

CRISIS OVERVIEW

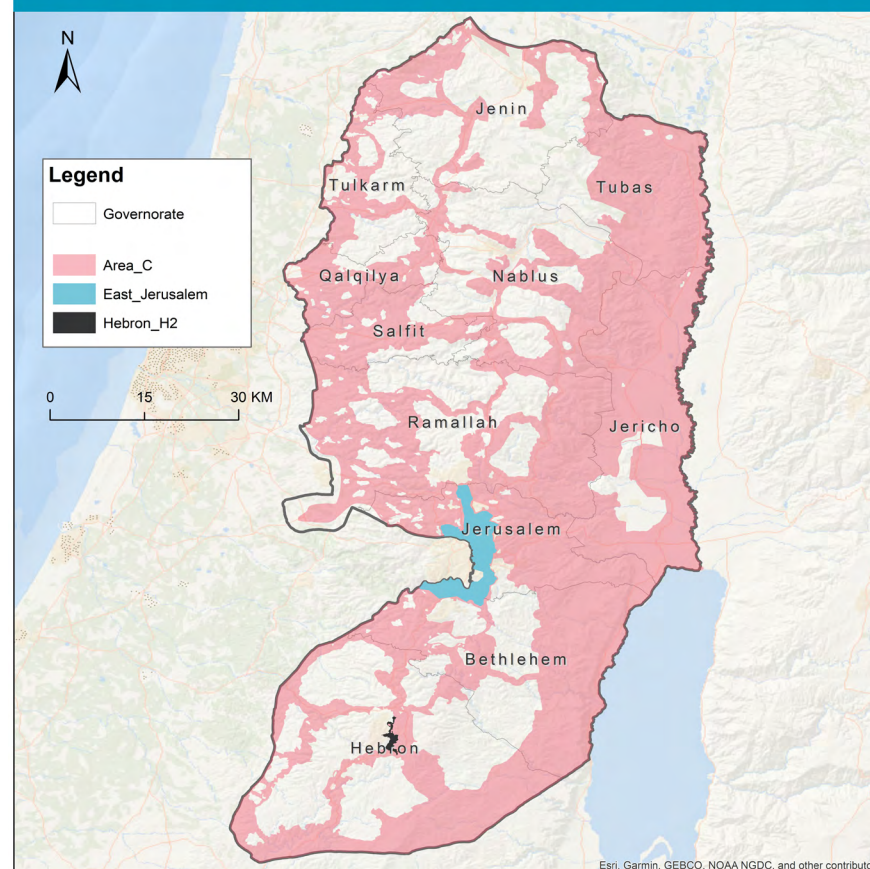
Restrictions on Palestinian access to land and resources – enforced through a complex system of administrative, bureaucratic, and physical constraints – contribute to the stagnation of economic and social development for Palestinians living in the West Bank, especially in Israeli-controlled Area C (OCHA 01/12/2020). The crisis is directly linked to the occupation and expansion of Israeli control in areas across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and Hebron H2. Palestinians in those areas continue to be marginalised through Israeli policies and practices (such as demolitions¹, confiscations, evictions², and erosion of livelihood opportunities) that create a coercive environment, triggering forcible transfer and displacement. Demolition orders affect not only residential structures but also structures related to income generation and the provision of essential services for Palestinian communities, including those provided by INGOs and local NGOs. Palestinians displaced as a result of demolitions or evictions require various forms of assistance – not only immediate but also short to midterm and long-term since the practice of demolitions has prevented any consistent development in the area. For example, displaced populations would require emergency shelter and NFI assistance following a housing demolition, as well as longer-term support to maintain their livelihoods and ensure access to basic services and protection.

About this report

This report investigates the sectoral impact of demolitions on Palestinians living in the West Bank, focussing on Area C (including East Jerusalem and Hebron H2). The analysis identifies common characteristics of vulnerability present in the West Bank, aiming to highlight how demolitions further affect access to essential services and the availability of coping mechanisms. The report is based on secondary data and key informant interviews (KIIs) with humanitarian actors with presence in Palestine.

The demolitions in East Jerusalem partly contributed to tensions that led to the escalation of hostilities in May 2021. Demolitions and forced displacement constitute a key issue in the context of Palestine, especially the West Bank. For more information on the impact of the conflict escalation in May 2021, please read our **Escalation of hostilities and insecurity in the Gaza Strip and West Bank report** (ACAPS 08/06/2021); a follow-up report will be published soon.

