NARRATOR
Jeff Halper left his native America 28 years ago to settle in his spiritual homeland, Israel. Since then his views about Israel have radically changed. Today Jeff is a human rights activist campaigning on behalf of Palestinians.

Jeff Halper
We’re on our way to a demolition. This morning we heard that the Israeli army is destroying the reservoirs of some Palestinian farmers in this fairly arid desert area near Hebron. So now we’re driving from Jerusalem down into the desert to see what’s going on.

NARRATOR
Kayed Jaber is the Palestinian farmer Jeff is on his way to see.

For generations, his family clan, the Jabers, have farmed most of this valley.

Kayed’s cousin Ismael lives on the neighbouring farm.

Kayed and Ismael grow fruit and vegetables for market.

But there is a serious water shortage.

Ismael
The best thing you can do if you farm in this area is catch every drop of rainwater and store it for farming.

NARRATOR
They use an ancient system of covered reservoirs to store rainwater, but these are no longer big enough.

They’re building some bigger reservoirs. But, the Israeli authorities want to destroy them.

KAYED
Rainwater is sent to all the people, black and white alike. But it seems, in Israel, it belongs to the strong.

NARRATOR
Kayed and Ismael’s water problem has turned into a battle with the Israeli Civil Administration.

Jeff Halper
The Civil Administration is the military government of the West Bank. A huge government that decides all the aspects of Palestinians’ lives and it also decides the settlement activities.

NARRATOR
And Israeli settlers are moving in ever greater numbers to lands farmed by Palestinians such as the Jabers.
The hills around Ismael and Kayed’s lands now form an Israeli settlement called Kyriat Arbat.

NARRATOR
Eliakhim Ha Etzni is a well-known legal expert who represents the local Israeli settlers.

Ha Etzni
We are at the old quarter of Kyriat Arbat. Across this valley, this beautiful valley of the vineyards, you have the other part of Kyriat Arbat. In the more distant future, we shall build there as we grow.

But the cultivated land belongs to the Arabs.

There is very, very close proximity between Jews and Arabs and we believe that this type of living should be in the whole country.

NARRATOR
Since the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict, the population of Israel and the West Bank has more than doubled. Both Arab and Israeli statistics show that in another 25 years the population in this part of the country is set to double again. As numbers increase, competition for land and water is causing friction between the communities.

Jeff Halper
As in other parts of the world, water resources are very much under pressure in the Middle East, in Israel and the West Bank as well. But in addition, we also have a conflict here for control over water - and it’s the people who have the guns and the power who also take control of the water.

It should be up here…

NARRATOR
Jeff arrives at Kayed and Ismael’s farmlands. The army has already been there for sometime.

Jeff Halper
We are way out in the middle of nowhere, in a sense, I mean it doesn’t bother anyone. And the Civil Administration, you can tell their white jeeps that are a real sign of fear and intimidation on the West Bank, those are the supervisors to come. And they are destroying a reservoir that a farmer set up here in order to irrigate his fields. Palestinians get very little water as opposed to the settlements. Right across here are settlements, right within a mile of here are settlements. So the Israeli settlers here get as much water as they want, living on a European level, whereas the Palestinians, especially the farmers, get very little water. And when they try simply to capture rainwater, the reservoirs they built get demolished. I mean that’s the degree to which the occupation has really gotten into the everyday details of people’s lives here. So, let’s go on and see what’s happening here.

NARRATOR
Kayed’s reservoir is the first to be attacked by the army bulldozers.
Jeff Halper
You know, Palestinians don’t get one fraction of what the settlers over here get. All the settlers here use twice the amount of water they use in Tel Aviv. And look what we’re doing. Look what we’re doing. Look what we’re doing. Come on. Come on man. How many years are you going to represent this?

Capt. Lerner
This is a reservoir that was built without a permit and that’s why it is being demolished. These people illegally break open the main pipelines serving only the city of Hebron and the water flows here instead of to people’s homes so we have a situation where people can grow tomatoes but unfortunately they can’t drink water in the city.

Jeff Halper
That’s nonsense. He can’t show me the pipes here. I’d like to see where the pipe are. Tell him to show you where the pipes are. People here either dig wells or they build reservoirs because they don’t get water. Why are they doing it? Why aren’t they doing what the Israeli farmers do? Why don’t they turn on the tap and irrigate their fields? Why don’t they turn on the tap and have water for their kids? Because they can’t do it. Because they don’t have the water. Israel allocates every drop of water.

