

The 1967 war dealt a devastating blow to the hopes of the Zbeidat community, together with thousands of Valley farmers. Aerial bombardments forced many refugees to leave their homes. The two camps of Ain as-Sultan and Aqbat Jaber, in the southern base of the Valley surrounding Jericho, lost their total population (between 50-60 thousand residents). They fled eastward and were re-settled in the Zizya camp in Transjordan. The nearby villages of Jiftlek and Makhrouq, to the immediate south of Zbeidat, were completely demolished by the Israeli army and its residents spirited across the river. In Zbeidat itself about 800 residents left and joined their kin in Irbid (North Jordan); several families later came back and regained control over their land.

Land confiscation, for the purpose of building Jewish settlements and for presumed security reasons, soon followed Israeli occupation. Suleiman al-Salih, the main landlord in the Marj Na'je region, whose land was share-cropped - in part - by Zbeidat and Marj Na'je peasants, lost 5000 dunums of his land to the Israelis (a substantial part of it was fenced-off for "security reasons" along the river Jordan). In 1968 all the dwellings and institutions serving the farmers residing in the lands of Suleiman al-Salih were demolished by Israeli armed forces. Those included 27 artesian water pumps, a school, a clinic, a post office and 600 farmers' dwellings. A hundred dunums of orange groves were defoliated (al-Salih, 1980:Inter.). The purpose apparently was to prevent the Ghor farmers from re-settling in their land and to create a land base for Israeli settlements along the Western Jordan Valley. The scheme was later known as the Allon plan. The incidents described here formed a pattern which recurred in al-Auja, Ghor al-Far'a, Diuk, Fasail, al-Hamra, and within the vicinity of Jericho itself. To the east and south of Zbeidat 2,000 dunums were confiscated for building the settlement of Argaman.³ Of these 600 dunums belonged to one landlord,