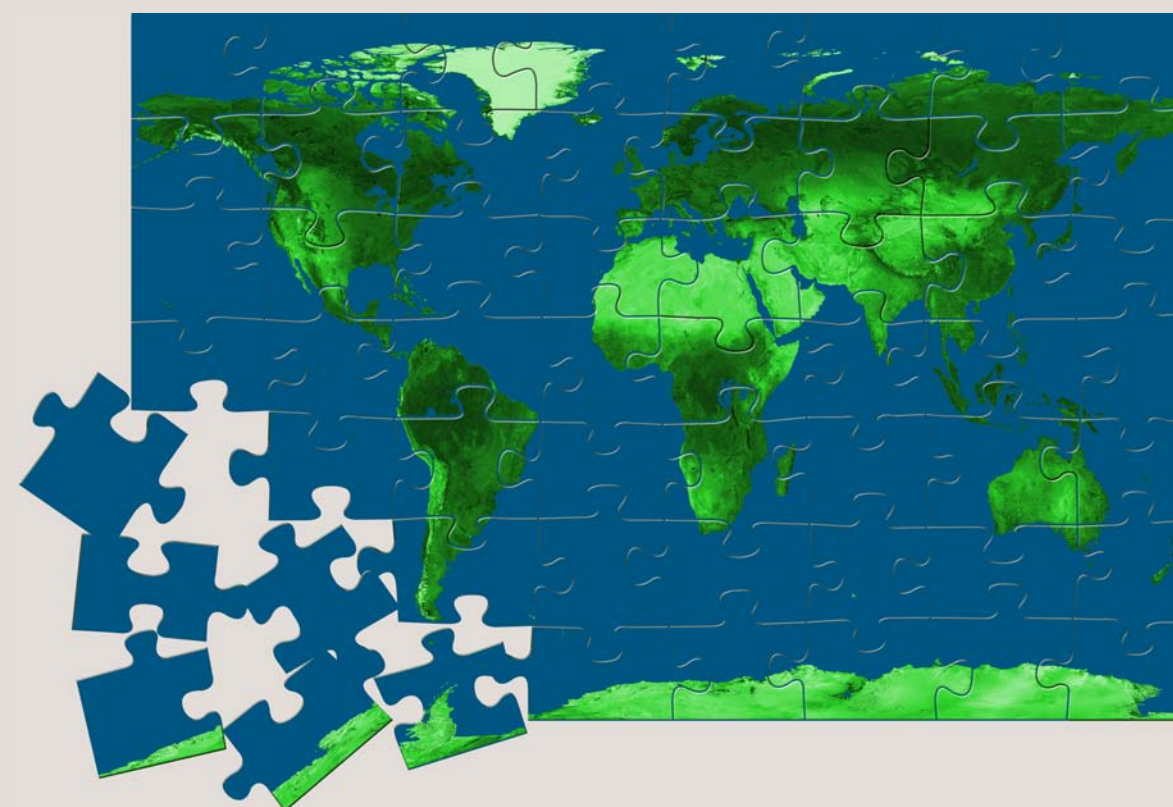


António Vieira e Francisco Costa (Orgs.)

II SIMPÓSIO DE PESQUISA EM GEOGRAFIA

Universidade do Minho – Universidade Federal de Santa Maria

27 e 28 de maio de 2015 – Guimarães, Portugal



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ISRAELI PLANNING POLICES IN THE JORDAN VALLEY.

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Abstract: Since the Israeli occupation for West Bank in 1976, the Israeli occupation has intentionally performed the process of migrating the inhabitancy of Jordan valley in order to empty it from its Palestinian native population and build Israeli colonial settlements in it. Where the Israeli occupation has followed several policies such as: expropriation of the land and natural resources, prevent the Palestinians from building and expansion and demolition many of the residential and agricultural facilities for the excuse of not having permits, which has negatively affected all the aspects of Palestinian citizens life in the region.

