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For Immediate Release



## New Israeli military data show drastic reduction in permits to cross the Separation Barrier: 84% of permit requests denied; only 1% for security reasons

New data released this week by the Israeli military show that only a tiny fraction of Palestinians are granted permits to reach their lands trapped by the Separation Barrier. The data was provided to HaMoked in response to a freedom-of-information request.

In 2019, 7,483 Palestinians requested farmer permits to access their plots in the “Seam Zone” – those parts of the West Bank isolated by the Separation Barrier. Of these, 62% were denied. The situation deteriorated further in 2020: fully 84% of farmers’ permit requests were denied in the first six months of this year.

Only 1-2% of requests are denied due to security considerations. The vast majority of permits are denied on the grounds that the applicants are not eligible according to the military’s regulations – which were amended in 2017 and 2019 to further limit access.

	2019		2020	
Requests for Seam Zone farmer permits	7,483		2,020	
Of them, number denied	4,659	62%	1,700	84%
<b>Grounds for denial</b>				
Security ("ISA access ban")	77	2%	19	1%
Failure to meet eligibility criteria	3,147	68%	784	46%
Land allegedly not in the Seam Zone	567	12%	632	37%
Relevant documents missing	361	8%	43	3%
Other	507	10%	222	13%

*Data provided by the Israeli military to HaMoked, 29 June 2020*

Tomorrow, Israel’s High Court of Justice will hear a petition filed by HaMoked and Palestinian landowners challenging two new amendments to the military’s Seam Zone Regulations: the denial of permits to Palestinians who own what the military defines as “tiny plots”; and the limitation of access to only 40 days per year for owners of olive groves (95% of the Seam Zone).

“It’s grown harder to get these permits and many people have given up,” said Ahmad Abadi, one of the petitioners in the case to be heard tomorrow. “It’s offensive that I have to fight to get a permit to my own land, and humiliating to receive a permit that says I can only reach my land 40 times a year. My connection to my land cannot be quantified by a dry calculation of what crops I grow. My land is my link to my parents and to our traditions.”

“Time and again, Israeli officials promised to respect Palestinians’ property rights and ensure farmers’ access to their lands,” said Jessica Montell, Executive Director of HaMoked. “This new data shows that these were empty promises. Rather than facilitating access, the military bureaucracy is evolving to dispossess all Palestinians from lands beyond the Barrier.”