

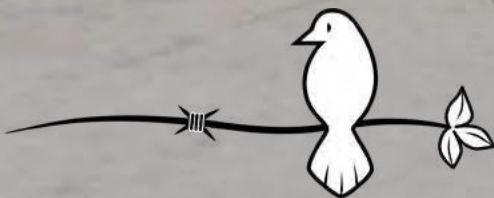
Semester School Report

January - May - 2022



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Palestinian students' journey to their school in H2 is not ordinary; each student must pass at least one fortified Israeli military checkpoint.



community peacemaker teams
PALESTINE

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Introduction

CPT Palestine accompanies children in the Al-Khalil H2 area as they go to school. There are eleven schools, three kindergartens, and a medical center in this area of the Old City. CPT monitors Qitoun Checkpoint (209) and Salaymeh Checkpoint (29), and Mafia Checkpoint during Jewish holidays.

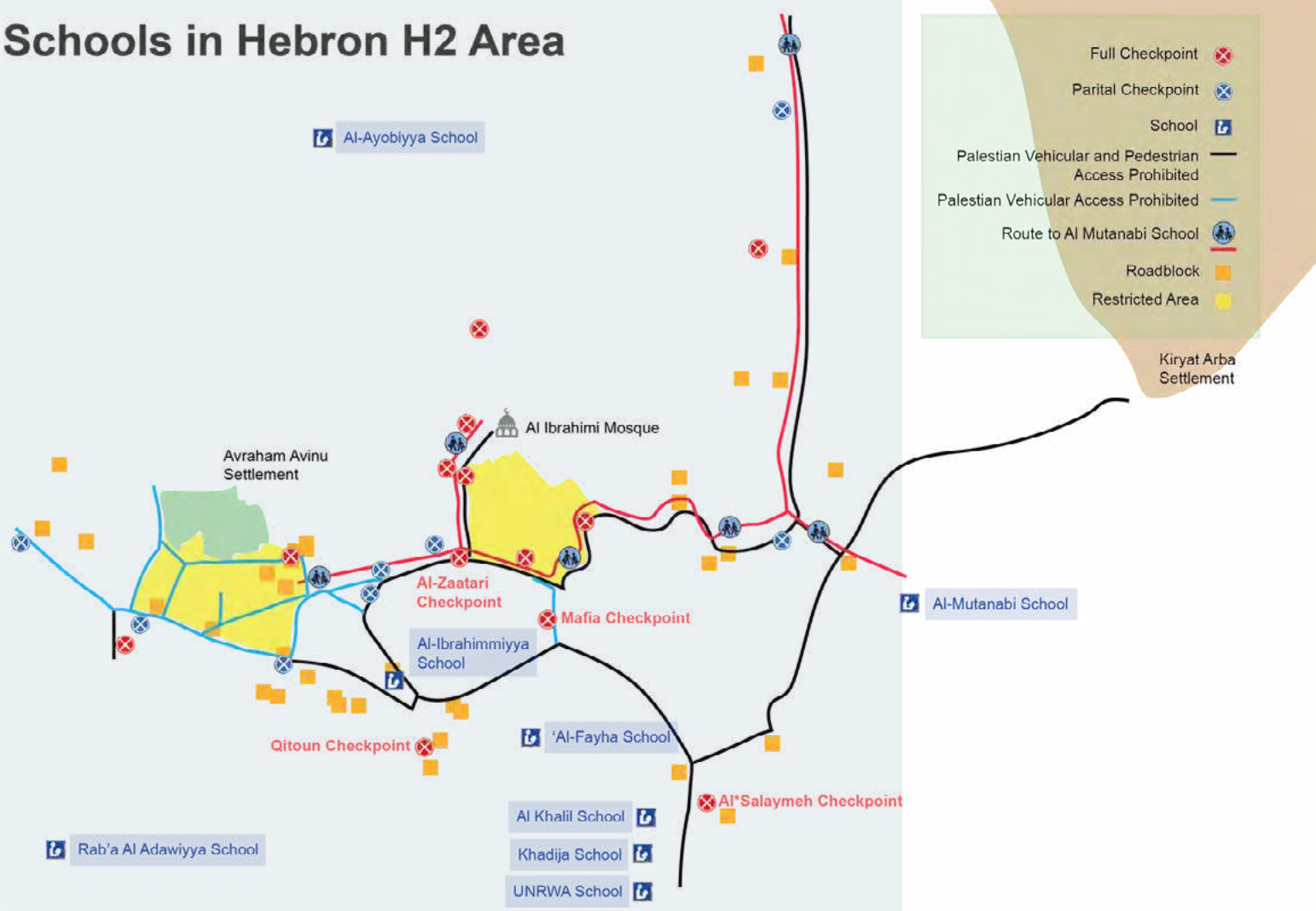
From January until May, CPT documented the Israeli military's escalating violence against students and schools in the area. The Israeli military regularly fired tear gas and sound grenades directly at children, school compounds, and civilians. There was also a teachers' strike against the Palestinian government's salary cuts, which negatively affected students' learning.