Narrator
We asked the army spokesman to show us the pipes the farmers are supposed to be stealing water from.

Capt. Lerner
They dig out everything that’s around it and then they drill into the main water pipe. They drill into the main water pipe, connect a tap, and then they take another pipe and send it out to the fields usually. And this is why we have green fields with tomatoes, which need a lot of water.

Narrator
But this pipe is not actually broken is it?

Capt. Lerner
No. This one isn’t broken because it is an old attempt.

Narrator
So the pipe hasn’t been interfered with and the reservoirs haven’t been drawing water have they?

Capt. Lerner
No, they were demolished before there was water inside them.

Kayed
We told them we would not touch their pipe and that we would wait for God to give us rain. The reservoir is empty. And it hasn’t rained.

Narrator
Jeff decides to take matters into his own hands.
Soldiers
Move! Move away!

I told you to go up there!

Move BBC, move away!

NARRATOR
A mobile telephone comes in handy for a hastily arranged press conference

Jeff Halper
They belong to the Palestinians. And we’ve always opposed this. We’ve always resisted, we see our resistance as Israelis as a part of resisting the occupation in general.

This act is against Israeli law, it’s against international law, it’s against human law and I’m embarrassed, I have to say, painfully, as an Israeli, I am embarrassed and mortified that this is the way we behave towards another people.

You take kids and draft them into the army and you say this is the Israel Defence Force. They get up in the morning, you take them to destroy the wells of poor Palestinian families. That’s the dehumanisation. The occupier does not win because in the end you end up destroying yourself.

Kayed
The army commander did not stop at destroying the reservoir - he even destroyed the foundation.

He clenched his teeth and said to me, ‘I want to destroy your future and kill the future of your children.’

NARRATOR
Jeff is bundled into an army vehicle and taken off to jail.

Meanwhile, the Israeli settlers overlooking Kayed’s farm from the opposite hilltop, are seemingly unaware of the scene taking place just below them.

Ha Etzni
This is the heart of the land of Israel. This is where the Jewish kings ruled and the Jewish prophets, the prophets of the bible, your bible and our bible, prophesied and gave the world this unique, one-time gift, which is called the bible.

For the Jewish nation, which means those Jews who are consciously Jews, time has no meaning. We don’t feel that we can be occupiers in our own homeland, which is a homeland in a deeper sense than anywhere in the world. There is no people in the world, who has remained faithful to a land, to a country, through so many tribulations and pogroms, wanderings in all corners of the world and remained faithful. There is not such a phenomenon.

NARRATOR
The destruction of Kayed’s reservoir complete, the bulldozers make their way to Ismael’s reservoir.

Ismael
I thank God anyway. He sees everything. If there is a God, then praise him.

NARRATOR
Ismael believes that the destruction of his reservoir is merely part of a bigger plan by the Civil Administration

Ismael
These are just excuses. The phrase ‘you steal water’ is kinder than saying ‘we just don’t want you here.’

Kayed
Is there any evidence that I have stolen water? I haven’t stolen any water. If I had stolen water why didn’t they arrest me?

Ismael
I have documents, which I have presented to the Israeli authorities, showing my family have long owned this land. Still they wouldn’t give us a permit although we have applied many times. They give themselves the right to come with bulldozers and bring Israeli settlers in that place. Of course the Israeli settlers will get permits to build.

NARRATOR
Across the road, lives Ismael’s father, Jawad. He too has been experiencing problems with the Israeli settlement just above his land.

Jawad
This is breaking our backs. It’s so hard, God will compensate us.

NARRATOR
It’s been nearly thirty years since the Israeli settlement on the hill was established.

Jawad
When will we be able to call them neighbours? They are really mean. The settlers up there throw stones down at us. They say that this is their land.

NARRATOR
Meanwhile, Jeff has been released from jail. Everyone meets at Kayed’s house.

Jeff Halper
They knocked me around a little, not bad. The soldiers see me as a crazy old man. They don’t have any conception of the issue, or why I did it. So you know, they’ve got this old guy on the ground. If a Palestinian does it, it’s much more threatening.

