

CORPORATE OCCUPATION

TRACKING CORPORATE COMPLICITY IN THE OCCUPATION OF PALESTINE

Research Blogs from Palestine February – March 2010

Corporate Watch

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Qalandiya Terminal: Entering the Corporate Nightmare

Qalandiya Terminal, the crossing between East Jerusalem and Ramallah, is often the first military checkpoint visitors cross when entering the West Bank. During the second intifada, the Israeli state began transforming the old Qalandiya checkpoint into a 'terminal', similar to an international border. The process has cost between \$32 and \$34 million and has delivered hefty profits to the contractors involved.

One of these contractors is Elbit, a large Israeli arms and security company whose technology can be seen all over the West Bank. People crossing Qalandiya from Ramallah to Jerusalem are monitored by Elbit CCTV cameras as they pass through turnstiles, carrying the brand or product name 'Alarm'. They are then barked at over a tannoy by soldiers inside a plate glass booth. The 'Shamrad' intercom system also bears the Elbit logo. Elbit has also secured a contract to provide security systems for the the Jerusalem Envelope section of the Wall (Masu'a system). For more information on Elbit, see www.whoprofits.org/Company%20Info.php?id=554.

Once through the turnstile, travellers belongings must be passed through a Rapiscan scanner. Rapiscan is a US company whose investors include Barclays Global Investors UK Holdings and AXA. The scanners are installed through its Israeli representative, Hashmira, Israel's largest private security company, which is 70% owned by G4S. For more information on Rapiscan, see www.whoprofits.org/Company%20Info.php?id=653. For more information on Hashmira, see whoprofits.org/Company%20Info.php?id=595 and www.corporatewatch.org/?lid=3500.

Fingerprint recognition systems at Qalandiya are provided by Schlage, a US-based company (see http://recognitionsystems.schlage.com/products/). Schlage is part of Ingersoll Rand Security Technologies. Its website pronounces, in unashamedly Orwellian language, that "Real security sets you free."

Over the next few days, Qalandiya will be a source of misery and frustration to Palestinians as the Israeli defence minister has announced that the West Bank will be 'closed' for four days from Friday, 26th February 2010, for the Jewish holiday of Purim. Closures generally mean that West Bank Palestinians, even those with permits, will not be allowed to cross to Jerusalem.

Israel is beginning to take the BDS movement seriously

"Whether we are confined in the open-air prison that Gaza has been transformed into, in military prisons in the West Bank, or in our own villages surrounded by the Apartheid Wall, arrests and persecution do not weaken us. They only strengthen our commitment to turning 2010 into a year of liberation." - Abdullah Abu Rahmah, in a letter written from his prison cell, 1st January 2010

The last year has seen an increase in repression of Palestinian grassroots activists involved in struggles against Israel's wall and Israeli settlements and who advocate the campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel.

In September 2009, Mohamed Othman, an activist with the Stop the Wall (www.stopthewall.org) campaign, was arrested on suspicion of 'dealing with foreign

enemies' and incitement. Mohamed spent four months in jail, two months awaiting trial and two months in administrative detention (without charge). On 24th December, Jamal Jumaa, coordinator of Stop the Wall, was also arrested. Mohamed and Jamal were released on 12th January, 2010, after international pressure. Jamal was never charged, while Mohamed's charges were dropped after two months. In February 2010, the Stop the Wall office in Ramallah was raided by the Israeli army and computer hard drives and documents were seized.

The arrests of Jamal and Mohamed are part of an Israeli crackdown on grassroots activists with links to the growing international solidarity movement. The Israeli state is becoming increasingly concerned about the burgeoning BDS movement, the actions of which are often against companies complicit in Israel's occupation of Palestine. This can be clearly seen in the agenda of the 2010 Herzliya conference (www.herzliyaconference.org).

