



# Friends of Tent of Nations North America

## People Building Bridges

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(in memoriam)

May 20, 2014

Israeli Ambassador to the U.S.

Dear Ron Dermer,

This letter is being written in protest of the actions by the Israeli Military Courts against the Nassar family and their **Tent of Nations** Peace Project. This family has documentation of ownership for their 100-acre farm, located just six miles southwest of Bethlehem in the West Bank, dating back to the Ottoman Empire. They have been working through the Israeli Military/Civil Courts and the Israeli Supreme court since 1991, defending their ownership rights to this land called Daher's Vineyard. So far, they have been able to hold back serious threats with legal challenges/appeals through the courts. In December 2012, however, new demolition orders were issued for 10 structures on the farm (including animal pens, compost toilets, temporary tent structures, cisterns, etc.) and three more structures were added in January 2013. None of these structures poses a security threat to neighboring Israeli settlements.

The family protested these actions through their lawyer; they applied for new building permits for all 13 structures. In addition, they submitted the following information by February 24, 2013:

- Additional land survey maps: one topographical map which shows the farm location in the region; two technical maps, one at 1/250 scale and the other 1/50,000 scale, which show the new structures and their locations and dimensions;
- Plans for sources of providing electricity and water to the land from the village and for provisions for gray water and filtration systems;
- Approval/signature of the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture, certifying that the land is agricultural land.

At the same time, the family continued their efforts to have the land legally re-registered in the Nassar family name (only the last effort in a long litany of attempts to have this done). As of mid-April 2014, there had been no word from the Military Court as to their decisions regarding either of these matters; the family never knows what to expect or when to expect it. In late April/early May 2014, however, the Military Authorities placed a warning on the land declaring that the trees were planted on "State Land" and, therefore, constituted a trespass and should be "evacuated"! On May 5, the Nassar family filed an appeal with the Military Court against this order and clarified that the land was not "State Land" and that the trees were planted on the family land. Furthermore, they clarified that the Supreme Court had declared that the Nassar family should continue with the "re-registration" process of their land.

According to the law, no demolition or evacuation is allowed once an appeal is filed and until a final verdict has been delivered. In spite of this fact, however, they rushed to destroy the land and uproot the trees. On May 19, 2014, the Israeli Military brought in bulldozers and, unannounced, illegally destroyed between 1,500 and 2,000 trees in the lower valley on the land as well as reducing the terraced land to rubble. We would like you to look into this situation as

soon as possible and help us prevent any additional destructive action on the part of the Israeli Military from taking place. This family lives by the motto "We Refuse to be Enemies" and is committed to solving issues in a non-violent manner. This 22-year struggle must come to an end in a just and legal manner, and we urge you to use your influence to ensure that justice does

prevail in this case.

Sincerely,

Friends of Tent of Nations North America - Steering Committee:

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