

# REPORT ON THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN PALESTINE

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**INSAMER**

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## Introduction

Despite systematic attempts to disguise it, a great human tragedy is playing out in the Palestinian territories today. The massacre, exile and captivity tactics that began with the establishment of the Zionist regime in 1948, have transformed into a genocide that intends to annihilate a whole people. The territories of Palestine, including Jerusalem, which passed to the control of Israel with the second movement of occupation starting after 1967, have experienced an existential turning point where not only the people and the land, but also all sacred values are being threatened.

After the guerrilla tactics of the first 30 years, the Palestinians who demonstrated a great amount of resistance to defeat these threats to their existence, stepped this up a level with the great popular up-

rising (Intifada) of 1987. But since the successful results of the Intifada, the shady dealings between Western countries and some Arab nations have transformed the Palestinian cause into a bargaining factor to be lost at the table.

When, during the negotiations carried out after the Oslo Accord of 1993, it was understood that Israel would never allow the Palestinian people to have their own state, the Al-Aqsa Intifada broke out in 2000. While this rebellion was a crucial turning point for the Palestinian people's independent Jerusalem-based state, the Zionists martyred thousands of Palestinians and suppressed resistance in the West Bank, however, they still had to draw back from Gaza in 2005. Upon this, an inhumane blockade was imposed on the region



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in revenge for the defeat in Gaza and the people of the whole region were condemned to a mass punishment.

While the flow of goods entering and exiting Gaza was almost entirely ceased by the blockade, Gaza's economy came to the point of collapse as the result of Egypt shutting the Rafah Crossing, which is the most important border crossing connecting the region with the world. The occupying Israeli state was causing the humanitarian crisis to worsen on the one hand, while simultaneously carrying out two major military operations on the other. Following the massacre of Operation Cast Lead in 2009, military attacks on Gaza from land, air and sea were carried out with Operation Protective Edge in 2014. Almost 5,000 civilians lost their lives in these operations.

## **DEVASTATING SUFFERING CAUSED BY THE BLOCKADE**

The occupied Palestinian territories present one of the most complex and most difficult humanitarian crises of the past century. The violence that has increased since the establishment of the occupying Israeli state and the state of confrontation that has been ongoing for 70 years continues to be a crucial issue that needs resolving in the international system within the context of the law and human rights.

The Israeli occupation has caused three basic and chronic problems for the Palestinian people:

- The first is the issue of refugees and displaced persons. Today, there are more than 5 million Palestinians scattered all over the world, mainly across the Middle East. Besides these persons, the number of the people who have been displaced in Palestinian lands or who are living in refugee camps has reached 3 million. Among these, at least 1.8 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza today require lifetime "protection measures" as the result of the ongoing attacks. Due to the Israeli attacks, many living spaces and houses have been destroyed and left uninhabitable. The Palestinians who have had to leave these homes have been completely

forced into displacement. In other words, they have become refugees in their own countries.

- The second problem that arises is the failure to deliver clean water, provisions, education and health services to blockaded living spaces and the fact that permission is not given to provide these basic needs. Today, living standards in Palestinian cities and towns are among the worst five in the world based on serious infrastructural issues.
- The third problem is the physical and psychological torment felt through the generations as the result of Israeli attacks. Today, there are thousands of Palestinians languishing in Israeli prisons as a result of arbitrary attacks and arrests. This situation divides families and leads to a traumatized society with tens of thousands of orphans.

The embargo and blockade cause the restriction of the flow of goods and human entrances to and exits from Gaza in particular, and as a consequence, the destructive effect on the people living in the region continues.[1] The long-term confrontation and blockade maintained by the occupying Israeli state have forced 80% of the region's population to be dependent on international aid in order to survive.[2] The employment capacity created by the economy and the economy itself have been destroyed and the poverty rate has increased as the result of this. According to the data of the World Bank, under the current circumstances, the unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip is 41%, which is one of the highest rates in the world. Today, more than 1 million refugees live in eight different refugee camps located in the Gaza Strip. This means that the region has the highest population density in the world.

