

Unprecedented Escalation in Settler Violence in the West Bank**4,113 Attacks in Seven Months – a 63% Increase**

24 August 2026
Report

Executive Summary

Ongoing settler attacks are increasingly becoming, in practical terms, a means of reshaping the demographic geography of the occupied West Bank without the need for a formal, direct order to expel Palestinian residents.

Weak deterrence and accountability, together with hesitant international responses, have contributed to the transformation of settler violence from isolated attacks into an organized tool for imposing new geographic realities and pushing Palestinians toward displacement and shrinking territorial space.

During the first half of 2026 alone, Israeli forces and settlers carried out a combined 11,074 attacks against Palestinians and their property.

25 August 2026 — Human Rights Report

Executive Summary

The latest data published by the Palestinian Colonization and Wall Resistance Commission reveal an alarming escalation in Israeli settler attacks across the occupied West Bank during 2026.

The Commission documented 4,113 settler attacks between January and the end of July 2026, compared with 2,524 attacks during the same period in 2025. This represents 1,589 additional attacks in just seven months — an increase of 63%.

The significance of these figures goes beyond the quantitative increase. The Commission's data and monthly reports indicate a qualitative transformation in the nature of settler violence, occurring alongside the expansion of settlement outposts—particularly pastoral outposts—the arming of settlers, the incorporation of some settlers into security formations, military protection for settlers, and weak accountability.

According to the Commission, weak deterrence and accountability, coupled with hesitant international responses, have contributed to transforming settler violence from isolated incidents into an organized tool for imposing geographic realities and pushing Palestinian communities toward displacement.

1. The New Figure: A 63% Increase

On 24 August 2026, the Commission announced that a comparison between the first seven months of 2025 and 2026 showed a sharp escalation in settler attacks:

Indicator	Jan–Jul 2025	Jan–Jul 2026	Increase
Settler attacks	2,524	4,113	+1,589
Percentage increase	—	—	63%

Notably, the number of attacks recorded in every one of the first seven months of 2026 exceeded the corresponding monthly figure for 2025.

The escalation reached particularly high levels in June and July:

June 2026: 748 attacks, compared with 442 in June 2025.

July 2026: 798 attacks, compared with 466 in July 2025.

July alone therefore witnessed an average of more than 25 settler attacks per day.

2. July 2026: 798 Settler Attacks in One Month

According to the Commission's July report, Israeli forces and settlers carried out 2,256 attacks against Palestinians, their land and property during that month:

1,458 attacks by Israeli forces and 798 attacks by settlers.

Settler attacks during July included 440 incidents involving property damage and land bulldozing, as well as 67 incidents of confiscation and theft.

According to the Commission, these attacks, with the support of Israeli forces, resulted in the uprooting, destruction or poisoning of 5,027 trees, including 3,241 olive trees.

The damage to trees was particularly concentrated in:

Hebron: 1,558 trees

Jenin: 1,051

Qalqilya: 862

Tubas: 600

Nablus: 564 trees

These figures demonstrate that the pattern of attacks is not limited to direct physical violence. It also affects economic resources, livelihoods and Palestinians' material connection to their land.

3. From Individual Attacks to a Tool for Territorial Control

The significance of the new data lies not only in the number of attacks, but also in the Commission's interpretation of the phenomenon.

According to the Commission, the escalation should not be viewed as a collection of separate incidents, but within a broader environment of political, security and legal empowerment that has intensified since the formation of Israel's right-wing government at the end of 2022.

The Commission identified several factors accompanying this escalation, including the expansion of settlement outposts—particularly pastoral outposts—the arming of settlers, the incorporation of some settlers into security formations, military protection for settlers,

and declining accountability.

Pastoral outposts are particularly significant. Territorial control does not always require the construction of a large settlement. A relatively small outpost can effectively dominate much larger areas by controlling grazing land, roads and water sources, while preventing Palestinian farmers and herders from accessing their land.

Violence can therefore contribute to creating areas from which Palestinian residents are effectively pushed out.

4. A Recurring Pattern: Violence → Restricted Access → Displacement → Territorial Control

The accumulated data point to a particularly dangerous pattern:

Establishment or expansion of a settlement outpost → increased attacks → restrictions on Palestinian access to land and grazing areas → attacks on property, water sources and crops → increased fear and insecurity → reduced ability to remain in the area → displacement → expansion of settler territorial control.

If repeated violence makes life in a Palestinian community unsustainable, the attacks can effectively become a means of reshaping demographic geography without the issuance of an explicit official expulsion order.

5. Settler Violence and the Broader Process of De Facto Annexation

The figure of 4,113 settler attacks cannot be examined separately from broader settlement and administrative developments in the West Bank.

In its semi-annual report for 2026, the Commission stated that the settlement project had entered a more advanced phase in the process of imposing de facto annexation, involving the combined use of legislative, executive, planning, military and settlement-related tools to reshape Palestinian geography.

During the first half of 2026 alone, the Commission documented 11,074 attacks by Israeli forces and settlers combined against Palestinians and their property.

The highest concentrations were recorded in:

Hebron: 2,224 attacks
Ramallah and al-Bireh: 2,175
Nablus: 2,095
Bethlehem: 1,137

These figures include raids, closures, land seizures, demolitions, land bulldozing, settler attacks, establishment of outposts, access restrictions and other measures.

6. 592 Settlements and Outposts and Control over Approximately 42% of the West Bank

According to figures published by the Commission in August 2026, the number of Israeli

settlements and settlement outposts in the West Bank had reached 592.

