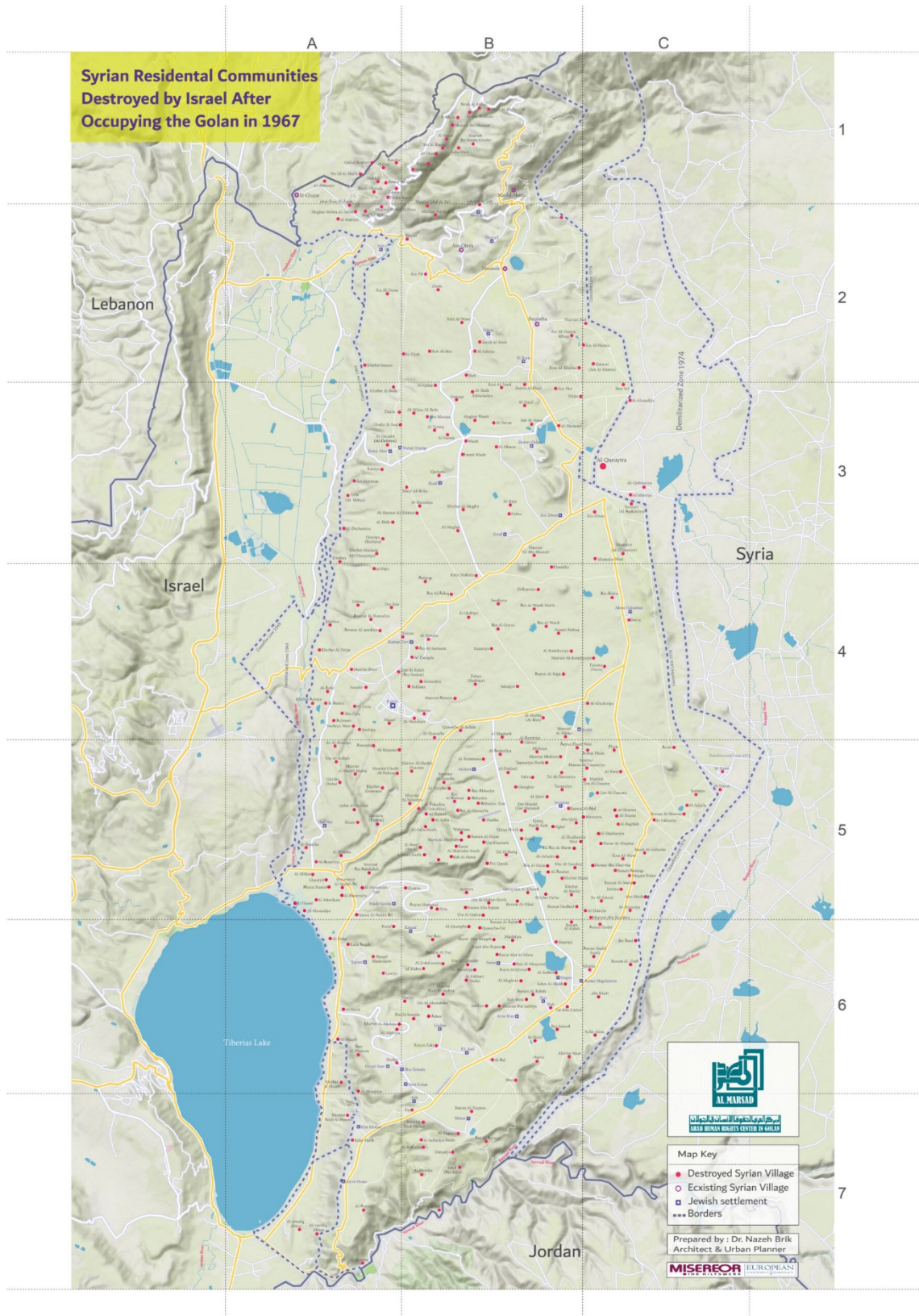


Al-Marsad Annual Activity Report 2022

Issued May 2023



المركز العربي لحقوق الإنسان في الجولان
ARAB HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER IN GOLAN