Palestine: West Bank



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Source: ACAPS

The boundaries and names and designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by ACAPS

¹ Demolition is the dismantling, razing, destroying, or wrecking of any building, structure, or part thereof (Law Insider accessed 20/09/2021). In this context, it is a means used in the forced eviction process.

² Forced evictions are the permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals, families, and/or communities from the homes and/or land they occupy without the provision of and access to appropriate forms of legal or other protection (OHCHR accessed 20/09/2021).

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ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION OF THE WEST BANK AND LAND ALLOCATION

The West Bank is controlled by different authorities: Area A is controlled by the Palestinian Authority (PA), Area B is controlled by both Israeli and Palestinian authorities, while Area C (more than 60% of the West Bank) is controlled entirely by Israeli authorities (Al Jazeera 11/09/2019). Approximately 300,000 Palestinians live in small, dispersed communities across the West Bank (MSF 05/01/2021). Just 0.24% of state land (as defined by the Israeli Civil Administration) in the West Bank is allocated to Palestinians, and 99.76% is being used for Israeli settlements and infrastructure (Save the Children 28/06/2021). While in some areas the PA has symbolic leadership, its resources are limited and cannot effectively counterbalance Israeli forces and policies (Humanity & Inclusion 09/2020).

Since 1948, Israeli authorities have used various military regulations and discriminatory laws to seize Palestinian-owned land for conversion into Israeli state land (B'Tselem 09/03/2021; OCHA 21/12/2017; NRC 02/2012). Land policies in recent years have further restricted the land available to Palestinians for residential growth and development. Most of the West Bank's natural resources, such as agricultural land, mineral resources, and 70% of the water reserves, are in Area C. In East Jerusalem, only 13% of the land is allocated for Palestinians to build on with appropriate Israeli permits, and much of this land is already built upon (MAP 30/04/2021). Palestinian communities are largely underdeveloped as they are prevented from utilising their own natural resources through discriminatory policies, restrictive working rights, forcible transfers, settler violence, and continuous demolition orders from the Israeli Civil Administration and the military (OCHA 21/12/2017).

Demolitions as a means for coercive environment

Demolitions and forced evictions are key factors in creating a coercive environment for Palestinians in parts of the West Bank. A coercive environment hinders the development of communities and forces people to leave their communities in search of more dignified and safe conditions, triggering forcible transfer and forced displacement³ (Al-Haq 31/01/2018).

There are three main categories of demolition orders (ICAHN 03/12/2017):

1. Punitive demolitions: houses are demolished as retaliation for the actions of people associated with the house. This practice only applies to Palestinians in the occupied territory. This type of demolition adversely affects other members of the household, making it a collective punishment prohibited under international humanitarian law.

2. Administrative demolitions: houses are demolished for lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are extremely difficult for Palestinians to obtain (OCHA 22/06/2021). This happens mostly in Area C⁴ and in East Jerusalem⁵ as a result of Israel's restrictive planning and permit regime (Al-Haq 31/01/2018; UNRWA 16/03/2017).

3. Land-clearing operations/military demolitions: houses demolished by the Israeli Defence Forces during military operations for the purposes of clearing off a piece of land. The law of occupation prohibits destruction and demolition unless necessary for military operations (Amnesty 06/04/2021). In Area C, new military orders enable Israeli authorities to circumvent procedures and execute demolitions or confiscation of assets without (or with very short) prior notice. The lack of proper notice limits households' ability to seek legal support and challenge the order (OCHA 08/12/2020). Military demolitions account for the majority of defined demolitions, leaving most affected Palestinians homeless as a result.

Palestinian residential and public structures are confiscated by Israeli forces through demolition orders and forced eviction often initiated by settler organisations⁶ to allow for the construction or expansion of settlements under the justification of military operations (OCHA 08/07/2021; OHCHR 07/05/2021; UNRWA 2013).

³ Forcible transfer and forced displacement are prohibited by the Fourth Geneva Convention. The West Bank, including East Jerusalem, remains part of Palestine, where International Humanitarian Law applies, meaning that the occupying power (Israel) cannot confiscate private property, "except where such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations" (OHCHR 07/05/2021).

⁴ Palestinians can only legally build in less than 1% of Area C (Save the Children 28/06/2021).