Today, the Palestinian population living in the occupied lands is 4.8 million. Among these, 1.8 million (38% of this total population) are directly affected by human conflict and therefore need protection and support.[3]

High rates of unemployment, low income, expensive living conditions and the annihilation

of means of survival through restrictions have caused food insecurity to arise in Palestine, which means the gradual dissolution of the possibility to access basic food supplies. Today, 1.65 million people in Palestinian lands live under the threat of food shortage. Approximately half of this figure is constituted by the civilians living in the Gaza Strip. Today, 47% of Gaza's access to basic food is limited.

Access to basic services, such as health, education, energy and housing, has been restricted by Israel so as to destroy the people's socioeconomic level. Today, in Gaza, clean water is supplied for 5-8 hours every three days and access to clean water outside of these time zones is blocked. The one million inhabitants of Gaza, 655,000 of whom are refugees living in camps, cannot access basic health services, such as the rehabilitation and emergency aid required to treat the disabilities and severe psychological damage caused by the war. Children are the ones who most suffer in Gaza; the current conditions will traumatize them for the rest of their lives. In Gaza, 504,000 children of school age do not receive any education that could be remotely compared with that of their peer groups and world standards.

But it is the piles of debris from the houses demolished and destroyed by Israeli attacks that constitute one of the most important issues in Gaza, which has never reached the top of the agenda. For the houses, buildings and infrastructure to be reconstructed again this debris must be wiped clean from Gaza. The attacks of 2014 left nearly 2 million tons of rubble and debris that needed clearing away from Gaza. While more than 1 million tons of this debris was cleared by international non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the inhabitants of the region removed the remaining rubble 800,000 tons.[4]

## REFUGEE CAMPS

Those who have been forcibly displaced within the occupied Palestinian territories since 1948 due to the intense and systematic attacks of Israel mainly take shelter in Gaza. As a result, there are eight refugee camps in Gaza and 19 in the West Bank.

## The Gaza Refugee Camps

As mentioned above, Gaza is a strip of land, the majority of whose population is made up of refugees. Two-thirds of the population of approximately 2 million inhabitants are Palestinian asylum seekers who have come to settle here from outside of the region. These asylum seekers, who have no land, property, or other means to survive, have established a new life for themselves in the refugee camps.

The Jabalia Refugee Camp is the largest of the refugee camps in Gaza. It is named after the northern district in which it is located. 35,000 Palestinians, the majority of whom come from the south of Palestine, were displaced after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and settled in the camps located in Jabalia. Today, 110,000 registered local refugees live in the camp. This figure only reveals the number of people stuck in the 1.5 square kilometer area surrounding the camp.[5] While unemployment in the region increases to critical figures, very few families can meet their requirements on their own. A large proportion of the population in the region is surviving on the aid received from international NGOs. Levels of hygiene and access to healthcare are worryingly poor in the camps. Providing the basic human right of access to water is hugely problematic in these camps. 90% of the water used by the refugees living in the camps is polluted and untreated water which is not suitable for human consumption.

Rafah Camp founded in 1949 is located in the southernmost part of Gaza, very close to the Egyptian border. Just in its first year, the camp saw thousands of refugees from nearby villages pour in. Today the 41,000-capacity camp founded in the 1940s for the war victims and inhabitants of the time holds 104,000 refugees.[6] The population density, which is very high for the size of the region, is the biggest issue encountered in the camp. The displaced Palestinians live cheek by jowl in groups of ten within housing units crammed together. Before the illegal blockade of Israel, Gaza's greatest contribution to the econ-

omy of the Rafah region was through the export of flowers. However, after the embargo, which started in June 2007, Israel prevented these exports and all entries to and exits from the Rafah Crossing were ceased.

Like in every region of Gaza, education at the Rafah Camp is one of the most troublesome aspects due to inadequate schools and facilities. The average number of pupils being schooled at Rafah Camp increases by 10,000 every year. With the school-age population every increasing, the facilities to be used for educational services, as well as the buildings remain constant in number, or they are either seriously damaged by the Israeli attacks.

The third largest and most crowded refugee camp in Gaza is the Al-Shati Camp. Located on the Gaza Strip's Mediterranean coastline and home to 85,000 people, this camp was initially set up for 23,000 refugees from Lydd, Jaffa, Beersheba and other regions of Palestine. The whole population in the camp has to survive within an area of approximately half a kilometer. This camp has one of the highest population densities in the world.[7] The streets of the camp, which is squeezed into a small area in the coastal zone of the strip, are so narrow that two people cannot walk down them at the same time.

