

Muhammad Abdullah, from Tubas (al-Salih, 1980:ibid.). The remaining 1,400 dunums belonged to a number of small farmers. The villagers of Zbeidat lost slightly more than half their own (as opposed to share-cropped) plots -- about 260 dunums. About 200 of those, located near the river, were fenced-off and declared a security zone. The remaining 68 were considered "absentee property" and given to three non-resident landowners as compensation for their confiscated land, which had been already seized of use by Argaman settlers (Ibrahim, 1979: Inter.).

The Israeli government refused to recognize the agreement concluded between the Zbeidat community and the Jordan government whereby the 500 dunums were to be registered in the names of Zbeidat farmers in the summer of 1967. However, their de facto possession of the land was granted by the military government against the continued payment of rent for the use of the artesian well, the houses, and the remaining dunums under their control. Since land was considered Miri (i.e. public domain) by the military authorities no new dwellings or even the repair of existing dilapidated structures were allowed. With the increase of population since 1967, newly married couples and their children were accommodated by adding new shacks -- made of bushes, plastic sheaths and wood -- to existing rooms. The result was the undescrivable squalor which typifies the present state of Zbeidat village.

In January 1980, the military government reversed the order against the building of new dwellings and the fixing of existing ones. When the field work for the present study was concluded, in June 1980, the people of Zbeidat were preparing to build new brick dwellings to replace their dilapidated and faltering ones.

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