



# Global Nonviolent Action Database

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## Golan Druze resistance to Israeli forced citizenship, 1981-1982

October

1981

to: July

1982

**Country:** Syria

**Country:** Israel

**Location City/State/Province:** Golan Heights

### Goals:

Maintaining Syrian citizenship and preventing forced imposition of Israeli citizenship

## Methods

### Methods in 1st segment:

- 038. Marches
- 097. Protest strike
- 106. Industry strike
- 141. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws
- 184. Defiance of blockades

### Methods in 2nd segment:

- 097. Protest strike
- 106. Industry strike
- 141. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws
- 184. Defiance of blockades

### Methods in 3rd segment:

- 097. Protest strike
- 106. Industry strike
- 141. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws
- 184. Defiance of blockades

### Methods in 4th segment:

- 023. Destruction of own property › Destruction of Israeli identity cards
- 097. Protest strike
- 106. Industry strike
- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance

- 141. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws
- 184. Defiance of blockades

**Methods in 5th segment:**

- 023. Destruction of own property › Destruction of Israeli identity cards
- 097. Protest strike
- 106. Industry strike
- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance

**Methods in 6th segment:**

- 023. Destruction of own property › Destruction of Israeli identity cards
- 097. Protest strike
- 106. Industry strike
- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance

**Additional methods (Timing Unknown):**

- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 055. Social boycott › Of Druze that accepted ID cards
- 147. Deliberate inefficiency and selective noncooperation by enforcement agents
- 181. Reverse strike

## Classifications

**Classification:**

Defense

**Cluster:**

Human Rights

National/Ethnic Identity

**Group characterization:**

- Druze communities

## Leaders, partners, allies, elites

**Leaders:**

Druze village leaders

**Partners:**

Not Known

**External allies:**

Druze communities in Israel spoke out in defense of the Golan Druze; Some Israelis spoke out against the annexation; some IDF soldiers refused to fire on villagers

**Involvement of social elites:**

Not Known

## Joining/exiting order of social groups

**Groups in 1st Segment:**

**Groups in 2nd Segment:**

**Groups in 3rd Segment:**

**Groups in 4th Segment:**

**Groups in 5th Segment:**

**Groups in 6th Segment:**

- Druze communities in Israel

**Segment Length:** *Approximately 1 and 2/3 months*

## Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

**Opponents:**

Israeli Occupiers

**Nonviolent responses of opponent:**

Not Known

**Campaigner violence:**

Not Known

**Repressive Violence:**

Homes destroyed, people shot and wounded

## Success Outcome

**Success in achieving specific demands/goals:**

2 points out of 6 points

**Survival:**

1 point out of 1 points

**Growth:**

2 points out of 3 points

**Notes on outcomes:**

After extended pressure many Druze accepted ID cards, though some continued to resist and the resistance led to a compromise that favored the Druze more than the initial annexation plan had.

Large amount of growth within the community, but very little growth outside.

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The Druze are a religious and ethnic sect on the Eastern edge of the Mediterranean. They live in mountainous regions in modern Lebanon, Israel and Syria (the Golan Heights). During the Arab-Israeli war in 1967 nearly all of the 110,000 Druze in the Golan Heights fled, though around 13,000 remained near the foot of Mount Harmon. They generally farmed olives and fruit. That same land was strategically important to both Israel and Syria, and Israel occupied it after the 1967 war. From 1967 to 1979 Golan remained a militarily occupied territory, but after the Camp David negotiations in 1979 Israel moved to assimilate the Golan region without formally declaring its intentions.

So in an effort to start de facto annexation of the Golan, the Druze were offered citizenship and identity cards, with the

implication that they would carry significant benefits. Assimilation of the Druze community would make later annexation of the land simpler for Israel. From the initial offer in 1979 to 1981, the Druze communities discussed the offer and came to believe it would be detrimental to accept. While some Druze who worked in Israel faced harassment for refusing identity cards, the Druze community shunned any who accepted the cards. Other Druze refused to visit or speak to them and they were not welcome at community or religious events, including weddings and funerals. There were a number of reasons for the resolute resistance to the offer of citizenship. Many Druze believed that the Golan was fully Syrian and would be returned. Others did not want the possibility of joining the Israeli military, which would mean they would have to fight against their relatives in Syria. Druze were also generally supportive of the Palestinian cause. In these regards they were making a distinction with the Druze who live in Israel and who were successfully assimilated after they were offered preferential treatment over non-Druze Palestinian Arab Muslims. Israel had successfully used sect as a wedge in that case, but the Golan Druze refused to be treated as anything other than occupied Syrian Arabs.

Having failed at enticing the Druze to assent to Israeli annexation, the Israelis applied more force. In October 1981 the Israeli Knesset formally annexed the Golan. The Druze petitioned the Israeli government for a reversal of the policy forcing them to accept citizenship, but Israel refused.

Druze day laborers responded by going on strike, which crippled northern Israel's industry. Even though many of these laborers lost their jobs, any who accepted citizenship were ostracized from the community. Israel tried to publicize that the Druze had accepted Israeli rule, when in fact IDF forces had surrounded villages, cutting them off from one another and from vital resources. When villagers ran out of food, they marched together to a neighboring village, making it through the military forces encircling the villages by strength of numbers.

At this point, an active campaign of resistance gained momentum. Villagers, especially the elderly and young, broke curfew to harvest crops. As Israeli forces arrested the harvesters and flew them away in helicopters, more came to take their place and get arrested. At one point, a large group of Druze peaceably assembled in a town square. Israeli soldiers in a helicopter above were ordered to fire on them, but the soldiers directly refused the order.

In one tactic that borders on violent, groups of Druze women wrestled guns from soldiers' hand and then returned them to officers. Striking workers went on reverse strike and completed a sewer project that the Israelis had refused to fund.

Israel began to negotiate with the Druze leaders and the Israelis gave the impression they were willing to compromise. But on the day in early April 1983 that the Druze were led to believe the pressure would end, 15,000 IDF troops stormed in and occupied villages. Village schools became military camps. The siege lasted for 43 days. Homes were destroyed along with basic infrastructure like water and electricity. Israeli forces went door to door confiscating Syrian citizenship papers and leaving Israeli ones. The Druze responded by throwing them in the street.

The siege eventually ended, and so did the strike, with little action. Again Israel negotiated and promised identity cards which addressed some concerns of the Druze, including that they be recognized as Arabs (not Druze). They also promised to leave civil rights with the Druze communities, including the right to water. Furthermore, Israel agreed not to impose mandatory conscription on the Druze. The Israelis have gone back on these promises since. Many Druze have accepted the identity cards, though many still refuse, and the community pressure to resist remains.

## Research Notes

### Sources:

Bennett, Brad. "Arab-Muslim Cases of Nonviolent Struggle." In *Arab Nonviolent Political Struggle in the Middle East*. Ralph Crow, et al., Editors. Lynne Rienner Publishers: 1990.

Kennedy, R. Scott. "The Druze of the Golan: A Case of Nonviolent Resistance." *Nonviolent Struggle in the Middle East*. New

society Publishers: 1985.

**Additional Notes:**

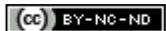
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Markus Schlotterbeck, 17/06/2009

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