The Herzliya conference is an influential Israeli thinktank that was set up by the Institute for Policy and Strategy in 2000. At this year's conference, many of the talks and papers centred on the growing global BDS movement as a threat to Israeli policies. One of the contributors, the Reut Institute (http://reut-institute.org), described the movement as "the work of a worldwide network of private individuals and organizations. They have no hierarchy or overall commander, but work together based on a joint ideology." The network apparently has its "hubs in London, Brussels, Madrid, Toronto, San Francisco and the University of California, Berkeley." Reut recommends setting up a "counter-network" to confront BDS activists, which it calls "deligitimisers".

Stop the Wall, where Jamal Jumaa and Mohamed Othman work, is a line of communication with this global solidarity movement - the 'hubs', in Reut's words. It is easy to see why they have become targets. Other such lines of communication are the Popular Committees of villages like Bil'in and Nil'in, which are engaged in an ongoing struggle against the apartheid wall. International and Israeli activists regularly attend the demonstrations in these villages and the popular committees regularly make calls to the international movement.

38 residents of Bil'in have been arrested since July 2009 in an Israeli army campaign of coordinated night raids. The raids began concurrently with a court case brought by residents of Bil'in against Israeli real estate company Green Park (see http://corporateoccupation.wordpress.com/2009/07/23/bil-in-versus-green-park/). 15 residents of Bil'in have been imprisoned, including the spokesperson for the Popular Committee, Abdullah Abu Rahmah. In a letter from his prison cell, Abdullah said "Bil'in has become the graveyard of Israeli real estate empires. One after another, these companies are approaching bankruptcy as the costs of building on stolen Palestinian land are driven higher than the profits." (for the full letter, see www.bigcampaign.org/index.php?mact=CGBlog,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=116&cnt nt01returnid=72).

Similar repression has met the residents of Nil'in, another village resisting Israel's wall's encroachment on its lands. 116 people have been arrested and 5 killed since May 2008 for resisting the wall's construction. 17 people from Nil'in are currently in prison, including the co-ordinator of the Popular Committee, Ibrahim Amira. Wa'el Al-Faqeeh, coordinator of the Nablus popular committee, was also arrested on 9th December, 2009, in an IDF raid on his home. He was detained without charge for over a month (see http://palsolidarity.org/2010/01/10740).

This new wave of Israeli repression has also hit the International Solidarity Movement (ISM, www.palsolidarity.org), another channel of communication with the global BDS movement. The Israeli military have carried out several raids of the ISM apartment in Ramallah and have arrested several international volunteers and deported one of them, while banning two from entering the West Bank (see http://palsolidarity.org/2010/02/11278).

The Reut Institute's presentation to the Herzliya Conference and the increased repression of activists with links to the global BDS movement only show that the Israeli state is starting to take the movement more seriously. Reut concludes that, "The risk posed is that such campaigns will create an equivalency between Israel and apartheid-era South Africa that penetrates the mainstream of public and political consciousness. Given Israel's dependence on vigorous trade, as well as scientific, academic and technological engagement with other countries, this movement towards isolating the country may pose a strategic threat." Let's hope they're right!

New settlement construction in the Jordan Valley



Above is a picture of the construction of a packing house on the land of the regional council of the Jordan Valley settlements. Local Palestinians say that this is to be a new packing house for Carmel Agrexco. Agrexco already runs packing houses for fruit and vegetables, bound for export, on dozens of illegal settlements in the occupied Jordan Valley.

Apple packing house on the Ne'ot Golan settlement



The illegal settlement of Ne'ot Golan was established in 1967 after Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights. It was established on the land of the Syrian city of Fiq. Above is picture of the apple packing house belonging to the settlement. Apples from Israeli settlements in the Golan are exported internationally.

Walking the route of Veolia's Tramline in East Jerusalem

French multinational Veolia is involved in several projects in occupied Palestine, providing services to Israel's illegal settlements (see www.corporatewatch.org/?lid=3433, www.corporatewatch.org/?lid=3474 and www.corporatewatch.org/?lid=3514). Veolia has come under intense pressure to pull out of the Citypass Consortium, the group of companies responsible for building the Jerusalem Light Railway. After years of pressure, Veolia has attempted to pull out of the scheme but has not been able to extricate itself from its contractual obligations to the Israeli government.