Unemployment in the region has been growing critically every year since the embargo was imposed on Gaza. Very few families in Gaza can meet their needs alone. The majority of the population living in the region meet their basic food and other needs through what has been supplied by international aid organizations. But as cement and construction materials are blocked by the embargo, the buildings and facilities destroyed by the Israeli attacks cannot be repaired.

Deir Al-Balah Camp located on the Mediterranean coast is the smallest refugee camp in Gaza. Today, more than 21,000 refugees live in this 9,000-capacity camp which was set up for the local people migrating from the center and south of Palestine after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Due to the fact that the camp is located on the Mediterranean coast, the inhabitants here try to meet their food requirements through fishing. However, Israel continues to add

to its unlawful practices and has determined that Palestinians can only sail 3 nautical miles out to sea in this region of Northern Gaza. Israeli Defense Forces continuously patrol the Mediterranean coastline and constantly harass the fishermen, preventing them from earning their livelihood. As a result of these Israeli sanctions that have no provision in the international law, the region's economy which was already in dire straits has come to the edge of extinction. Refugees in Deir Al-Balah Camp also survive on what has been supplied by the international aid organizations.

Khan Yunis Camp is located in the north of the Rafah region lying 2km from the Mediterranean coast. 35,000 refugees fleeing from Israeli attacks since the war of 1948 have taken refuge here. More than 72,000 refugees live in the camp today. The refugees of Khan Yunis Camp have lost their homes and shelters due to years of ongoing attacks by Israel. In addition to preventing basic needs from being admitted to the region, Israel has also blocked the entry of construction materials, condemning the refugees to living conditions far below minimum standards. There are 25 school buildings in the Khan Yunis region. Here, as is the practice in many places, half-time education is offered by the schools. For this reason, pupils are unable to receive an adequate education. The camp also has three health institutions and a food distribution center.

## The West Bank Refugee Camps

Today, nearly 800,000 registered refugees live in the West Bank. This figure corresponds to about one-third of the region's population. The West Bank has 96 schools serving 48,000 pupils from 19 different refugee camps. Although health services are relatively better than those in Gaza, services here are still far below world standards. There are 43 health institutions and 15 community rehabilitation centers in the region.[8] The main problems seen across all camps are the following:

- Excessive population density and inadequate housing
- Insufficient infrastructure
- High unemployment rates



- Food insecurity
- Security issues caused by Israeli raids

Among the West Bank's camps, the most crowded is Balata Camp in the city of Nablus. Today, more than 27,000 refugees live in the camp originally set up to accommodate 5,000 people. Overcrowding and inadequate infrastructure are felt in every aspect of camp life. Life in the camp has been rendered unbearable by the weekly investigations and arrests of Israeli security forces. The refugees inhabiting these camps state that they are living far below the poverty line and emphasize that the greatest challenges are the high rates of unemployment and food insecurity. More than 60% of refugees living in Balata Camp are under 25 years old. However, despite their many problems, this is one of the West Bank refugee camps where civil society has best been organized and coordinated.

## Food Security

Almost all Palestinians make their living from agriculture and consume the majority of what they produce in their own internal markets. Food security is one of the main problems in Palestine as it does not have the economic funds to import food. The issue is particularly serious in Gaza, where a severe blockade is imposed.

Besides the arbitrary restriction of food, seed, pesticides, fertilizers, etc. to the region, the military attacks of the Zionist regime have destroyed many agricultural lands, food manufacturing facilities and furnaces. Considering the cost of living, 1.6 million people are facing food insecurity all over Palestine today. A large part of this figure consists of the civilians in Gaza. Even though 27% of these people receive food aid from international organizations, this is the existing situation.[9]

Compared to Gaza, the situation in the West Bank seems relatively better. While food insecurity among refugees in the West Bank is 22%, including the East Jerusalem region, the ratio among the non-refugee locals is 14%. Meanwhile, food insecurity among refugees living in rural areas in the West Bank is 20%, while it is 14%

in urban areas.