CPT noticed that greater violence from Israeli soldiers would often coincide with Jewish holidays and Ramadan.

Teachers and students faced many challenges this semester. In a conversation with the principal of the Faihaa school, she noted, "Even during the strike, we always try to be at the schools around 7:00am because we want to be there if anything happens to any girl while they are crossing the checkpoint."

Schools in Hebron H2 Area





The safety and freedom of students should not need to be defended.

A safe path to education must be demanded by the international community.

Everyone has the right to live

By: Mona el-Zuhairi



"Everyone has the right to live, to be free, and to feel safe." Article 3, Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The violation of these rights is the main reason CPT has a monitoring team documenting the daily violations of Palestinians at Israeli military checkpoints.

Palestinian students' journey to their school in H2 is not ordinary; each student must pass at least one fortified Israeli military checkpoint. The following is a description of Palestinian students going to their school:

At 7:00 am, a ten-year-old boy goes from his house to Ibrahimi school. Like any other boy, this boy needs to pass through Qitoun Checkpoint, a fortified Israeli military checkpoint. To pass, the boy must go through a turnstile.

The boy is delayed because the turnstile has been closed by Israeli Border Police. More students are waiting. Five minutes pass, and then the turnstile is opened. The student must go through a small passage before entering a room where he needs to pass through a metal detector. If the boy is lucky, the Israeli Border Police will not stop him or check his school bag.

After leaving through the metal detector, he passes through another passage, another turnstile, and then he can finally reach the school. This daily journey is the epitome of human rights violations, which is why we must always have someone who can monitor and document these violations.

CPT has daily monitoring duties at checkpoints. Sometimes we walk with kids, sometimes we ask or demand that the Israeli Border Police open the turnstiles for kids, and sometimes we may intervene. CPT's role during school runs is to monitor and document. But is this enough?

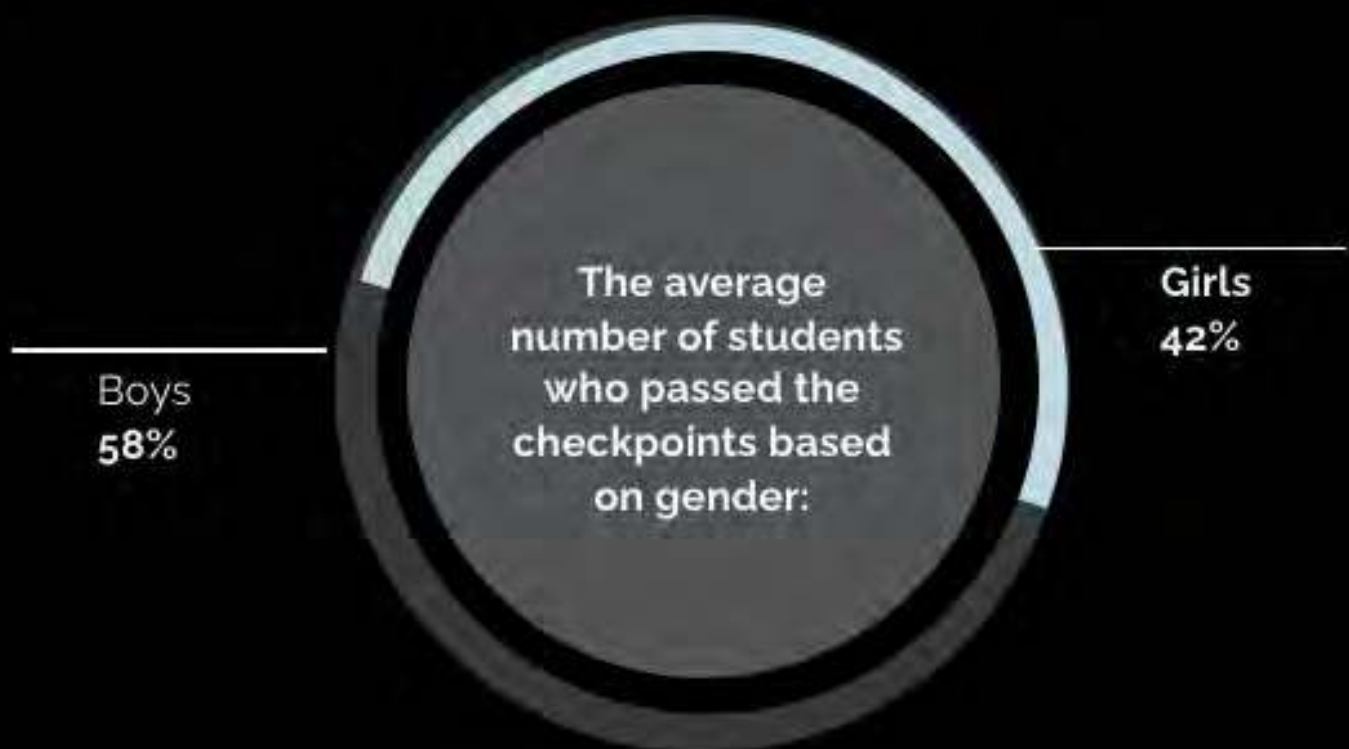
Palestinian students need more than monitoring and documentation. They need more than advocacy and protection.