Updated Map of the Syrian residential communities destroyed by Israel after occupying the Golan in 1967

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1. INTRODUCTION

Al-Marsad – Arab Human Rights Centre in Golan Heights ('Al-Marsad') has continued 2022 to monitor, document, research, and raise awareness of the human rights situation in the occupied Syrian Golan. This report explores the organization's activities of research, awareness-raising/advocacy, Cultural festival, and legal aid provided to the Syrian community in the occupied Golan during the reporting period. The activities include, among others, correspondence with Israeli authorities; workshops for the local community; legal aid (consultations and litigation); Advocacy; field visits for local and international delegations; The organization of a second cultural festival, **"Jawan Cultural Days - 2"**; meetings and correspondence with journalists, government officials, and politicians.



Opening ceremony of the cultural festival "Golan Cultural Days," Second year

Al-Marsad pursued to deepen its roots, especially within the local community, and strengthened its international and local credibility and reputation as the only human rights NGO in the occupied Syrian Golan, overcoming challenges that influenced the local community. Al-Marsad made significant achievements during 2022, especially regarding legal support to Syrians in their struggle to confront the wind turbine project. Our continuous legal work on the wind farm project strengthens our cooperation with dozens of local agriculture associations and hundreds of Syrian farmers. Al-Marsad strengthened its collaboration with different grassroots initiatives and groups in the Golan, such as the Fateh Al- Mudarris Centre for Culture and Arts, the Golan for Developing Arab Villages, school parent committees, and the agriculture associations. The Al-Marsad team is proud that the organization has become more influential and credible than ever. This situation is challenging for the organization, especially for the local community. Implementing the cultural festival for the second year was an opportunity to revive cultural activities inside the community.

The armed conflict in Syria caused the cease of the peace negotiations between Syria and Israel concerning the Golan future. This situation meant that the remaining Syrian community in the Golan was isolated from the rest of Syria, including friends and family. The conflict has also cut off vital export lines for apple sellers in the Golan's Syrian villages, hurting the region's overall economy.

Israel pursued its settlements policies in the Golan. 2022 witnessed unprecedented settlement expansion while the Remaining Syrians will suffer from systematic discriminatory policies in gross human rights violations in urban planning and land use to meet the Syrian's housing needs.

The Syrian community suffers from dozens of discriminatory policies which violate their fundamental rights, including the right to adequate housing; The seizure of land and severe restrictions on the use of land for urban planning and expansion; the presence of dozens of minefields between agricultural fields and adjacent to Arab villages; Frequent power cuts in Syrian towns, especially in the freezing winter, due to defects and shortcomings in the electricity networks inside the villages. Moreover, the Israeli authorities refuse to register newborns whose families stay abroad for work or study because they were born to families with Israeli residency. Still, they choose their "life center" outside Israel.

The following summarizes Al-Marsad's activities during 2022.

2. CHANGES IN THE SITUATIONAL CONTEXT AND THE ORGANIZATION'S ACTIVITIES

The Israeli authorities adopt discriminatory policies against the remaining indigenous Syrian community on the occupied Golan while taking advantage of the military conflict in Syria proper to strengthen its control over the Golan. As reported previously, After the "Trump Declaration," which recognized Israel's 'sovereignty' over the Golan in 2019, we are witnessing an escalation in settlement expansion, exploitation of natural resources, and Israelization policies designed to undermine the Syrian identity of the remaining indigenous Syrian community.

Israeli authorities have continued to pursue the development of a large wind farm project (31 wind turbines, up to 220 meters in height each) owned by Energex Renewable Energies Ltd. The company obtained building permits for the project, and it began to take the first steps to implement it in light of massive public opposition. Al-Marsad continues to follow the developments with its partners- the Association of Civil Rights in Israel ('ACRI') and Planners for Planning Rights ('BIMKOM') to contest the project from a legal perspective. Al-Marsad Also continues to afford intensive legal support to 8 agriculture committees and hundreds of Syrian farmers in their legal confrontation of the wind turbine project.