⁵ Palestinians can legally build in just 13% of East Jerusalem (Save the Children 28/06/2021).

⁶ Organisations whose explicit mandate is to develop and expand Jewish settlements.

Most eviction proceedings are based on the application of two Israeli laws: the Absentee Property Law⁷ and the Legal and Administrative Matters Law of 1970⁸ (OHCHR 07/05/2021). Any Palestinian-owned building could face demolition once it is authorised by military orders or discriminatory laws. After demolitions and the confiscation of residents' belongings, Israeli officials order the affected population to relocate to other areas, usually in hard-to-reach locations with limited resources (DCI-Palestine 08/04/2021).

Since the resurgence of violence in the occupied West Bank from October 2015 until 6 September 2021 (OCHA 11/11/2015), Israeli forces have demolished 4,217 structures (of which 3,506 were residential and livelihood structures), displacing 5,811 people and affecting a further 100,370 people⁹ (OCHA accessed 06/09/2021). Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and associated movement restrictions, in 2020, the rate of demolitions and forced evictions of Palestinians reached the highest number recorded in four years (OCHA 22/06/2021). This escalation is likely to continue. Between January–August 2021, a total of 658 structures were demolished, compared to a total of 854 structures demolished in all of 2020 (OCHA accessed 06/09/2021).

The West Bank annexation plan

In April 2020, the Israeli coalition government signed an agreement including an article permitting the annexation of up to 30% of the West Bank territories (ACAPS 18/08/2020). Initial plans were to begin on 1 July 2020, but on 13 August, Israel signed a normalisation deal with the United Arab Emirates that included the suspension of the annexation plans (The Guardian 13/08/2020). Although this suspension is not guaranteed, annexation had not formally begun as at 6 September 2021. If annexation plans go ahead, the likely impact remains high for Palestinians. Similar to the impact of the East Jerusalem¹⁰ and Hebron H2¹¹ annexations, Palestinians would experience greater difficulty in accessing essential services, and the limited humanitarian access available could further diminish. Humanitarian needs for Palestinians residing in the West Bank have been increasing at an alarming rate since its occupation in 1967, with the majority of the population reliant on aid to meet their basic needs (OCHA 31/12/2020).

WHO IS TARGETED FOR DEMOLITIONS AND EVICTIONS IN THE WEST BANK?

Demolitions and forced displacement usually occur in areas under full Israeli control that are close to settlements and under the threat of annexation (KII 18/08/2021; MSF 23/04/2020). Area C, including annexed East Jerusalem and Hebron H2, is therefore most affected. In 2010, the Israeli Government instructed the military to increase demolitions of Palestinian buildings without Israeli permits in the Jordan Valley; since then, the enforcement of demolitions has intensified (Haaretz 19/07/2010; Al-Haq 31/01/2018).

Area C

Since 2000, the Israeli Civil Administration has only accepted 3% of building permits submitted by Palestinians for Area C (MAP 30/04/2021). Most Palestinians resort to building without permits on private land to meet their housing needs. This leaves a significant proportion of the Palestinian population at risk of demolitions and displacement. Within Area C, the Jordan Valley (Jericho, Nablus, and Tubas governorates) has seen the highest number of demolitions (OCHA accessed 06/09/2021; Al-Haq 31/01/2018).

East Jerusalem

Only 7% of Palestinians are granted housing permits in Jerusalem despite making up 40% of the city's population, which means that around one-third of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem lack proper Israeli building permits. An estimated 100,000 people are at risk of demolitions and displacement. Roughly 72% of Palestinians in the Jerusalem municipality live below the poverty line as a result of significant neglect towards infrastructure and service investment (MAP 30/04/2021).

Palestinians in East Jerusalem are often forced to destroy their own homes as heavy fines on top of demolition fees are imposed if Israeli authorities carry out the demolition instead (HRW, 21/05/2017). The proportion of structures demolished by their owners following the issuance of demolition orders has increased in 2021 compared to the past five years. This is a result of the new Israeli legislation that limits the authority of Israeli courts to intervene and enables the Jerusalem municipality to exercise pressure on the families to demolish their properties themselves (OCHA 23/07/2021).

7 The main law in a series of laws that regulate the treatment of property belonging to Palestinians who left, were forced to flee, or were deported during the 1948 war. These Palestinian refugees left behind a great deal of property, and the Absentee Property Law has served as the legal basis for transferring such property into the possession of the State of Israel (NRC 15/02/2017).

