



Photo: Ruti Tuval

MACHSOMWATCH

Annual Report 2015

لا للحواجز
لا لمخسوميم



נשים נגד הכיבוש ולמען זכויות אדם
نساء ضد الاحتلال ومن أجل حقوق الانسان
Women against the Occupation and for Human Rights

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4	About MachsomWatch
5	In 2015
6	Monitoring Checkpoints
7	Jerusalem Area
12	Southern West Bank (Hebron and South Hebron Hills)
16	The Central Region
22	The Northern West Bank
25	The Jordan Valley
32	The Hidden Bureacracy of the Occupation
36	Military CourtWatch
37	MachsomWatch Public Outreach
37	Reality Tours
41	Lectures and Virtual Tours
42	Raising Awareness Among Young Israelis
44	Media Outreach
45	Website and Facebook
46	The Organization
47	Legal Representation
47	Membership
47	Our Donors in 2015

Persecuting Human Rights Groups Won't Hide Israel's Injustices

Haaretz Editorial, December 17, 2015

“In contrast to Israel’s leaders, who with their policies are sullyng Israel’s reputation throughout the world, human rights groups are a small but significant source of light that preserves the flame of democracy.

People should vigorously defend them, support their work, and join their ranks. This is a struggle for the character of Israeli citizenship against a leadership that has launched a witch hunt against those who try to defend the public’s rights.”

About Machsomwatch

“MachsomWatch women are not just about the checkpoints, they are also about obtaining work permits, removing blacklisting status; they are about the military courts and about informing and documenting.”

Vered Bitan, artist

“MachsomWatch does what all of us choose to ignore, and that is to look the Occupation in the eye, to see it for its ugliness... to identify what it does to our children, and our grandchildren, and to see what it has done for decades to Israeli society.”

Sima Kadmon, Israeli Columnist

MachsomWatch is a volunteer organization of Israeli women who are peace activists from all sectors of society. We oppose the Israeli occupation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and we oppose the appropriation of Palestinian land and the denial of Palestinian human rights. We support the right of Palestinians to move freely in their land and oppose the checkpoints, which severely restrict Palestinian daily life.

Since 2001 we have been observing and reporting on the Occupation. On a daily basis we monitor the West Bank checkpoints, the separation fences, the agricultural gates, the military courts and Palestinian villages. We document what we see and what is reported to us by local Palestinians.

Through our observations, reports, films, photographs and tours we aim to influence public opinion in Israel and throughout the world by recording and authenticating the impossible conditions faced by the Palestinians under Israeli occupation; conditions which also corrode the fabric of Israeli society and the values of democracy. We attempt to ease the frustrations and hardships of Palestinians by offering assistance wherever we can.

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In 2015

- 👁 **In 2015**, the State of Israel commemorated twenty years since the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was signatory to the Oslo Accords, and who paid with his life as a result.
- 👁 **In 2015**, we continued to witness an ongoing and steady decline within Israel for supporting any kind of peace agreement with the Palestinians.
- 👁 **In 2015**, an increase in violence and deaths by both Israelis and Palestinians paralyzed day to day life, and generated a sense of fear and panic on both sides.
- 👁 **In 2015**, Palestinians continued to stand in long lines for hours in the middle of the night, so that they could cross into Israel to work and support their families.
- 👁 **In 2015**, Israeli army officials and private security guards continued to keep thousands of Palestinians waiting at the checkpoints because the time of Palestinians is dispensable.
- 👁 **In 2015**, Israeli army officials and private security guards continued to challenge MachsomWatch members as they stood and observed at the checkpoints and agricultural gates.
- 👁 **In 2015**, the Israeli army continued to demolish villages and hamlets in the Jordan Valley.
- 👁 **In 2015**, the Israeli government, together with the Jerusalem municipality and the Israeli army, forced an estimated 370,000 Palestinian residents of Jerusalem to pass through checkpoints in order to leave or gain access to their neighborhoods, in response to a rash of stabbings in Jerusalem.
- 👁 **In 2015**, the Israeli government, formed earlier that year, promoted laws in an attempt to silence our work, as well as the work of other Israeli anti-occupation organizations.

Monitoring Checkpoints

Total number of Checkpoint Shifts in 2015: 1,021



Photo: Tamar Fleishman

Monitoring checkpoints is the backbone of our organization. We have been monitoring and documenting checkpoints since we began in 2001, and our name reflects the importance of this work. MachsomWatch volunteers travel to checkpoints in the Jerusalem area, the Northern West Bank, the Southern West Bank, the Central Region, and the Jordan Valley. At least two-to-three teams of women set out to observe different checkpoints almost every day of the year throughout the day.

Overcrowding and inefficiency continued to be a problem at the larger checkpoints. Throughout the year, MachsomWatch members reported on long lines, sleeping soldiers, only a few people allowed through at a time, and failure to open the humanitarian gates for elderly, disabled, and children.

During 2015, MachsomWatch members continued to encounter hostility from military and private security personnel. We often were asked to produce identification, subjected to searches of our bags and vehicles, were asked to move away from the checkpoints because we were standing in “hostile” territory or in security zones, (where Palestinian civilians move through all the time) or because we would make “trouble.”

Jerusalem Area

343 Checkpoint Shifts / 743 Volunteer Shifts



Qalandiya

Photo: Tamar Fleishman

MachsomWatch volunteers regularly observe, monitor, and report on the following checkpoints in the Jerusalem area: **Qalandiya, al-Zeitim, Jaba/Lil, Shu'afat Refugee Camp, al-Za'im, Wadi Nar (Container), Sawahre al-Sharqiyya, Sheikh Said, Bethlehem (300), Maccabim, and Na'alim** on Road 443, and less frequently **Beitar** and **al-Jib** (Givat Ze'ev). MachsomWatch volunteers also go regularly to the Etzion District Coordination Office, where they meet with and give advice to Palestinians who have been blacklisted (see below). This year MachsomWatch conducted several shifts to the Jericho DCO. The DCO in Jericho serves about 50 people each day, and is open on the same days as the other DCOs. Many Palestinians waiting were from Jenin, and all were eager to seek assistance from MachsomWatch. This is a new shift for the MachsomWatch women in the Jerusalem area.

In October, as a wave of violence increased in Jerusalem, many Jewish and Palestinians neighborhoods were suddenly divided by new checkpoints and roadblocks. Numerous checkpoints were set up in Jerusalem, heavily impacting the freedom of movement of Jerusalem's Palestinian residents. Palestinian 'satellite' neighborhoods have been almost entirely closed off for vehicular traffic. Pedestrians have had to confront serious delays at checkpoints, undergoing stricter - and at times humiliating - inspections.

MW member Michaela Rahat writes about one of her shifts.

A JERUSALEM DIVIDED: NOVEMBER 2015

Michaela Rahat



Photo: Michaela Rahat



Photos: Anneline Kisch

We drive and cannot believe our own eyes: checkpoints and more checkpoints. Now Jerusalem is really divided. We discover new checkpoints popping up at every corner: at Umm Tuba, Sur Bahr, Jabal Mukabar, Sheikh Jarrah, Issawiya, and more and more. Our hearts sink, we're concerned about our friends living beyond these checkpoints. Little thoughts flash by, of the grocery shop in the Arab neighborhood where we like to shop on the Sabbath which now seems to be beyond the pale.