As mentioned in previous reports, due to legal work contesting the project, Al-Marsad became by June 2019's first human rights organization to be sued under Israel's controversial anti-BDS law. Despite Al-Marsad not engaging in BDS-related activities, Energex used the anti-BDS law to sue Al-Marsad to silence the organization and others who expressed concerns about the wind farm's legality and impact on the Syrian population. Energex withdrew the silencing case filed against Al-Marsad following the parties' engagement in a mediation process that led to a settlement without any obligations to our organization.

Conflict in Syria: The conflict is of enormous concern to Syrians in the Golan as the reality has made the future of the Golan ambiguous for the coming years and possibly decades, considering that Syria is de facto divided. Traveling from the Golan to Syria has been no longer possible since 2012. Accordingly, physical communication between families residing in the Golan with their relatives in Syria is impossible, while farmers lost vital markets for selling their apple harvest. The Israeli government held its cabinet meeting in an illegal settlement in the Golan to confirm that "the Golan will always remain in Israel's hands."

3. IMPORTANT CHANGES WITHIN AL-MARSAD

There have been no principal changes within Al-Marsad throughout 2022. The main difference within the organization is that Singer Singer & Co. (Tel Aviv) took over the audit of the accounts and conducted periodic audited financial reports for the Misereor. In contrast, Muneer Al-Kassem's office (Nazareth) took over the bookkeeping. Other than that, there have been no crucial changes within Al-Marsad throughout January–June 2022.

The organization has increased its advocacy activities among the local community and internationally. Besides, a particular focus is still being given to economic, social, and cultural rights programs. Since the beginning of 2022, we have made all the necessary arrangements for holding the second "Golan Cultural Days" festival in the context of this program, in cooperation with several local initiatives, including women and youth, Fateh Al-Mudarris Centre for Culture and Arts, and the Golan for Developing Arab Villages.

"Golan Cultural Days - 2" is the second edition of the cultural festival organized by Al-Marsad in cooperation with local grassroots and partners. This year 2022, the festival's activities lasted over nine consecutive days and included theatre performances, discussion workshops, and musical evenings, in addition to an arts camp for children. Last year, young and university students volunteer had a significant role in organizing and running the festival. This year, there is a good turnout and local contribution to support the festival, in addition to the Palestinian assistance represented by the **"Takatuf Grant"** provided by the Abdul Mohsin Al Qattan Foundation.



"Jawlan Cultural Days" Festival: Art workshop for children

The Board:

A. Committee

1. Hiba Abu Saleh, Private law office.
2. Madaa Al-Mughraby, Dentist.
3. Madak Kalany. Engineer.

4. Madad Ewidat, farmer.

B. Audit Control Committee

1. Shada Safadi, artist and community activist.
2. Wesam Sharaf, human rights lawyer.

Al-Marsad aims to influence decision-makers at the local and international levels by calling for respect for international law and human rights. Hence, Al-Marsad calls upon the Israeli authorities to respect their obligations enshrined in international human rights and humanitarian law treaties and to end the discriminatory policies against them.

Al-Marsad has achieved the project objectives for the reporting period by researching and advocating Israel's violations of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of the remaining Syrian population in the occupied Golan; Issuing statements; Organizing public meetings and workshops; Cooperating with local and international CSOs; Meeting with local and international groups. Al-Marsad has completed preparations for the annual festival cultural festival titled "Jawaln Cultural Days" on July 29 - August 6, 2022.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES

The al-Marsad team conducted various activities during 2022, including research, UN submissions, preparation for the cultural festival, and advocacy. Besides, Al-Marsad continued the cooperation with local and international NGOs and coalitions, mainly with the ESCR-Net, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Euro-Med Network for Human Rights, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), and various local human NGOs and activists.

Al-Marsad aims to influence decision-makers at the local and international levels by calling for respect for international law and human rights and requesting the Israeli authorities to respect their obligations enshrined in international human rights and humanitarian law treaties and to end the discriminatory policies against them.

