

# From Golan to Gaza

A photo essay by Maria Kastrinou



Israeli troops enter the Golan Heights during the Six Days War in 1967. Approximately 131,000 (out of 137,000) native Syrian inhabitants were forcefully transferred or displaced.

Archival photo courtesy of *al-Marsad* (<http://golan-marsad.org>).



1967 - Golan residents flee with arms raised.  
Photograph is courtesy of *al-Marsad* (<http://golan-marsad.org>).



Protest by the people of the occupied Syrian village Majdal Shams during the six-month strike of 1982.  
Photograph is courtesy of *al-Marsad* (<http://golan-marsad.org>).

Building on top: Israeli occupation forces do not allow new building permits, and residents have to build on top of existing buildings. Majdal Shams, 2015, image by Maria Kastrinou.



Afterlives of war: Army barracks near Lake Ram in the occupied Golan. November 2015, photograph by Maria Kastrinou.



War for tourists, or, Damascus is nearest: The tourist history trail near United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), in Mount Bental, Jabal Bental. Photograph by Maria Kastrinou, 2015.



Over there is Quneitra: The United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), in Mount Bental, Jabal Bental. Photograph by Maria Kastrinou, 2015.



'Making bread with cherry wood is delicious': The traditional Druze bread made with a Saj oven is very thin and a staple of everyday life. Photograph by Maria Kastrinou, 2015.



Ceasefire line, fortified fences and minefields separate the Golan Heights from the rest of Syria. The Druze flag is raised for good luck during new building work. Photograph by Maria Kastrinou, 2015.



Jawlani landscape. Photograph by Maria Kastrinou, 2015.



Apple storage: Selling apples in Syria was a means of local resistance and economic independence that has stopped due to the war in Syria, to the detriment of Jawlani farmers. Photograph by Maria Kastrinou, 2015.



Entrance forbidden: Israel issued hundreds of Military Orders declaring depopulated Syrian villages as closed military zones, preventing villagers from returning and using the spaces for military training. Photograph by Maria Kastrinou.

Occupation art 1: Israeli occupation forces use a deserted administrative unit in the destroyed prefecture of Quneitra for army training. In the shells of these structures, one can see the silhouettes of tanks, barricades, and strange, disturbing wall art, often accompanied by writing in English and in Hebrew, and presumed by locals to belong to Israeli soldiers. Photograph by Maria Kastrinou, 2015.







Occupation art 2. Photograph by Maria Kastrinou, 2015.



Occupation art 3. Photograph by Maria Kastrinou, 2015.



At the *bostan*: This is the cared-for agricultural landscape that surrounds the occupied villages. Resisting the monopolization of water resources by the Israeli occupation forces, many farmers have installed water tanks to collect rainwater. Most families have a small piece of land or orchard that they tend to, visit and socialize at. Photograph by Maria Kastrinou, 2023.



*Al-Masirah* (The March): known by locals as ‘the statue of Sultan al-Atrash,’ it is the first sculpture that was installed in Majdal Shams’ main public square. Created by the renowned sculptor and art teacher Hassan Khater, the monument is an symbol of the resistance and resilience of its people. The central statue belongs to Basha Al-Atrash, the Druze leader of the Great Syrian Revolt (1925-1927) against French colonialism. Next to him, stands the man of letters, holding a book. On his side, kneeling with a rifle in his hand is a man dressed in traditional Druze garments. On the front, a wailing mother holds her martyred son, an evocation of Michelangelo’s *Pietà*. At the back of the statue are three young children holding papers and wheat – emphasizing the connection to both education and the land. The statue was installed in 1987. Photo by Maria Kastrinou, 2023.



At the barber's: Remnants of Arab Socialism.  
Majdal Shams, 2015. Photograph by Maria Kastrinou.



Majdal Shams and the ceasefire separation fence.  
Photograph by Maria Kastrinou, 2023.

For the shirts of immortal souls:  
Believing in reincarnation  
(*taqammous*), the Druze place  
importance upon the soul that  
returns, rather than the body that is  
like a shirt (*qamis*) to the soul. In  
keeping with this belief, the dead are  
put in large ossuaries like this one, at  
the cemetery in Majdal Shams.  
Photograph by Maria Kastrinou, 2023.





The martyrs are different: These are the graves and remembrance plaques for the martyrs of the occupation, including Hayel Abu Zeid and Amir Abu Jobal. The “shouting hill” can be just seen adjacent, overlooking the ceasefire separation fence and the “valley of tears.” This is where relatives would come to speak with megaphones to loved ones inside Syria, on the over side of the fence. Photograph by Maria Kastrinou, 2023.

Turbine trouble: Israeli occupation forces have installed these warning signs in the rich agricultural lands of the occupied Syrians in preparation for their wind turbine installation - which is fiercely resisted by the local people.







“Everyday I am exposed to the danger of missiles on my way to work...” Photograph by Kamel on June 24, 2024.



"And on my return I face the same danger when I arrive home."  
Photograph by Kamel on June 24, 2024.



Like fireworks in the sky: Missiles over Majdal Shams being intercepted by the Iron Dome. November 2023.