Protection is necessary so that students can get the best of their education, enjoy their classes, and feel inspired to continue their studies rather than drop out of school. But the safety and freedom of students should not need to be defended. A safe path to education must be demanded by the international community.

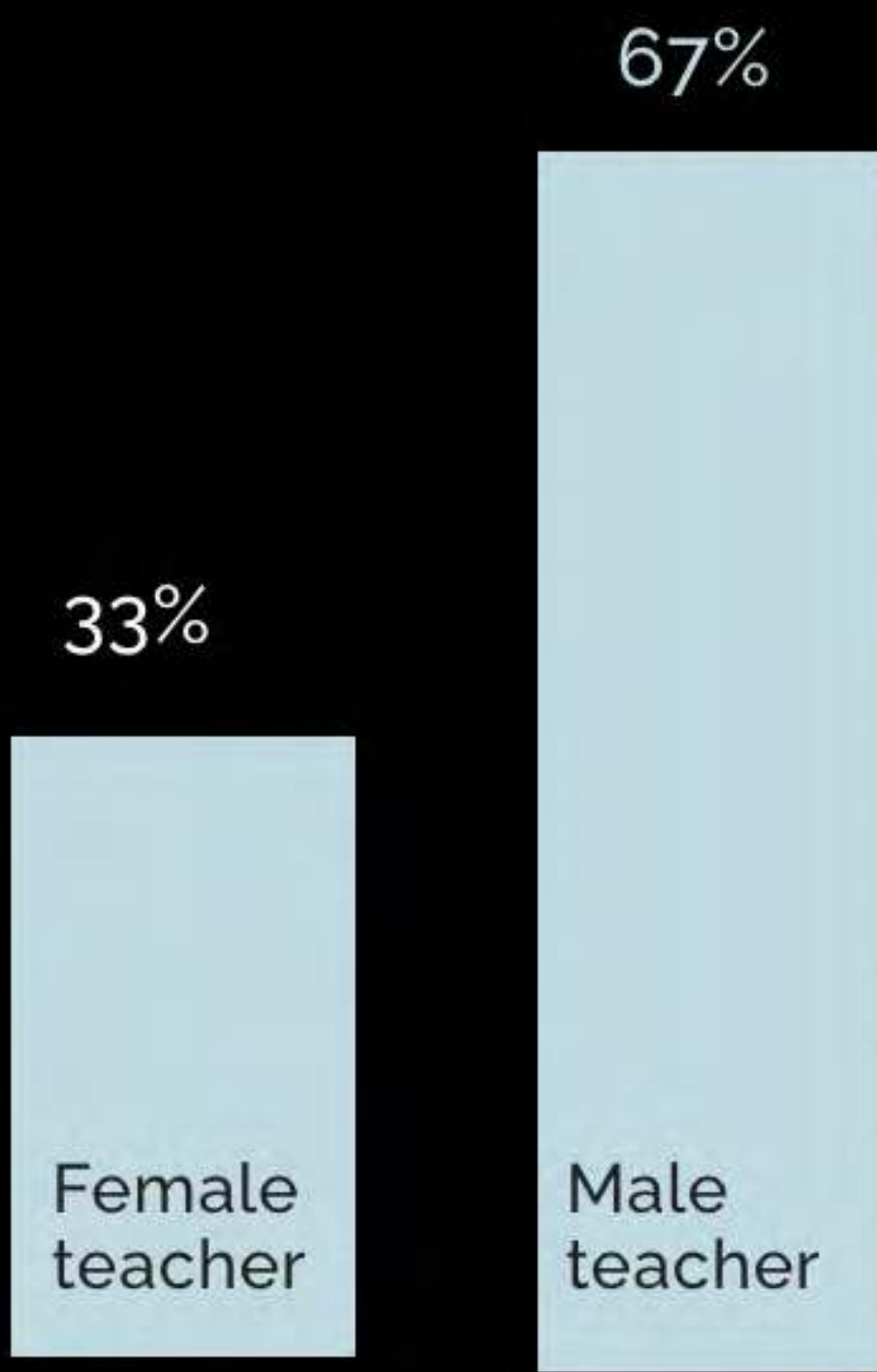
STATISTICS

From January to May 2022, CPT monitored the Qitoun (209) and Salaymeh (160) checkpoints between 7 and 8:00am. There are eleven schools and three kindergartens in proximity to these checkpoints. Each morning, we document the number of girls and boys that pass through these checkpoints. Since most of the schools are gender-segregated, it is important that we document gender to measure the impact of the checkpoints on different schools.

