

# BUSTANEI HEFETZ INDUSTRIAL ZONE RAMIFICATION ON TULKARM GOVERNORATE



## Settlement Expansion

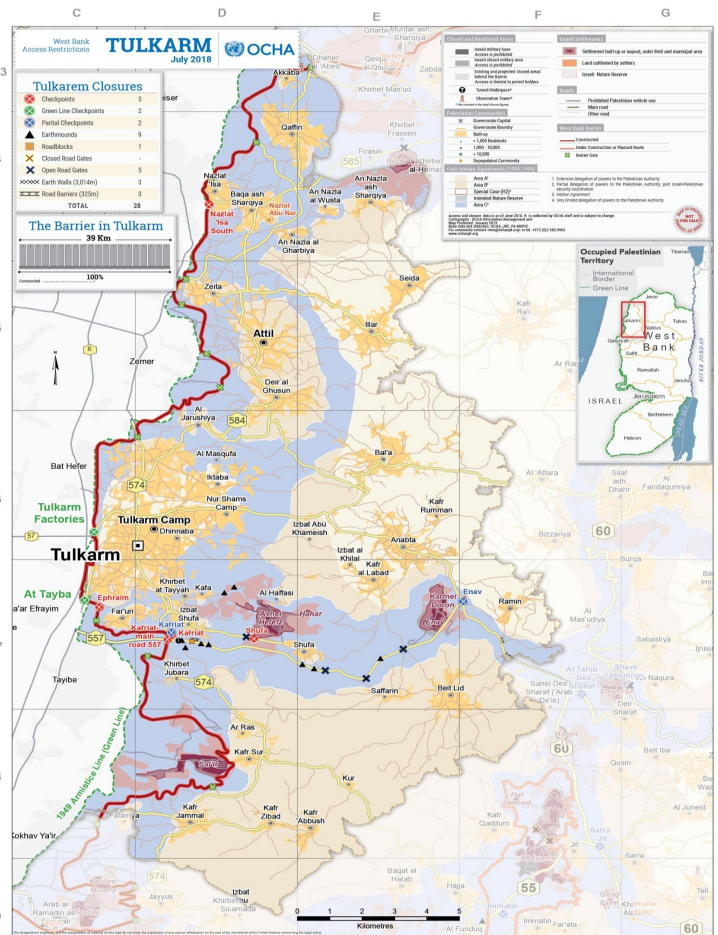
The Tulkarm governorate in the north west of the West Bank, is facing eminent risk of being severed, enclaved, and further disposed by settlement expansion as had the governorate of Qalqiliya been in preceding years. Falling along the green line (bordered by Israel along its entire western boarder), the Tulkarm governorate is fertile grounds for Israeli annexation and expansion into the West Bank, with efforts underway to ensure the contiguity of Israeli settlements within Palestinian bounds to each other and to Israel, at the expense of Palestinians security, livelihood and larger rights to a viable homeland and self-determination. In addition to serving as close suburb for Israeli urban hubs as Tel Aviv and Netanya, settlements in the area also provide industrial zones for Israel and the ability to evade environmental/ labor laws, monopolize pillaged natural resource, and exploit the local population as cheap laborers.

## About JLAC

*The Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center (JLAC) is a Palestinian non-governmental organization mandated with providing pro-bono legal aid, community awareness, and advocacy in both East Jerusalem and in the remainder of the West Bank.*

If planned settlement expansion efforts are implemented (along with associated bypass roads, checkpoints, and fences/walls) the settlements will serve to form a bloc enshrouded by the Annexation Wall which will enclose the city of Tulkarm, bisect the governorate and sever it from the governorate of Qalqiliya; annexing lands and pillaging resources along the way and strangulating the villages in the area, by rendering them with small access points in which their residents may come in and out of.