We decided to spend a few hours walking the route of the tramline, from Jaffa Street to the settlement of Pisgat Ze'ev. The line connects illegal Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem to West Jerusalem and the Old City. We walked along Jaffa Street to the walls of the old city, past the border police checking Palestinian IDs at New Gate and on to Damascus Gate. From Damascus Gate the line runs west, stopping frequently outside the hotels and Jewish religious communities built on occupied Palestinian land on Nablus Road. The

tramway runs past the settlement buildings and Palestinian houses occupied by settlers in Sheikh Jarrah, and stops outside the settlement of Giv'at Ha Mivtar. The line passes through the Ramot Eshkol area, a settlement built on the land of the Palestinian area of Lifta and splits into two, with one line running straight to the settlement of Pisgat Ze'ev.

The line conveniently bypasses the Hizmah checkpoint leading to the lands of Shu'afat and Hizma. These lands are encircled by a six-foot fence, rolls of barbed wire and a military road overlooked by a military watchtower. About half a kilometre along the road, the tram line returns from its detour in the affluent community of Pisgat Ze'ev. Pisgat Ze'ev is a settlement of over 4,000 people established in 1985 on the land of Palestinians from Beit Hanina and Hizma.



Businesses in the Bnei Yehuda settlement

Bnei Yehuda settlement was established in 1972 after Israel's occupation of the Golan heights, It was reportedly set up by workers from Israeli Aircraft Industries (www.iai.co.il). It is located on the site of the Syrian area of Scopia, which was depopulated when the Israeli military forced most of the Syrian residents of the Golan Heights out of their homes. It now has 1.036 residents.

Bnei Yehuda boasts a Carmel Agrexco packing house. Agrexco is the largest exporter of fresh produce from the Israeli settlements to Europe and elsewhere.

On the road leading to Bnei Yehuda, a factory bearing the Elbit logo can be seen. The factory appears to be manufacturing aircraft. Elbit operate in the UK and is involved in testing unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) at ParcAberporth in Wales (see www.corporatewatch.org/?lid=3470).

Near the entrance to Bnei Yehuda industrial area is a sign offering 'free land' to people who want to settle on the expropriated Syrian land in Bnei Yehuda.



Sign offering 'free land' for settlers in Bnei Yehuda

Evidence of British company Lee Cooper trading in illegal Israeli settlement

The other day we took a trip to to the settlement Ma'ale Adumim in search of signs of dodgy business dealings and, for the first time, found a British company trading directly in a settlement. Lee Cooper, a British denim company established in 1908, was joined by the international businesses Western Union, Dr Fischer and a Tower Records franchise in their willingness to make a profit out of the occupation.

Ma'ale Adumim is the third largest settlement in the West Bank. Established in 1976, it now has a population of around 35,000 and is rapidly growing. The settlement is at the heart of the controversial E1 project, which aims to cut the West Bank off from East Jerusalem and to facilitate further settlement expansion. Ma'ale Adumim was established on land stolen from the five Palestinian villages of Abu Dis, Al Izriyyeh, Al Issawiyyeh and

Anata. Just like Mishor Adumim, the industrial zone connected to the settlement (see www.corporatewatch.org/?lid=3477), Ma'ale Adumim has also confiscated land from the Jahalin Bedouin, who are now forced to live on the outskirts of the industrial area.

Earlier this year, Ma'ale
Adumim made the news when
it was revealed that the
London-based business man,
Tory party donor and chairman
of Britain Israel
Communications and Research
Centre (BICOM), Poju
Zabludowicz, has a stake in the
Ma'ale Adumim shopping
centre.