The Civil Administration spokesman told me that they had wanted to grow tomatoes – and tomatoes take too much water.
NARRATOR
Dr. Jad Isaac is a leading Palestinian water expert.

Dr. Jad Isaac
You mean to tell me that they destroyed the rainwater catchment because Palestinians were growing tomatoes? Frankly, I believe the Israelis would like to blame the Palestinians for everything including the ozone layer.

Shmuel Kantor
I have been several times to that particular site and and others, and I know exactly the size of the reservoir is such that they cannot store water from winter to summer. They can only store water from night to day to take water illegally from our system.

NARRATOR
But it looked pretty big to me.

Shmuel Kantor
Because you don’t have an engineering eye.

Dr. Jad Isaac
I find what the honourable hydrologist in Israel was telling you, I think he should re-do his calculations again and believe that there were Nabatians, and Canaanites, and Amorites, who did not know how to drill water, to extract ground water, but knew how to collect rainwater. Their domestic agriculture started in this area using these two thousand or three thousand years technology.

We count more on rain than we count on Israel.

Jeff Halper
Officially the settlers are really stealing tremendous amounts of water from the Palestinians under the guise of legality and allocations and all of that. You know, these are people that have to live. You know, and the answer is, and the bottom line is they want you to leave. That’s really the bottom line, they want you to leave.

NARRATOR
We decided to leave Israel and come back three months later to see how things would develop.

At the time we left, the Civil Administration had cleared the field behind Jawad’s house of his olive trees.

When we returned, we found a wall had been built through it and Jawad’s land confiscated. The Jawad land is in the so-called area C, that part of the West Bank, which under the Oslo peace agreements would fall under complete Israeli control. With no-one to help him, Jawad is feeling increasingly vulnerable.

Jawad
A soldier called Captain Shai grabbed me by the throat and slapped me twice. I told him, ‘you can’t take this land, I have deeds’. I told him, ‘It’s a sin to cut down olive trees like this.'
This tree prays to God and gives us oil and olives to sustain us’. He said, ‘this land is confiscated, and you can’t stop us’.

**NARRATOR**

Eliakhim Ha Etzni takes a very different view of the wall. He feels it should have been built even further into Jawad’s land.

**Ha Etzni**

This was government land. He took it. He simply took it. But we didn’t want to quarrel over it so we built the wall here. You understand? And here is the site of the new building coming up.

**NARRATOR**

How could he just take it?

**Ha Etzni**

Who, the Arab? He planted vineyards. That’s it. And we did not want to quarrel and the Civil Administration didn’t bother as they don’t bother over vast stretches of areas.

**Ismael**

Since your last visit, I have received a demolition notice on my house.

I hope to God almighty that my house will not be demolished for the sake of my family. They have taken farmland over there to build a petrol station for the Jewish settlers.

**Kayed**

Since your last visit, we have had to stop all of our farming activities. The administrator said he said he would only help us if we stopped farming.

**Har Etzni**

We are in a park. You can hear the birds. When we came in 1972, no birds.

This is the swimming pool, heated all year because this is a thousand metres above sea level.

**Dr. Jad Isaac**

I think it’s about time for Israel to recognise that this is not Britain. You have to adapt your life according to the environment you are in. A lawn, if it is 200 square metres, consumes enough for a family of ten Palestinians. But we have to live in harmony with nature.

**NARRATOR**

At home in Jerusalem, Jeff Halper continues his fight for the rights of Palestinians.

**Jeff Halper**

When you see injustice being committed there’s a great sense of outrage. So when I go out I and see the army, the powerful Israeli army, destroying the reservoir of a poor Palestinian farmer, I want to take some of the Civil Administration people and soldiers and just shake them, and say, ‘how can you do this as people? We’re always talking about all the suffering
the Jews have gone through and the Jews as victims. And here we the victims have victims.

Ismael
Come on. Let’s go inside.

NARRATOR
With his savings lost on the reservoir, and a demolition notice served on his house, Ismael has written an open letter to the Israeli prime minister

Ismael
Where is your conscience, you who advocate peace? Letting bulldozers of the occupation army destroy land and reservoirs owned by me and my brother Kayed Jaber. Reservoirs we eat from, so destroying our lifeline.

What we are calling for, Mr. Barak, if you have any conscience, is to stop these criminal acts against people who are only trying to live.

Thank you