Yesterday I returned from a pleasurable holiday in Italy. A phone call from a friend in MW greeted me, and here we are, already at the checkpoints. We enter Sur Bahr and see the endless line of cars waiting to be inspected at the checkpoint. We drive and drive but the line never ends – a life threatening traffic jam par excellence. We stop at the end of the line and wait for 100 minutes until we are able to cross, and this is not even rush hour.

Four checkpoints surround Issawiya; the main entrance to this neighborhood has been blocked to vehicular traffic. Every morning a stream of children of all ages walks up the hill towards the checkpoint. Naturally one must leave home very early in order to make it in time for school. And I recall my own pupils in the western part of the city who would arrive at school within minutes from their secure home. How hard it was for them not to be late.

Two parallel universes, at times only one block apart. An elderly man, his legs swollen, he can hardly walk, is supported on both sides by his grandchildren, and this is how he drags every single day to receive dialysis treatment in the hospital.

At another checkpoint we see vehicles waiting to transport children with special needs to their school. The drivers have a special permit issued by the municipality to cross the barrier, but in vain. The soldiers will not allow the concrete blocks be moved so this bus can pass. Finally, the drivers give up and leave. A few minutes later an army bulldozer arrives and moves the concrete barrier. We hold back the scream of rage locked in our throats. It's not the soldiers who dictate occupation policy.

Shuafat Checkpoint is not a new checkpoint; it has been around for several years already even though the people living beyond the checkpoint are Jerusalem residents and pay city taxes just as we do. Lately conditions for passing here have been tightened. We stand in line with those waiting for inspection. It's crowded; one's body is crushed and pressed against many others. Mothers carrying infants in their arms try to protect them. We wait one hour to cross this checkpoint. For the people of Shuafat this is a daily routine. Teachers and pupils are late for school, what a horrid way to begin one's school day, or workday! There is no swift passage for the infirm. They stand among us, their faces marked with pain. Obviously the checkpoint, as it sows frustration and hatred, is not contributing to the security of Jerusalemites.

We go home to west Jerusalem with a heavy heart. Our mind is processing the tough sights we've seen. At this side of the city we notice people leisurely walking along, cafes full to bursting and life that looks nice and pleasurable. Who among those sipping their cappuccino or licking ice cream just now knows anything about the reality of life of other residents living so near them? Are they aware of the suffering that is the lot of the Palestinian residents of their united city?

Michaela Rahat has been an active member of MachsomWatch since the founding of the organization in 2001. Once a week, almost without fail she goes out on a shift to the Checkpoints. Michaela is a trained botanist. Nature and plant life are ingrained in her soul. She was an educator in Jerusalem and taught high school biology.

Every Palestinian passing through the notorious Qalandiya checkpoint is a story untold. MW member Tamar Fleishman writes about two women she met there.

NIHAYA AND SUAD: SISTERS IN ILLNESS, SHARING THEIR FATES

Tamar Fleishman



Nihaya and Suad at the Qalandiya Checkpoint

Photo: Tamar Fleishman

Nihaya and Suad, who live in Gaza, met at Al-Najah hospital in Nablus where they shared a room while being treated for cancer. Nihaya was accompanied by her sister. No one accompanied Suad. She came alone. In the hospital the three of them became friends, family. Sisters in illness, sharing their fates. When they were released, with an appointment for the next treatment two weeks later, they travelled together to the Qalandiya checkpoint, which is the only way to leave the West Bank and return home to Gaza.

After they'd overcome all the obstacles on the way to the District Command Liaison Office: the locked metal gates, a lying soldier claiming the office had already closed and in any case they should have gone to the District Command Office in Ramallah, not here – they raced and managed to arrive on time, and in particular after the DCL office had said [to me], "We treat everyone humanely and with consideration." When it seemed the hardest part was already behind them, it turned out that it was just beginning. Nihaya and her sister received permits. Suad didn't. Suad was told, "You must speak to the intelligence service in Gaza. Come back tomorrow. Now, (the time was 4 PM) we're closing."

A trace of optimism remained because it's possible to speak to the Shabak man at the Erez Crossing. They telephoned from the shed at the entrance to the checkpoint and spoke to the Shabak who said there wasn't any problem. Maybe they erred at Qalandiya? But there was a problem, a big problem. Because at the Qalandiya checkpoint, the final link in the chain issuing crossing permits, Suad was told that they are closed for the day, come back tomorrow.

When Suad lost hope she also lost consciousness.

As if there is one army here at Qalandiya and a different army at the Erez crossing.

As if there is one intelligence service here at Qalandiya and a different intelligence service at the Erez crossing.

As if there's one computer system here at Qalandiya and a different computer system at the Erez crossing.

As if there's no telephone connection between Qalandiya and the Erez crossing.

Tamar Fleishman: Once a week Tamar heads out to document the checkpoints between Jerusalem and Ramallah. She is also a member of the Coalition of Women for Peace and a volunteer at Breaking the Silence.

Southern West Bank (Hebron and South Hebron Hills)

120 Checkpoint Shifts / 238 Volunteer Shifts



Southern West Bank (Hebron)

Photo: Kobi Wolf

This fall, Hebron and the South Hebron Hills became centers of violence. Since October MachsomWatch volunteers were unable to go on their shifts due to security concerns, but shifts resumed (cautiously) in November. During the rest of the year, MachsomWatch volunteers monitored checkpoints and blocking of passage in the city of Hebron itself, as well as **Tarqumiya**, and **Sansana** (Meitar Crossing), which are the main checkpoints for entry into Israel in the Southern West Bank; 5,000 to 7,000 workers pass through these two checkpoints each morning. This team travels also along **Route 60** and **Route 317**, where they regularly observe soldiers creating impromptu flying checkpoints.

Hagit Back, a veteran MachsomWatch volunteer in the Hebron area describes some of her experiences in the southern region.

POSTCARDS FROM HEBRON

Hagit Back



Hebron Checkpoint

For an entire decade now, once a week, I take part in a MachsomWatch monitoring shift in the city of Hebron and its surroundings. During each shift something else happens, and after each shift I write a report and attach photos. These tell only a small part of the story of the ongoing Occupation.

My friends and I know that our ability to help the Palestinians or to change the reality of their situation is miniscule. And yet, the fact that Palestinians encounter Israelis of a different kind – neither soldiers nor colonizing settlers ignites a small ray of hope.

Here are some photos of what I have witnessed this year.

The Hebron Checkpoints

The city of Hebron is divided into two areas known as H1 and H2. Between sectors H1 and H2 in Hebron are 10 army-manned checkpoints operating 24 hours a day. During our shifts we visit all these checkpoints and the photos represent what we very often see there. Young people, mothers and children are often detained as they try to pass from one Hebron area to another.



Points of friction



Hate graffiti calling for revenge

DIRAT: Price tag, hate graffiti, and arson

The Village of Dirat is located on Road 356. Last March Jewish terrorists from Tag Mechir – price tag violence – paid a visit and left behind hate graffiti calling for 'revenge' and arson. We visited the villagers to show solidarity and support and remain in regular touch.

Hebron H2: Points of friction

Friction and violence between Jewish settlers and Palestinians living in Hebron's H2 sector occurs on a daily basis. We are often witnesses to these clashes.