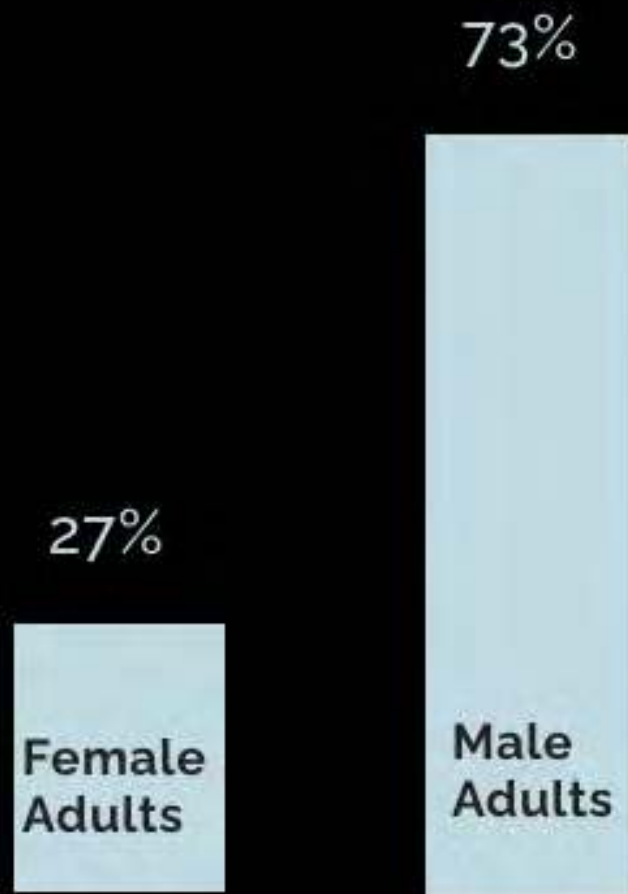
On average, a total of 29 girls and 40 boys crossed the checkpoints each day. Compared to the fall semester, the average number of boys decreased by 30% and the average number of girls decreased by 9%. These decreases are due to the teachers' strike which began part way through the semester, as well as another wave of COVID-19. Furthermore, our averages do not include data from April since the number of students that month was especially low.



Teachers and other adults must also cross the Qitoun and Salaymeh checkpoints to get to their workplaces. From January to May, an average of one female and two male teachers crossed the checkpoints each day. An average of seven other female adults and 19 male adults crossed the checkpoints as well. These numbers are also lower compared to the fall semester and this difference should be attributed to the strike as well.



The average number of teachers who passed the checkpoints based on gender



The average number of other adults who passed the checkpoints based on gender

In addition to documenting the number of checkpoint crossings, CPT observed at least 48 tear gas canisters and 19 stun grenades fired from the Qitoun and Salaymeh checkpoints between January and May. CPT also witnessed numerous checkpoint closures, many detainments, five child arrests, and one adult arrest during this period.



We document these statistics because each student, teacher, and adult is more than just a number. Every single checkpoint crossing indicates the violation of a person's rights to freedom of movement. Please note that these statistics only reflect data from two of the 22 checkpoints in the H2 area. Our report provides only a small sample of the human rights violations that take place at checkpoints in Al Khalil on a daily basis.



Highlight of Incidents:

Child Arrest and detention

By : Shahd Al Junaidi

"They [Israeli soldiers] detained her [a student] at the checkpoint for approximately 30 minutes because she did not have an ID yet and they did not believe her." This is what the principal told CPT when we visited Al-faiha'a School to check on the situation during the Jewish holiday.

This is one of many stories in which children in H2 are forbidden from moving freely because of illegal checkpoints. These children have to cross between two and four checkpoints to reach their schools.

During this journey, they are always at risk of being arrested or detained for no reason. Furthermore, when clashes happen during the school time, soldiers can detain children even if they did not participate in throwing stones.

On the 7th of March: Clashes started in the area around the Al-Salaymeh checkpoint and the Israeli army arrested a couple of students, claiming that they had been throwing stones at the soldiers.

On the 21st of April: A 14-year-old boy was arrested from Al Hajeryh School after being accused of throwing stones. He was released hours later after paying \$300 USD.

Demanding ransom is one technique the Israeli occupation uses to make the situation even harder for the parents of detained children. Some parents cannot pay this amount of money, which is often between \$200 and \$1000 USD. Some organizations like Defense for Children International intervene to lower the amount, but in the end, the families still have to pay.

Imagine that your child is arrested. You will be thinking of your child's feelings, their mental health, their needs, and what they are facing during the arrest. At the same time, you must think of ways to collect the amount of money needed to release your child as soon as possible. Most Palestinian families face this situation at least once in their lives.

On the 23rd of May: The Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) detained two children from their schools and arrested one child after some clashes happened around the school area.