## Health and Nutrition

Access to health services in the Gaza Strip and the status of the healthcare sector have been alarmingly low for many years. As a risk group, women and children are taking the lead. High-risk pregnancies and food shortages for newborns in the first 28 days pose a severe danger. In children under the age of five, 45% of child mortality occurs during the newborn period.[10] Today, approximately 300,000 newborns and children are facing the risk of death due to insufficient nutrition. 60,000 pregnant women are also experiencing serious problems during their pregnancy due to malnutrition. Gaza is among the worst five regions in the world in terms of newborn mortality rates.

The hospitals cannot work at full capacity, many operations cannot be performed and, furthermore, the necessary drugs cannot be found. Patients and wounded people either have to undergo treatments in other parts of Palestine or in Israel or Egypt. Applications for these treatments require long procedures and serious efforts and are often rejected for arbitrary reasons.

In the West Bank there is a very volatile situation due to the intensity of the Israeli occupation and the existence of Jewish settlements. While some regions are able to access health facilities more easily, some regions are no different than Gaza. 172,104 people in Region C of the West Bank and Al-Halil require basic healthcare.

In 2016, it was determined that approximately 1 million people, 830,000 in Gaza and 209,000 in the West Bank, were on the risk threshold in terms of nutrition and health services and hence in need of humanitarian assistance.

- The whole population of Gaza, in particular, those without access to primary healthcare services, need specific health support.
- Due to the geographical distances and the many number of checkpoints, Region C has limited healthcare services.



- Palestinians living in East Jerusalem require psychological and spiritual support.

When Gaza is considered in particular, a total of 6,475 people are in need of healthcare services due to their physical disabilities. Approximately 100,000 people suffer from chronic and non-contagious diseases. 51,000 of these are male. The number of women in a fragile situation due to pregnancy and those requiring medical services are 18,000. The most worrisome aspect in terms of health problems is related to newborns and children. A total of 86,287 newborns and children in Gaza are in urgent need of healthcare and special medical care.[11]

## Energy and Water

Israel's intentional attacks targeting Gaza's infrastructure in 2014 have caused a crisis to break out in the region in terms of energy supply. Despite repair works on the facilities, today only 45% of Gaza's energy requirements can be met and there is a daily power outage for 16-18 hours.

Due to the shortage of energy, clean water supply requirements cannot be met. Today, 70% of Gaza's population is supplied with water for 6-8 hours over three days. In addition to this, energy interruptions also prevent the operation of wastewater treatment plants. There are also serious problems in the supply of underground drinking water in Gaza due to issues related to energy.[12] According to a statement by the World Bank, energy and fuel cuts have made the humanitarian crisis in Gaza more permanent.[13]

## Manufacturing Sector

The agricultural and non-agricultural production sectors are those that are most affected by the demolition in Gaza and which require the longest time to recover. With regards to the agricultural sector, less than 20% of the greenhouses and fruit gardens that were destroyed due to the attacks have been rebuilt, while less than 50% of water wells and storage tanks have been repaired. The most important reason for such slow rebuilding of the agricultural sector is related to funding issues. Another reason preventing the improvement and

repair is the prohibition by Israel of the use of the tools required for the repair of infrastructure and agriculture with the grounds that they could be used in weapons manufacturing and for civil needs.

Investment rates in the manufacturing sector, which includes the industries, the service sector and commerce, have remained at a low level. The total material loss to these sectors during the attacks was \$152 million. 5,153 economic facilities and workshops in Gaza were destroyed and rendered inoperable. \$120 million is required to repair the economic damage. New investments made to compensate for these economic losses are highly insignificant. Today, the public and private sector organizations in Gaza employ 40% fewer workers compared to the period before the attacks in 2014.[14]

## Education

In Palestine, both the schools under Palestinian authority and the UNRWA management are faced with serious problems. Due to the collapse of many schools during the attacks, the transfer of pupils from these schools to the surviving ones has caused classes to be more crowded and the financing of these schools has become more difficult. Today, there are 504,000 pupils in Palestine who do not have equal educational opportunities and are waiting for help to make this possible.

