

By Mariam  
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## ABU SAKR

**A**bu Sakr Bisharat, 71, is a native of Al-Hadidiya, a Bedouin homestead in Palestine's Jordan Valley. Located in Area C, Al-Hadidiya lands have long been targeted by Israeli settlers and the army. Today the entire area is slated for confiscation, and Abu Sakr and his family of 24 are likely to become refugees.

"They have been trying to push us off our land since 1969, shortly after occupying the West Bank," explains Abu Sakr, a herder and farmer. "Back then, they began by arresting shepherds and seasonal farmers. Most of us breed animals and raise wheat and barley; we always use rainwater rather than irrigation."



"When arrests didn't work, they began to shoot at our livestock from helicopters and military jeeps. After the 'peace agreement' in 1997, they began to destroy our homes."

Abu Sakr's family is spread over two locations, one in Area C, in Al-Hadidiya, and one in Area B, in Bardala. Both areas are threatened by annexation, but the former is the most vulnerable. Since 1997, the Israeli army has destroyed Abu Sakr's home at least seven times.

"They pull down our tents and destroy all the contents of our homes. They confiscate everything – our tractors, our equipment – and then they empty the water barrels, where we collect rainwater."

Just a few hundred meters from Abu Sakr's home is the illegal Israeli settlement of Roi, built in the late 1970s on lands of Al-Hadidiya, which was declared a military zone. This effectively prohibited Palestinians in the area from building – or even repairing – homes and structures on their own properties. The settlement became home to some 165 Israelis who created a fish-breeding business – manned by an Asian workforce.

Abu Sakr points out that the Jordan Valley is the main breadbasket of the West Bank and that without it, "there can be no Palestinian state." Both Abu Sakr and several of his sons have been arrested over the years for violating Israeli military orders. One son died because a cement roadblock that separated his home from the main road prevented him from getting timely medical attention after a tractor accident.

"The ambulance took six hours to reach us. By that time my boy was already dead."

Abu Sakr explains why the Palestinian Authority has not

been allowed to help the Palestinian communities of the northern Jordan Valley. "The PA gets money from donor states but cannot implement projects without Israeli permission. The Israeli policy has always been to drive us away, not to aid our survival here."

The annexation, says Abu Sakr, is a long-term policy that the sponsors of Oslo and every other peace accord chose not to pay attention to. "They are accomplices; neglect is also a crime!"

For more information, follow this link to a film about Abu Sakr and Palestinians in Area C: <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/aljazeeraworld/2012/08/2012822102524273640.html>.