Al-Marsad achieved the 2022 core activities of researching and advocating Israel's violations of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of the remaining Syrian population in the occupied Golan; Issuing statements; Organizing public meetings and workshops; Cooperating with local and international CSOs; Meeting with local and international groups. Al-Marsad supported the implementation of the annual festival "Jawaln Cultural Days," organized on 29 July – 6 August 2022.

5. REPORTS AND SUBMISSIONS

- Shadow report on Israel's Violations of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights On the occasion of Israel's fifth periodic report to the Human Rights Committee. Submitted by Al-Marsad, January 2022.

<https://golan-marsad.org/report-on-israels-violations-of-the-international-covenant-on-civil-and-political-rights/>

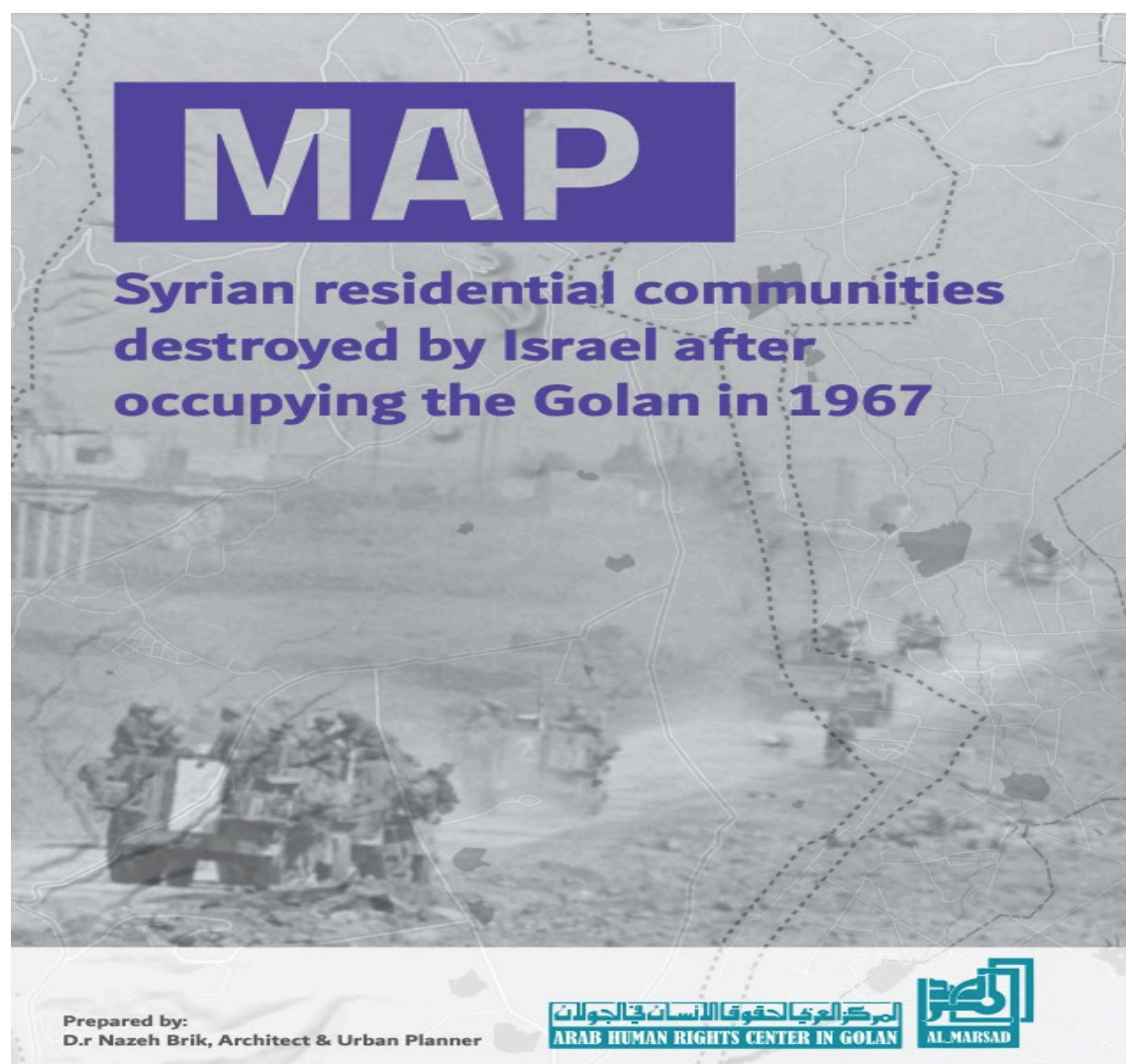
- joint report on the repression of human rights defenders in Israel, the Occupied Territories of Palestine, and the Golan. Submitted to the UN Special Rapporteurs on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories, the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association, the Freedom