In the photo below, soldiers separate Palestinian and settler children. Children of settlers threw stones at the Palestinian children. We called the mother of one of the Palestinian kids, she came running, calmed the kids and thus prevented the situation from escalating into a riot.



Points of friction

As I write these lines, I am prevented from entering Hebron. It has been declared a closed military zone and entry is only allowed for those registered as Hebron residents. Phone calls from the South Hebron Hills area do not cease – the Civil Administration does not allow anyone not residing in Hebron's H2 sector from entering town. I get phone calls from people detained at checkpoints, teachers who tell of teargas canisters hurled into classrooms, parents who do not know where their children are, and I have no way of helping them. I remain with the sense that we must not give up. It is always important to reiterate that human rights must be an integral part of the idea of security.

Hagit Back is a MachsomWatch activist in the Southern region. She lives in the Negev and lectures on Hebrew Literature. Hagit is 61 years old, she is married and the mother of two. She recalls that she has been protesting against the Occupation since 1967 when she was in the 7th grade. She considers her ongoing protest against the Occupation as an expression of the great patriotism she feels towards the State of Israel.

The Central Region

381 Checkpoint Shifts / 951 Volunteer Shifts



Sheep at Habla Gate

Photo: Nirit Haviv

BABY LAMBS SEPARATED FROM THEIR MOTHERS AT HABLA CHECKPOINT

MW volunteers encountered the following bizarre situation at the Habla Agricultural Checkpoint in late November:

MW volunteers on a shift at the Habla Agricultural Checkpoint in the West Bank encountered a commotion involving newborn lambs, which had been separated from their nursing mothers by the IDF. About 120 sheep had crossed the gate in the morning to get to their pasture on the Israeli side, but when they returned to the gate in the afternoon the soldiers did not allow them to cross back to the Palestinian side. MW Phone calls and attempts to reunite the sheep were fruitless as there were orders from above to NOT let the sheep cross for security reasons.



Seam Zone Separation Barrier: separating Palestinians from their agricultural lands;
Oranit Checkpoint once open for brief periods, now closed
Photos: Ben Singer

News from the Central Region Checkpoints

MachsomWatch volunteers in the central part of the West Bank monitored and documented a number of checkpoints and agricultural checkpoints in the central area of the West Bank as well as in the Jordan Valley. These include **Azun Atme, Beit Furik, Eyal, Falamiya, Habla, Hamra, Huwarra, Efrayim/Irtach, Jaayus, Tayasir, Zaatara** and others.



Irtach Checkpoint at the pre-dawn hours
Photo: Ben Singer

Efrayim / Irtach Checkpoint remains crowded and slow: The Efrayim/Irtach Checkpoint, south of Tulkarm, serves Palestinians with permits to work in Israel and opens at 3:45 am. Two Palestinians died as they waited to pass at this checkpoint in 2014. Wide media attention was given to these deaths. MachsomWatch also met with officials in the military administration to protest the deaths and the unbearable conditions. Subsequently changes designed to better control the crowds were made. Palestinians rightly claim that this new structure is like a "passage for goats." A separate line was created for women, who had complained of harassment in the past when they had to stand in the lines with the men. In the latter half of the year, MachsomWatch reported that all the lanes remain full, and that despite creating a separate women's lane, men were in all of them.

Recently this checkpoint has become even more crowded: the army decided to close down the **agricultural checkpoint of Far'un** forcing the farmers to travel quite a distance and pass through the Irtach checkpoint. After a few weeks of chaos, regulations have changed again: the Far'un checkpoint will reopen three times a week for vehicles and agricultural equipment, but only twice a day instead of three.

Deteriorating Conditions at the Agricultural Checkpoints: Many of the checkpoints in this region are agricultural gates. They enable Palestinian farmers from villages in the Occupied Territories to cross at certain points the separation barrier, which has cut them off from their lands located in the Seam Zone, (the area between the Separation Barrier and the Green Line), in order to cultivate them.

As the year drew to a close we witnessed and heard reports which confirmed that the access to Palestinian land in the seam zone is rapidly becoming more restricted: several agricultural gates which used to open three times a day have been closed. The number of days a week and the opening hours have been curtailed, the passage of herds and recently even of agricultural vehicles and means of transportation has been prohibited. The uncertainty with which the Palestinian farmers have to live due to the frequent changes in the location of the gates that the military administration decides to open and the varying opening hours, makes it very hard for them to live from their lands. We remain concerned about the ongoing process of keeping Palestinians away from their agricultural lands. Recently MW volunteers got reports that some of the Palestinians' requests to renew their yearly permits to pass the agricultural checkpoints were denied with no explanation.

We have started a project to observe more intensely the goings on in the villages affected by the separation barrier in order to collect accurate data and see if there are any infringements of the agreements reached in the Supreme Court concerning the Separation Barrier.

Azzun Atme Checkpoint Removed: In January 2015, the Israeli military authorities removed the Azzun Atme Checkpoint, which was part of the separation barrier dividing the village of Azzun-Atme, southeast of Qalqilya. The separation fence, which split the village and forms a large enclave in this area so that three settlements east of Azzun-Atme would not be physically separated from Israel, was replaced by an ominous wall going around the village. The checkpoint used to be open daily from early morning until late at night, it was easily accessible from neighboring Palestinian villages, and was in proximity of the settlements and the main road (No. 5) to Israel. This crossing had served hundreds of Palestinian workers from all the villages in the area with permits to work in the nearby settlements or in Israel. They now have to travel about 20 km. and pass at the Eyal checkpoint, north of Qalqilya.

Agricultural Checkpoints: not for Herds for Agricultural Vehicles or Equipment

When this new wall was finished, several agricultural gates were abolished. **Oranit Checkpoint**, (1473) an immense iron gate was opened allowing farmers to pass to their land in the seam area three times a day, officially for half an hour, in fact only for a few minutes, after keeping the farmers waiting for long periods of time. Several months later this checkpoint stopped functioning, forcing the farmers to walk a few miles further north to **Abu Salman/Beit Amin Checkpoint (Gate 1447)**. The latest news is that the passage of herds, agricultural equipment and any means of transportation (except for bicycles) have been prohibited! MW protested to the military authorities. Several days later it was announced that there had been a mistake, any sort of vehicles can pass.

Habla Agricultural Checkpoint: MachsomWatch volunteers reported irregularities in the opening hours of Habla agricultural checkpoint (1393) following the opening of the new gates in the fence between Azzun Atme and Habla. Complaints about harassment of Palestinians at Habla Gate were commonplace during this period. MachsomWatch volunteers reported that soldiers were inspecting Palestinians as they exited

Habla Gate, even though they had passed through metal detectors and had their papers checked minutes earlier when they entered the checkpoint. The soldiers often decide arbitrarily who and what can pass, what is considered agriculture equipment or what is not allowed to enter the Palestinian territory through this particular gate.

