

WADI AS SEEQ

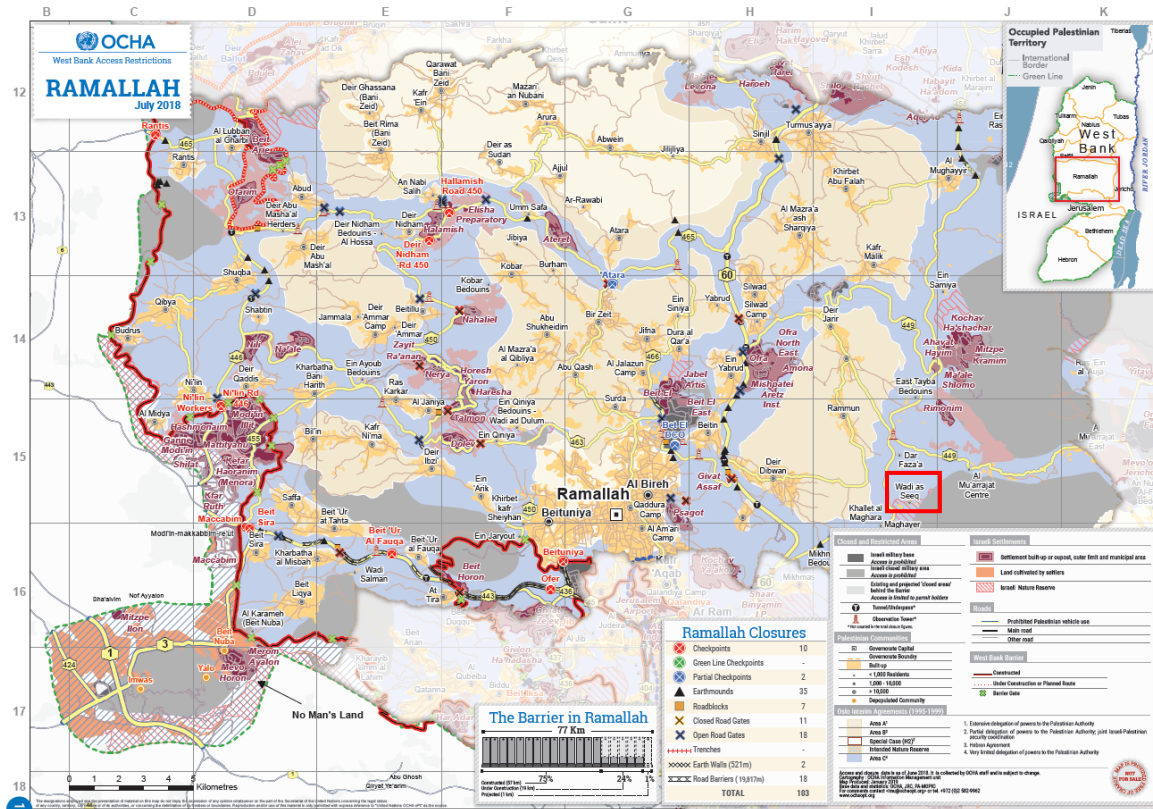


Forced Displacement

Evicted from the Naqab in 1948 to the Jordan Valley, becoming refugees, and eventually settling in Wadi as Seeq, the Bedouin community of Wadi as Seeq has resided in the West Bank prior to its occupation in 1967 or the designation of certain lands as “C” following the Oslo Accords. Yet, the community, as all Bedouin communities in the West Bank, has been continuously targeted by the State of Israel for its presence in key areas earmarked for effective annexation (i.e. the Jordan Valley and the Jerusalem periphery). Nearly all Bedouin communities, as reflected in OCHA figures and affirmed by JLAC’s field documentation, are facing blanket eviction orders (and accompanied violence and confiscation of livestock and equipment); with many (46 Bedouin communities comprised 1,358 households) being directly coerced to concede to inequitable forceful relocation plans aimed at eradicating their way of life. Forcible removal of indigenous peoples on any grounds (military or security necessity) is prohibited under international law (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2017).

