

Police investigation of vandalization of Palestinian trees in the West Bank

Yesh Din Monitoring, 2005-2009



Data summary

Since 2005 Yesh Din has been monitoring the Samaria and Judea (SJ, West Bank) district police investigation of 69 separate incidents of vandalization of Palestinian trees in the Occupied Territories (OT).¹ In many cases the vandalism is directed against olive trees but other kinds of trees are also harmed, including almond and lemon.

27 events, nearly forty percent of the aforementioned 69 incidents, were documented in the first ten months of 2009 (January to October). Our review of the investigation status of each of the 62 aforementioned incidents shows that not a single investigation has so far led to filing an indictment against persons suspected of involvement in vandalism against Palestinian trees.²

Yesh Din does not claim to document all of the offenses committed by Israeli civilians against Palestinians and their property in the OT (including vandalization of trees) but the investigation files monitored by Yesh Din constitute a very broad sample of the total investigations conducted by the JS district of the Israel Police into ideologically-motivated offenses by Israeli civilians against Palestinians in the West Bank.³ Yesh Din is not aware of a single case where an indictment was made for involvement in vandalism of trees belonging to Palestinians. Yesh Din's monitoring shows that if any such indictments were made at all, their number is negligible compared to the number of incidents of vandalism of trees whose investigation ends in failure.

Incidents of tree vandalization in 2009 (January-September)

Yesh Din has been monitoring **27** investigation files following incidents of tree vandalization that occurred in 2009.

Of those **27** investigation files:

- **Twelve** are still under investigation
- The investigation of **two** incidents ended and the files were transferred to the prosecutor's review to decide on their results: whether to close them or file indictments.
- **13** investigation files were closed.
 - Of those, **one** file was closed on grounds of insufficient evidence to prosecute.
 - **12** investigation files were closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator."

¹ In one case, other that occurred in recent weeks, the land owner has not filed the complaint with the police yet.

² Following one incident involving stone throwing at a Palestinian family's house in Hebron and setting fire to a tree in the house's garden, an indictment was filed against a defendant (and even then only following an appeal by Yesh Din against the initial decision to close the file without filing an indictment against the suspect). However, in that case the arson was a part of the assault incident and therefore the incident is not included in the figures presented here. Likewise, with the intention of concentrating in this document solely on data about the vandalization of trees, we do not include here figures about incidents of attacks on harvesters during the harvest, theft of fruit from trees or vandalism of wheat fields.

³ For figures on Yesh Din's ongoing monitoring of police investigations into offenses by Israeli civilians against Palestinians in the West Bank, see Yesh Din reports **A Semblance of Law: Law Enforcement Against Israeli Civilians in the West Bank** (pp. 89-95) and **Too Little, Too Late: the State Attorney's Supervision of Police Investigations into Israeli Civilians' Offenses against Palestinians** (pp. 16-21).

Table 1: Yesh Din monitoring of investigation files on the vandalization of trees in 2009 (January-September)

	Yesh Din file no.	Date of incident or discovery	Location	Incident details	Police investigation status
1	1722/09	January 26, 2009	Al-Dhahiriya	Breaking the branches of seven olive trees	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
2	1715/09	January 27, 2009	Kafr Thulth	30 saplings of one-year-old olive trees uprooted	File closed on grounds of "lack of evidence"
3	1725/09	February 7, 2009	Al-Bira	35 small olive saplings and 55 saplings of barren trees uprooted	Transferred to review of JS district police prosecution unit prosecutor review
4	1750/09	February 18, 2009	Jinsafut	117 tree saplings uprooted and stolen	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
5	1808/09	March 1, 2009	Sinjil	16 olive trees cut down	Under investigation
6	1793/09	March 23, 2009	Al-Khadr	20 18-year-old olive trees uprooted	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
7	1790/09	April 13, 2009	Kafr Qadum	Two seven-year-old olive trees and six almond trees uprooted	Under investigation
8	1821/09	May 1, 2009	Sinjil	More than 200 olive saplings were uprooted and replanted in another plot that was fenced off	Under investigation
9	1827/09	May 4, 2009	Turmusayya	27 olive trees uprooted and stolen	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
10	1817/09	May 10, 2009	Fur'ata	40 57-year-old olive trees uprooted and stolen	Under investigation
11	1811/09	May 14, 2009	Kafr Thulth	Eight young olive trees vandalized	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
12	1841/09	June 1, 2009	Burin	Branches of 106 olive trees vandalized	Investigation file transferred for review of prosecutor in Central District prosecution
13	1865/09	June 1, 2009	Burin	67 olive trees burned in two plots	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
14	1870/09	July 1, 2009	Fur'ata	10 young olive trees and three almond trees uprooted and branches of	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"