8 Enacted in 1970, it exclusively allows Jews to pursue claims to land and property allegedly owned by Jews in East Jerusalem before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 (UN 23/02/2021).

9 'Affected people' refers to those whose livelihood has been affected by the demolition without being displaced. 'Displaced people' and 'affected people' are mutually exclusive (OCHA accessed 06/09/2021).

10 In 1967, Israel illegally extended Israeli 'law, jurisdiction, and administration' to East Jerusalem by annexing and occupying the area (MAP 30/04/2021).

11 In 1997, the Hebron Agreement split the city of Hebron into H1 and H2, with Hebron H2 (including the old city of Hebron) under military control of Israel (Amnesty International accessed 21/09/2021).



Hebron H2

There are roughly 33,000 Palestinians living in the Hebron H2 area (20% of the city of Hebron). As a result of its urban nature, the H2 area has an increased presence of settlers and Israeli soldiers, suggesting a heightened risk of demolitions and displacement for Palestinians, who face daily harassment and violence from settlers and soldiers.

Governorate/city	Number of demolished structures between 2009 and 6 September 2021	Number of displaced people between 2009 and 6 September 2021	Number of further affected people between 2009 and 6 September 2021	Number of donor-funded structures demolished or confiscated between 2009 and 6 September 2021
East Jerusalem	1,551	2,839	8,386	25
Hebron	1,192	1,837	21,262	262
Tubas	1,346	1,667	22,090	413
Nablus	751	1,184	41,086	195
Jericho	735	1,172	2,048	184

Source: OCHA accessed 06/09/2021

IMPLICATIONS OF FORCED EVICTIONS AND DEMOLITIONS ON HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

A significant proportion of the population is vulnerable to forced displacement and disruption of their lives and livelihoods over a prolonged period, given the protracted crisis. Housing demolitions and consequent displacement are often followed by long periods of instability for the family concerned and with many moving multiple times before being able to permanently settle again (DCI-Palestine 08/04/2021). Some households wait to return to their original homes, risking being affected again by demolitions.

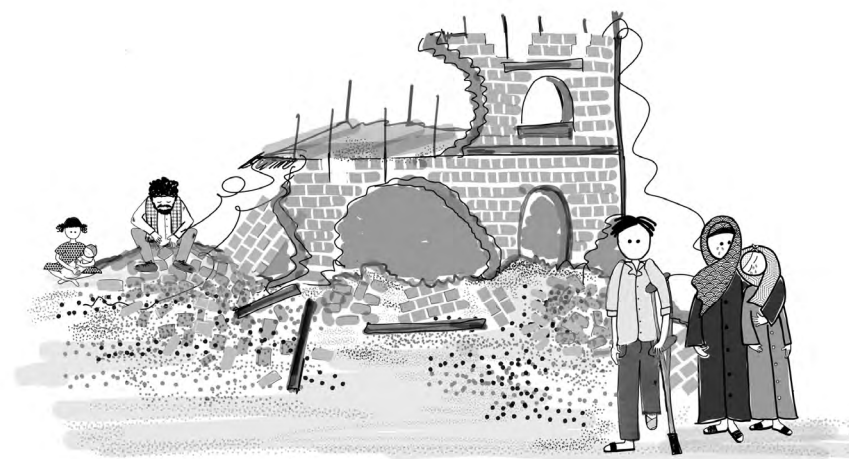
Households deplete their savings or borrow money from family members to cope with displacement and pay for demolitions fees and fines. Some households have a decreased ability to save owing to the diminishing income-earning opportunities in their areas resulting from continuous demolitions of livelihood structures and other economically restrictive Israeli policies, as well as higher dependency ratios. Without the safety net of relying on their families, these households are more likely to experience heightened needs and resort to risky coping strategies after their homes are demolished. Some examples of these coping strategies are sheltering with strangers in public buildings, engaging their children in child labour and child marriage, decreasing health-related expenses, and lower food consumption (KII 18/08/2021; OCHA 31/12/2020; ILO 04/03/2014).