And in this study, the focus was pointed toward the policies that were followed by the Israeli occupation in planning for the Jordan valley region. The obstacles that were set by the Israeli occupation in front of the development planning and execution operations for the Palestinian residential communities were studied, where the majority of the Palestinian communities in Jordan valley is lacking for the basic life factors such as: water, electricity and sewage systems, they also don't have schools and health centers to serve people there. Where all kind of services are provided in the Israeli colonial settlements that are built in Jordan valley with cheap costs in order to seduce and encourage the Israeli settlers to live in these Israeli colonial settlements.

Key words: planning, Palestine, Jordan valley, Oslo agreement, colonial settlement.

INTRODUCTION

Since the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories Palestinian Authorities do not have sovereignty on the land and the natural resources, depriving the Palestinian people from their rights to organize their lands and manage their own resources. Due to the lack of Palestinian sovereignty on their natural resources, the Palestinians have not been able to accomplish a sustainable development and a good management of the environment in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Jordan Valley Region is considered one of the Palestinian regions that suffers most from problems related with the Israeli occupation, the most prominent and important of which is the current political situation. Most of the area (about 95% of the Palestinian lands in the region) is still under Israeli control.

The Jordan Valley is a sparsely populated region with vast, uninhabited areas. The considerable size of the Jordan Valley and its relatively sparse population make it the largest land reserve for future development of the West Bank. Urban centers could be developed in the Jordan Valley to address population growth in the West Bank; its fertile soil is crucial for the production of food for the West Bank's growing population and for turning a profit on agricultural exports; and its extensive uninhabited sections make it attractive for development in terms of energy, infrastructure and industry. On various arguments, Israel does not allow Palestinians to use most of the Jordan Valley, restricts their access to the Jordan Valley's abundant water resources and refuses to draw up plans for Palestinian villages located there. Among the objectives of this policy, under which Israel exploits the area's resources and reduces Palestinian presence there to a minimum, is the control of the area by Israel and de-facto annexation of the Jordan Valley to Israel. Ultimately, the policy is designed to set the stage for perpetuating Israel's presence in the area in the long run, even in the framework of a formal status agreement.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF THE JORDAN VALLEY

The Jordan Valley extends from Lake Tiberias, located at 212 m below sea level, to the north of the Dead Sea, located at 400 m below sea level. It is located between the Jordan River in the east and the mountains of mid Palestine (Nablus, Jerusalem, and Hebron) in the west (Al Quds Open University, 2009).

Astronomically, the study area is located between the longitude circles 35.26.24 – 35.40.06 to the east of Greenwich Line, and latitude lines 31.45.24 – 32.32.05 to the north of the equator.

The Jordan valley region is divided into three areas:

The Northern Valley (in Arabic, Al-Aghwar) that includes the villages of: Ein Al-Baida, Bardla, Kardala, Marj-Na'ja, Zbeadat, and Marj-Ghazal. The population of this area, according to estimates of the Central Bureau of Statistics in 2011, is 6,041 people (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2008, Tubas Governorate).

The second region is the Central Aghwar that includes the villages of: Fasayel, Jeftlik, and Froush Beit Dajan. The population of this area, according to estimates by the Central Bureau of Statistics in 2011, is 6,124 people. (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009, Jericho & Al Aghwar Governorate) (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009, Nablus Governorate)

The third region is the Southern Aghwar, that includes the city of Jericho and the villages of: Al-Nweima, Al-Dyouk, Ein Al-Sultan Refugees Camp, Aqbat Jaber Refugees Camp, and Al-Ouja. The population of this area, according to estimates by the

Central Bureau of Statistics in 2011, is 38,491 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009, Jericho & Al Aghwar Governorate). The following figure shows the location of the Jordan Valley and the population concentrations (communities) in the regions of Jordan valley.

