

HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT No. 477

Israeli army detains a 10-year-old during the weekly demonstration in Kufr Qaddum

Date of incidents: 1 June 2013

Place: Kufr Qaddum, Occupied West Bank, Palestine

Witnesses: Residents of Kufr Qaddum, local and international activists

On Friday 14 June, the Israeli army detained a 10-year-old child during the weekly protest in Kufr Qaddum. Israeli soldiers fired tear gas canisters and sound bombs at the villagers; many local residents suffered from tear gas inhalation.

At approximately 12:00, when residents and international solidarity activists started gathering for the demonstration before the Friday prayers, nearly 30 foot soldiers stormed the village from the main road leading toward the illegal Israeli settlement Qedumim. As they entered the village, they fired tear gas canisters directly at the group before the demonstration even began. Local youth resisted the incursion, chasing the soldiers back from the bystanders toward a hill overlooking the village.

Over the next two and a half hours, soldiers shot tear gas and threw sound bombs at demonstrators in the olive groves next to the main road of the village. At approximately 12:30, soldiers detained a 10-year-old boy. While in their custody, soldiers tied his hands, grabbed him by the neck, beat him and threatened to "drop [him] from this rock."

Nearly one and a half hours later, the boy was released and residents of Kufr Qaddum celebrated his return. Soldiers continued to fire tear gas at local youth protesting at the edge of the village close to the illegal settler colony of Qedumim. No further arrests were made and the demonstration ended at around 15:00.

Kufr Qaddum is a 3,000-year-old agricultural village that sits on 24,000 dunams of land. The village was occupied by the Israeli army in 1967; in 1978, the illegal settler-colony of Qedumim was established nearby on the remains of a former Jordanian army camp, occupying 4,000 dunams of land stolen from Kufr Qaddum.

The villagers are currently unable to access an additional 11,000 dunams of land due to the closure by the Israeli army of the village's main and only road leading to Nablus in 2003. The road was closed in three stages, ultimately restricting access for farmers to the 11,000 dunams of land that lie along either side to one or two times a year. Since the road closure, the people of Kufr Qaddum have been forced to rely on an animal trail to access this area; the road is narrow and, according to the locals, intended only for animals. In 2004 and 2006, three villagers died when they were unable to reach the hospital in time. The ambulances carrying them were prohibited from using the main road and were forced to take a 13 km detour.

These deaths provoked even greater resentment in Kufr Qaddum and, on 1 July 2011, the villagers decided to unite in protest in order to re-open the road and protect the land in danger of settlement expansion along it.

Kufr Qaddum is home to 4,000 people; some 500 residents attend the weekly demonstrations. The villagers' resilience, determination and organization have been met with extreme repression. More than 120 village residents have been arrested; most spend 3-8 months in prison; collectively they have paid over NIS 100,000 to the Israeli courts. Around 2,000 residents have suffocated from tear-gas inhalation, many in their own homes. Over 100 residents have been shot directly with tear-gas canisters. On 27 April 2012, one man was shot in the head by a tear-gas canister that fractured his skull in three places; the injury cost him his ability to speak. In another incident, on 16 March 2012 an Israeli soldier released his dog into the crowded demonstration, where it attacked a young man, biting him for nearly 15 minutes whilst the army watched. When other residents tried to assist him, some were pushed away while others were pepper-sprayed directly in the face.

The events of the past week are part of a continuous campaign by the Israeli military to harass and intimidate the people of Kufr Qaddum into passively accepting the human rights violations the Israeli occupation, military and the illegal settlers inflict upon them.





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