



During Ramadan, many Muslims break their fast following the sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) with water and dates. But do they know the history of injustice behind the production of so many dates? Many dates are grown in Israeli settlements built on occupied Palestinian land, in direct violation of international law, and harvested through unfair labor practices.

DATES IN THE ISRAELI ECONOMY

Israel produces more than half the world's leading variety of dates, the Medjool date.¹ The majority of these are grown in Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea areas on occupied Palestinian land, and then exported worldwide for a profit of \$265 million for Israeli export companies.²

Dates were Israel's leading fruit export in 2005.¹ Export of Israeli dates to Europe and North America increased by 16 percent in 2011.³ Large quantities of these are exported specifically during Ramadan.¹ Currently, most Israeli dates are marketed by Hadiklaim, a company that exports dates from Israel and its settlements in the Occupied Territories, especially in the Jordan Valley.⁴ Hadiklaim markets the dates under the brand names of Jordan River, Jordan River Bio-Top and King Solomon, and under the private labels of supermarket chains.⁴

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THIS RAMADAN,
MAKE A DATE WITH JUSTICE
Choose Occupation-Free Dates

SETTLEMENTS IN VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

Since 1967, Israel has enforced a military occupation throughout the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea areas, which contain the largest arable land reserves in the West Bank.⁷ Israel prevents the development of Palestinian communities in these areas by systematically demolishing the homes and structures of the area's Palestinian communities, blocking Palestinians from accessing the Valley's water resources, and restricting Palestinian movement therein.⁵

Despite international agreement that its settlements violate international humanitarian law, Israel continues to seize and confiscate land in order to build more and more settlements in the Jordan Valley and the rest of the West Bank.⁵ According to United Nations Security Council Resolution 465, among others, Israel's construction of settlements on occupied Palestinian land is illegal.¹⁶ It also violates the Fourth Geneva Convention and the International Court of Justice has also judged these settlements to be in violation of international law.⁷

EXPLOITING PALESTINIAN LABOR AND CHILDREN

Palestinian workers in settlements face exploitation, discrimination and lack social welfare and job security guarantees.¹¹ Despite a 2007 Israeli High Court ruling requiring that Israeli labor laws be applied equally to Israeli employers and their Palestinian West Bank workers, unequal implementation of labor laws persists, resulting in inferior labor standards for Palestinians.⁸

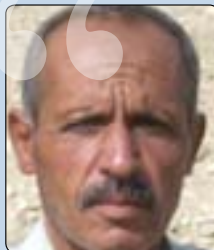


Moreover, despite a military order requiring payment of a minimum wage equal to that paid in Israel, Palestinians working in the settlements receive less than the minimum wage.⁹ Typically, they earn \$2 an hour or less, and pay is often withheld for several months.^{8 10}

On date plantations in particular, reports indicate that Palestinian laborers in the Jordan Valley are often required to remain atop date trees throughout the entire workday (up to eight hours) without any

breaks – even to use the bathroom. These trees can be up to 40 feet tall.¹¹

Palestinian child laborers are also subject to exploitation in the settlements. In 2008, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics found that more than 7,000 children between 5 and 17 years old were working in the Jordan Valley alone.¹⁰ This figure has since increased, and does not include undocumented working children.¹⁰



In 1967, when Israel occupied the West Bank, I was seven years old. Two-thirds of my family moved to the East Bank because of the war...Israel took control of the 500 dunams [124 acres] that we leased from the Jordanian government and had worked for seven years, and prohibited us from getting to them... Now they are date-palm orchards of the Yafit settlement... we're forbidden to enter the area.”⁶

–Hussein Muhammad Hassan Sa'eydeh, 51, married with six children, is an unemployed farmer and a resident of al-'Uja, in Jericho District, the West Bank.

On date plantations, many children are hired because employers perceive them as “quick and light” and able to “climb trees faster.”¹¹ Children often work on dangerous construction sites that do not comply with Israeli health and safety regulations. When accidents occur, as they often do, they receive no insurance or protection.¹⁰

CONSUMER BOYCOTTS AND WHAT YOU CAN DO

In July 2005, more than 170 Palestinian civil society organizations united to call for a Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement to pressure Israel until it complies with international law and universal principles of human rights.¹² Consumers can voice their opposition to Israel's human rights abuses by participating in a consumer boycott of both Israeli and non-Israeli products and companies that profit from the occupation.

Over the past few years, groups in the United Kingdom and South Africa have responded to the Palestinian call to boycott products that support human rights abuses by organizing campaigns to boycott Israeli dates.¹³ One of the companies targeted, Agrexco—a company half-owned by the Israeli government—also exports Israeli dates

“ As soon as I climb up the tree, the only thing I think about is how to get down from it,” says a worker from the village of Jiftlik, in the Jordan Rift Valley. “I don't think about anything other than how not to fall out of the tree and how to manage to complete the quota. I know that at any moment I can fall and die, or fall and become crippled, break an arm or a leg. So we work with one hand and hold the tree with the other. It's terribly hard. Your body cramps up. The people are nervous, afraid. The whole time you are crouching, on your feet.”¹¹

from the occupied territories.¹⁴ In September 2011, following a wider campaign lasting over six years and taking place in more than fifteen countries, Agrexco was forced to enter into liquidation.¹⁵

American Muslims for Palestine (AMP) has joined these voices by promoting a boycott of Israeli occupation dates in several cities across the United States. AMP calls on Muslims and other people of conscience to refrain from purchasing and selling dates that support settlements on Occupied Palestinian Territory and inhumane labor practices.

Brands of dates grown in Israeli settlements include Jordan River, Jordan River Bio-Top, King Solomon, and several others. Israeli occupation dates are labeled as Products of the West Bank, the Jordan Valley, or Israel. AMP urges consumers and business owners to boycott dates that have these labels. Products packaged in Israel or the Occupied Palestinian Territories can also be recognized by their barcodes beginning with 729 or 0 729.

BUY AMERICAN AND HELP OUR ECONOMY

This Ramadan, AMP asks Muslims to uphold the ethics of our faith, and to refuse to buy or sell dates that are profiting from Israeli occupation. Instead, you can choose to support the American economy by buying dates that are produced and sold in California. Two major suppliers of dates are Oasis Date Gardens, www.oasisdate.com, or www.medjooldates.com which sells from three California growers, Sun Garden Date Growers, Royal Medjool Date and Southwestern Date Ranches.

A boycott is an individual act that becomes much more powerful when it finds strong support in organizations and communities willing to act as a collective. Please visit www.ampalestine.org/ramadandates to get more involved.