The Israeli attacks have intentionally caused serious damage and the ceasing of educational services in Palestine. The number of pupils who have had their means to education prevented by Israel, particularly in Al-Halil, Region C and East Jerusalem, is registered as 14,751.[15] Another way in which education is hindered in the West Bank is that Israel arrests and detains students and teachers for no reason. In the first half of 2016, 91 students were seized and put under arrest for no reason. The checkpoints and barriers in the West Bank intentionally prevent students from getting an education in East Jerusalem.

Educational opportunities in Gaza are far worse than those in the West Bank. 583,000 children

have been deprived of an education due to the ongoing blockade and continuous attacks. As a result of the attacks in 2014 in particular, education has come to a stopping point at schools in Northern Gaza, Eastern Gaza and in the eastern regions of Khan Yunis, with pupils in all these regions sent to schools in other regions of Gaza.

## Wall of Shame

This wall whose construction was started in 2002 and which transformed the entire West Bank region into an open-air prison, is one of the biggest violations against the Palestinian people. Both the UN and the International Court of Justice have decreed that this wall is unlawful and in violation of the law. Due to this 700km-long “Wall of Shame”, nearly 4,000 Palestinian homes have been destroyed, 83,000 trees have been uprooted, 35,000m of irrigation network have been damaged and 160,000 acres of fertile agricultural land owned by Palestinians have been destroyed. More tragic than all this is that 2.9% of the West Bank territory has passed more directly under the occupation of Israel. Palestinian families in the towns and villages on the northern side of the Green Line have become refugees because of the obstacle of the wall. Furthermore, the declaration of the Palestinian villages and towns residing between the Green Line and the wall as “closed military territories” has increased militarist control in the region and has rendered people prisoners in their own homes.[16]

With its resolution issued on July 10, 2005, Israel intends to separate East Jerusalem and the West Bank with this wall. Through this project, four Arab districts paying their taxes and located within the borders of Jerusalem municipality have been cut off from the city. Thus, while the Muslim population in Jerusalem is being reduced, a serious risk has arisen regarding negotiations on the status of East Jerusalem.[17]

While Israel has increased control points in the West Bank to over 600, the Palestinians’ freedom to travel continues to be arbitrarily blocked.

## Refugees

It is stated that the number of Palestinians all over the world is approximately 9.7 million. Out of this figure, only 3.7 million Palestinians live in Palestinian territories, while 1 million are living within the borders of the Israeli-occupied territories and the remaining 5 million Palestinians have been exiled to other countries, mainly Arab states.

Jordan is the country hosting the most Palestinians, with a population of 2.8 million. However, about 500,000 Palestinians in Jordan hold refugee status. It is estimated that the number of Palestinians living in Syria today is less than 20,000, whereas 436,000 Palestinian refugees used to live there before the ongoing civil war. There are 415,000 Palestinians in Lebanon, while this figure is 62,000 in Egypt. The number of Palestinians in the USA is 236,000. According to these figures, 5.1 million Jews live in the Palestinian territory, compared to the 4.6 million Palestinians living there.

There are two important tools at hand in international law when it comes to the refugee issue. One of these is the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the other is the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. However, as per Article 1-D of the 1951 Convention, Palestinian refugees are excluded from the scope of these instruments. As per this article: “This Convention does not cover the persons who have received any assistance from any organ or institution of the UN other than the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).” As they are under the protection of the UN Conciliation Commission (UNCCP) and the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), Palestinian refugees are deprived of the rights of the 1951 Convention and the protection of the UNHCR.

## Jewish Settlements

The Jewish settlements are considered one of the most important violation of rights in Palestinian lands. Today, these exceed 600 along with those under construction. All of them have been concentrated in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. According to international law, today, 48% of the

West Bank which is supposed to belong to the Palestinians is controlled by the Jewish settlers. The Jewish population in these settlements is growing faster than that in Israel and the demographic structure of the region is completely changing. Today, the number of the inhabitants in East Jerusalem has reached 250,000. This represents almost the same figure as the Palestinians living in the region. 35% of East Jerusalem has been seized for Jewish settlers. In East Jerusalem, the building permits of 32% of Palestinian homes have been canceled and there is always a risk of demolition.