				two olive trees broken	
15	1867/09	July 20, 2009	Burin	Olive grove set on fire in Burin, damaging 45 olive trees and another 22 olive trees cut down	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
16	1872/09	August 1, 2009	Kafr Thulth	Olive trees uprooted and well cover smashed	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
17	1882/09	August 10, 2009	Al-Mughayer	150 saplings uprooted	Under investigation
18	1890/09	September 4, 2009	Al-Mughayer and Turmusayya	300 olive trees uprooted	Under investigation
19	1891/09	September 5, 2009	Deir Nidham	10 ten-year-old lemon trees and the branches of 15 42-year-old lemon trees cut off	Under investigation
20	1907/09	September 16, 2009	Einabus	12 fig trees and 40 olive trees cut down	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
21	1909/09	September 20, 2009	Burin	17 olive trees sawed	Under investigation
22	1913/09	September 21, 2009	Mahmas	The branches of 21 olive trees, aged 29 years, were vandalized and the olives from tens of trees were harvested and stolen	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
23	191409/	September 21, 2009	Mahmas	69 young olive trees, aged 4 years, were trampled	Under investigation
24	191509/	September 7, 2009	Al-Mughayer	60 young olive trees uprooted	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
25	1916/09	October 4, 2009	Al-Mughayer	At least 50 trees were sprayed with poisonous substance	Under investigation
26	1921/09	October 29, 2009	Burin	At least 60 45-year-old trees were cut down	Under investigation
27	1925/09	October 20, 2009	Al-Mughayer	47 olive trees were cut down	Under investigation

Incidents of tree vandalization, 2005-2008

Yesh Din has been monitoring **42** investigation files on incidents of tree vandalization that occurred from 2005-2008.

Of those **42** investigation files:

- **Two** are currently under investigation (after appeals against closure of the investigation files by Yesh Din's legal advisor on behalf of the plaintiffs were accepted and the investigation files were reopened).
- **Two** investigation files are under the review of a prosecutor in the JS district police prosecution department to make a decision on the future of the files
- **38** investigation files have been closed.
 - Of those, **seven** files were closed on grounds of insufficient evidence to prosecute
 - **31** other investigation files were closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator."

Table 2: Yesh Din monitoring of investigation files into the vandalization of trees 2005-2008

	Yesh Din file no.	Date of incident or discovery	Location	Incident details	Police investigation file status
1	1010/05	March 21, 2005	Bil'in	100 olive trees were uprooted from the land of Bil'in. 60 of them were stolen.	File closed on grounds of "lack of evidence"
2	1008/05	April 1, 2005	Kafr Thulth	3 olive trees were cut down and one was uprooted in the village of Thulth.	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
3	1023/05	May 12, 2005	Salem	150 olive trees belonging to residents of the village of Salem were burned.	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
4	1022/05	May 19, 2005	Jinsafut	200 olive trees belonging to residents of the village of Jinsafut were cut down	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
5	1033/05	June 5, 2005	Asira al-Qibliya	51 trees were cut in the village of Asira al-Qibliya, of which 12 were almond trees and the rest olive trees	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
6	1057/05	July 23, 2005	Salem	200 olive trees sawed and uprooted	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
7	1050/05	July 24, 2005	Beitillu	11 olive trees were cut down. Vegetable plants were uprooted and agricultural equipment was vandalized.	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
8	1085/05	September 13, 2005	Kafr Thulth	20 olive and fig trees were vandalized when a bulldozer destroyed a stone fence in the village of Thulth,	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
9	1077/05	September 20, 2005	Fur'ata	More than 100 olive trees were cut down, uprooted and set on fire.	File closed on grounds of "lack of evidence"