These repeated detentions and arrests of children affect their mental, psychological, and physical health. Many children are traumatized for several years or their entire lives. Join CPT in working for a world in which these children's rights are respected.



Jewish holidays

By : B.S

The area adjacent to the Ibrahimi Mosque is strictly surveilled by occupation soldiers and checkpoints. Settlers and soldiers in this area are particularly oppressive to Palestinians, and especially school students. These violations increase on Jewish religious occasions and holidays. It is even more difficult to move and there is prolonged detention, harassment and provocation. The soldiers also inspect school bags, delay the opening of the checkpoints for students, and separate the roads during the holidays. They divide the street into different sections, where settlers can pass in their vehicles in complete comfort while students and residents must pass through a small, narrow space. Soldiers also set up more iron barriers to separate the settlers and supposedly protect them. Tents and portable bathrooms are set up in the streets. During Jewish holidays, Palestinians face greater obstacles, including restriction of entry and exit, inspection, scrutiny, and insult.

During the feast of Purim from March 16-18, there were several obstacles to the students' passage to schools and many confrontations at the Al-Salaymeh and Abu Al-Rish checkpoints.



The occupation soldiers threw sound bombs and tear gas at the students while they were returning to their homes. Clashes erupted due to the pressures, provocations and violence of settlers and soldiers.

On April 10, Alayah Day, occupation soldiers confronted school students, inspected their school bags, threw sound bombs, and arrested two children near the Al-Salaymeh checkpoint. The soldiers closed the checkpoint for more than an hour and a half and prohibited people from crossing. This is one example of the soldiers' violent behaviour and assault of students and residents at checkpoints.

During the Jewish Passover on April 17, CPT was accompanying children home from Al Saraya Kindergarten. The occupation soldiers stopped one student and would not let her or us proceed. Instead, the child's mother had to come meet her at the checkpoint. Then the occupation soldiers searched us and checked our IDs. The next day, while CPT was near Al-Fayhaa school, there was a group of Palestinian students who wanted to go to their schools. We were behind the students and two soldiers were walking near the students. A border police officer took pictures of the students and soldiers to show that the soldiers were protecting the students. This is simply not true. The soldiers were going to the military checkpoint directly opposite Al-Fayhaa School.

Between May 5 (Independence Day for Israelis) and May 15 (The Palestinian Nakba), clashes erupted between students and the occupation forces. Soldiers closed the checkpoints for hours and prevented students from crossing from either direction. This caused a delay in the school day. Some students had to find alternative routes to reach their schools. These checkpoint closures resulted in more violence and confrontations. The region's residents suffer from the occupation on a daily basis, but the soldiers' violence increases during the Jewish holidays.





In South Hebron Hills, the schools and



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education system operate under the threat of the IOF



CPT stresses the importance of giving Palestinian teachers their rights to live with dignity. We know that when teachers' rights are respected, the whole community benefits.

Between the severity of the weather and the settlers' violence, teachers and students resist in Masafer Yatta.

By: Ahmad Abu Monshar

Schools in South Hebron Hills (Masafer Yatta) are a place of resistance and resilience. According to Gad Nawaja, the principal of Al Majaz School, "After the Israeli court ordered areas in South Hebron Hills as a firing zone, there was a huge spread of the military around. They started checking students more, and even the car that took the students to the schools was once stopped for three hours. The car didn't carry the students this time; instead, the car had the director of education."

Furthermore, Nawaja discussed how the occupation and new order affects the students, and how they are unable to focus during their classes. He is noticing a large number of soldiers around compared to before the court order. He is becoming increasingly concerned. The IOF is continuing to build the apartheid wall and has confiscated teachers' cars in the Junba area. Around 10 cars were taken, and sometimes settlers threw rocks at teachers' cars (Nawaja, July 7, 2022). On April 28, 2022, Al-Masafer co-educational high school reported that the IOF took teachers' cars and made them walk to the school (Al-Masafer co-educational high school, April 18, 2022).

Felesteen Online news reported that 200 students attend schools in South Hebron Hills. Three of the schools are primary schools and one is a co-educational high school. According to Haitham Abu Sobha, the Israel military training had led to some injuries among students. Nidal Younes, the head of the Masafer Yatta Village Council, has stated that each school in South Hebron Hills needs a lab, library, and counseling psychologist. Also, he emphasized the need to solve the transportation problem, since some of the students must walk seven kilometers to reach their school. Between the hot weather in the summer, cold weather in winter, and settlers threatening to attack students on their way to school, it is more important than ever to solve the transportation problem ("Report of the students of Masafer Yatta," 2022).

CPT members have started hearing this statement from the locals: South Hebron Hills will be the next catastrophe (Nakba) if the international communities do not stop Israel from ethnic cleansing the area.