## Transits and Controls

There are five border crossings that connect the besieged and oppressed region of Gaza to the outside world. With the Convention on Transit Points that was signed after the withdrawal of Israel in 2005, legal arrangements were made regarding these border points. Accordingly, the status of each border crossing has been determined.

The Rafah Crossing on the border with Egypt is Gaza's most important transit point. Only the transit of pedestrians and a certain amount of exports are allowed through this crossing and it is not possible to perform any imports. Commercial products from Egypt enter Gaza through the Kerem Shalom Crossing and those from Israel enter Gaza from the Karni and Sufa Crossings. The last two crossings have never been made available by Israel since Gaza started to be ruled by Hamas. The Erez crossing in the north was also designated for transits from Israel, but today only the transit of patients is allowed. Entirely besieged, this means that Gaza's access to economic tools and all vital connections in its favor has become dependent on its political maneuvering ability, connection with the international environment, and the day-to-day whims of Israel and Egypt.

While 77% of those asking to leave Gaza for medical treatment was granted permission in 2015, in 2016, only 64% were allowed to make such a transit. In 2016, Israel restricted exit permits from the Gaza Strip, reducing them by 13% compared to previous years.

Israel has had to make some exceptions to its restrictions, which are in violation of human rights and international law, and has allowed entries and exits in certain categories. These exceptions generally apply to the following:

- Businessmen
- Severely ill patients and their relatives
- Employees of international organizations
- Special humanitarian cases

Anyone remaining outside these categories specified by Israel is not allowed to enter or exit Gaza. Having killed hundreds of thousands of people in attacks lasting a number of months every year and causing the displacement of thousands of people, Israel continues to prevent the delivery of aid to the people of Gaza, including urgent requirements.

Now with the restrictions imposed by Egypt regarding transits through the Rafah Crossing since November 2014, the situation in Gaza has reached fatal levels.

## Erez Crossing

After the ceasefire which followed the battles of Summer 2014, the Erez Border Crossing was opened in 2015 and the number of permits for entrances and exits was increased compared to previous years. This situation continued until the second half of 2016, but entrances and exits have since ceased. In 2000, just before the Second Intifada has begun, 26,000 Palestinians used to make transits through the Erez Crossing every day for various purposes.

It was announced that transits through the Erez Crossing would not only be for civilians, but also for patients, the wounded, and businessmen. In 2016, there was a 20% increase compared to other years in the number of Gazaians wishing to receive medical services through the Erez Crossing. Despite the increase in applications, Israeli authorities have rejected the requests of those wishing to pass for medical reasons, hence reducing the number of exit permits compared to



other years. Also, many patients who have applied for emergency medical services and whose applications have been accepted have not been able to get through the border crossing because of the postponement of permits. The families of cancer patients have staged protests in the Gaza Strip in reaction to the rejected and postponed exit permits. Preventing patients from receiving medical care in Israel and the West Bank is considered a death sentence for these civilians, cutting them off from any hope of treatment. Besides this, according to the World Health Organization's data, the approval rates for patients' hospital attendants have reached the lowest level ever seen. While the rate of permits issued in 2012 was 83%, this figure fell to below 35% in December 2016.

### **Rafah Border Crossing and Transits**

For the Palestinians of Gaza, the Rafah Border Crossing with Egypt is their main link to the outside world and the most important transit point. However, this point has been closed to all entries and exits, including humanitarian aid, since October 24, 2014, cutting Gaza off from the world. The border crossing was open for just 32 days in 2015. While the number of people using the Rafah Crossing in 2013 was 300,000, this figure was reduced to 40,000 in 2016.[18] Despite the Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip and the increasing number of casualties and losses in those attacks, only 1,713 people were allowed to pass through Rafah Border Crossing to receive medical assistance in 2016. To put this in perspective, before 2014, the Rafah Crossing was used by an average of 4,000 people every month.

### **Unlawful Policies in East Jerusalem[19]**

The occupying state of Israel has been following an expansionist policy since the commencement of its occupation in Palestine. Continuing its policy of annexation with the support received from the West in opposition to the practices of international law, Israel has not just limited this policy to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It has also annexed Jerusalem, contrary to international law and UN resolutions no. 181, 242 and 338.