Lee Cooper, which had a shop based in the Adumim Mall, has a long history of work wear production and is known for supplying the British Ministry of Defence during both World



Wars. After the second World War, its production changed to the manufacture of Jeans. Its Hebrew blog is headed by a Union Jack next to the slogan "For a civilized world." The company also appear to be associated with the London night club Fabric, which is advertised on its Israeli site as a "suitable holiday destination for Israeli Lee Cooper wearers" (http://www.leecooper.co.il/blog.html).

Lee Cooper branches in the UK and Ireland

Lee Cooper is one of the only British retail companies to operate in Israeli settlements. The company has a branch in Adumim Mall in the illegal settlement of Ma'ale Adumim (see above).

Lee Cooper Lee Cooper have head offices in London (brands) and Slough, with branches in the UK, Ireland, Belgium, Holland, France, Australia, Dubai, Singapore, Thailand, Lebanon, Turkey and many more. See

http://www.thestoryworks.com/leecooper/newsite/store UK 01.htm.

Dr Fischer Pharmaceuticals – Exploiting the Dead Sea

At Ma'ale Adumim's Adumim mall, Corporate Watchers were able to buy mud from the dead sea, produced under the supervision of Dr Fischer Pharmaceuticals, a company with a sales office in Brussels. Dr Fischer's line of Dead Sea products and cosmetics, which also included minerals from the Dead Sea, were on sale in the Ma'ale Adumim's branch of the Israeli Body Shop. Body Shop Israel (apparently separate from the larger international chain although using their slogans) also has a branch on the illegal East Jerusalem settlement of Pisgat Ze'ev. Body Shop Israel advertises that its pharmaceutical products are manufactured in the laboratories of Dr Fischer. Dr Fischer's foreign sales office is:

Dr. Fischer SA / NV 149 Ave. Louise Brussels, 1050 Belgium

Tel: 32-2-5357625 Fax: 32-2-5357575

email: info@dr-fischer.com

Fischer Pharmaceuticals Ltd was set up in 1965 and has over a 100 products, many produced in Israel. The company claims that it markets its products in 30 countries.

The North Western coast of the Dead Sea is in the Israeli occupied West Bank. Palestinians access to the Dead Sea is tightly controlled by Israel and are, thus, unable to benefit from its resources. Israel exploits the Dead Sea by extracting mud and minerals from the area and through the tourist industry. Foreign tourists often visit illegal Israeli settlements, such as Kibbutz Kalya, on the Dead Sea coast in the South of the Jordan Valley.

Businesses in Katzerin settlement industrial zone

Katzerin is a settlement of 6,444 people situated in the occupied Golan Height. It was established on the land of the Syrian area of Fakhura.



Mey Eden/Eden Springs – www.meyeden.co.il/www.edensprings.co.uk: Mei Eden extracts water from the occupied Golan and sells it throughout Israel. Eden Springs supplies water coolers to businesses, local authorities and universities across the UK. A successful campaign in Scotland has seen boycotts of Eden Springs at universities and pressure on Edinburgh City council to pull out of its contract with the company (http://www.scottishpsc.org.uk/index.php?option=com_sectionex&view=category&id=23&It emid=200208). Eden Springs' Scottish depot has recently closed.

Golan Winery – www.golanwines.co.il: Golan Winery produces its wine in the Katzerin industrial zone and distributes it in Israel and internationally. Its UK distributor is currently Osem in Essex, although the visitors centre staff claimed that this may change. A full list of its international distributors can be found at www.golanwines.co.il/distributors_eng.asp. Its vineyards, all of them on illegally occupied territory, can be found at http://www.golanwines.co.il/allVineYards eng.asp.

Biomor – www.biomor.com: A producer of organic biocides with international distributors.

Mei Golan - http://meygolan.co.il: A cooperative exploiting water from the Golan Heights and providing agricultural water to the settlements.

Gesher Golan – www.geshergolan.co.il: Car rentals and sales for the local market.

Golan brewery - www.golanbeer.co.il: Brewery established in 2006, recently entered into a deal with the Golan winery. It has a bar which sells international brands like Budvar.