Checkpoints North of Qalqilya: In May, MachsomWatch members reported on a strike of farmers at **Falamya North Checkpoint (914)**, to protest the difficulties they face crossing; the too short opening periods, particularly since the closure, at the end of 2014, of the former Falamya Checkpoint, through which they could access their crops all day, and to demand respectful treatment by the soldiers. The farmers also complained that the soldiers had begun denying passage to farmers who are not allowed to enter Israel, to their agricultural lands. Checkpoint 914 serves 300 farmers from five neighboring villages who used the former Falamya Checkpoint, open 12 hours a day, until it was removed at the end of 2014, when the separation barrier north of Jayus was moved to include more land on the Palestinian side of the fence. It was replaced by faraway **Falamya South, (935)** which opens only three times a day for short periods, and serves mainly farmers from Jayus, because the gate they had previously used, Jayus North, has also been closed. MachsomWatch members reported several times about incidents of harassment and delays by the army at Falamya South checkpoint (935). They were twice detained for a few hours, wrongly accused by soldiers of being in a prohibited zone (Area A). In these incidents the Israeli Police released our volunteers.

MachsomWatch volunteers often encounter blocking of roads to some villages and army presence in them or at their entrances. They reported some time ago that the entrance of **Dir Istiya** village was blocked, and that there was continued military presence in that village. Military presence at the entrance to Azzun village was also frequently reported.

Meetings in Palestinian Villages

For the past several years, members of MachsomWatch have regularly visited Palestinian villages along the Seam Zone and in the central area of the West Bank, in order to better understand the problems faced by these villages, and to help resolve individual cases of Palestinians who are not able to access and cultivate their lands in the Seam Zone or near the settlements. We meet regularly with village councils, who all have complaints about the path of the Separation Barrier; the location and size of the agricultural gates (which often do not meet the topological conditions); their limited opening hours and days (which do not enable farmers to grow the variety of agricultural produce that they would like to grow); and problems in receiving permits to reach and cultivate their lands. The Palestinian farmers whose land is located near settlements need army protection to reach their land. This protection is scarcely given, sometimes only twice a year. We also hear complaints about water, open sewage from the settlements, and attacks by settlers, such as uprooting and destroying olive trees.

People-To-People Activities



Meeting with young Palestinian girls

Photo: Nirit Haviv

In the past few years, MachsomWatch members began to develop people-to-people projects with women and children in a number of Palestinian villages in the Central West Bank. These activities are important in that they provide a rare opportunity for both Israelis and Palestinians to meet. In 2015, these activities were downscaled due to the repercussions of the 2014 war in Gaza and the anti-normalization activism in the villages. In June, we were able to hold some activities with women and young girls in Jawarish and Qira villages, and with coordinators of women's groups in the villages of **Isle**, **Farata**, and **Nabi Elias**, in order to identify needs and explore the possibility of renewing our activities. We also held meetings with the woman mayor of the village, and held some activities in Dir Ista and also in Azzun village. Unfortunately, the violence on both sides in fall 2015 brought these activities to a complete halt.

The tragic murder of 18-month-old 'Ali Dawabshe, his mother Riham and father Sa'ad in an arson attack of their home affected the entire Occupied Palestinian Territories, as well as the members of MachsomWatch. Riham Dawabshe had been a teacher in the school in Jawarish, and many of the girls whom we have met there studied with her. Since the tragic death of the Dawabshe family, MachsomWatch members have visited and are lending support to Ahmad, the only survivor of the family. Our members have forged strong ties with Ahmad's grandparents who do not leave his side.

The Northern West Bank

199 Checkpoint Shifts / 377 Volunteer Shifts



Flowers at the gate Vera Moskowitz
Photo: Vera Moskowitz

AN UNEXPECTED MOMENT OF GRACE

Two of our volunteers in the North report this special incident:

On one of our November shifts in the Barta'a Checkpoint we noticed a man exiting the checkpoint holding a bouquet of narcissus in his hands. He approached us with a wide grin and handed us this fragrant bouquet. Before we could react the man disappeared. We took a photo of the flowers and for a moment forgot why we were there at the bleak checkpoint. Instantly, the guard brought us back to reality as he shouted angrily that it is forbidden to photograph and threatened to take our camera. He relented when we explained why we were taking a picture of the narcissus. We offered the flowers to a Palestinian woman as she stepped into the checkpoint carousel and left.



Anin Checkpoint
Photo: Shuli Bar

Northern Checkpoints

The MachsomWatch in the North Northern travel regularly to the checkpoints in the Northern West Bank along the separation barrier. The large manned checkpoints in this area are **Barta'a-Reihan** and **Jalame-Gilboa**.

Barta'a-Reihan Checkpoint is located on the separation barrier in a Palestinian area; it mainly serves as a point of passage for the seam zone residents of the Barta'a enclave and for West Bank residents possessing permits for work in the seam zone. Our volunteers often hear complaints about the cumbersome bureaucracy of the Occupation, particularly during the Jewish new year holidays, when the District Coordination Office is closed, permits expire and there is no possibility of renewing them for over two weeks. We also hear complaints about the long delays in the morning rush hours. This situation has improved towards the end of the year due to the efforts of one of the Palestinian workers.

The **Jalame** Checkpoint is located on the Separation Barrier along the demarcations of the Green Line. This checkpoint mainly serves workers with a work permit allowing them to work in Israel.

Our Northern Team also regularly monitors the **Anin and Tayba-Rummana Agricultural Gates**. These gates serve as passage for famers who have been separated from their agricultural lands by the separation

barrier. The gates are open only twice a week, in the morning and then in the afternoon. Only during the olive harvest season are the gates opened on a daily basis. The opening of the agricultural gates is often delayed with the reason given that the delays are due to 'incidents at the barrier'.

Tura-Shaked and Baqa are known as 'fabric of life' checkpoints. We monitor Tura-Shaked regularly and note that openings are often delayed and the computer used to process those who need to pass through is often down. Baqa is located on the separation barrier adjacent to the Green Line.

We also monitor the **Ya'bed-Dotan** Checkpoint which is located well within the West Bank on the road from Barta'a Checkpoint to the city of Jenin near the turning to the Mevo Dotan Settlement.

The Jordan Valley

61 Checkpoint Shifts / 151 Volunteer Shifts



Earth Mound at Gochya Gate

Photo: Rachele Hayut

The rumble of bulldozers and army vehicles were the sounds that echoed for the Palestinian residents of the Jordan valley from the first day of January to the last day of 2015. Hundreds of families including women, children and the elderly suffered without shelter through the freezing winds and rains of the winter to one of the hottest and most unbearable summers in history. The scorching hot summer included a heavy, dusty haze that severely polluted the entire region in September.

It is during this period of extreme heat that Israel demolished Palestinian shelters (mostly shacks and tents) at an unprecedented rate. Hundreds of shepherd families including children, the ailing, the elderly and their livestock remained exposed to the scorching sun. While most Israelis enjoyed the summer in the cooling comfort of swimming pools, visits to the sea, and air-conditioning, the indigenous population suffered without electricity, many without minimal shelter and what is worse, even without water.

The demolitions have continued throughout the fall as rains and winds and freezing night time temperatures returned. The routine of life for Palestinians in the Jordan Valley includes demolitions, limited or no access to water and confiscation of water tanks, checkpoints, confiscation of property, and living alongside military

maneuvers and temporary expulsions. It is without a doubt that the actions taken by the Israeli military, often against court orders, are meant to target and displace the Palestinians of the Jordan Valley.

