

International
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Social Studies



Journal of
Agrarian Change

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Symposium in the *Journal of Agrarian Change*

**Resistance Agriculture: Farmers, Land and Legal,
Mobilisation in Palestine**

**Co-edited by academics at the International Institute of Social Studies,
Erasmus University Rotterdam (ISS-EUR) and Leiden University,
Department of Middle East Studies (Leiden)**

**Special Issue Editors: Dr. Hadeel S. Abu Hussein (ISS-EUR),
Jeff Handmaker (ISS-EUR) and Christian Henderson (Leiden)**

Deadline for Submissions: 15 March 2025

Workshop Planned for May 2025 (exact date and venue TBC)

Overall Assumptions and Purpose of the Symposium and Workshop

This project of a Symposium and Workshop departs, firstly, from the assumption that attenuation of land and farmers' rights in Palestine is part of a deliberate policy of settler colonialism. Second, we assume that this policy can be countered by various forms of strategic legal mobilization aimed at protecting and reclaiming these rights, which encompasses a variety of formal and informal tactics.

Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories since 1967 exemplifies settler colonialism, as recognized both in the context of international law (Masri, 2017) and in post-colonial studies (Veracini, 2013). The purpose of this Special Issue and Workshop are to explore how agrarian political struggles and legal mobilization strategies in Palestine can be situated within the field of agrarian political economy. We also wish to situate the experiences in Palestine within the broader political economy of agrarian change in the Middle East.

Further Context

The Israeli state's system of racial segregation that it has imposed on Palestinian society is considered by Palestinian, Israeli and international human rights organisations to be a form of racialized apartheid (Reynolds 2023). The associated confiscation of Palestinian land and environmental resources has been systemic and continual (Abu Hussein 2022).

Efforts to deprive Palestinians of their land and livelihoods has not taken place without resistance amongst agrarian farmers and solidarity organizations, as evidenced by a wide range of legal mobilization tactics, from public interest litigation to protests and both localized and global solidarity campaigns. In one, typical case in 2022, the Israeli military announced its plan to expel 1000 Palestinians from the village of Masafer Yatta in the southern region of the occupied Palestinian Territory of the West Bank. In response to this ongoing violence, Palestinians organised different forms of legal resistance, widespread protests and campaigns to resist their forced expulsion. Smallholder agriculture remains central to life in Palestine.

Legal Mobilization and smallholder agriculture offer a means to resist appropriation; the former regards law as a legitimate form of politics, while the latter aspires to promote food sovereignty and is a source of income. For communities that are marginalised and at risk of violence and dispossession, small-scale / artisanal farming is a vital activity, for daily survival and/or as a form of resistance in itself (i.e. to limit dependency on the regime of the oppressor) (Asi, 2020; Dajani and Isma'il, 2014). The implications of Palestine's agrarian political economy compels a critical reflection on how Palestinians gain access to nutrition, acquire more control over the terms of exchange, reflect their historical attachment to land and agrarian livelihoods and participate in political resistance.

Agriculture in Palestine has already been the subject of a substantial body of historical work. This includes research on the processes of agrarian change that took place during the periods of the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate (Buheiry, 1981; Doumani, 1995; Reilly, 1981). This scholarship examines the way in which Palestine was integrated into the global economy as a producer of primary commodities. It shows how the agricultural political economy in Palestine has been directly affected by the changes in governance and exposure to the regional and global economy (Reger, 2017; Nadan, 2006).

Contemporary studies of Palestine's agrarian political economy have been characterised by a focus on the Israeli occupation and dispossession of Palestinian land and resources (Abu Hussein 2022; El Zein, 2017; Kohlbry, 2018, 2022; Sahliyeh, 1982). These studies have examined agriculture within the context of resistance to occupation and encompass both the

agrarian and broader political economy of Palestinian society. Scholars have also explored the socio-legal dimensions of resisting dispossession. For example, scholars have focussed on water, which has been appropriated by Israeli authorities and distributed in a manner that explicitly favours Israeli settlers, and corporate war profiteers and discriminates against Palestinians (Dillman, 1989; Gasteyer et al, 2012; Isaac and Selby, 1996; Who Profits 2023; Zeitoun, 2010). A related body of scholarship has examined the role of legal mobilisation to hold corporations, individuals and the Israeli state accountable through legal enforcement institutions (Bisharat et al. 2018; Dugard 2018; Dugard and Reynolds 2013; Erakat 2019; Falk 2017; Handmaker 2020 and 2023; Kearney 2010; Moerenhout 2012; Saba 2019). This body of scholarship notwithstanding, lacunae remain, specifically regarding the dynamics of agrarian change and the potential for legal mobilisation in the pursuance of agrarian struggles in Palestine.

