

The Caterpillar Campaign

Demanding the End of Caterpillar Bulldozer Sales to Israel

The Israeli government routinely uses bulldozers in its military activities and employs them to alter the facts on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territories. The result of these operations has been the destruction of vital Palestinian infrastructure, and the death of civilians. These actions are in blatant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and other international laws.

Caterpillar Inc., the giant equipment manufacturer based in Peoria, Illinois, sells most of these bulldozers to Israel. Because Israel is using these machines for unjust and illegal purposes, hundreds of grassroots organizations from across America are working together to demand that Caterpillar stop selling its products to the Israeli government.

Bulldozers as Weapons

The bulldozers favored by Israel are Caterpillar's D9 model, a giant two-story machine with a front blade of more than 6 feet high and 15 feet wide and a claw-like hydraulic "ripper" in the back.



The US Campaign is a diverse coalition of over 200 groups working for freedom from occupation and equal rights for all by challenging US policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Campaign is based on human rights and international law, providing a non-sectarian framework for everyone who supports its Call to Action. Its strategy is to inform, educate, and mobilize the public so as to change the US role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In 2001, Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz declared, "The D-9 is a strategic weapon here."¹

The Israeli military adds its own armaments including machine-gun mounts, grenade launchers, and bulletproof windows, bringing the machine's weight up to approximately 60 tons

Uprooting Olive Trees

Olive trees, the foundation of the Palestinian economy for generations and a symbol of the Palestinian people's attachment to their land, are prime targets of the Israeli occupation forces. Using Caterpillar bulldozers, Israeli forces have uprooted hundreds of thousands of Palestinian olive trees in recent years.

Demolishing Homes

Since Israel occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967, it has demolished 12,000 Palestinian homes, leaving 70,000 people without shelter and traumatized.

About 15 percent of the demolitions carried out since 2000 were in retaliation for attacks against Israelis, even though the families had nothing to do with any alleged violence. In 25 percent of the cases, houses were destroyed for a "lack of permits." (Since 1967 Israeli policy has been to deny construction permits to Palestinians.) Some 60 percent of the home demolitions were carried out by Israel in land "clearance operations". The vast majority of these homes have been destroyed with Caterpillar equipment. Human Rights Watch, which has carefully documented the destruction in the city of Rafah in Gaza, has called on Caterpillar to suspend bulldozer sales to Israel.²

Building the Wall

Caterpillar equipment has also played a central role in clearing Palestinian agricultural land for the 450-mile-long Wall Israel is building illegally through the occupied West Bank.

In most places the route of the Wall cuts deeply into Palestinian land cutting farmers off from their fields, students and teachers from their schools, and the sick and elderly from medical care.

Killing of Civilians

Caterpillar bulldozers have also resulted in the killing of Palestinian civilians. In April 2002, seven Palestinians including an 85-year-old man, a pregnant woman, and children aged 4, 7, and 9, were killed when Israel used Caterpillar bulldozers to demolish their family home.

In 2002 Israel's largest-circulation newspaper, Yediot Aharonot, published an interview with a soldier who had operated a CAT D-9 bulldozer during military operations in the center of the Palestinian city of Jenin.

An excerpt: "I wanted to destroy everything. I begged the officers, over the radio, to let me knock it all down from top to bottom. To level everything. ... When I was told to bring down a house, I took the opportunity to bring down some more houses.... For three days, I just destroyed and destroyed. The whole area... They were warned by loudspeaker to get out of the house before I come, but I gave no one a chance. I didn't wait. I didn't give one blow, and wait for them to come out. I would just ram the house with full power, to bring it down as fast as possible. I wanted to get to the other houses. To get as many as possible."³

In the Gaza Strip, a 38-year-old paralyzed man died when his home was bulldozed despite pleas from his mother and sister that he had been unable to get out. In a similar incident in 2004, an elderly man was found crushed to death in the rubble of his family's bulldozed home.

In 2002 Rachel Corrie, a 23-year-old American peace activist was killed with a Caterpillar bulldozer as she tried to protect a Palestinian home from demolition.

Is Caterpillar Responsible?

United Nations guidelines on the responsibilities of multinational corporations state that companies should not "engage in or benefit from" violations of international human rights or humanitarian law.⁴

Caterpillar's own corporate code of conduct declares: "our commitment to financial success must also take into account social, economic, political, and environmental priorities. However, Caterpillar executives assert that the company has "neither the legal right nor the ability to monitor" the way customers use its products.⁴



What US and International Law Say

Article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention deems the "extensive destruction and appropriation of property carried out unlawfully and wantonly" as a war crime

The sale of Caterpillar bulldozers to the Israeli military is subject to the US Arms Export Control Act, which prohibits the use of US made machinery or weapons against a civilian population.

What The US Campaign is Doing

In 2005 the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation voted to make the Caterpillar campaign one of its national priorities.

What You Can Do

*Learn more about Caterpillar's role in the Occupied Territories.

*Write to CAT management and your local CAT dealer demanding an end of bulldozer sales to Israel.

* Urge your Congressional representatives to seek an investigation of Israeli and CAT violations of the Arms Export Control Act

***Join nationwide activities
against Caterpillar**

For information and links to key partners in the CAT Campaign, go to the US Campaign's CAT Page:

<http://www.endtheoccupation.org/article.php?list=type&type=29>

End Notes

1. http://www.btselem.org/Download/200101_Civilians_Under_Siege_Eng.doc

2. See "Israel: Caterpillar Should Suspend Bulldozer Sales" <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/11/22/isrlpa9711.htm> and "Razing Rafah: Mass Home Demolitions in the Gaza Strip" <http://hrw.org/reports/2004/rafah1004/index.htm>

3. Yediot Aharonot, May 31, 2002. Translation from http://gush-shalom.org/archives/kurdi_eng.html.

4. "Norms on the responsibilities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises with regard to human rights" - [http://www.unhcr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/E.CN.4.Sub.2.2003.12.Rev.2.En?Opendocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/E.CN.4.Sub.2.2003.12.Rev.2.En?Opendocument)

5. <http://www.cat.com/cdacomponents/securedFile/displaySecuredFileServletJSP?fileId=89709&languageId=>