It is the results of these tactics that MW teams observe during their shifts. These tactics were publicly confirmed at a meeting of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Sub Committee (April 2014), when Col. Enav Shalev exposed the ways the army uses to try to expel Palestinian residents from the Jordan Valley. Military maneuvers and the IDF policy of confiscating humanitarian equipment before it gets to its destination are some of these tactics. According to Shalev these tactics serve as "a punch in the right places. When you confiscate 10 large, white and expensive tents, it's not easy. It's not simple to recover." This confiscation policy led the Red Cross to stop providing tents to shepherd communities whose huts and animal shelters were destroyed.

MachsomWatch shifts to the Jordan Valley were constant and vigilant throughout the year as we tried to track and document the endless infractions and human rights violations. We alerted members of Parliament, the press and other human rights organizations about our findings and observations in the field in an effort to bring attention to the deteriorating condition in the Jordan Valley.

What follows is a condensed view of some of our observations during 2015. Our reports can confirm that Israel has been escalating its war against a peaceful population whose residents are non-violent farmers and shepherds. The main goal is ethnic cleansing of a civilian population in order to annex the region.

Checkpoints

Gochya Gate: MachsomWatch volunteers reported that the Gochya Gate remains locked, as it had been for the last two years, thus separating inhabitants of the Jordan Valley who want to go to school, to a doctor, the grocer, or to visit their children who study in the larger cities. To get to these destinations the inhabitants need to travel 20km, not a huge distance but incredibly difficult when public transportation is unavailable.

Hamra (Bekaot): While only 15 km in distance from the now inactive Tayasir Checkpoint, this crossing remains manned and passing through it often entails a rigorous inspection. For over 6 months one of the lanes remains closed resulting in a long wait during the morning and afternoon rush. These delays are an example of the daily harassment of a population trying to maintain a minimally normal life.

Tayasir: In the early months of 2015 this checkpoint continued operating and we heard reports of rigorous inspections and delays. Sometime in May the checkpoint ceased operating and traffic flowed through it freely bringing relief to the local population.

Firing Zones, Military Maneuvers and Temporary Expulsions

Firing Zones: Nearly 90% of the areas of the Palestinian Jordan Valley have been declared as firing zones. Most of these do not serve the military and are simply placed as markers to enable the expulsion of civilians at the army's will.

Military maneuvers and repeated acts of temporary expulsions: occurred throughout the year. In May, numerous fields were incinerated as a result of the maneuvers. This meant that the flourishing fields of wheat, barley and chickpeas benefitting from the blessed rains of winter (which came after several years of severe drought) were totally lost to the fires. Thousands of dunams were set aflame. Even the eastern half of the Umm Zuka Nature Reserve was victim to the fires, irreplaceable flora and fauna, lost.

The hamlet of **Khomsa** (whose residents have been expelled 18 times from January to November, with 13 times in November alone) can serve as an example of the impact of these expulsions. Thirteen families (including 65 children) were forced to leave their homes twice a week for 6 to 18 hours without alternative shelter or protection from harsh desert conditions. The children did not attend school on those days, and predators killed 10 goat-kids left behind in the absence of their owners. >

Live Ammunition: After every maneuver, the army leaves hundreds of shells on the ground. These include bombs and shells that have not exploded, including phosphorus ammunition. Local shepherds, usually children of no more than age 12-14, find these objects on the ground, some are seriously wounded or even killed. In spite of repeated warnings by human rights organizations, the army makes no effort to prevent these serious injuries and remove the ammunition even when it is called upon to do so by locals who find them. Faisal Mas'ad of Khirbet Yarza showed us two RPG shells that fell in his yard and were not picked up by the army, although he notified the authorities several times.

Confiscations: Water tanks, tractors and livestock are often the victims of confiscations. Confiscation of Palestinian property happens regularly under the guise that the property owner entered a firing zone. When Israel confiscates tractors and water tanks as they are being transported to the villages the consequences are dire and can be a death sentence to the livestock and hardship to the human residents.

A CONFISCATION STORY



Palestinian water tanks under constant threat of confiscation

In the Jordan Valley tractors are used to transport water tanks to the villages and hamlets. Sliman's tractor was confiscated. For a whole month he could not supply water for his livestock and family. This hungry family, with 11 children shared the water with Sliman's brother and his brother's own 11 children, and now there was none. With the help of his neighbors Sliman was able to rescue some of his animals.

When a 4,500 NIS fine was issued for the water tank and tractor, MachsomWatch volunteers issued a call for help and were able to raise a large part of this fine. It turns out that the army took the tractor to Qalqiliya, at the other end of the West Bank. Sliman needed to spend another 1,000 NIS in order to transport the tractor back home. The story doesn't end here. In September Sliman's tractor was confiscated for a second time. The families and their livestock were again left without water.

Demolitions: We witnessed and reported on a wave of house demolitions unprecedented for over 12 years – at Fasail, Khomsa, Khirbet Yarza, El-Hadidiya, Khirbet Makhul, and Jiftlik. Some of the demolitions took place during extreme heat waves. MachsomWatch teams reached all of the affected families and offered meager primary help. Mostly we listened to their story and great suffering, and expressed our solidarity with their plight. Hundreds of shepherd families including children, the ailing, the elderly and their livestock remained exposed to the scorching sun. MachsomWatch teams reached all of the affected families and offered meager primary help. Mostly we listened to their story and great suffering, and expressed our solidarity with their plight. In the Fall, the demolitions continued, as rains and winds and freezing night time temperatures returned.

We conclude our Jordan Valley report with an article published in Haaretz. The article was written by MachsomWatch activist Daphne Banai who knows the Jordan Valley and its residents as well as she knows her own neighborhood in Tel Aviv.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A BEDOUIN BUILDS A GRAVEL PATH SO HIS CHILDREN CAN GET TO SCHOOL ON RAINY DAYS

Daphne Banai



The army blocked this road which was built by the residents of El Hadidya in order to enable their children the travel to school during the winter months when the fields are too muddy for driving.

Photo: Mahadi D.

Abu Sakr just wanted his kids not to miss school, but the story ended with his tent encampment destroyed, his son's sheep pens leveled, and his pregnant daughter rushed into a hospital after being pushed by an Israeli soldier.

The military has forbidden construction in Area C of the West Bank, which is under total Israeli military and civilian control. Anyone violating this ban risks the demolition of their building, sometimes without warning. That's why Abu Sakr and his children, who live in the Bedouin village of Al-Hadidiya in the Jordan Valley, had to work like thieves in the night to build a gravel path. They need it so the kids can get to school on rainy days.

Every week I go to the Jordan Valley with my friends from MachsomWatch. That's how I know that, for years, the children of Al-Hadidiya lived on their own in the neighboring village of Tamoun without parental supervision. Why? Because all the routes to the central West Bank were blocked with earth mounds, checkpoints, gates, huge boulders and more. No one could enter or leave. This meant the children could not study because there is no school for them in the northern Jordan Valley.

As a result, the Jordan Valley Solidarity NGO built a shabby mudroom in the nearby village of Khirbet Samra to serve as a school. On August 10, shortly after construction was completed, the army demolished it.

From Abu Sakr's house to the school there's a long path, which turns into an impassable swamp during the rainy season. Abu Sakr and his sons pave the gravel path in the dead of night because they fear the strong arm of the military. In Area C, as noted, it's forbidden to repair a path. It's against army regulations. But on November 15, the residents of Al-Hadidiya received a stop-work order. At the request of the villagers, a court delayed its implementation until the end of this month.

