



Some settlers are employing a new strategy to get Palestinians evicted from their land in the northern region of the Jordan Valley, Haaretz has learned. A number of settlers, some of whom are residents of the Maskiot settlement, set up a "protest" tent next to a tent belonging to Bedouin herdsman near Wad el Maleh, on private Palestinian land.

Last Thursday, after the Palestinians complained to the civil administration, both the Israelis and Palestinians there were handed decrees declaring the area a closed military zone, signed by brigade commander Yochai Ben-Yishai.

The Israelis left, but so did the Palestinians, who had lived on the site for over 40 years. Security forces told Haaretz that although the military decree was short-term and was meant to prevent friction between the Bedouin family and the settler group, the Palestinians have not yet returned to their land for fear the settlers will return as well. Members of a committee for popular struggle in the Jordan Valley fear settlers will use the same method elsewhere, acting on the assumption that the authorities would only chase them off the land if it meant local Palestinians would be forced to move as well.

The family told activists from the Machsom Watch human rights group, who visited the site Tuesday and Thursday, that the settlers stayed up late at night and played loud music, and that the settlers' dog was harassing their herd. They went to the local IDF District Coordination Office to complain, they said, but both the DCO representatives and soldiers who eventually came to the site told them that the settlers could stay there as long as the Palestinians did.

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