of Opinion and Expression, and Contemporary Forms of Racism. (Submitted in January 2022 by Al-Marsad, Syrian Golan; Al-Haq, Ramallah, Palestine; Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council; ESCR-Net; International Human Rights Clinic, Cornell Law School, Ithaca, New York; International Human Rights Clinic, Boston University School of Law, Boston, Massachusetts).

<https://golan-marsad.org/report-on-the-repression-of-human-rights-defenders-in-israel-the-occupied-territories-of-palestine-and-the-golan/>

- Publishing an updated map and a booklet of the destroyed villages (**Arabic, English**).

<https://golan-marsad.org/map/>



- Joint submission with Adalah on the new Israeli plan of settlements' expansion in the Golan (Hebrew).
- monitor the settlement expansion and its impacts on the rights of the remaining Syrian community in the Golan.
- Reconstruction of the organization's website and reviewing and updating all the research material.

- position paper on Forty years of annexing the Syrian Jawlan and imposing citizenship.

<https://golan-marsad.org/forty-years-of-the-annexation-of-the-golan-and-imposing-citizenship/>



- Investigation paper: The situation for human rights defenders in the occupied Syrian Golan.

<https://golan-marsad.org/the-situation-for-human-rights-defenders-in-the-occupied-syrian-golan-2020-2022/>

- Israel's plan to consolidate and expand the settlements project in the occupied Golan 2022-2025 (Arabic).

<https://golan-marsad.org/ar/%d8%ae%d8%b7%d8%a9-%d8%ad%d9%83%d9%88%d9%85%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%ad%d8%aa%d9%84%d8%a7%d9%84-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a5%d8%b3%d8%b1%d8%a7%d8%a6%d9%8a%d9%84%d9%8a-%d9%84%d8%aa%d9%88%d8%b7%d9%8a%d8%af/>

- Legal report, "Ethnic planning": The discrimination policy in planning between Syrian villages and Israeli settlements (Arab, English).

<https://golan-marsad.org/ethnic-planning-a-comparison-between-israels-ethnic-spatial-planning-policies-in-israeli-jewish-settlements-and-syrian-villages-in-the-occupied-syrian-golan/>



6. LEGAL AID AND REPRESENTATION

- 286 in-house legal consultations on various issues: Labor rights, Wind turbine projects, planning, housing rights, and policies of Israeli authorities (local councils, ministries, government companies, social security).
- Follow-up case of family unification in cooperation with ACRI.
- Providing legal support for the agriculture cooperatives and farmers to support their legal struggle against the wind turbine project implemented by “Energex for Renewable Energy.” In this context, Al-Marsad achieved several activities, including:
 - Conducting 15 Meetings at the Al-Marsad office with the heads of the agriculture cooperatives to follow up on the wind turbine project implementation.
 - Continuo provided extensive legal support to 6 agriculture cooperatives in front of their private law office, “Tadmor Levy,” to facilitate their case of challenging private contracts with “Energex for Renewable Energy.”
 - three zoom meetings at the Al-Marsad office between a private law firm in Tel Aviv “Tadmor Levy”, the head of agriculture cooperatives, and dozens of farmers amidst preparing to file a case of challenging private contracts with “Energex for Renewable energy.”
- Letter to the Local Planning Committee to reveal information regarding acceptable amounts paid due to building violations in the five Syrian villages in the Golan.
- Four workshops with local activists in preparing for the festival (Jawlan Cultural Days).
- Three workshops by Zoom with the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI).
- Two cases were filed to the District Labor Court in Nazareth (case No. 11818-07-21 and case No. 18959-04-22)
- Three cases under evaluation and calculating potential compensation amounts.