Housing and belongings

Forced evictions and demolitions violate the rights of the affected people to adequate housing, privacy, and security (OHCHR 07/05/2021). More than 73,000 Palestinians in the West Bank are in need of shelter assistance – primarily in Area C, East Jerusalem, and Hebron H2 (OCHA 31/12/2020). In many cases, one demolition order can target multiple structures owned by the same household (including the residence, livestock shelters, and latrines located outside), amplifying the impact for the household (OCHA 06/09/2015). Families that are unable to move in with relatives after their home is demolished have to find immediate shelter in tents or public buildings. If no emergency shelter is available, the families sleep outside (HIC 09/07/2021). After the initial displacement, some people attempt to return to the site of the demolition in search of belongings that can be salvaged from the debris, including documentation, clothes, and school materials. People affected by the destruction may also return to rebuild their houses.

As at June 2021, 57% of all structures targeted in Area C were seized without (or with very short) prior notice. Affected populations did not have enough time to either object to the order or remove their belongings (OCHA 23/07/2021). As a result, people affected by demolitions often require immediate assistance in the form of clothes. This is especially true for children and women (DCI-Palestine 08/04/2021). Bedouin and herding communities in Area C have been displaced multiple times and live in tents, metal shacks, and caves, so that they can gather their belongings quickly (OCHA 31/12/2020).

The ability to shelter and isolate at home is a crucial protection measure against exposure to COVID-19. People affected by demolitions and forced evictions are at an increased risk of exposure to the virus as their ability to stay indoors and practise social distancing is reduced. Affected people taking shelter in overcrowded public buildings are at greater risk of contracting the virus.



Protection

After a demolition, family units are sometimes broken up as they search for shelter for all household members (Save the Children 04/2009). Women, girls, and children are potentially at an increased risk of experiencing sexual assault and abuse during this time.

Demolitions can cause long-term trauma on parents and caregivers, who feel unable to protect and provide for their families. The majority of people lose their jobs after a demolition and face increasing costs of living. In many cases, this has resulted in high rates of irritation and anger, combined with feelings of being distanced from their families (Save the Children 28/06/2021). In crisis situations, the head of the house often feels unable to fulfil their role as expected by society. In such cases, intimate partner violence, gender-based violence, and violence towards children can become common. The impact of COVID-19 restrictions is likely to compound the psychosocial distress and its consequences among victims of demolitions.

There has been an increase in the vulnerability of Palestinian households to settler violence in the West Bank since 2020 (KII 18/08/2021 and 25/08/2021). The number of settler attacks resulting in injury and/or property damage has increased by 46% in 2021, compared to the same period in 2020 (UK Government 05/08/2021). Settlers generally attack sources of livelihood and infrastructure in an attempt to sabotage Palestinian communities financially and force them to leave their land in search of opportunities elsewhere. The most frequent types of attacks involve destroying crops such as olive trees and other agricultural properties, damaging homes and vehicles, as well as forms of physical assault such as stone-throwing. Farmers and herders known as Bedouins are the most common targets of stone-throwing (B'Tselem 11/11/2017; OCHA accessed 06/09/2021; Al Jazeera 14/04/2021).

People living near settlements are confronted with the presence of more checkpoints and Israeli soldiers, who frequently harass and injure Palestinians as a means of intimidation and demonstration of authority (MAP 06/09/2017). Consequently, movement for people in communities near settlements is even more restricted. According to WeWorld-GVC Community Protection Approach (CPA) data¹², which provides a snapshot of vulnerable communities in the West Bank, the primary reasons for communities facing restrictions in accessing land are Israeli military restrictions (85%) and harassment from settlers (75%). In a four-year comparison across 116 communities in Area C that have been consistent CPA participants, the percentage of communities affected by settler harassment resulting in restrictions to land has increased from 65% in 2018 to 75% in 2021). Although the impact on land access resulting from Israeli military restrictions appears to have decreased by roughly 5% since 2019, across the same communities, movement challenges caused by military restrictions remain constant, with approximately 90% of responding communities having reported issues over the four years (WeWorld-GVC 2021).



Health, mental health, and psychosocial support

Housing demolitions often result in injuries and arrests – and sometimes death of family members. The trauma of losing a home can lead to severe physical and mental health problems. Many households experience changes in the physical health of their family members after the demolition of their homes, including strokes, diabetes, and high blood pressure (Save the Children 04/2009). The majority of households face challenges accessing health services after losing their homes. The situation is compounded by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is still unclear how the demolitions compound the existing barriers.