Benda Plast: Plastic food packaging manufacturers exporting products to the US and Europe.

Pigmentan – www.pigmentan.com: Paint manufacturer supplying products internationally. Distributors listed across Europe – see http://www.pigmentan.com/Pigmentan/Templates/showpage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMI

D=800&FID=717. Headquarters in Ramat Gan

Capernaum Vista Olive farm – www.oleaessence.net: Producer of olive oil and olive oil-based skin products. Seems to market itself primarily over the Internet and to wholefood stores. Its contact address is in California.

Nistec – www.nistec.com: Nistec is a high-tech and arms company which opened a new plant in Katzerin in 2009. Nistec also has offices in Petach Tikhvah annd Maalot.

Sealy – www.sealy.com: Sealy advertises itself as "America's best selling mattress company." It is a multinational company and the factory in Katzerin is run by an Israeli licensee. It has a UK base in Cumbria (http://www.sealy.co.uk/contactus.php)

Ionics Systems Ltd – www.ionicsystems.com: Manufacturer of cleaning products.

P&O shipping container in the illegal settlement of Katzerin

A P&O shipping container was seen in the illegal settlement industrial zone of Katzerin in Mach. It is pictured below. P&O is a British freight and passenger ferry company with offices in Dover (www.poferries.com/tourist/content/pages/template/_footer_About_about_P&O Ferries about P&O Ferries.htm).



Organic Apartheid: The Mehola settlement

The settlement of Mehola is situated in the Northern Jordan Valley. It is comprised of a gated, fenced residential settlement and an agricultural area. The agricultural area is close to the Palestinian village of Ein al-Beida and Palestinian workers, including child workers, work in the fields and packing houses. Workers are paid from 60-80 Israeli shekels a day, half the Israeli minimum wage. They also have no contracts or health insurance. There have been documented incidents of employers in Mehola falsifying wage slips in order to appear to be paying proper wages. Mehola has an area of 5,000 dunums and a population of 351 people. It falls within the Bik'At HaYarden regional council of settlements. It was established in 1967, on Palestinian land from the Tubas region.

A large proportion of the produce in Mehola is maketed as 'organic' for the export market. The two largest companies in the agricultural zone are Arava and Carmel Agrexco. Individual settlers appear to have their own 'organic' plots and export through one of these companies. The residential part of Mehola, behind a barbed wire fence, contains housing, animal pens and a swimming pool.

'Produce of Israel': British company mislabelling settlement goods

Despite increased publicity regarding the labelling of Israeli settlement produce and the recent DEFRA guidance on the matter, which states that produce from the settlements should be labelled as such, it only took us a few minutes inside the illegal Jordan Valley settlement of Mehola to find herbs bound for a British company being mislabelled.

Herbs bearing the logo of Fresh Direct, which has its head office in Oxfordshire, were spotted inside the Halpert Moshe 'fresh herbs' packing house, which operates under the Carmel Agrexco banner. At this location, herbs being prepared came with a joint Fresh Direct/Carmel Agrexco label, which clearly states the product is a "Produce of Israel", despite being packaged in an organic farm on an illegal Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank. The label we collected was for 70 grams of sage with the text written in English, indicating that the contents were intended for export to Britain. There were also herbs labelled in German, without the Fresh Direct logo, inside the packing house.

Not only does this kind of labelling go against the the call for a distinction to be made between settlement and Palestinian produce, it also goes one step further by not even

acknowledging that the product is grown in the West Bank. The DEFRA advice regarding labelling of settlement produce, published in December 2009, is clear about the illegality of this practice: "The Government considers that traders would be misleading consumers, and would therefore almost be certainly committing an offence, if they were to declare produce from the OPT (including from the West Bank) as 'Produce of Israel'. This would apply irrespective of whether the produce was from a Palestinian producer or from an Israeli settlement in the OPT. This is because the area does not fall within the internationally recognised borders of the state of Israel." (To read the full advice from DEFRA, see http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/food/pdf/labelling-palestine.pdf.)