Value of the Symposium

Despite the importance of agricultural life, the study of Palestine in Anglophone scholarship is often dominated by the lens of doctrinal law, security and conflict. There is an over-emphasis on formal legal institutions, often obscuring the agrarian politics as part of the Palestinian national movement. The absence of articles generally on Palestine in the field of agrarian change is striking. In total, we identified just two articles in the *Journal of Peasant Studies* (Kohlbray, 2022; Nadan, 2007) and one in *Sociologia Ruralis* (Gasteyer and Butler Flora, 2002). The inclusion of Palestine in discussions on agrarian change is crucial to understanding the dimensions of Israel's domination of Palestinians, as part of an ongoing case of European settler colonialism in which violence and land-grabbing are systemic. According to Kohlbray: "Palestine is not unique. Instead, it is place that can help scholars and activists understand connections between the seemingly disparate struggles for land that are unfolding across the rural world today," (2022: 16). Accordingly, further attention to the case of Palestine is relevant to discuss, which broadens our understanding of the historical consequences of forced removal, dispossession, and settler-colonialism more generally and the extent to which systemic injustices have become entrenched in other legal-constitutional regimes. In other words, this workshop discussions and the symposium collection volume in the final stage we will study the political economy and legal mobilization of land rights against the backdrop of other experiences of settler-colonialism and apartheid.

Land rights in Palestine are especially relevant to the global question of agrarian change. Israel is a longstanding, and ongoing case of settler colonialism that encompasses a global influence. The practices and methods used in the occupation of Palestine constitute a knowledge economy that is manifest in Israel's defence and technology exports. The Israeli military's occupation is considered to be a laboratory for surveillance and military weaponry that assists the country's defence exports and impacts all levels of Palestinian society (Li, 2006; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015). Israel's agribusiness sector has similar characteristics and its technology transfers have moreover been manifest in normalization agreements with other Arab states (Tanchum, 2022).

In this Symposium we intend to reveal shifts and permeations of imperial practices in new and old state formations. The intersection of race and land rights is taking on new forms and intensities and this ongoing case of colonial appropriation is a component in these trends (Shattuck, et al

2023). Some of Israel's violations of Palestinian rights amount to international crimes for which remedies are potentially available in Israeli, third country or international fora. Careful use of the media can also play a significant role in amplifying these violations, explaining their legal contours and shaming the violators.

This special issue intends to locate Palestine within the field of agrarian political economy. In doing so this special issue will also address the political economy of agrarian change in the Middle East within Anglophone scholarship (Ajl, 2021).

Shorter Submissions and Deadline

The Symposium will ultimately consist of 6–12 shorter papers, which will be selected, following a workshop and a successful peer review organised by the *Journal of Agrarian Change*. As an indication, papers should be between 4,000 and 6,000 words in length.

The deadline for abstract submissions is: 15 March 2025. Based on a selection of abstracts, we will invite authors to a workshop will take place in May 2025 will help refine the papers and contribute to debates around the intersection of agrarian political economy, settler colonialism, and legal resistance in Palestine.

Themes of the Symposium

We particularly welcome papers for the Symposium that address the theme of “*Resistance Agriculture: Farmers, Land, and Legal Mobilization in Palestine*” both conceptually and empirically.

We invite submissions that explore the following questions and themes:

- What role does small-scale farming play in Palestinian life, particularly in its economic, political, and cultural dimensions?
- How does Palestinian small-scale farming engage with the political economy of provisioning?
- What is the relationship between Palestinian agriculture, land, and resistance—both direct and indirect—against Israeli occupation and apartheid?
- To what extent is Palestinian small-scale agriculture agro-ecological, and how does it contribute to managing climate-related challenges, including diminishing water resources?
- What is the scope and transformative potential of legal mobilization in resisting violence, land-grabbing, and other forms of harm directed specifically at Palestinian farmers?
- How have Palestinian farming systems been affected by the integration of agribusiness practices and surveillance technologies?

We encourage contributions that critically analyze these themes and propose innovative perspectives on the intersections of agriculture, resistance, and legal mobilization in the Palestinian context.

About the Workshop

The workshop, in which authors whose abstracts have been selected, will be invited to participate, will take place, in an in-person or hybrid format, at the International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam (Hague Campus), The Hague, The Netherlands. Unfortunately, we are currently unable to cover travel and accommodation costs for participants. However, we are currently seeking funds to support a limited number of travel support scholarships for early-career scholars without a research budget to facilitate their participation. In the absence of in-person participation, there will be the option for online presentations.

Invited contributors whose abstracts are accepted will be asked to submit a draft paper before the workshop.

Submission guidelines and deadline

We invite proposals for papers comprising an abstract (of a maximum 350 words). These abstracts should be submitted *in one single PDF document*, together with a cover letter by 15 March 2025. The cover letter should include a one-paragraph CV (maximum of 200 words) and explain in a few sentences the context of the paper: i.e. whether it is part of a PhD project, whether it is based on empirical research, part of ongoing research, etc.

The selection process will be based on both the abstract's quality and its relatedness with the core themes of the project and other submitted proposals. Decisions on accepted papers will be communicated by 30 March 2025. After the workshop, we will invite authors to submit their paper for Peer Review, with a view to being part of a Symposium collection in *The Journal of Agrarian Change*.

Please submit the pdf with your abstract, CV and context explanation in one unified document by sending an email with the header '**Resistance Agriculture: Farmers, Land and Legal, Mobilisation in Palestine**' **before 15 March 2025** to LMP@iss.nl

About the Journal

The *Journal of Agrarian Change* is the leading journal of agrarian political economy. It promotes investigation of the social relations and dynamics of production, property and power in agrarian formations and their processes of change, both historical and contemporary. It encourages work within a broad interdisciplinary framework, informed by theory, and serves as a forum for serious comparative analysis and scholarly debate.

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