One of the most important reasons people stay rooted in their land is because they have basic rights like education. In South Hebron Hills, the schools and education system operate under the threat of the IOF. The Israeli government is trying to force Palestinians to leave, and this is one form of settler colonialism that we have seen happen in past years.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2018) stated that 44 Palestinian schools in the West Bank have demolition orders. This means the schools are at risk of being partially or fully demolished, due to a lack of building permits which are nearly impossible to obtain. Children and teachers are not the only ones who are stressed during school time. Parents are also stressed and anxious about what might happen to their children on their way to or from school, or even at school.

Muntaha Abu Aram declared that her heart is never calm when her children are on their way to school. Her sons, Hamed and Issa, are in the eighth and third grades, respectively. They were stalked and beaten by settlers (Meshaaleh, 2021). Why do children, parents, and teachers have to suffer from settlers and the IOF? They are simply existing in the land that they were born in - the land that belongs to them.

If international communities and human rights organizations do not stop the Israeli government from attacking the schools and students, the next Nakba will happen. CPT members on the ground have observed that the first way the IOF is going to displace people in South Hebron Hills is by targeting the schools and attacking the children. In this way, the IOF will try to give more power to settlers.



Palestinian teachers have been going through a strike for almost three months.

Teachers in the West Bank have been through several strikes over the years in an effort to obtain better working conditions. The main demands of the teachers are that the Palestinian government support the teachers' children, promote and raise the status of the teaching profession, and respect teachers' rights, which includes increasing their salary. The average salary of Palestinian teachers is currently 2500 ILS per month, which is the equivalent of approximately \$730 USD. Teachers can barely afford the basics with this income and many are forced to find part-time jobs to meet the needs of their families. Teachers are demanding that the government reactivate the cost of living allowance, which has not been applied since 2013.

The last long teachers' strike took place in 2016, when an intense general strike went on for one month. The strike ended after the Palestinian government and the General Union of Palestinian Teachers (GUPT) reached an agreement. However, the government did not implement the agreement, and in 2018, they forced a number of teachers who had been leaders of the strike to retire early.

In March of this year, teachers started a partial strike all over the West Bank, demanding that the government raise their salaries to reflect the current cost of living, give justice to the teachers who were dismissed in 2016, amend the retirement law, and form a union that would defend their rights and take their interests seriously.

The teachers also brought forward other demands related to contract and hourly positions.

The government reached an agreement with GUPT in April 2022 and called on the teachers to suspend the strike activities. However, over 60% of teachers in the West Bank continued to strike because they felt that the government's response was not adequate. This led to a disagreement between the GUPT and the Unified Teachers' Movement, the impacts of which further affected students in negative ways.

The strike this semester had no official leadership. Teachers were using social media to discuss and make decisions and it was often unclear whether classes were running from day to day. During a couple of visits to the schools, CPT asked teachers if they were striking that day and most of the time they were unsure.

The strike has significantly impacted the learning atmosphere at schools, especially after two years of COVID-19 lockdowns and online classes. Even though in-person learning was possible this semester, many students still did not attend school because they were never sure if they would have classes or not. This explains why there were lower numbers of students passing through the Qitoun and Salaymeh checkpoints compared to last semester.

In addition to losing almost three months of school this past semester, children in H2 continue to have the added challenge of living in a particularly vulnerable area:

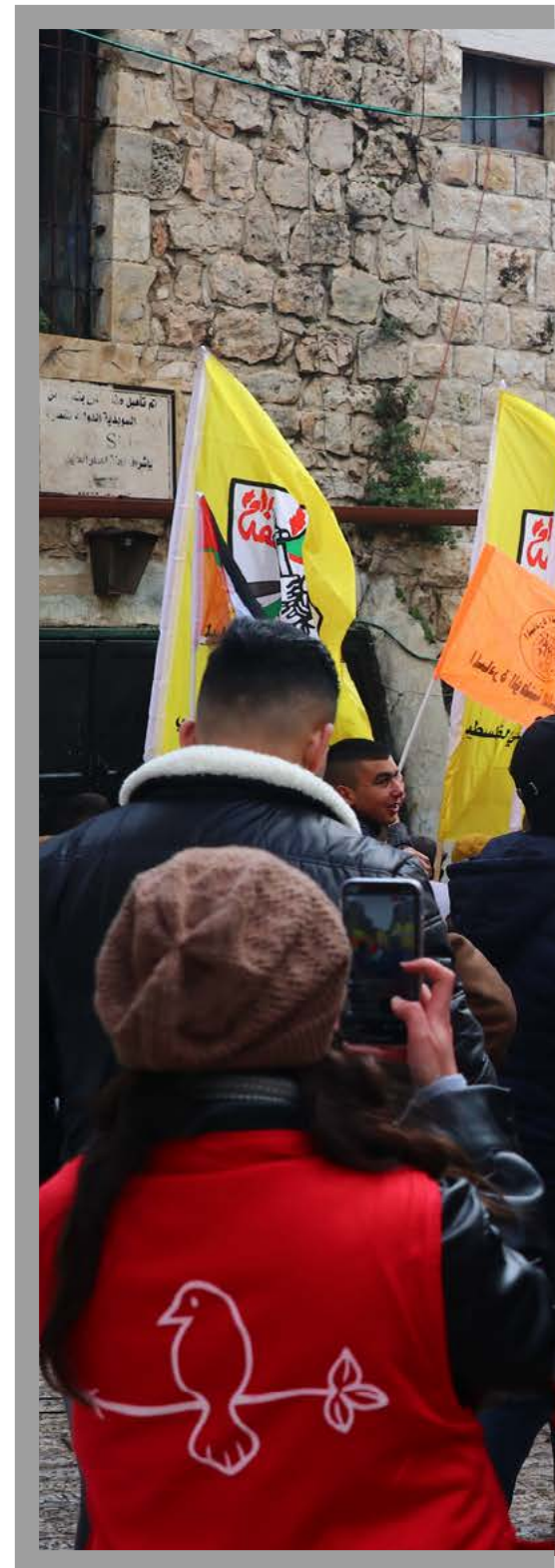
"My son would go to school and I could never be sure when he would leave. Since I didn't know when he was leaving the school, I couldn't wait for him near the checkpoint or make sure he was safe during clashes or the soldiers' provocations," one student's mother said.