Israel attaches special importance to the region of Jerusalem in its policy of annexation and is conducting a systematic policy to erase the thousands years old Islam and Christian traditions of the city by asserting its own religious, historical and cultural narrative. Through the administrative and social changes that it has put into practice, Israel aims to transform the city into a Jewish one. Despite the fact that since the invasion of 1967 it has been stated that Israel cannot act as the sovereign law-maker in East Jerusalem and that it may not forcibly enforce its own law (Hague Convention Art. 43 and Fourth Geneva Convention Art. 64), the state continues to apply its own laws by force.

Rather than "locals", Israel treats the Muslims as having "residence" by issuing temporary residence permits to the Palestinians who make up most of the city and are the original inhabitants, putting them in a position in which they can be expelled at any time. Within the framework of the Demographic Policy put into practice by Israel to be in effect until 2020, the objective is to increase the number of Jewish settlers to the maximum extent and to reduce the existing number of Palestinians to a minimum with strict residence policies and exiles under the so-called "silent transfer".

In accordance with the objective of clearing the occupied East Jerusalem of Muslims systematic and discriminatory exile policies, the demolition of Palestinian homes, the refusal of residence permits and forced expropriation procedures have been applied intensively. Within the same framework, other practices that may be considered noteworthy are the arbitrary cancellation of Palestinian residence permits, as well as the over-complication of family reunification and children's identity registration procedures. These practices impose a very strong amount of psychological oppression on the Palestinians combined with legalized victimization, and life is becoming more and more difficult for urban Muslims.

As a result of Israel's systematic occupation policy, 35% of East Jerusalem has been forcibly

expropriated. Only 13% of the region is given to Palestinians, while 20% of green spaces are possessed and under the control of the Zionists. Some Palestinian houses are being demolished and/or arbitrarily evacuated on the grounds that they were constructed in an unauthorized manner.

As part of the annexation policy of the occupying state of Israel, residence procedures have been made incredibly difficult. Even though the “permanent Muslim residents” of Jerusalem are able to obtain Israeli identity cards, they cannot vote in Israeli elections, cannot obtain Israeli passports and cannot transfer their legal status to their children. Moreover, Israel can easily withdraw the legal status of these persons. This is despite the fact that the Israeli Ministry of the Interior has no right to cancel residence documents arbitrarily. More than 14,500 residence certificates have been canceled since 1967.

With the Oslo Accord of 1995, marriage was determined as a rightful and adequate grounds for family reunification, but again this has been left at Israeli authorities’ discretion. While before 1995, a permanent residence permit was granted in the case of marriage, the practice of issuing provisional permits was started in 2003. The family reunification procedures were temporarily suspended in July 2003 upon the enforcement of the Act on Citizenship and Entry to Israel. In 2006, Israel ceased the family reunification procedures for Gaza. 43% of applications regarding family reunification procedures filed between 2000 and 2013 were rejected. As a result, Israel is seriously violating the right to family life.

### **A Tool of Punishment: Residence Permits**

- In 2013, four persons from Jerusalem were forcibly transferred to the West Bank. In 2016, the residence permits of three young men were unlawfully annulled. In 2017, the residence permit of 63-year-old Manwah Qunbar, a mother of eight who had been living in Jerusalem for more than 30 years, was unlawfully annulled with the Armon Hanatziv incident given as the grounds. It was alleged

that one of the family members was involved in an illegal act. The family reunification file for the 12 family members was rejected.

- Nadia Abu Jamal’s husband, Ghassan Abu Jamal, was killed in an attack in 2014. Her children’s health insurance and their residence permits were canceled and the demolition of their homes was approved by the Israeli Supreme Court of Justice. Their homes were demolished in 2015. They were then forced to migrate in 2017.
- In 2015, Abed Dwayat was charged with throwing stones along with two other children and causing the death of a driver. The residence permits of the three children were canceled. The Israeli Supreme Court of Justice had Dwayat’s home locked up and sealed. The Israeli authorities stated that the punishment inflicted on the Dwayat family, who were prohibited from entering their own home, was being done so to set an example to other Palestinians. Dwayat was sentenced to 18 years of imprisonment in 2017. This is the most severe punishment given in a stone-throwing manslaughter case.
- Since November 2014, six houses have been demolished, four houses have been sealed and two have been designated for demolition.