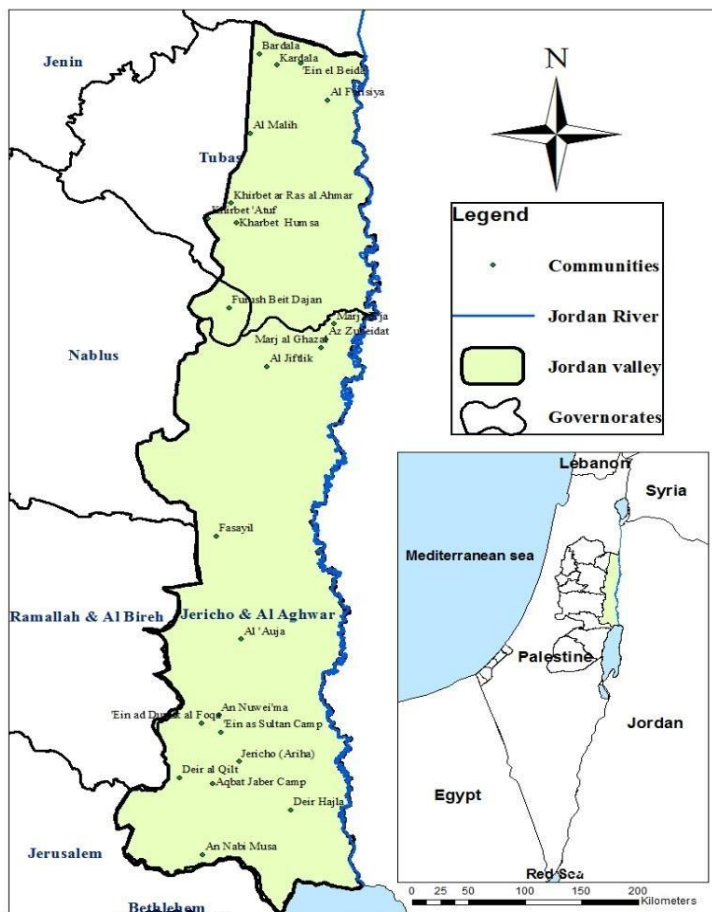


Figure 1. Jordan valley.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE JORDAN VALLEY

The Jordan Valley is characterized with several natural characteristics that grant the area a significant strategic importance that distinguishes it from the rest of Palestine's natural regions. The region of the Jordan Valley is rich in underground water resources which are vital for human life, irrigated farming and the various elements of economy. In addition, its warm climate in winter and hot in summer grants the area a significant importance for both the winter tourism and agriculture. The warm climate is appropriate for numerous kinds of vegetables, fruits, and many other kinds of trees. On the other hand, the hot climate is suitable for banana and palm trees. In the Jordan Valley region, there are huge areas planted with banana and palm trees. Furthermore, it is considered the boundary of Palestine with Jordan from the east. (Al Quds Open University, 2009) In 1967, Israel occupied the territories of the West Bank in Palestine including the region of the Jordan Valley. Since then Israel has been enforcing its policies and regulations, in addition to imposing numerous obstacles that hinder the development and planning process in Palestine.

The official planning for land use and the permit procedures in the West Bank are the main tools used by Israeli authorities to take over lands in the occupied Palestinian territories (Benvenisti, 1988). By the Israeli policies and the Military Orders (M.O.) issued on this subject, the Israeli authorities started to exercise their control over buildings and development in the West Bank by issuing M.O. No.393 in 1970. This order gave the military governor the right to prohibit, halt or impose restrictions on buildings (B'TSELEM, 2002).

Israel changed the Jordanian planning law by means of Military Order No. 418, issued in 1971, which was later amended several times over the years. This order introduced far-reaching changes in the planning system in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. These changes reflected almost exclusively the interests of the Israeli administration and the settlers, while minimizing Palestinian representation on the planning committees and Palestinian influence in planning matters (Khamaisi, 1994 and 1997).

The main result of this change was that the Israeli military authorities, and later their "Civil Administration", took over all responsibilities of the planning system in Palestine, which has had decisive effect over the map of the West Bank in Palestine. Like other mechanisms established in the Occupied Territories, the planning system operates along

two separate tracks – one for Jews and the other for Palestinians. While the system works vigorously to establish and expand settlements, it also acts diligently to prevent the expansion of Palestinian towns and villages (Khamaisi, Rassem, 2006).