Movement and access restrictions, limited land status, and other discriminatory policies already prevent Palestinians from accessing healthcare (OCHA 31/12/2020; Al-Haq 08/12/2020). This situation is likely worse for people displaced by demolitions. There are no permanent Palestinian healthcare centres in Area C as a result of the restrictive Israeli building regulations (MSF 05/01/2021; MAP 30/04/2021). Over 160,000 Palestinians in Area

¹² Collected annually between 2018–2021 across roughly 160 communities in the West Bank, including Hebron and Jerusalem. The total number of communities in each annual update may differ because of the process of adding new communities to the CPA and graduating communities through the exit strategy.

C, Hebron H2, and the surrounding seam zone¹³ depend on mobile clinics for essential health services (MAP 30/04/2021). Mobile clinics are under constant threat of demolition or confiscation from the Israeli authorities – particularly those run by local NGOs, who face increasing restrictions on their activities (MSF 05/01/2021). Palestinians from the West Bank living outside East Jerusalem have to submit permit applications to Israeli authorities to access healthcare in East Jerusalem and Israel. The process of permit applications is likely tougher for Palestinians who are displaced from their homes and do not have a proper address or consistent residency.

Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) remains a critical response gap in relation to demolitions and displacement because of lack of funding and access restrictions (KII 18/08/2021; Save the Children 28/06/2021). People affected by demolitions have increased mental health issues and psychosocial needs as a result of chronic exposure to violence (Marie and SaadAdeen 29/05/2021). Pressure generated by the recurrent COVID-19 lockdowns, combined with displacement from demolitions and challenges maintaining livelihoods within the coercive environment, have increased the need for MHPSS support (OCHA 31/12/2020; MSF 10/10/2019). Women and children who have been exposed to gender-based violence have additional MHPSS needs.

WASH

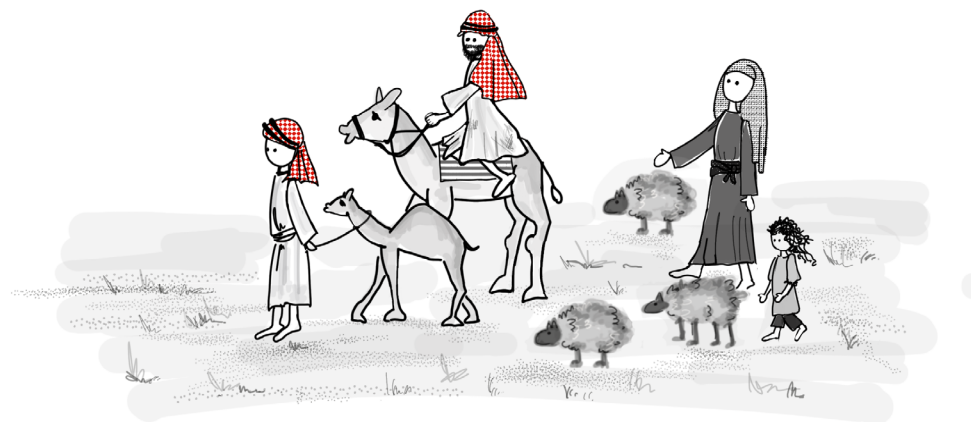
WASH infrastructure is increasingly targeted for demolitions. Damage to WASH infrastructure increases health risks amid the COVID-19 pandemic. In Area C, rainwater harvesting and mobile water tanks are the main source of basic water supply for Palestinians. Israel's policy of limiting the amount of water available to Palestinians and denying permits to restore old water infrastructure in the Jordan Valley compounds the impact of WASH infrastructure demolitions (such as water cisterns and other basic rainwater collection systems) on farming communities (B'Tselem 03/06/2021; Al Jazeera 15/07/2021; Al-Haq 31/01/2018). Mobile water tanks are often confiscated by authorities. Between January–August 2021, 46 Palestinian WASH structures were destroyed, affecting 794 people in Area C. Compared to the same period in 2020, the destruction of WASH infrastructure has increased by 40%, and people affected have increased by 300% (WASH Cluster 17/08/2021). Between 1 January and 31 March 2021, 30 WASH structures were demolished in Area C – the highest quarterly number in the last ten years (OCHA accessed 06/09/2021). Public water networks that supply water to multiple communities are often targeted, leaving large numbers of people without water supply for prolonged periods (B'Tselem 03/06/2021; Haaretz 21/06/2016). As a result, people must travel long distances with donkeys in search of water. This is particularly difficult for marginalised groups, such as people with disabilities and other mobility issues (KII 18/08/2021). The

journey to search for water also exposes people to potential violence from settlers in the area and harassment from Israeli soldiers at checkpoints. People may resort to drinking water from untreated sources, exposing the population to potential contamination and waterborne diseases. Although water connectivity is increasingly diminishing for communities in Area C, there is no recent information on the prevalence of waterborne diseases in the area.

