The following English-speaking contacts have been selected from a long list of experts in the Palestinian refugee problem. Don’t hesitate to contact Badil (Email: medi-aenglish@badil.org, Phone: +972(0)2-2747346) for references who speak other languages. Our staff is also well-prepared to answer your questions on refugee law, politics and advocacy.

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Related Organizations & Resources
Al-Awda – Palestine Right to Return Coalition
Grassroots coalition campaigning for refugee rights and return
Al-awda.org (US) or al-awda.org.uk (UK)

Association for the Defense of the Rights of the Internally Displaced
Civil Society Organization for Rights in Israel
Phone: +972(0)2-6466167;
Fax: +972(0)4646-8241;
adrir@palnet.com

Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA)
Global Civil society coalition raising awareness of Israel’s Apartheid-like policies and campaigning for boycott, divestment and sanctions
Website: www.caia-web.org

National Committee for the Commemoration of Nakba-60 in Palestine
Coordinating body for Nakba commemoration
Tel: +972(0)2-599-255584;uyac@uyac.org
Website: www.nakbainhebrew.org

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large urban Jewish settlement of Gilo had been constructed in its vicinity.Israeli municipal authorities have asked Ein Juweiza residents, who comprise about half of Wallajeh, to sign a document recognizing that their homes are in eastern Jerusalem, and that they, holders of West Bank IDs, are residing illegally in Jerusalem.

In the meantime, Israeli soldiers commonly arrest and fine Wallajeh residents in their homes for entering Jerusalem without the proper papers.

In 2004, Israeli city officials announced a new plan to construct Giv‘at Yael, a settlement planned to house more than 55,000 Jewish residents, on the lands of Wallajeh and nearby Palestinian communities. This settlement will complete the ring of settlements forming a physical barrier between Palestinians in the southern West Bank and the city of Jerusalem. Plans for the controversial construction are frozen until 2009.

Seemingly sounding the final death knell for Wallajeh, the Wall (a series of cement walls, fences and guard towers that Israel is constructing in the West Bank) will entirely encircle the village’s houses, leaving only one exit. Built mostly on land in the occupied West Bank, the Wall was declared illegal in the advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice, which called for a halt to construction and reparations.

As early as 2003, UN Special Rapporteur John Dugard warned that the Wall and its associated regime were likely to “lead to a new generation of refugees and internally displaced persons”. A 2006 pilot study by Badil found that 64% of involuntary residence changes made by Israeli Palestinians had occurred since 2002, and 17.3% of surveyed Palestinians who changed their previous place of residence did so because of the Wall.
Case Studies in Displacement

► Kafr Bir'im - 1948

On 29 October, 1948, Israel began a new military campaign code-named ‘Hiram’ intended to occupy Arab villages in the Upper Galilee. According to estimates of the Zionist forces, there were 50,000 to 60,000 Palestinians in this area before the operation – and only 12,000 to 15,000 remaining afterwards.

The 1,050 villagers of Kafr Bir'im were among those forced out of their homes, two weeks after the Zionist occupation of the village. Officer Emmanuel Friedman told the villagers on 13 November that they were “in danger” and must leave. He told them that their evacuation was temporary, only to last two weeks, and asked for the keys to their homes.

Most of the villagers took refuge in nearby caves and fields rather than moving across the border to Lebanon as they had been instructed. When the two-week period was over, Israeli officials continued to promise the villagers that they would be allowed to return.

“We used to keep the keys to our homes in our pockets,” said Ibrahim Issa, whose family had moved to nearby Jish. “My mother would send me to our home in Kafr Bir'im to bring the necessary supplies – you know, the farmer’s house is like a grocery. Our chickens remained in Kafr Bir'im for about a month, and we fed them regularly.”

Three months after the villagers were moved out, Israeli patrols arrested 65 people working in the area, despite their valid permits, and deported them into the West Bank, which was under Jordanian control.

Then, in June 1949, a group of Israeli settlers occupied homes in Kafr Bir'im, heralding the French Consulate and in southern Lebanon. The villagers have waged a protracted legal and political battle to return to their land, taking their case to the Israeli Supreme Court, which in a January 1952 decision recognized their right to return to their village with the permission of the military governor. This permission has never been granted.

► Wallajeh - Ongoing Displacement

Few communities illustrate as well as the village of Wallajeh the myriad ways that Israel has used to pressure Palestinians to leave their land.

The Israeli settlement of Har Gilo overlooks old Wallajeh in the Ein Juweiza area, which is now off-limits to most Wallajeh residents. Cover image: Return march to the Jerusalem village of Lifta. May 2006. Photos by Anne Paq.

whose ruins remain visible. Today, more than 2,000 displaced inhabitants of Kafr Bir'im live in Israel. Hundreds of others live in a Beirut refugee camp and in southern Lebanon. The villagers have waged a protracted legal and political battle to return to their land, taking their case to the Israeli Supreme Court, which in a January 1952 decision recognized their right to return to their village with the permission of the military governor. This permission has never been granted.

Further, in a bizarre twist, Israeli government surveyors annexing areas of the occupied West Bank to Jerusalem unwittingly included the Ein Juweiza neighborhood of Wallajeh within the new city borders. The move was not made public until 1981, when the Jerusalem municipality was ‘correctly’ placed in charge of demolishing ‘illegally-built’ Wallajeh homes.

For over 14 years, these residents with West Bank identity cards had no idea that they were living in the city of Jerusalem. The municipality had provided no new schools, utilities or services to the growing population.

Meanwhile, Wallajeh’s land was coveted. Its springs, fields and olive trees had been eaten up by the Biblical Zoo and the Jewish settlement of Har Gilo, and Teddy Kolleck stadium and the

to refugee camps in Jordan, where they number 12,500 today.

After the 1948 war until 1967, the lands of Wallajeh were divided between Israeli and Jordanian control. Initially living in caves or makeshift housing, some of the people of Wallajeh eventually rebuilt homes in the village in areas under Jordanian control.

But in 1967 – after Israeli occupied the West Bank, including Wallajeh and nearby Bethlehem – Wallajeh’s residents began to realize that they may never be allowed to officially return. It became very difficult for residents of the new Wallajeh to obtain building permits. Homes built after 1967 without permits were subject to Israeli demolition proceedings.

The displaced families of Kafr Bir'im return to the village to celebrate Easter in 2005 as a way of maintaining their connection to the land. Photo by Zaha Hassan/Badil.

The Israeli settlement of Har Gilo overlooks old Wallajeh in the Ein Juweiza area, which is now off-limits to most Wallajeh residents. Cover image: Return march to the Jerusalem village of Lifta. May 2006. Photos by Anne Paq.

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