Last week, however, the army violated the court order and started to destroy the path with a bulldozer. The officer at the site was seen urging his soldiers to expedite the destruction. Urgent calls to the Civil Administration revealed that the demolition was being carried out without its knowledge. An officer from the Civil Administration who arrived at the village stopped it.

Abu Sakr may have succeeded in stopping the destruction of the path, but last Thursday morning bulldozers destroyed his tent encampment, his son Ghazi's sheep pens and his neighbor's tent encampment. Abu Sakr's pregnant daughter, Suzanne, who was visiting, was pushed by a soldier, fell and started to bleed. An ambulance took her to hospital.

Meanwhile, the prime minister, defense minister and the media continue to debate whether the terror attacks of recent months are an intifada or a "limited uprising."

Daphne Banai has been an active member of MACHSOMWATCH since 2002. She was instrumental in the founding of the Central Region group. The Palestinians of the Jordan Valley have been her main focus for the last 8 years. She has become an expert on the plight of the inhabitants of this distant region and she is often called upon for comments in the media. Daphne was also instrumental in the creation of the MW Jordan Valley documentary *The Fading Valley*.

Postscript



El Hadidya Demolitions, November 2015

Photo: Rachele Hayut

In the days following Daphne's report the tent encampment was demolished repeatedly. Meager tent shelters provided by aid organizations were knocked down as were the families' own attempts to put plastic tarps as protection against the bitter cold and rain. This latest round of demolitions continues the history of demolitions in El Hadidya which began in 1997. Since then the encampment has been demolished 13 times, each time to be restored by the families living there. Abu Sakr broke the hearts of MW volunteers when he explained that he hoped that the children would not become embittered in view of the violence that they witness.

Helping Palestinians Navigate the Bureaucracy of the Occupation

The Hidden Bureaucracy of the Occupation



MW volunteer Sylvia helping with paperwork

Photo: Kate Shuttleworth

Over the years, some of the members of MachsomWatch have become experts on the Israeli bureaucracy of control of Palestinians in the OPT, which restricts Palestinians' freedom of movement. Hanna Barag who battles the bureaucracy every day summarizes the current situation:

Until the "Stabbing Intifada" broke out, it seemed that the authorities were more lenient in issuing personal entry permits into Israel for medical needs, family events, participation in seminars etc. In the last few months, in view of the ongoing Palestinian uprising, Israeli authorities have implemented a policy of collective punitive measures as regards the Palestinian population. Many valid permits have been voided, and new ones are issued very sparingly. The denial of work permits for Palestinians impacts not only the permit-holder who is now barred, but also entire families left without a source of livelihood.

In recent months we received complaints about the tightened inspection procedures at the various checkpoints. We have tried to appeal to the army echelons on such matters in real time.

In 2015 we answered 117 phone requests, and sent 35 letters of complaint to the Civil Administration and the Central Regional Command. Appealing by phone has proven to be more effective than the written complaints – the authorities do not relate to the actual complaint, only confirm its arrival. However, we still regard this correspondence as significant to our intention to document the Occupation's injustices.

B'S SECURITY PREVENTION WAS LIFTED AFTER 10 YEARS

Sylvia Piterman

B is married, and the father of adult children. He is a gifted professional. He was involved in many projects in the West Bank with International Companies in very senior positions.

In 2005 elections were held for the local authorities in the Palestinian Authority. These elections were the first since the establishment of the Authority. Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front and independent lists competed in the elections. In B's city there was a huge Hamas victory. Following the Hamas victory lots of people in his city became blacklisted, many permits were confiscated and B's permit among them.

B was never arrested, never investigated, never involved with any party. It didn't help. He was blacklisted. He was in the middle of a brilliant career, he lost his job, he had a huge economic loss and as he defined it in the many conversations we held, he lost his dignity.

He tried to be removed from the blacklist, he appealed to the Court but nothing helped. He couldn't believe that things would change someday. But we convinced him that it was worth a try... every year... So B sent papers again and we submitted a request to remove the security prevention. Some time ago we were notified that he is off the blacklist, after ten long years. Now he is in search of lost time. We hope he will be able to recover some of what has been lost.

And in the words of Proust:

"But sometimes illumination comes to our rescue at the very moment when all seems lost; we have knocked at every door and they open on nothing until, at last, we stumble unconsciously against the only one through which we can enter the kingdom we have sought in vain a hundred years – and it opens."

Marcel Proust, In Search of Lost Time

Sylvia Piterman devotes her time – together with other MW members – advocating for Palestinians who have lost work permits to work in Israel. She has been an active MW member since the end of 2003. Formerly, she worked at the Bank of Israel. During the last ten years at the Bank she was director of the Foreign Currency Department.

"Invisible Prisoners": Blacklisting Appeals

General Security Services (SHABAK) Blacklisting Team:

**1,922 requests submitted in 2015 from people that approached the MachsomWatch team
897 people (51%) were removed from the blacklist.**

Police Blacklisting Team:

700 Palestinians blacklisted by the Israeli Police approached the MachsomWatch team for assistance.

MachsomWatch has been working with blacklisted Palestinian workers and merchants for over 10 years now, in order to appeal against their blacklisting. From this activity emerges a harsh picture of the oppressive system orchestrated by the Shabak (General Security Services), the Civil Administration and the military commander of the West Bank, with the backing of the Government and the Knesset.

During the last few months of 2015, we observed that one of the methods of collective punishment, with the new uprising, is confiscating permits of veteran workers. It seems that the Security Services have made a complete scan of the system: workers and merchants who have brothers or sons in jail have been blacklisted. This is not new, but in the past some people were allowed to work, especially those who had worked in Israel for many years. Now, nobody can escape from punishment. Since allowing people to work or trade contributes to security, it is clear that this policy is not aimed at achieving security, but rather for punishment and revenge.

During the last two months of 2015 the percentage of people removed from the blacklist has decreased, but not by much. The number of requests to remove names from the blacklist has also declined. People think that it is worthwhile to wait for better times.

We work with Palestinians in submitting requests to be removed from the blacklist, and each day documents are faxed to us for this process. We devote a lot of time to calling people when they send insufficient or unsuitable documents. We also answer endless telephone calls from Palestinians who don't get permits; they don't know why and don't have any address to turn to. Most telephone calls are from Palestinians blacklisted by the Shabak who need permits to enter Israel for work or trade – those are the ones for whom we can prepare requests. Other calls are from people trying to follow up on their requests.

We also let people know about the local offices where they can get forms requesting removal from the blacklisting filled out in good Hebrew. We are in touch with those offices in the Hebron area and we collaborate with them, mainly exchanging information about changing requests and other details. We also inform people who filled requests at these offices about the answers to their requests.

Upon receiving their petition for removal from the security blacklisting from us, people must submit their requests to the offices of the Civil Administration in the areas where they live. We submit many requests with the help of Adv. Tamir Blank, with whom we work in the Court Project (see below). We know from experience that many times requests are thrown out, and sometimes we have to send requests again by fax and check again, to make sure that each request will be handled.

Summary of 2015 Requests

1,922 requests for removal from blacklisting submitted in 2015 to DCLs by people who approached the team.