10	1095/05	October 5, 2005	Kafr a-Dik	20-25 olive trees were uprooted and stolen.	File closed on grounds of "lack of evidence"
11	1111/05	October 15, 2005	Iskaka	Some 50 olive trees were stolen from the land of the village of Iskaka.	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
12	1101/05	October 16, 2005	Salem	An area of 300 dunams mainly of olive trees was set on fire on the land of the village Salem. More than 200 other olive trees were cut down.	File closed on grounds of "lack of evidence"
13	1122/05	November 2, 2005	Bil'in	An illegal road was opened in the land of the village of Bil'in on the route of the separation fence. During the road works 190 olive trees were uprooted and stolen.	File closed on grounds of "lack of evidence"
14	1656/08	November 8, 2005	Al-Mughayer	45 olive trees cut down.	Under investigation (the investigation file was closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator" but the investigation was renewed following an appeal by Yesh Din on behalf of the plaintiff).
15	1121/05	November 27, 2005	Salem	250 olive trees cut down on the land of Salem.	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
16	1128/05	December 14, 2005	Al-Sawiya	An olive tree was uprooted and stolen.	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
17	1130/05	December 24, 2005	Burin	100 olive trees were cut down in Burin in the Nablus area.	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
18	1139/06	January 2, 2006	Sinjil	60 trees were uprooted from the land of a resident of Sinjil: 30 olive trees, 20 almond trees and 10 fig trees	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
19	1140/06	January 6, 2006	Al-Tawani	120 olive trees were cut down in the land of Al-Tawani in the southern Hebron Mountain.	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
20	1142/06	January 9, 2006	Burin	At least 110 olive trees were cut down on the land of the village of Burin.	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"

21	1155/06	February 20, 2006	Kafr Thulth	2 olive tree saplings stolen	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
22	1171/06	March 13, 2006	Al-Sawiya	Olive tree uprooted and stolen	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
23	1192/06	June 10, 2006	Salem	45 olive trees cut down	File closed on grounds of "lack of evidence"
24	1280/07	June 17, 2007	Karyut	300 olive trees belonging to a resident of the village were uprooted and stolen	Transferred to review of JS district police prosecution unit prosecutor
25	1206/06	June 22, 2006	Sinjlil	More than 100 olive trees cut down	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
26	1207/06	August 21, 2006	Sinjlil	About 40 olive trees cut down	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
27	1316/07	September 10, 2006	Jitt	61 olive and fruit trees cut down	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
28	1262/07	May 6, 2007	Jitt	370 saplings of olive trees uprooted	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
29	1267/07	May 9, 2007	Lubban al-Sharqiya	15 olive trees uprooted and olive saplings trampled	Transferred to review of JS district police prosecution unit prosecutor
30	1278/07	June 6, 2007	Salfit	About 100 olive and almond trees damaged in arson of field	File closed on grounds of "lack of evidence"
31	1364/07	December 6, 2007	Susiya	32 olive trees uprooted	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
32	1389/08	January 17, 2008	Al-Mughayer	100 olive saplings and 76 fig saplings uprooted and stolen	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
33	1386/08	February 3, 2008	Jitt	200 olive saplings uprooted and stolen from the land of the village of Jitt	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
34	1433/08	March 15, 2008	Turmusayya	133 olive saplings uprooted	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
35	1459/08	April 8, 2008	Madama	Olive saplings uprooted	Under investigation (the investigation file was closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator" but the investigation was

					renewed following an appeal by Yesh Din on behalf of the plaintiff)
36	1454/08	April 15, 2008	Jitt	1000 olive saplings uprooted and stolen from the land of a village resident	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
37	1536/08	July 21, 2008	Amatin	50 olive trees burned in arson of field	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
38	1464/08	August 1, 2008	Deir Istiya	13 olive trees uprooted and agricultural equipment stolen.	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
39	1606/08	September 18, 2008	Fur'ata	18 dunams planted with olive trees set on fire and burned	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
40	1624/08	October 12, 2008	Turmusayya	40 olive, fig and almond trees uprooted.	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
41	1671/08	December 2, 2008	Ras Karkar	47 trees cut down from the land of a village resident	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"
42	1677/08	December 2, 2008	Ras Karkar	14 olive trees cut down and 49 vandalized on land belonging to two residents of the village of Ras Karkar	File closed on grounds of "unknown perpetrator"