THE OSLO AGREEMENT:

The second Oslo agreement, implemented in 1995, has divided the West Bank into three areas, each of them with different arrangements and different levels of security and administration, and represented in figure 2 as follows: (Isaac, and J. Hilal, 2011) Area A: Area A, which includes all major population centers, is controlled by Palestinian security and under its full administration. It has an area of about 18% of the area of the West Bank, amounting to about 5,802 square kilometres.

Area B:

The adjacent towns and villages to the cities are under Palestinian supervision in terms of civilian control but under the Israeli supervision in terms of security control. These towns and villages form 21% of the area of the West Bank. This situation does not give the Palestinian Authority the right to practice its duties in those areas, which leads to imbalance in the integration of the Palestinian Authority's structure and to dividing it into categories and isolating it in cantons. These cantons have a controlled access that depends on not only the security situation but also the mood of the Israelis.

Area C:

This area, which includes only adjacent areas and non-intermittent in the West Bank, is under full Israeli control, administrative and security, and constitutes about 61% of the West Bank area.

In the year of 1994 the Palestinian authority assumed its responsibilities in the West Bank and Gaza due to the first Oslo agreements (Newman, 1996).

According to the Oslo Agreement, the Jordan valley has its area also divided into three sections, which are: A, B and C. Areas A and B represent about 8.4% of the total area of the Jordan Valley, whereas area C is under the control of the Israeli occupation, which forbids the Palestinians from building in it and using it in any possible way.

Most of the land in the C areas include agricultural land and open areas, fertile and rich in natural water sources, which constitute major sources of income for residents of

villages in the Jordan Valley. Table 1 shows the classifications of land in the Jordan Valley area, according to the Oslo Agreement.