- Coordination with ACRI to file a petition to challenge the poor electricity network in the Syrian Villages and to end the daily electricity cuts, mainly during the winter. ACRI Team (4 Lawyers) will visit the Golan to conduct a field tour to learn about the problems of the electricity network on August 3.
- Follow up with Tadmor Levy Law Firm on the civil case to challenge the legal aspects of the wind farm project. The lawyer works closely with the law firm, coordinates meetings, and explains to the agriculture cooperatives and their members the legal dimensions and development of the case, participates in the hearings, conducts research, gathers core information for the topic, and prepares and approves 94 sworn statements of local farmers affected by the wind farm.
- letter to the Israel Police asking whether Energy paid the police officers who backed up Energex on 09/12/2021.
- Two Joint letters, Al-Marsad & ACRI, to local councils regarding electricity network problems in the Syrian villages of the Golan.
- letter to the Ministry of Defense requesting a map of mine clearance in the agricultural lands belonging to Syrian farmers in the Golan.
- Joint letter (Al-Marsad and ACRI) to the Police commander requested to refrain from closing agriculture roads while implementing the wind turbine project.
- Several letters to the schools and local council in Majdal Shams.
- Letter to the Ministry of Environment requesting data on rubbish collection in the Golan

7. Local Advocacy (Field visits, workshops, journalists, interns):

- Three Zoom meetings with ACRI for consultation and possible cooperation on specific legal issues.
- Implementation of the Agriculture Festival "Golan Cultural Days) in 29 July-6 August 2022.
- Coordinating and contributing to Tel-Aviv University online course led by Dr. Behar Almug, currently named "What is Culture? - Between East and West".
- An online free learning platform of TAU that allows students to take academic courses via the Internet and will be available on other free educational media.
- Launching the new cultural program, "Jawlan Cinema Club": Displaying the first Documentary film of Lebanese filmmaker Hadi Zakak.
- letter to the Israel Police under the Freedom of Information Law asks whether Energy paid the police officers who backed up Energex on 09/12/2021.
- Letter to the Local Planning Committee to reveal information regarding amounts (fines) paid due to building violations in the five Syrian villages in the Golan.

8. International Advocacy

- Follow-Up and sustainable coordination with International Network for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ESCR-NET).
- Following up with The London School of Economics (LSE) on issues related to the Joint project with Bir Zeit University and Al-Marsad, "Mapping the resistance." Constant follow-up with Dr. M Muna Dajani from LSE on implementing and developing the "Mapping the resistance" project.
- Following up (Two meetings) with the Cornell University Team of the Law Clinic.
- Preparing meetings for the International Labour Organization (ILO) visit to the Golan on 02/04/2022.

- Statement: End-of-Mission Statement of the UN Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices (New York, July 15, 2022).
- International Labour Organization (ILO), The situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories. 110th Session, 2022.
- Follow-Up and sustainable coordination with International Network for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ESCR-NET).
- meeting with Amnesty International and a field tour (26/07/2022).
- (03/08/2022) ACRI to Al-Marsad office to discuss cooperation. A field tour was organized to learn about human rights violations in the Golan, including the electricity infrastructure in Majdal Shams and Masada. Moreover, meeting with locals and discussing breaches of their rights.
- Visit a German Groupe of Rosa Luxemburg Foundation to al-Marsad to learn about the human rights situation in the Golan. A full-day field tour was organized for them.
- 30 students from Notre Dame University (US). A full-day field tour was organized for them.

Link:

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_845252.pdf

- Joint report on the repression of human rights defenders in Israel, the occupied territories of Palestine, and the Golan, January 2022.

Link:

<https://golan-marsad.org/report-on-the-repression-of-human-rights-defenders-in-israel-the-occupied-territories-of-palestine-and-the-golan/>

- Report on Israel's violations of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) January 2022.