The particular label that we collected contains the "traceability" number 08209306 and the grower ID number 675256. If there are any organic farmers out there who know what this means, and fancy helping us out, please send us an email at contact@corporatewatch.org.

Fresh Direct has local branches all across Britain, as well as an office in the United Arab Emirates. Its head office address is Freshdirect (UK) Ltd, Bicester Distribution Park, Charbridge Way, Bicester, Oxfordshire OX26 4SW, phone 01869 365600. For local branches, see http://www.freshdirect.co.uk/contact.aspx.

Corporations in Katzerin Industrial Zone – Part 3

Katzerin is a settlement of 6,444 people situated in the occupied Golan Height. It was established on the land of the Syrian area of Fakhura.

Simmons – www.simmons.com: International mattress company based in US. Simmons has an office in the UK:
Simmons Bedding Group plc
Knight Road, Rochester
Kent. England ME2 2BP

Lithotech: Produces kidney stones' removal devices, sold by special agreement worldwide by Cook Urology (USA).

United Kingdom

Bobcat – www.bobcat.com: Bobcat is a manufacturer of construction equipment that is known to hire equipement, through Emcol, for the construction and maintenance of settlements. Bobcat Company is a business of Doosan Infracore International, a US-based subsidiary of Doosan Infracore (South Korea). Bobcat machines were seen working on the road in Katzerin industrial zone.



UK company exporting from Jordan Valley settlements

The Jordan Valley is the Palestinian area most relentlessly exploited by settlement agricultural companies. Most famously, campaigners have been focusing on the Israeli national exporter Carmel Agrexco for its illegal exports from the area. Corporate Watch has uncovered a new company to add to the target list.

During a trip to the area, we found a packing house owned by the Israeli company Edom UK (http://www.edom.co.il), which is 20% owned by the British company Valley Grown Salads (www.v-g-s.co.uk). The packing house is based in the agricultural area of the settlement of Tomer. There was also a truck marked EDOM UK picking up produce from the settlement for export to the Britain.

Edom was founded in 2003 and is described by Valley Grown Salads as "a partnership between a select group of growers, marketers and customers," of which the company is a part. Jimmy Russo, Valley Grown Salads' owner and director, is also the chairman of Edom. In 2008, a sister company, EDOM Fruit, was established.

Not only does Edom directly profit from the occupation by operating in the Jordan Valley, we also found immediate evidence of worker exploitation tied to its business when we talked to Palestinians in the area. According to two men working in the fields opposite Tomer, pickers working in the fields supplying Edom's packing house get paid 60 Shekels a day, less than half the current Israeli minimum wage (which Palestinians are legally entitled to), and work on a day to day basis without contracts. The men also confirmed that children as young as 13 work with them in the fields, where they pick tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, cucumbers and aubergines - all produce advertised by Valley Grown Salads through their UK web-site. Valley Grown Salads supplies two British supermarket but would say which ones. Workers in Tomer informed us that the products packaged at Edom are exported to Europe, with confirmed destinations being the UK and France.

Unsurprisingly, VGS's operations in the Jordan Valley are nowhere to be found on its official website, where it promotes itself as a caring company with an interest in community relations. Under the heading 'Working together for the community', you can read all about its 'joint project' with Edom in the Arava desert, on the Israeli side of the Green line, where they sponsor a plot of land close to the local school so that its children can 'learn about food', as well as a room where 'they study and learn how to care for the environment and wildlife.' This is a far cry from the reality for the children of Fasayil, and other Palestinian communities around the Tomer settlement, who do not appear to figure in EDOM's CSR

rhetoric. Communities in the valley are prevented from building homes, hospitals, schools or any other building by the Israeli military. Israel's stranglehold on the local economy forces people to work in the settlements.

Valley Grown Salads' UK office and packing house:

Nazelow Nursery, Sedge Green Road Roydon, Essex CM19 5JS

Tel: 01992 445000



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corporateoccupation.wordpress.com

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