

## Bil'in village holds press conference and a demonstration against construction of the Apartheid Wall

Friday, 26 June 2009: Bil'in village holds press conference and a demonstration against construction of the Apartheid Wall. Palestinian residents, alongside international and Israeli activists gathered today in Bil'in to demonstrate against the Wall. By Hamde Abu Rahma

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Before the demonstration, Naomi Klein, Basel Mansour, and Attorney Wisam Ahmad held a press conference.

Basel Mansour and Naomi Klein in press conference Naomi Klein and Iyad Burnat The head of Bilin Popular committee

Naomi Klein is visiting Palestine on the occasion of the publication of her latest book, the #1 international bestseller, "The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism" in Arabic and Hebrew. Klein is an advocate for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign and spoke about her choice to respect the 2005 call for BDS from Palestinian civil society. She explained that the international community can actively support the Palestinian people in their non-violent resistance to the Occupation through BDS.

Explaining her role as a writer, Klein said, "We believe that art and culture are political... Bil'in has integrated art and culture into their resistance."

Basel Mansour, a member of Bil'in's Popular Committee Against the Wall and Settlements spoke about Bil'in's ongoing campaign to demonstrate against the theft of its land.

"We will continue our non-violent resistance to the confiscation of Bil'in's land and incorporate using the legal system as a means of attaining justice. We hope that the Canadian court will decide to hear our case and hold Green Park International and Green Mount International accountable for their violation of international law." — Basel Mansour

Attorney Wisam Ahmad, a program officer for Al Haq and speaker on behalf of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC) will talk about Bil'in and the village's current suit against two Canadian companies.

"The privatization of the settlement industry is an attempt for the Israeli government to hide behind the actions of companies such as Green Park International and Green Mount International. These companies and the Israeli government must be held accountable for violating the Geneva Conventions and Rome Statute."

After the press conference, Palestinian, Israeli and international demonstrators marched from the village towards the site of the Wall. Chanting slogans against occupation, protesters arrived near the Wall. Israeli forces shot tear-gas at demonstrators, including the use of the cannon (which shoots off many gas canisters at once). Several suffered from heavy tear-gas inhalation and required medical attention from medical personnel.

### Bil'in's Court Case

Bil'in has charged that Green Park International and Green Mount International are illegally constructing residential buildings and other settlement infrastructure on village territory.

The Canadian court will first decide if it has jurisdiction to hear Bil'in's case.

According to Emily Schaeffer, an Israeli attorney representing the village of Bil'in, both the articles of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Rome Statute have been incorporated into Canadian federal law under the 2000 Canadian Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Statute, giving Canadian courts jurisdiction to hear Bil'in's case.

Green Park International and Green Mount International have motioned to dismiss the suit. They claim that Canada is not the appropriate forum in which to try the case.

Bil'in plaintiffs are asking for three things in the lawsuit: a declaration that the companies' construction is illegal under Canadian and international law; the demolition of the buildings and restoration of the land, and \$2 million in punitive damages from the companies.

Bil'in is located 4 kilometers east of the Green Line and is adjacent to Modi'in Illit, a large settlement bloc that sits on territory confiscated from Bil'in and several neighboring Palestinian villages. Since 2005, residents of this agricultural community have been organizing a nonviolent campaign against the construction of Israel's Wall in the West Bank on village land.