During this last semester, most students left the school early which increased the chances of Israeli soldiers using force against them. Since the students did not have classes and there were no activities available to them, they would start throwing stones at the checkpoint as a game. This led the soldiers to use excessive amounts of teargas and stun grenades, and in some cases, they arrested children.

Teachers in H2 are responsible for more than teaching. A teacher from Al Ibrahimiyah school said: "I am committed to the strike, but I can't leave the school without making sure that all my students have left the school and passed the checkpoint safely." Everyday, the principal and teachers of Al Ibrahimiyah School would wait at Qitoun checkpoint to make sure their boys passed through safely. They were ready to respond if the Israeli border police decided to stop one of the students.

In the Salaymeh neighborhood, teachers have also been doing their best to keep students safe from the attacks of the Israeli Occupation Forces. Every morning, despite the teachers' strike, the teachers prevented the soldiers from invading the school and intimidating or arresting the students. Sometimes the IOF would throw tear gas canisters into the school, causing many students to suffocate. During times like these, teachers end up acting as observers, paramedics, escorts, and sometimes even journalists.

As observers who are accompanying members of the community, CPT heard many touching but challenging stories from teachers this semester. The strike is not over, and it may very well impact students and teachers again this fall. CPT stresses the importance of giving Palestinian teachers their rights to live with dignity. We know that when teachers' rights are respected, the whole community benefits.



Reference

ISRAEL BRIGADES: BATTALIONS AND THEIR IMPACT DURING SCHOOL TIME IN H2 AREA.

During the Spring semester, two brigades served in the H2 area. The 932nd Battalion from the Nahal brigade, called “Granite,” served from November 3, 2021 until March 13, 2022. The 12th Battalion from the Golani brigade, called “Barak,” served from March 14 until July 17, 2022. Since then, the Givati brigade has been serving.

As CPT members, we noticed the shift in brigades by the change in the soldiers' beret and boot colors. The Nahal brigade wears green berets and red boots, while the Golani brigade wears brown berets and black boots. The brigades also have their own flags. The Nahal flag consists of a sword, sickle, and wheat, which the IOF uses as a symbol of protection. The sickle and wheat represent working the land and the pioneer spirit. The Golani flag consists of an olive tree on a yellow background. The olive tree is a very important symbol of Palestinian resistance that the Golani brigade has appropriated for their military operations.

Both brigade flags symbolize a connection with land, as a way to claim the land and condition the soldiers to believe that their oppressive behavior is rational because they are protecting the land from Palestinians. In reality, however, the Israeli occupation is harming nature by cutting down thousands of olive trees and building walls which separate animals and destroy the land.

The Nahal brigade is under the IOF's Southern Command. It was founded in 1948 as a way to combine military service with the creation of agricultural communities. Their aim was to provide the IOF with soldiers with the basics for establishing kibbutzim (intentional agricultural communities).



We found that the Golani brigade used more tear gas against school students and were more likely to check and harass CPT members during our observation duty.

On the other hand, the Golani brigade is under the IOF's Northern Command. Golani has a variety of crime records. They participated in the Nakba in 1948, the Naksa in 1967, and the occupation of the Golan Heights. Golani is also more violent and aggressive compared to other brigades. In the fall semester, when the 13th battalion from the Golani brigade was serving, CPT observed the most violence and aggression against Palestinians over a prolonged period of time without any political events, such as the Gaza war in May 2021. We have published an emergency report that contains all of the incidents we observed in August and September 2021.