Link:

<https://golan-marsad.org/report-on-israels-violations-of-the-international-covenant-on-civil-and-political-rights/>

- The Number of visitors to Al-Marsad's website and the number of Facebook page followers have significantly increased from January-June 2022. Visits increased by more than 30%.
- Zoom meeting with a group of activists from Japan – Presentation and discussion about the reality of human rights in the occupied Jawlan.
- Participation in the FIDH regional conference on economic and social inequality in the Middle East and North African countries, which occurred in Tunis, Tunisia, May 13-14, 2022.
- Meeting at the Al-Marsad's office with the International Mission of the Red Cross, 25/5/2022.
- Reviewing the FIDH paper on the Corporate Sustainability due diligence proposal published by the European Union for Al-Marsad's signature.
- Letter to the UAE ambassador in Israel to grant entry visas to Syrians from the occupied Golan.

9. Cultural Festival: "Jawlan Cultural Days - 2"



Jawlan Cultural Days: Main poster

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Jawlanculturedays>

“Jawlan Cultural Days” - Vision

The occupied Syrian Jawlan has been going through an exceptional phase during the past decade; (specifically with the beginning of the events in Syria, and in part, as a direct result of them) characterized by anxiety, confusion, imbalance, and loss of peace of mind. These surrounding circumstances, and their repercussions on the Jawlani Syrians, generated frustration and a decline in effectiveness on several levels. Perhaps the most prominent is the noticeable shrinkage of the civil and cultural spaces. The fluctuating social dynamics and the destabilization of public consensus, revealed by recent conflict issues within the Jawlani community, may indicate a process of profound transformation in the public sphere, which has not yet taken a stable form.

The last decade has provided favorable conditions for the colonial power to push the policies of integration and adaptation in the occupied Syrian Jawlan to their limits. It is no secret that it seeks to control focal points in the public sphere, extract political representation from civil society, and seize its cultural field. This is because tightening control over the public sphere can only be achieved by possessing the artistic area and its contents.

The vacuum and the regression of activists in the arts and culture allowed a broader expansion of the “culture” of colonial power by creating spaces, youth movements, and containment projects where “Culture” is the outer shell. At the same time, the agendas of altering consciousness and distorting identity lie at the core.

The scene is not as bleak as this preamble suggests. It is undoubtedly insufficient to capture this period and understand the transformations that occurred during it, but it is necessary to say:

reactivating the civil and cultural margin has become a necessity after ten years of atrophy, and it has become a fundamental need; Social and political before it is a purely artistic luxury.



“Golan Cultural Days” – Public Seminar on Identities

Despite the vacuum, and perhaps because of it, an opportunity is formed for our community to revitalize the field of independent indigenous culture in a way that represents and resembles it, free from agendas and coercions of all authorities, to defend our cultural values and identity.

“Jawlan Cultural Days” is an activity by the community and for it which aspires to celebrate its culture and arts; both are the condition of “awareness” and the field of its formation, while the song, the painting, the poem, the play, the film, the symposium, and the intellectual dialogues are its tools. An active cultural life revives the spirit in the public space, expands the scope of public freedoms, deepens critical thinking, gives social processes their positive meanings, and consolidates belonging to this land.



"Jawlan Cultural Days" – Daily Field Tour

This step will strengthen the sense of togetherness in our Jawlan, building hope and urging creative youth competencies to take action, influence, and make a change. We believe that the public space is not the preserve of the elite or any authority and that we deserve, as individuals and as a community, to celebrate qualitative cultural content that is available to all and respects our minds, away from the prevailing culture of consumption.



