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Rabbis for Human Rights files police complaint over Rabbi Lior's Palestinian olive harvest ruling

Rabbis for Human Rights said its acting director submitted the complaint on behalf of its 170 members, alleging incitement to racism, incitement to violence, and encouraging the theft of property.



A Palestinian farmer raises a handful of olives over a dark collection cloth as several fruits fall from his hands in Beit Awwa, southwest of Hebron in the West Bank, on October 15, 2026.
(photo credit: Mosab Shawer / Middle East Images / AFP via Getty Images)

By SARAH BEN-NUN

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Rabbis for Human Rights said Sunday it had filed a police complaint against Rabbi Dov Lior over his religious ruling permitting Jews to harvest olives from Palestinian groves, adding to the rabbinical opposition to the ruling amid violence during the West Bank harvest.

The organization said its acting director, Anton Goodman, submitted the complaint on behalf of its 170 rabbinical members, alleging incitement to racism, incitement to violence, and encouraging the theft of property.

The complaint follows reports that the IDF recommended investigating Lior for suspected incitement.

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“I am sorry that I have to file a police complaint against a rabbi in Israel, but reality requires us to stand up for the Torah,” Goodman said in the organization’s announcement.

“Entering other people’s land and taking their crops unlawfully is not what God wants from us in this land.”



Palestinians and Israeli activists take part in the olive harvest in the village of Beitillu, northwest of Ramallah in the West Bank, overlooking Wadi Zarqa and opposite the outpost of Or Binyamin, October 2, 2026. (credit: HILEL BEN OR/FLASH90)

Lior argued that olive trees remained property of Jewish people

Lior, the former chief rabbi of Kiryat Arba, published the ruling Friday. He argued that the land remained the property of the Jewish people and that Palestinians prevented from harvesting for security reasons could be presumed to have given up on the olives.

He also argued that past harvests had already provided sufficient compensation for planting the trees. His conclusion extended beyond groves near settlements, permitting Jews to harvest in more distant areas to assert Jewish ownership and fulfill what he described as the religious commandment to conquer the land.

The ruling concerns taking the olives; its text does not explicitly authorize physical attacks on Palestinian farmers. The organization's allegations that it constitutes incitement are part of its complaint, rather than findings by police or a court.

The dispute turns in part on whether farmers barred from reaching their trees can be treated as having relinquished their crops. Rabbis opposing Lior's position argue that being prevented from harvesting does not mean owners have abandoned their property.

Earlier in the week, a group of Gush Etzion rabbis issued an opinion prohibiting Jews from taking olives from Palestinian-owned groves near settlements, even where the owners were denied access for security reasons.

They argued that the fruit remained the owners' property and that taking it constituted theft and a desecration of God's name. One alternative they

proposed was arranging for workers or volunteers to harvest under the permitted security arrangements and return the crop to its owners, with harvesting expenses covered.

Tzohar says theft prohibited regardless of owner's religion

The Tzohar rabbinical organization subsequently rejected Lior's ruling, stressing that theft is prohibited regardless of whether the owner is Jewish.

Tzohar also disputed the assumption that restricted access amounted to abandonment, particularly where owners expressly said they intended to harvest through arrangements allowed by the military. It cited Lior's own earlier writings in arguing that individuals could not decide for themselves to confiscate property on security grounds.

The religious dispute comes alongside restrictions on access to some harvesting areas.

Rabbis for Human Rights, which brings together rabbis from different Jewish denominations, said its activists accompany Palestinian farmers during the annual harvest both to help pick olives and to deter violence and document incidents.

The organization's complaint followed a week of reported attacks on Palestinian harvesters, journalists, and European diplomats participating in the harvest.

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