### **General Assessment**

Today, the Palestinian people are experiencing one of the greatest man-made disasters. Having been subject to the violence of an oppressive Zionist regime since the de facto occupation of 1948, the civilian population is being subjected to genocide before the eyes of the world. Tens of thousands of civilians have already lost their lives in the one-sided Zionist attacks, besides the battles between Palestine and Israel. Just in the past 10 years, the number of civilians killed in attacks carried out by Israel on Gaza has reached 5,000.

The Zionist regime which has escaped any detailed questioning, despite all kinds of illegal acts for which it is responsible in the occupied Palestinian territories, has recently tended to-

wards indirect intimidation tactics instead of direct massacres upon the reactions of the international community. So instead of bombing and killing with weapons, it uses tactics that can be explained more easily to the world. One of these tactics is to intimidate people by leaving them hungry and thirsty through a blockade imposed under the name anti-terrorism. Today, the Palestinian people are deprived of basic life requirements in the push to make them bow down to Israel.

It has become vital to take steps to end the suffering of the Palestinian people in what is now the 70th anniversary of the occupation. The basic wishes of the Palestinian people converge at three basic points and it is not possible for these to be silenced without an answer. They ask for:

- The Zionist occupation of their lands to come to an end.
- The right for Palestinians who have been exiled to return to their homeland.
- A Palestine state with Jerusalem as its capital city.

Despite all differences of opinion between the Palestinian groups, these basic principles, which are defended by all such groups, are the key to establishing peace in the Middle East.

[18] Humanitarian Bulletin, “Occupied Palestinian Territory”, January 2017, p. 8.

[19] This report has been put together using information and data obtained from a presentation by Nada Awad at the conference entitled “PRC Raises the Issue of Justice and Accountability in Occupied Palestinian Territories at the UN” held by the Palestinian Return Center on March 16, 2017 at the UN headquarters, Geneva. <http://www.prc.org.uk/portal/index.php/activities-news/prc-un-ecosoc-status/3632-prc-raises-issue-of-justice,-accountability-in-occupied-palestinian-territories-in-un-hq>; <http://visualizing-palestine.org/visuals/living-under-policies-of-colonisation-jerusalem>

## End Notes

- [1] <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/gaza-strip>
- [2] UNRWA, 2016 Occupied Palestinian Territory Emergency Appeal Progress Report, Gaza, s. 4, <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/2016-opt-emergency-appeal-progress-report>
- [3] Humanitarian Needs, [https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/humanitarian\\_needs\\_overview.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/humanitarian_needs_overview.pdf)
- [4] “Gaza: Two Years After”, s. 5, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/gaza-two-years-after>
- [5] Jabalia Camp, The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/gaza-strip/jabalia-camp>
- [6] Rafah Camp, <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/gaza-strip/rafah-camp>
- [7] <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/gaza-strip/beach-camp>
- [8] <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/west-bank>
- [9] 2017 Humanitarian Needs Overview for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Annex 1, Food Security <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/2017-humanitarian-needs-overview-occupied-palestinian-territory>
- [10] 2017 Humanitarian Needs Overview for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Annex 1, Health and Nutrition, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/2017-humanitarian-needs-overview-occupied-palestinian-territory>
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- [12] “Gaza: Two Years After”, s. 5, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/gaza-two-years-after>
- [13] World Bank: “Gaza power cuts causing ‘humanitarian crisis’”, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/world-bank-gaza-power-cuts-causing-humanitarian-crisis/>
- [14] Federation of Industries in Gaza, August 2016.
- [15] 2017 Humanitarian Needs Overview for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Annex 1, Education, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/2017-humanitarian-needs-overview-occupied-palestinian-territory>
- [16] Gamze Değirmenci, “Batı Şeria Duvarı ve Uluslararası Hukuk” (The West Bank Barrier and International Law), Bilge Strateji, Issue 2, Volume 4, Spring 2011, p. 207.
- [17] “Israel Approves West Bank Barrier”, 11.07.2005, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkish/news/story/2005/07/050711\\_westbank\\_wall.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkish/news/story/2005/07/050711_westbank_wall.shtml)