1,750 responses received

897 (51%) individuals have been removed from the blacklist

853 (49%) individuals have remained on the blacklist and may reapply after 12 months or appeal to the court

172 requests were not answered, but can expect responses in 2016

The Court Project: Most of the people who get a negative answer have to wait one year before they are allowed to try again, or may appeal to the Court. The appeals are submitted by Adv. Tamir Blank. Many more people would appeal but cannot afford the cost.

Verdicts during 2015

Since 2007, we have submitted more than 500 appeals. Average rate of success is 70%. For 2015 we achieved a 67% success rate, assuming that all agreements will be fulfilled.

Total Verdicts issued in 2015	78
Verdicts resulting in removal from blacklist ² , including fulfillment of agreements ³	36
Agreements in the pipeline and for the next few months ⁴	16

2. Some of the people still have a problem, but can get a permit to work in Israel.

3. Almost all agreements state that the petitioner may submit a new request to remove the security prevention and this request will be "positively" considered.

4. The 16 agreements reached, include 4 people who didn't bring new papers so they are not able to submit requests, one person who is still waiting for an answer and 11 people who must still wait to submit requests in 2016.

Providing Information to Palestinians about Removal from Police Blacklists:

MachsomWatch's Police Blacklisting Team provided information to over 700 Palestinians blacklisted by the Israeli police, in addition to dealing with cases that were not closed during 2014. The majority are blacklisted due to having been caught in Israel without valid work permits. This team takes a lot of phone calls for 2 hours, 3 days a week, giving advice over the phone about the procedure and documents needed for appeals.

We are not allowed to submit and check up on the situation of the appeals, and Palestinians are required to visit the DCOs in person to get their records, to handle their appeals and check about the results. Unfortunately, the majority of Palestinians who appeal their Police blacklisting are not successful, but we advise them to appeal again in six months. We encourage them to keep trying.

Military CourtWatch

99 Court Hearings Attended/ 165 Volunteer Shifts

The military courts were established several years after Israel occupied the West Bank. These courts are located at **Ofer** and **Salem** with extensions adjacent to the General Security Services' interrogation facilities at the Russian Compound in Jerusalem, in Petah Tikva and at other locations. It is at these facilities that the judges review the interrogation process and approve extended administrative detention. It is during this detention that accusations are developed into specific charges after which cases are transferred to military prosecutors who prepare cases for court.

The judges and prosecutors who serve at the military courts are army and reserve duty officers.

Since 2006, MachsomWatch volunteers have been monitoring and documenting the sessions at the military courts. In the past few years most of our observations have been at Ofer, Salem and their extensions.

In October 2015 Palestinians killed the Hankin family from Neria in a shooting east of Nablus. Since that incident we have witnessed a surge of arrests of Palestinians which includes men, women and minors. Among those arrested are many Palestinians from East Jerusalem and its surroundings, who are holders of Israeli residence IDs. Their court sessions take place at the Jerusalem District Court, and we try to attend those hearings whenever possible.

The recent increased range of punitive measures and changes of indictment definitions are worth noting. Stone throwing, for example, even when applied to minors, is often defined as an intent to harm human life, and this charge is punished accordingly.

Israel's efforts to delegitimize Palestinian civil society organizations have led to a declaration that all of them are illegal organizations. All protest demonstrations which are forms of non-violent resistance are defined by the military court as violations of law and order.

Due to overcrowding in the jails, the detention facility at **Giv'on** prison has opened to house minors. **Damoun** prison has reopened as an additional facility for women.

At least once a week, MachsomWatch volunteers attend hearings and report their observations from the courts at Ofer, at the Russian Compound and at Salem. It is during these visits that we try to speak with the Palestinians who are at the courts. We always explain our reason for being there and at the same time we receive valuable information about Palestinian life under the Occupation. We try to incorporate these details into our reports.

MachsomWatch Public Outreach

MachsomWatch public outreach includes activities focusing on reaching out to the Israeli and international public through reality tours; lectures and virtual tours; films and media outreach.

Reality Tours

44 tours to the Occupied Territories / 1,171 participants

Our tours enable participants to learn what is happening on the ground, and to meet with Palestinians. Daniela Gordon, one of our English language tour leaders, tells us why the tours are important.

MEETING AND GETTING TO KNOW THY NEIGHBORS

Daniela Gordon



Daniela leading a MW Tour
Photo: Marieke Lisette

Most Israelis and internationals know very little about what happens in the West Bank. They have not entered the WB for several decades, they know almost nothing about the

Palestinians' way of life. For them the Occupied Palestinian Territories and their inhabitants are distant, scary and best forgotten or denied.

The Palestinians' experience with the Israelis, on the other hand, consists mainly of rules and restrictions imposed upon them, of soldiers with guns pointed at them and of settler harassment.

When I lead tours to the West Bank my intent is to reverse some of the misconceptions that Israelis and Palestinians have about each other. I hope to show Israelis (and internationals) that not all Palestinians are hate filled terrorists. At the same time, I wish to give the Palestinians the sense that there are Israelis who wish to meet them, who are willing to listen to them and try to understand the hardships of life under military occupation. In these troubling times, it seems that the need for such interaction and perception is all the more important, that it is even more critical for the two sides to get to know the other and form a different opinion. The Palestinians are as keen as ever to be heard by Israelis and internationals, whereas Israelis these days are continuously questioning the motives underlying the recent uprising: Why do they stab us? Run us over? What have we done to them? What do they want from us?

On the tours, we try to show that the animosity of the Palestinians does not stem from everlasting hatred but is in many ways a reaction to the sufferings inflicted by the occupation for almost 50 years.

Thus we follow the Separation Barrier, tour the Seam Zone and beyond so as to understand the distress of Palestinians who have been robbed of their lands; whose movement is controlled by a foreign army every single day; for whom going thru checkpoints, roadblocks and barriers is a daily experience; who cannot defend themselves against the harassment of settlers in certain areas; whose additional building options are nonexistent in 60% of the West Bank. The participants of the tours witness the ways in which the welfare of the Jewish settlers is what controls Palestinian lives by means of the many restrictions imposed upon them.

We are pleased to see many young people on the English tours - tourists, foreign students, foreign journalists and diplomats, as well as organized groups of youth and students on behalf of the British Yachad organization, J-Street, rabbinical students of Tru'ah. I welcome an opportunity to meet these present and future emissaries of opposition to the occupation and its implications on Palestinian human rights.

After leading tours with MachsomWatch for the last few years, their importance grows all the more urgent and relevant as the days and weeks pass by with violence, intolerance and racism on the rise. The Palestinians are very grateful that their side can be heard and

hopefully delivered to others, whilst these one-day tours give Israelis as well as the rest of the world a glimpse of what the Occupation really looks like.

Indeed, even those who believe themselves to be well informed and familiar with the situation, fully admit that nothing equals actually being on location and seeing the Occupation for themselves. "We really did not know", "we did not actually understand," "this was an eye-opener" are some of comments we often hear at the end of the day.

Daniela Gordon has been a human rights activist with MachsomWatch for over 12 years. In addition to leading many of our English Language tours she is a Board Member, a coordinator for the Jerusalem region and a member of the Secretariat. She is a psychologist by profession who claims that her time is dedicated as follows - first to MachsomWatch, then to her grandchildren and finally to psychology in that order.