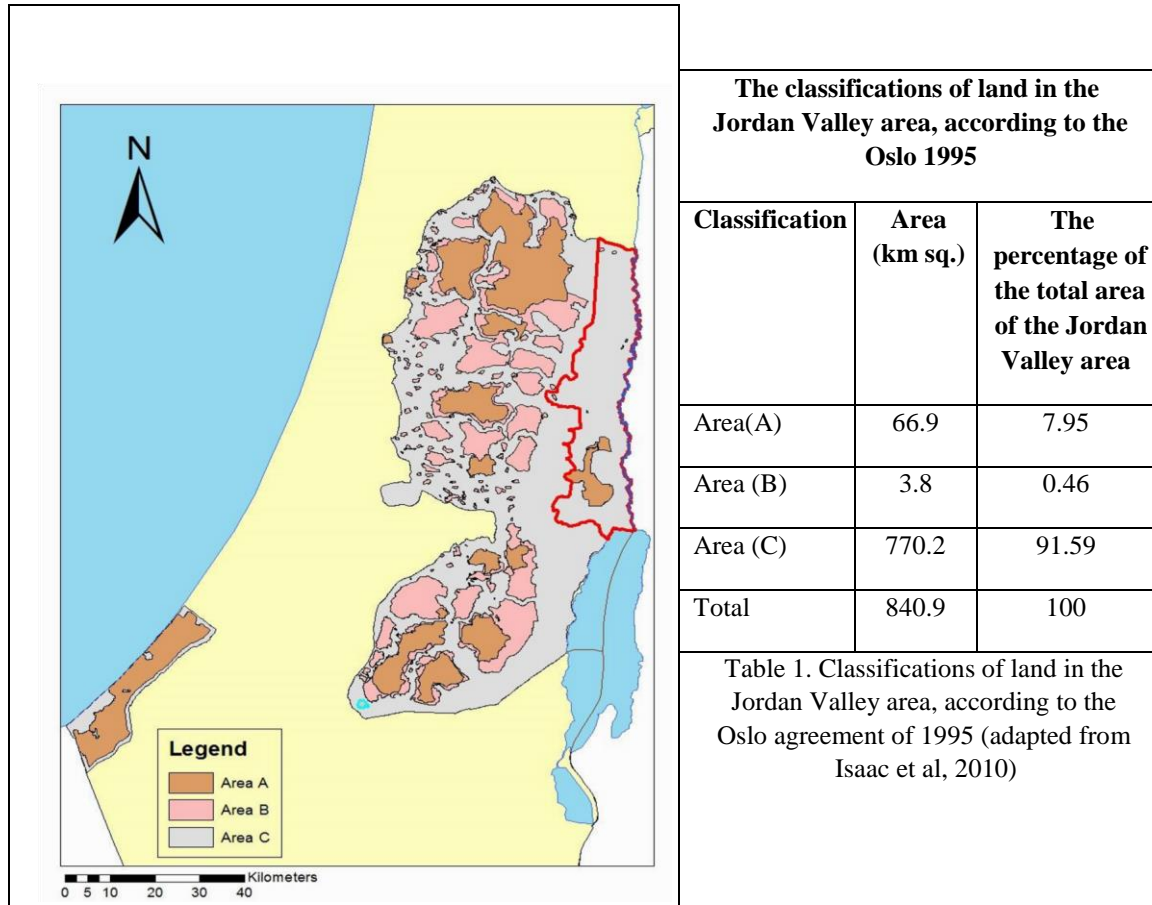


Figure 2. Division of the Jordan Valley according to the Oslo agreement

ISRAELI PLANNING POLICIES IN THE JORDAN VALLEY

The Israeli occupation target for the Jordan Valley area lies on the devastation of Palestinian organizational structures, hindering the population development; taking control of the majority of the natural resources that are considered the foundation of development in the area, such as the arable lands and water resources which are transferred for the benefit of the Israeli colonies. In addition, the Israeli occupation has been delimiting the movements of the Palestinians and violating their rights by demolishing their houses, agricultural constructions, and livestock farms (as seen in figure 3), displacement of their owners, leaving them in the open areas, confiscating their

possessions on the pretext of building without obtaining licenses, since those constructions are located in areas under the complete Israeli control, i.e. Area C. Such actions are taken for the purpose of forcing them to emigrate and, consequently, emptying the area of the Jordan Valley from the Palestinians, confiscating it for the benefits of the occupation, the colonies and the closed military bases, and building bypass roads that connect the colonizing settlements with each other.



Figure 3. An Israeli bulldozer demolished the Palestinian building in the Jordan Valley (Anderson and Cooper, 2013).

Israeli occupation divided Jordan valley region and dismembered the Palestinian communities, in order to confiscate its territory and isolate and weaken Palestinian communities, preventing its development and expansion in the future. The accomplishment of this objective is made by the implementation of several policies, including:

Thousands of square meters were taken from Palestinian refugees and used to build the Israeli colonial settlements there.

By legal manipulation, Israel has enlarged the inventory of “state land” in the area. 53.4 percent of the area, four times greater than pre-1967, is now considered state land. In other way, Israel has declared 45.7 percent of the area military firing zones, although they are situated next to the main traffic arteries for Palestinian communities (B'Tselem, 2011).

In result of the previous Israeli policies, Israel has taken control of 77.5 percent of the Jordan valley's land and has prevented Palestinians from building on, using the land or

remaining there. Because of that, the spatial domain which is available for the Palestinians became few and Palestinian communities become isolated from each other (B'Tselem, 2011).

There are many projects and schemes that Israeli officials have been preparing to ensure continued occupation control on the Jordan Valley, most notably:

- A plan prepared by the Israeli security forces, and published in Israeli newspapers on March 7, 2006, which see the utmost importance in the control of strategic points on the mountain heights and the belt in the Jordan Valley stretching from the north of the Dead Sea, and until the northern Jordan Valley and must be wide enough to provide "active defense".