About JLAC

The Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center (JLAC) is mandated with providing pro-bono legal aid and consultation in the defense of human rights, both in East Jerusalem and the remainder of the West Bank. JLAC has coupled its legal aid with public interest cases, legal reform, community awareness, and advocacy.



Added Vulnerabilities

Situated in the south-east Ramallah Governorate (*on rented lands belonging to the adjacent towns of Deir Dibwan to the West and Rammun and Al Tayba to the North West*), the Bedouin community of Wadi es Seeq falls along the Alon settlement road (*road no. 458*) connecting the settlement blocs in the vicinity to each other (*Kochav Hashachar (including Ahavat Hayim, Ma'aleh Shlomo, Mitzpe Kramin) and Rimonim to the north and Ma'ale Michmash (including Mitzpe Danny, Neve Erez) to the south*) en route to the Jordan Valley. Adding to its vulnerability are the footpaths frequented by Israeli hikers and violent settlers. The small community is home to 150 persons (62% of which are children) and their flock, as housed in approximately 100 makeshift structures (mostly metal poles with stung canvas material for walls, for homes and animal shelters alike). Earning a humble yet dignified living through the sale of their dairy products and wool in the local markets, the community worries if forcibly displaced, they will lose the capacity to shelter and maintain such a source of livelihood; as such a fate befell Bedouin communities displaced to tight quarters, where loss of livelihood and living conditions soon turned the localities into slums and the communities into cheap laborers in adjacent settlements.

The community is neither connected to water or electricity networks and relies on the costly delivery of water tanks (4x the cost of piped tariffs) and solar panels. A community school (Badiyat Ramallah School, resistance school no. 6) was established in September of 2017 (through EU funds) towards servicing 82 students (1st- 6th grade) from the community itself and 3 other small Bedouin communities in the vicinity (i.e Dar Faza'a, Al Mu'arajat, and Bedouins residing in Al Tayba). Though only comprised of nine small rooms and small outdoor area (un paved and un canopied), the school affords students with the ability to ensure their safe and continuous early education; as prior to that the children had to face arduous and lengthy treks to schools located in adjacent villages. The community relies on adjacent villages for such needs as health, secondary education, produce, and other procurements.



View of portion of the community.



Badiyat Ramallah School.

Legal Interventions

JLAC first became acquainted with the community in 1996, when it took on blanket demolition orders issued by the Israeli Civil Administration at the time on alleged grounds that the vicinity was a “closed military training zone” (although now classified as a Natural Reserve). A collective case was promptly lodged by JLAC before the Israeli Supreme Court and won, with the court ruling that the communities’ structures (save for the three structures furthest East) do not pose a “threat” to the State of Israel and may continue to be situated in their vicinities. The said three structures were relocated (further West) by the community (closer to the remaining structures), and it seemed that the court ruling had bought the community some peace of mind.

Regretfully, Wadi es Seeq received a new batch of demolition orders in October and November of 2018 and a second batch in May of 2019 (including a demolition order against the community school), with concerns being that the area is being targeted for its unique natural features and nature tourism capabilities. JLAC went on to undertake individual cases on the community’s behalf in combating efforts on the part of the State of Israel to forcefully displace them. Such involved holding field visits and collecting needed documentation in building cases and attending scheduled sessions; during which JLAC argued the community’s human right to housing and education and violations of IHL therein. The community’s cases were at the final stage of litigation, and it was thought that imminent threat of forced displacement was mostly contained, when (despite an announced moratorium on demolition during the coronavirus crisis) a third batch of demolition orders was issued in May of 2020 (with 34 new orders against housing and livelihood structures issued in the span of two days alone, on May 19th and 20th). Rushing to undertake case preparation in combating the new orders, JLAC and the community find themselves once again back at square one.

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