“Jawlan Cultural Days” – Closing ceremony

10. STAFF MEMBERS’ ACTIVITIES

Staff engaged in the following activities throughout 2021:

A. Salam Said Ahmad, Executive Secretary/Accountant

- Conducted daily administrative and financial tasks;
- Prepared salaries and transferred them to employee’s bank accounts;
- Paid taxes and office bills, monitored Al-Marsad’s bank account, and followed up on financial issues with the accounting office and the program auditor;
- Prepared financial reports in coordination with the program auditor; and,
- Updated the organization’s website, entering data regularly;

B. Wael Tarabieh – Manager, Economic, Social, and Cultural rights program

- Led the Economic, Social, and Cultural rights program;
- facilitate non-legal workshops and provide consultations.
- Coordinate and lead the annual cultural festival “Golan Cultural Days”;
- Conduct research papers and draft statements;
- Represent the organization in local and international conferences, workshops, and activities related to its work;
- Administer and feed the organization’s website and Facebook page;
- Conduct field tours for local and international groups, journalists, and diplomates.

C. Karama Abu Saleh, Lawyer

- Provided legal advice to the Arab population of the Golan (More than 1000 consultations to local community groups and individuals in 2021);
- Corresponded with various Israeli ministries and authorities (e.g., Ministry of Defence, Ministry of the Interior, the Israeli Comptroller, Local Councils, the Landmine Authority, Ministry of Education, and the Israeli local and district planning committees);
- Followed up on Al-Marsad's file with the Israeli non-profit registrar office in Jerusalem as required by law;
- Followed up on Israel's obligations to clear landmine fields with the Israeli Comptroller and the Israeli army; and,
- Represented local workers and filed cases with the Israeli labor court.

D. Nizar Ayoub, Director

- Led the organization's daily work;
- Led the internship program (contacted interns, chose interns, supervised the interns' daily work, and assisted them in conducting their research);
- Conducted legal research (drafted statements, position papers, and legal reports);
- Followed up with Al-Marsad's applications for consultative status with ECOSOC and The European-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN);
- Conducted fundraising (contacted donors, drafted funding proposals, and established relationships with donors);
- Reported to donors;
- Networked with local, regional, and international human rights non-profits; and,
- Conducted interviews on behalf of Al-Marsad.

E. Nazeh Brik, Senior researcher

- Research settlements, settlement expansion, and discrimination in housing rights against the indigenous Syrian community;
- Update the map of "Syrian residential communities destroyed by Israel after occupying the Golan in 1967";
- Lead a program "settlement monitor";
- Conduct field tours for local and international groups, journalists, and diplomats;
- Represent the organization in local and international conferences, workshops, and activities related to its work;

F. Interns

The International interns Program has not regained momentum since the Covid 19 Pandemic coronavirus outbreak in early 2020. Therefore, a few interns were engaged remotely in helping the organization draft legal research and submissions during 2022.

Throughout 2022, dozens of local interns contributed to Al-Marsad's work. The local interns were intensively engaged mainly in supporting the cultural festival "Golan Cultural Days - 2".

11. CONCLUSIONS AND HIGHLIGHTS

Al-Marsad made significant achievements during 2022 concerning legal research and services, Advocacy, and the implementation of the festival "Jawlan Cultural Days-2". As usual, these core activities witness the organization's credibility and increased influence in achieving its human rights mission.

Al-Marsad's work continues to expand along 2022, focusing on civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights programming as usual. Monitoring illegal settlements and their intensive

expansion, legal services, especially legal consultancy, has become a cornerstone of Al-Marsad's daily work. Al-Marsad has strengthened its cooperation with Palestinian and Israeli NGOs. Moreover, Al-Marsad keeps its strong ties with various organizations that work on collective advocacy, including ESCR-Net, The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH).

Al-Marsad continued during the project implementation to investigate, map, and research the human rights situation in the occupied Golan, reporting to the relevant Israeli authorities and challenging human rights violations and discrimination before various Israeli authorities and in Israeli courts in specific cases.

Al-Marsad is pursuing an intense campaign to raise awareness among Syrians about their rights and actively involve independent activists in lobbying for community rights. 2022 witnessed many local advocacy achievements among the Syrians of the Golan.

Increased advocacy has also led to new fundraising opportunities as awareness for Al-Marsad's work has grown exponentially. However, with expanded attention, Al-Marsad's workload has increased as it now needs to meet growing demands for cooperation and assistance locally, regionally, and internationally. Al-Marsad keeps trying to find new funding sources and intends to do so to meet these demands.