According to this plan Israel considered the Jordan valley a security barrier for it in the east side of the west bank, and in the western side Israel has built the apartheid wall which surrounds west bank. This plan also revealed Israeli occupation ambitions to rebuild the Jordan valley by establishing industrial and agricultural projects linked to the Israeli economy, to control the water basins and the separation between the Palestinians of the West Bank and the Palestinians in Jordan (Palestinian Jordan Valley Conference, 1998).

- Sharon project (figure 4): Sharon has adopted the invitation of establishing two main chains of settlements during the past twenty years in a way that the first one is situated along the coastal plane, and the second starts from the Golan Heights, in the north, till Sharm el-sheikh, including establishing colonial settlements in the Jordan Valley and creating connections by the settlements between both of the chains (Isaac et al, 2010).
- Gush Emunim project: This project relied on two parallel lines; the first line was to establish a massive number of settlement blocs in the Palestinian populated areas, as is the case in the city of Hebron and the city of Jerusalem. The second line was adopted to establish a large number of small and scattered settlements on the largest possible area of land, as is the case of the Jordan Valley (Palestinian Jordan Valley Conference, 1998).

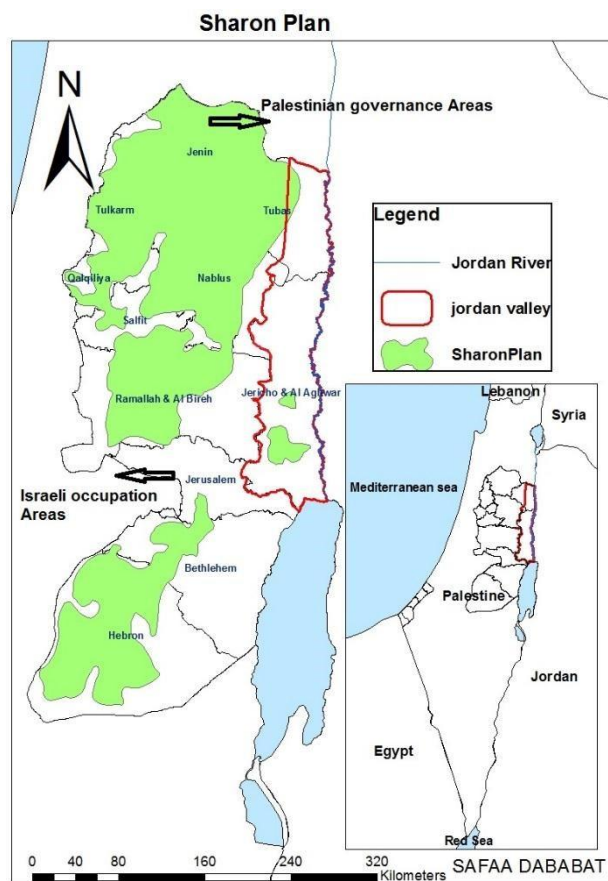


Figure 4. Sharon plan

Furthermore, the Israeli occupation has been encouraging and developing the Israeli colonization of the Jordan Valley area by adopting numerous policies and facilitations for the Israeli colonizers, in order to establish a major and obvious difference in the development levels between the Palestinian population concentrations and the Jewish colonization settlements in the area.

The facilitations that are provided by the Israeli occupation authorities to the Jewish settlers for the purposes of encouraging them to settle in the colonization settlements include offering lands, apartments, and residential houses for low, cheap prices; governmental support; developed infrastructure; educational support, low taxes; and huge governmental support in social welfare.

Therefore, the majority of the settlers' concentrations enjoy high levels of public services such as the water networks, power grids, means of transportations, and free education and medications services. By contrast, the Palestinian population concentration receive minimum, meager levels of such services. The majority of the Palestinian population concentrations lack water networks, power grids, and sanitation sewage systems. In addition, the concentrations located in Area C lack schools and health centers since the

Israeli occupation authorities prohibit issuing building licenses to the Palestinians (Isaac, Jad, Jane Hilal, 2011).

