

Wild Boars Running Wild In Haifa During Lockdown

by Hugh Fitzgerald



The Palestinian Arabs blame Israel for a great many things. I learned recently that for years they have been claiming that the Israelis, always seeking ways to harm the inoffensive Palestinians, have been deliberately raising wild boars in order to set them loose to forage for food in Palestinian farms, where they eat the crops, and rampage destructively through the farmland.

This charge was first made before a large audience by Mahmoud Abbas [in 2014](#):

Several Palestinian media outlets on November 21 quoted Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas as accusing Israel of using “wild pigs” against Palestinians in the West Bank.

Abbas’s allegation was made during a speech he delivered at a pro-Palestinian conference in Ramallah on Friday night.

This was not the first time the PA accused Israel of releasing pigs to destroy agricultural fields in the West Bank.

In the past, the PA has claimed the IDF and settlers released wild pigs in Palestinian- owned lands to damage crops and intimidate farmers.

“Every night, they [Israelis] release wild pigs against us,” Abbas was quoted as saying in his speech. “Why are they doing this to us?”

But “they” [the Israelis] are not “doing this to us” [the Palestinians].

Wild boars are known to be especially destructive as they root around for food. Further, as members of the pig family they are regarded with special disgust by the Muslim Palestinians, who want nothing to do with the crops that have survived but that the wild boars have rendered “unclean” by being in contact with them. But there has never been any evidence offered to support this charge. No Israelis have ever been caught delivering wild boars to Palestinian agricultural areas, not before Abbas first made that charge publicly in 2014, and not in any of the years since. There are tens of thousands of wild boars in Israel; it would be very hard to prevent all of them from damaging farmland, whether that belonging to Jew or Arab, and both Israelis and Palestinians have suffered from their depredations.

Far from destroying Palestinian farmland, the Israelis have shared their agricultural prowess, including the latest advances in drip irrigation, and how to enhance seeds so that they produce more plentiful and robust crops, giving a big boost in yields. Let’s not forget how eager Israel was to turn over its 3,000 greenhouses and the thriving business in fruits and vegetables Israelis in Gaza had built to the Palestinians. It was not they, but the Palestinians themselves, who

vandalized and destroyed those greenhouses. Of course, the Israeli help with irrigation and higher crop yields, freely offered to Palestinian farmers, is never publicly recognized by the recipients. Instead, the official line of the PA ignores that aid, and accuses the Israelis of trying to harm the Palestinian farmers in any way they can. Among those ways, the favorite charge is that they set loose wild boars.

The boars' natural habitat is the forest around Mount Carmel, right next to Haifa. But ever since the mayor of Haifa ended the culling of the wild boars – forbidding them to be hunted – in 2019, their numbers have multiplied by the dozens, and some believe will soon increase to the hundreds unless culling is brought back. They have made their way to Haifa, where they have been increasingly brazen, blocking traffic, digging up public gardens, and even overturning large garbage bins.

In the last few months, with people in lockdown because of the coronavirus, [the problem has only gotten worse](#). With the streets and parks largely empty of people, the boars roam free, with no one to yell at them, or shoo them away with sticks.

Many residents of Haifa, a predominantly Jewish city of 300,000, with a significant Arab minority, are fed up with the boars, who have multiplied since the left-wing mayor, an animal rights sentimentalist, ended the killing of the animals last fall. Some residents are worried that the boars might attack children. They are no longer afraid to appear in broad daylight, and appear indifferent to the few humans they encounter, and the few cars on the roads, as they walk serenely across the streets.

"I'm scared that after the coronavirus passes, the boars will have gotten used to coming every day, every night, every hour," said Yaron Hanan, 63, who runs a public campaign that has been calling for a municipal crackdown on the animals.

The appearance of the wild boars in Haifa, having arrived from the Mt. Carmel forest, does remind us that these animals are a menace to everyone. There is still no evidence Israel has been using them to spitefully damage Palestinian farms. Israel has, in fact, done everything it can to help those farmers increase their yield. The wild boars are just as destructive to Israeli as to Palestinian farms, and now, with so many people in lockdown, to the urban environment of Israelis and Arabs in Haifa as well. The Israeli and Palestinian farmers' common enemy, Mahmoud Abbas should, but probably won't, take notice, are the animal-rights sentimentalists who refuse to let anyone touch a hair on the bristly heads of these wild and, thanks to the coronavirus, no-longer-so-wild marauders.

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