The Commission also stated that Israel controls approximately 42% of the West Bank.

By the end of July 2026, it estimated that approximately 780,000 Israeli settlers were living in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem:

333,600 settlers in Jerusalem settlements
446,400 settlers in the rest of the West Bank

These figures place the escalation in violence within an important geographic context: settler attacks are occurring alongside the expansion of a large settlement infrastructure, rather than in a geographic or political vacuum.

7. July Shows the Intersection Between Violence and Settlement Planning

During July 2026—the same month in which 798 settler attacks were recorded—the Commission reported that 14 settlement plans were considered in the West Bank and another eight plans within the Israeli-controlled Jerusalem municipal boundaries.

The West Bank plans targeted the construction of 1,128 settlement units across approximately 1,172 dunams.

According to the Commission, more than 90% of the planned units and targeted land area were concentrated in three plans associated with the expansion or authorization of the settlements of Mevo Dotan, Asael and Beit Hagai.

The two processes therefore operate in parallel: violence exerts pressure on Palestinian presence on the ground, while planning and administrative mechanisms consolidate and expand settlement presence.

8. Legal Assessment: Settlements and Settler Violence Are Not Separate Issues

Under international humanitarian law, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is considered occupied territory and is subject to the law of occupation, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and customary international humanitarian law.

Article 49(6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits an occupying power from deporting or transferring parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.

Article 8(2)(b)(viii) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court also provides that the direct or indirect transfer by an occupying power of parts of its own civilian population into occupied territory may constitute a war crime when the required legal elements are met.

Settler attacks themselves require separate legal assessment depending on the nature and circumstances of each act. Killings, injuries, destruction or seizure of property, and coercion leading to displacement may raise different forms of responsibility under international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international criminal law.

9. Forcible Transfer and the Coercive Environment

One of the most serious questions raised by the data concerns whether repeated attacks are contributing to the creation of a coercive environment that forces Palestinians to leave

their communities.

Forcible displacement does not necessarily require physically forcing people onto vehicles and removing them from their homes. The coercive circumstances surrounding displacement may also carry legal significance depending on the facts, context and applicable law.

Where communities repeatedly face armed attacks, threats, destruction of property, attacks on livestock, road closures, denial of access to grazing land, destruction of water sources, burning of crops, uprooting of trees and attacks on homes, the legal question becomes not simply:

“Did the residents leave?”

but also:

“Did they retain a genuine and safe choice to remain?”

10. Responsibility of the Occupying Power

Regardless of the individual responsibility of settlers who carry out attacks, international law imposes obligations on the occupying power toward the protected population living under occupation.

Accordingly, legally relevant questions include the presence of Israeli forces during attacks, their response to requests for protection, whether they intervened or failed to intervene, whether attackers were protected, whether victims rather than attackers were arrested, the arming of settlers, their incorporation into security formations, and whether attacks were effectively investigated and prosecuted.

The analysis therefore should not stop at identifying the individual who threw stones, opened fire or burned property. It must also ask:

What was the role of state authorities before, during and after the attack?

11. Why Is the 63% Increase an Alarm Signal?

The new figure is significant for several interconnected reasons. The increase from 2,524 to 4,113 attacks in a single year is substantial; every one of the first seven months of 2026 recorded more attacks than the corresponding month in 2025; June and July witnessed particularly sharp escalation, culminating in 798 attacks in July alone; and this escalation coincides, according to the Commission, with expanding settlement outposts, the arming of settlers and declining accountability.

Most importantly, the potential impact extends beyond the immediate victims. Repeated attacks may affect population distribution, access to land, use of natural resources and the future viability of Palestinian communities.

12. Human Rights and International Action Required

These figures call for moving beyond treating settler violence merely as a local security issue and recognizing it as a matter of international protection and legal accountability.

This requires establishing a permanent international mechanism to monitor settler attacks

and publish periodic data; providing an international protective presence in communities most vulnerable to violence and displacement, particularly rural and pastoral communities; developing an interactive geographic map linking attacks, new settlement outposts, displacement and land seizures; separately documenting the presence, intervention or non-intervention of Israeli forces during attacks; documenting the impact on freedom of movement and access to land, water, grazing areas, education and healthcare; preserving evidence according to standards suitable for international investigative and judicial mechanisms; and encouraging states to use available legal and diplomatic measures against individuals and entities responsible for serious acts of violence, in accordance with their domestic and international obligations.

Conclusion

4,113 settler attacks in seven months are not merely another statistic.

The 63% increase, the higher number of attacks in every one of the first seven months compared with 2025, the 798 attacks recorded in July alone, and the simultaneous expansion of settlement outposts, arming of settlers and weak accountability collectively indicate a dangerous transformation in the situation across the occupied West Bank.

The gravity of the situation increases when these attacks are viewed alongside 592 settlements and settlement outposts, approximately 780,000 settlers, and Israeli control over an estimated 42% of the West Bank, according to the Commission.

The issue therefore goes beyond protecting Palestinians from individual attacks. It raises a broader and increasingly urgent question:

Has violence become a practical instrument for reshaping Palestinian geography?

The data presented by the Colonization and Wall Resistance Commission make this question central. According to the Commission, settler violence is shifting from isolated incidents toward an organized instrument for imposing geographic realities and pushing Palestinian communities toward displacement.

Accordingly, the required international response should combine protection on the ground, independent monitoring, prevention of displacement, protection of access to land and resources, and accountability for violations, rather than limiting itself to condemning individual incidents after they occur. End

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