The Israeli occupation authorities offer free residence for every Jewish settler; whereas the Palestinians are not able to extend their buildings because the Israeli occupation authorities do not issue building licenses in Area C. Therefore, the Palestinian citizens are forced to resort to building without licenses. Eventually, the Israeli occupation authorities demolish those buildings.

From the perspective of organizing the population concentrations and encouraging the investments, it should be noted that there is a system for encouraging, promoting, and supporting the developmental and organizational projects in the Israeli concentrations, such as paving roads, constructing pools and gardens in addition to many others (See Figure 5). By contrast, the Israeli occupation authorities hinders and places obstacles in order to prevent the developmental and organizational projects in the Palestinian concentrations in the Jordan Valley area. Consequently, it can be noticed that the Palestinian concentrations in the Jordan Valley area suffer from randomness and extreme poverty (See Figure 6).



Figure 5. Israeli colonial settlement in the Jordan valley (www.islahjo.com/vdcfmydy.w6d1xaikiw.html).



Figure 6. The Palestinian community in the Jordan valley.

The Israeli occupation takes control of the majority of the water resources in the Jordan Valley area, allowing the Jewish settlers to enjoy huge quantities of water for all services, so that the Israeli settler consumes 5 times the water quantity that the Palestinian citizen consumes (Palestinian Hydrology Group, 2007/2008; Palestinian National Authority, 2010). In the field of agriculture, the Israeli occupation confiscated or destroyed vast areas of the Palestinian lands (See figure 7). Consequently, the Palestinian agricultural sector has been weakened and underdeveloped, and the Palestinian farmers have been deprived from a vital source of their income.



Figure 7. An Israeli bulldozer bulldozed the Palestinian farm in Jiftlik in the Jordan Valley (Amnesty International, 2009).

The control of the Israeli occupation on the water resources and preventing the Palestinians from digging or constructing agricultural wells has major impacts on the deterioration and devastation of the Palestinian agricultural sector. On the other hand, the Israeli occupation allows the Israeli farmer to dig and construct water wells at huge depths, allowing their agriculture to obtain huge quantities of water; and eventually, supporting the agricultural sector in the Israeli farms that leads to a well-developed agriculture and provides it with a sustainable source of irrigation in huge quantities. In addition, the Israeli occupation prevents the Palestinian farmers from building agricultural roads so that the Palestinian farmers cannot reach their lands easily in order to farm their lands or transport the agricultural crops to the markets (B'TSELEM, 2011). Furthermore, the Israeli occupation imposes arbitrary measures against the traffic and movements of the Palestinians between the Jordan Valley area and the neighboring locations in a way that negatively affects the daily life of the Palestinian citizens. In addition, it also affects negatively the development projects in the area.

The pastures in the Jordan Valley area are also targeted by the Israeli occupation arbitrary policies. On the pretext of protecting the environment or for security excuses, the Palestinians peasants are prevented from using the pasture areas which are considered a significant feeding source for raising livestock. In addition, the Israeli occupation authorities uproot and destroy trees in order to expand the scope of the Israeli colonization settlements in the Jordan Valley area (Japan International Cooperation Agency -JICA, 2006).

CONCLUSIONS

We can say that the violations and the restrictions that are imposed by the Israeli occupation authorities on the Palestinians in Palestine, in general, and in the Jordan Valley region, in particular, have caused severe consequences on the potentials of exploiting the huge capabilities and resources that are available in the Jordan Valley region for the purposes of developing the Palestinian population concentrations in the area.

The Israeli occupation caused severe damages to the planning process in the Jordan Valley region, affecting the living aspects of the Palestinian population. From the planning perspective, the Israeli occupation has concentrated all its attentions on building,

expanding, organizing and developing the Israeli colonization settlements in the area. The municipal areas of the Israeli colonization settlements (i.e. the areas for their potential expansion) are nine times larger than the areas where constructions are erected at present. At the same time, the Israeli occupation has not even attempted to put forward development plans to expand the Palestinian population concentrations in the region. On the contrary, it has always attempted to adopt policies and measures that prevent the Palestinians from constructing and expand beyond the limits of the master plans.

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