Lectures and Virtual Tours

18 Lectures / 795 Participants in Israel and abroad

12 Virtual Tours / 343 Participants

MachsomWatch volunteers regularly meet with journalists, political tourism groups, religious groups, student groups, and private citizens who are visiting Israel, and we also give lectures to groups abroad. In addition, we present virtual tours, as Dalia Golomb describes below:

MACHSOMWATCH VIRTUAL TOURS: A JOURNEY INTO THE REALITY OF THE OCCUPATION

Dalia Golomb



Like all other MachsomWatch activities, the Virtual Tours aim to influence public opinion against the Occupation and against the domination of the State of Israel over the Palestinian people since 1967.

The Virtual Tour is designed as a way to give the participants the sense of an actual tour. It contains short films, images and maps which are accompanied by short explanations. In this way we are able to bring the reality of the situation in the West Bank into the homes of our hosts. The Virtual Tours offers what the media does not show, that is, the routine and reality of the life of the Palestinian people who live under military rule.

The audiences who attend the Virtual Tour are individuals who are interested in receiving firsthand information but are not ready or willing to get out of the house and take a tour

in the field. Our Virtual Tours are an opportunity to reach a portion of the public who would not otherwise be exposed to the Occupation first hand. The feedback from Virtual Tour participants is positive and reveals an audience who is very moved by the information presented during the tour.

The Virtual Tours were initiated in 2012. Since then we have given 40 tours in private homes and community centers (to 25 – 40 participants at a time). The Virtual Tours are not advertised and come about through word of mouth and personal recommendations. This year, with the level of tension growing in the West Bank, the Virtual Tours become more important than ever and the demand for these meetings continues to grow.

Dalia Golomb has been an educator her entire life, from music education to Feldenkrais to leading MW tours. Dalia joined MW in 2003. she was one of the founders of the Central region where she served as the scheduler and organized shifts to the checkpoints. In 2008 she began leading tours to the West Bank for Israeli and foreign visitors. She is the creator of our Virtual Tours and has been offering them for the last 3 years, and if all that wasn't enough she now co-leads the Central Area Activities.

Raising Awareness Among Young Israelis

19 Tours / 880 Participants

8 Lecture - Discussions / 650 participants



MW offers talks to Young People

Photo: Anthya Sadeh

This was our second year of activities specifically geared to young people. We are slowly building contacts and establishing connections with pre military academies, high schools and university students in an effort to open a dialogue about the Occupation. We note that institutions we visited in 2014 are inviting us back and we hope to grow the project year by year.

Our experience so far in our meetings with young people convinces us more than ever that the tours and discussions we offer are necessary and vital. Young Israelis are sorely lacking in knowledge and understanding of democracy, human rights, minority rights and racism. The need for discussions about these topics is urgent. Tours and exposure to the checkpoints seem to have the greatest impact. The youth acknowledge that the encounters with Palestinians at the checkpoints are significant and worthwhile.

Our ability to respond to the wishes and perhaps skepticism of the pre-military academies has also paid off.



Hyde Park Day in Southern town of Yeruham, an opportunity to meet with hundreds of young people

Photos: Rachele Hayut

The Telem pre-military academy in Jaffa, which met with us at Susiya village for a discussion, was impressed and is returning for a tour to the checkpoints. Our team spent the summer of 2015 planning for the 2015-2016 academic year. Additional MachsomWatch volunteers from different geographic areas in the country also joined the team. The team reached out to pre-military academies and universities and introduced them to our tours and lectures. We met with the director and presented a lecture/discussion for students of the Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasium High School. As a result, we have been invited to meet with the 11th and 12th grade classes - a total of 14 classes. We have planned an interesting program for this school. In December we travelled to the southern town of Yeruham to engage with young people in the Kibbutz Movement Hyde park event. We plan to meet with the organizers of this one-day event and offer our more comprehensive lectures and tours.

Unfortunately, the rising violence in the fall has prevented us from taking out tours. We wait for a calming of the waters in order to be able to lead tours again.

Media Outreach

100 Media Items

45,462 Web Site Sessions / 30,626 Users

6,000 Facebook Followers



Media

Maintaining media interest in the stories of the Occupation remains a great challenge. In 2015, several of our reports were used as background material by respected journalists who wrote published stories which were brought to the attention in the local press.

MachsomWatch members also wrote news items, letters to the editor, op-ed pieces, gave interviews, and provided video footage and information (Here is a link to our 2015 media report).

We were pleased to read in Haaretz Magazine that filmmaker Shira Gefen noted that her experience as a MachsomWatch volunteer inspired her to make her film Screw.

Website And Facebook

Our website serves as an important database of information about restrictions on Palestinians and the ongoing violations of human rights. We upload all of our reports and photographs taken during our shifts to our website. In 2015, our volunteers worked at reviewing and upgrading our website. Our aim is to make the website more attractive, more user friendly, improve the ease of searches on the website and expand the content of the website.

We use Facebook as another means of publishing our regular reports and to share the most troubling and important incidents that we encounter in our work. Currently, it's only in Hebrew. Members of MachsomWatch also use their own Facebook pages to share information about MachsomWatch with their personal contacts.

Contact info:

Website: <http://www.machsomwatch.org/en>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/machsomwatch>

Email: friendsofmachsomwatch@gmail.com

The Organization

Secretariat, ORG, and Board



MachsomWatch ORG meeting

Photo: Nurit Popper

During 2015, MachsomWatch **Secretariat** held monthly meetings focusing on MW organizational, legal and financial issues as required to implement and carry out MachsomWatch activities.

The **ORG** (our decision-making body composed of all active members of MachsomWatch) met four times in 2015. ORG plenary meetings focused on gaining a wider perspective about the political situation we face. Guest speakers including **Shaul Arieli**, one of Israel's leading experts on the demarcation of the future Israeli-Palestinian border and the route of the Separation Barrier; history professor **Gadi Algazi**; international human rights attorney, **Michael Sfar**; writer and journalist **Amira Hass**; and sociologist **Dr. Sarit Helman**. These speakers helped focus MachsomWatch's discussions as we review our range of activities in advance of 2016, our 15th year of human rights activism.

The **Board** of MachsomWatch registered non-profit company, the **Women's Fund for Human Rights** met as required and handled all audit and legal matters.

Legal Representation

MachsomWatch is represented by **Gaby Lasky and Partners Law Offices**. The office provides MachsomWatch with ongoing legal assistance, represent MachsomWatch members as needed when they are challenged by the authorities, and among other activities, work with us to enable our members to enter hearings of the military courts in Petah Tikva.

Membership

MachsomWatch members who actively participate in the organization number between 250-275 women. In addition, over 700 women (consisting of active and inactive members) are subscribed to our mailing list. Women continue to join MachsomWatch, particularly after having taken our tours. Veteran members of MachsomWatch are involved in introducing MachsomWatch and its activities to the new members.

Our Donors in 2015

We are grateful for the support that we received this past year from private donors and from the following foundations and grant-making organizations:

AJ Muste Institute

Anonymous Donors

Delegation of the European Union to Israel

Firedoll

New Israel Fund

Royal Norwegian Embassy

Open Society Foundation

Peace and Justice Fund

SBSCT Fund

Women's Day of Prayer- Germany

Women's Inter-Church Council - Canada