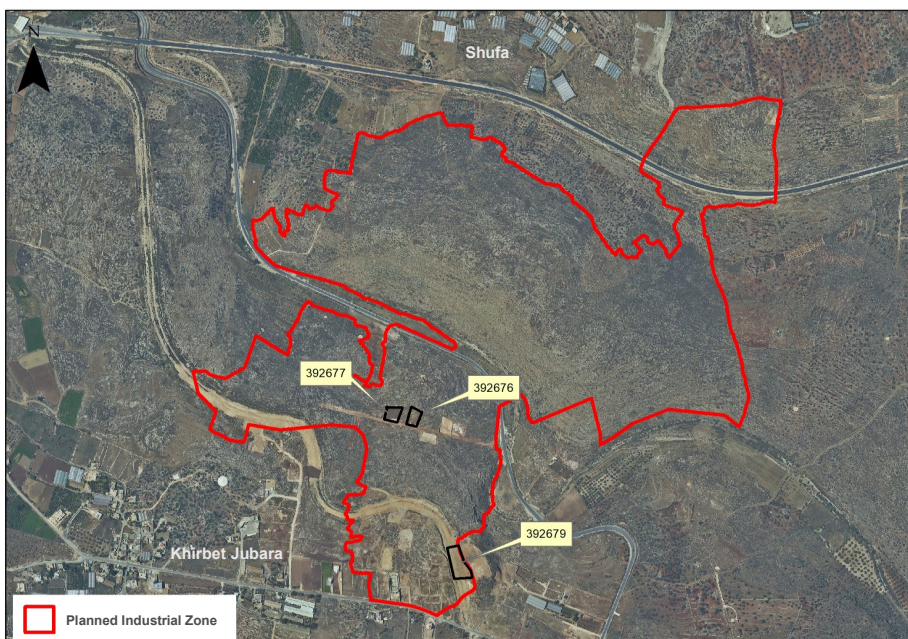
One recent component of this manifestation is the settlement of Avnei Hefetz (established by an Israeli governmental decision in 1984, initially allotting 1,300 dunams of mostly Shufa lands and later expanding into surrounding villages) and the various expansion plans it has underway within its bounds. To the north east of the settlement, a residential area is being developed (erecting 108 housing units) and being marketed by developers as a separate settlement using a construction plan from 1998. Kedem is to operate autonomously and consequently will have the capacity to infringe more upon Palestinians than if it had expanded as part of Avnei Hefetz (Peace Now 2018 Annual Construction Report).



More threatening still is the planned industrial zone to the south east of Anvei Hefetz ("Bustanei Hefetz" plan no. 158-T), which allocates 788 dunums (of Shufa, Kirbet Jubara, Far'un, and Ar Ras lands) for the commercial and industrial expansion. 130 establishments are planned, with a revenue cycle of hundreds of millions of shekels. The Bustanei Hefetz plan was approved by the ICA (Israeli Civil Administration) on December 26, 2018 and deposited for public objections on November 7, 2019, giving 60 days from that date to file objections. The plan was published on-line (November 11, 2019 on the ICA site), in the Israeli press (Maariv newspaper November 14, 2019 and Maariv Boker November 15, 2019) and Arab-Israeli press (Sot El Arab November 18, 2019), all mechanism relatively un-known/inaccessible to the local population harmed by the plan (Israeli Civil Administration official site).

The Israeli press (Israel Today Newspaper, "Palestinians delay the establishment of an industrial zone in Samaria"; by Gilead Zwick, August 31, 2019 <https://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/687645>) reports efforts on the part of pro-settler Israeli groups to push the implementation of the Bustanei Hefetz plan. In October of 2018, a tour was held by the Samaria Regional Council Chairman Yossi Dagan to the area for the Minister of Economy Eli Cohen, whom later said "Bustani Hafetz" was a priority of the Ministry of Economy. This was followed by an urgent letter being sent by Regavim in cooperation with the Samaria Regional Council to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, to the Civil Administration, the Supervisory Unit and the Israel Police, calling for the implementation of demolition/eviction orders against Palestinians in the vicinity towards implementing the Bustanei Hefetz plan. A senior official in the Prime Minister's Office told Israel Today that "enforcement agencies in Judea and Samaria are guided by law enforcement in recent months. We are working to advance the development of the Avni Hefetz industrial zone in March. The issue is currently undergoing administrative proceedings and will be addressed as soon as possible by the relevant factors. The Civil Administration dually responded; "The case is known to the civilian enforcement agencies, and the structures in question are undergoing administrative proceedings. When a decision is made on them, the Civil Administration will act in accordance with the decision." JLAC infers from these statements, that "administrative proceedings" have no intention of ensuring the application of justice but are just a procedural step in providing a "legal" cover to existing ulterior expansionist motives.

JLAC has felt this intension through Israeli practices on the ground in preparing for the implementation of the plan, with tens of demolition/eviction orders from the vicinity pouring into JLAC in recent months. The plan had also been referenced by the military court during proceedings involving demolition/eviction cases for the village of Khirbet Jubara. Preceding recent demolition/eviction order, Israel announced much of the area as "Sate Land" leaving little room for legal intervention in protecting the individual cases. As a result, JLAC attorneys are employing a two-fold legal approach; taking individual cases through available legal channels (although room for success in extremely limited) as to exhaust them, and on lodging a major objection against the plan itself. However, in such a discriminatory environment, in which laws are manufactured to give the illusion of justice while undermining international law in facilitating expansionist aims, legal interventions can only do such much (i.e. naming and shaming). What is need is raising the profile of the matter on a diplomatic level by third-state actors (as in the case of Khan Al Ahmar).



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