According to our observations, the Nahal brigade used a collective punishment strategy more often than other brigades. For example, they closed checkpoints from both sides during the school run, especially at Al-Salaymeh checkpoint. The closure usually started between 7:30 and 8:00am when more people were going out. We found that the Golani brigade used more tear gas against school students and were more likely to check and harass CPT members during our observation duty.

Every brigade serves for four months. Locals and students have to learn about the new brigade and their unique behaviors and aggressiveness. There is continual conversation between locals about how the new brigade compares to other battalions because this brigade will affect their lives for several months. The impact of the brigade's oppressive presence may even last a lifetime. So much depends on the soldiers' mindsets and moods.

We are asking international communities and organizations to highlight the situation in the H2 area, protect school students, and help locals have their basic needs met, at the very least. In the meantime, Palestinians in H2 are now dealing with the Givati brigade, and we do not yet know what the situation will be like during their service.



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VIOLENCE AGAINST HUMAN RIGHT OBSERVERS

By: Ameera AL-Rajaby

Two CPT members were going to Al-Salaymeh checkpoint to do their daily observation duty. Children had gathered to throw stones at the Israeli checkpoint. There was a soldier who called the CPT members and said: "Stay away from dangerous children. You can be safe here by the checkpoint."

One local CPTer replied: "We are in danger because you are here, not because of the children! You are here to kill Palestinians and make the settlers safe. The checkpoints are illegal."

Then the soldier ignored the Palestinian member and directed his comments to the foreign CPTer and told her: "Don't believe this girl; she lies. We are here to protect Israelis and Palestinians!"

Protect the Palestinians? From what?!

This semester, some foreigners joined CPT for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic. For the last two years, the team has consisted only of local members and we have noticed how the soldiers are racist against Palestinian CPTers.

We always see racism against us as Palestinians when the Israeli occupation army asks us who we are, and they seem very surprised when they discover that we can speak English and communicate with foreigners.

CPT's daily patrol starts with Al-Haram checkpoint and ends at the Qitoun checkpoint. To get from point A to B, we pass through five other checkpoints. We may get searched at every single checkpoint, particularly if we are Muslim or Palestinian. The soldiers' treatment also varies depending on their ethnicity.

If you are a Muslim and/or Palestinian, the soldiers will be more violent. You are also not allowed to cross many areas or streets, such as Al-Shuhada Street. However, if you are a foreigner or non-Muslim, you will be treated with respect and allowed to walk down every street.

Sometimes the Israeli occupation places soldiers of color at the checkpoints to try to instigate greater conflict. The occupation works to recruit soldiers of racial minorities in order to set one oppressed people group against another (Palestinians). This allows the cycle of oppression to continue. Soldiers of color often treat CPTers particularly badly and delay us longer at checkpoints.

As human rights observers, we try to be at the checkpoints to help children pass safely and document everything that happens. However, the soldiers always try to prevent us from doing our work. They stop us and keep us away from the checkpoint so we cannot complete our mission. They do not want us to convey the truth of what is happening in Palestine to the world.

If we stay for long periods of time at the checkpoints and keep an eye on what the soldiers do, they prevent us from going through the checkpoints. Therefore, we have to take taxis and drive a long way around the city to get to the CPT office, which can take more than 30 minutes. These situations happen a lot, especially when CPTers stand at checkpoints and soldiers ask us what we are doing there. Sometimes we have to lie in order to stay as long as possible and accompany the children.

One of the difficult situations the team went through this semester was when soldiers dealt with two CPTers in a very disgraceful way. An Israeli soldier forcefully searched their bodies and harassed them!

Summary

This report documents the daily experiences of students in the H2 area of Al Khalil from January to May 2022. During this time, CPT accompanied students through the Qitoun and Salaymeh military checkpoints to eleven different schools and three kindergartens. By presenting these statistics and stories, we are asking the international community to join us in demanding safe and accessible education for all Palestinian students.



This semester brought added challenges, including a teachers' strike, another wave of COVID-19, and a particularly aggressive soldier brigade. These obstacles affected school attendance; CPT observed less children crossing the Qitoun and Salaymeh checkpoints compared to the previous semester. Despite lower numbers of students, however, the Israeli Occupation Forces still arrested five children and one adult.

This report also highlights increased harassment by settlers and soldiers during the Jewish holidays. We describe the accentuated violence and overt racism that our local team members experienced. The report also draws attention to the pressing situation in South Hebron Hills, where schools and children are the first to be targeted in the Israeli occupation's latest displacement project.

Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, who was murdered by the Israeli Occupation Forces this past semester, once said, "I chose journalism to be close to the people. It might not be easy to change the reality, but at least I could bring their voice to the world." CPT will continue to be close to the people in the H2 area of Al Khalil as we strive to amplify the stories of those experiencing the injustice of the Israeli occupation. Palestinian students, teachers, and parents are fighting for their right to safe education, and these are the voices that must be brought to the world.





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CPTheb@cpt.org



+972 598 104 549