Livelihoods and food security

Demolitions have detrimental impacts on the economic security of a household. An estimated 38% of Palestinian households in Area C rely on inconsistent daily wages for a portion of their income (MAP 30/04/2021). Employment opportunities are already limited because of the underdevelopment of the West Bank. The main source of income for many people is disrupted by demolition and/or confiscation of homes and livelihood structures. Sometimes, families located in Area A or B are affected by demolitions as their livelihood structures located in Area C are demolished or confiscated (OCHA 06/09/2015).

Agricultural structures are the second-most demolished and/or confiscated construction in the West Bank, followed by livelihood structures. More than 78% of Palestinian households in Area C rely on agriculture and livestock for part of their daily income (MAP 30/04/2021). In combination with pre-existing access restrictions to farming and grazing, Area C has been most affected by the demolition or confiscation of agricultural structures, with Bedouin and herder communities being the most targeted (OCHA accessed 06/09/2021). In many cases, people are not given enough time to evacuate and gather their livestock before the demolition of their home (DCI-Palestine 08/04/2021).



¹³ Seam zones are sections of Palestinian land which fall between the illegal Israeli annexation wall and the 1949 armistice line (the Green Line) and are therefore severed from Palestine. These swaths of land have been designated by Israel as closed military areas (UN 24/08/2012).

Other income-earning opportunities are available in East Jerusalem, but Palestinians require Jerusalem identification cards to work there. These identification cards are difficult to acquire and are only given to those born in Jerusalem (KII 18/08/2021; Al Jazeera 18/11/2017). As a result, West Bank Palestinians born elsewhere are unable to access the city for employment. Holders of the Jerusalem identification cards are under a constant threat of revocation of residency. Living outside Jerusalem in the West Bank is considered a justification for Israel to revoke the permit (Al Jazeera 18/11/2017).

Limited livelihood opportunities, combined with the impact of confiscation or demolition of housing and livelihood structures, hinder Palestinians in the West Bank from coping with other types of shocks, such as health emergencies. In the event of demolitions carried out by authorities with short or no prior notice, households lose their assets, belongings, and homes (Save the Children 28/06/2021). This compounds the issue of income loss and hinders households' ability to exercise coping mechanisms such as the selling of assets. Without adequate employment opportunities or job security, Palestinians have struggled to cope with the increasing cost of living. This results in decreasing food consumption rates and higher levels of food insecurity, which leads to further health risks. The COVID-19 crisis continues to further strain the deteriorating socioeconomic conditions of Palestinians. The indirect effects of the pandemic on access to employment have led to increased financial stress on account of the loss of pre-existing livelihoods and the inability to search for better opportunities as a result of stricter movement restrictions.

The destruction of agricultural assets and seizure of land continues to disrupt rural livelihoods and contributes to food insecurity as households' access to food decreases over time. The food security situation in Area C has been consistently worse than Areas A and B (PCBS 30/09/2016). Even before the COVID-19 outbreak, 10% of the Palestinian population in Area C faced severe food insecurity, and 16% faced moderate food insecurity (MAP 30/04/2021; PCBS 30/09/2016). Food insecurity is especially high among the Bedouin communities of Area C, at 79% (MAP 30/04/2021). This is a result of the high poverty and unemployment rates, compounded by the restrictions associated with COVID-19. An estimated 40% of Palestinians (excluding refugees) in the West Bank are food-insecure (WFP 30/04/2021).

Nutrition

There is an absence of publicly available and recent, comprehensive nutrition information for the West Bank – and Palestine in general. Movement restrictions, limited access to water, poverty, and lack of security, combined with the impact of demolitions and displacement, are likely to negatively impact child nutrition. Chronic malnutrition for children under 5 years old was at 7.9% in 2003, when the last nutrition assessment was conducted in Gaza and the West Bank (CARE 02/01/2003). Chronic malnutrition is a long-term indicator of poor nutrition status over time.

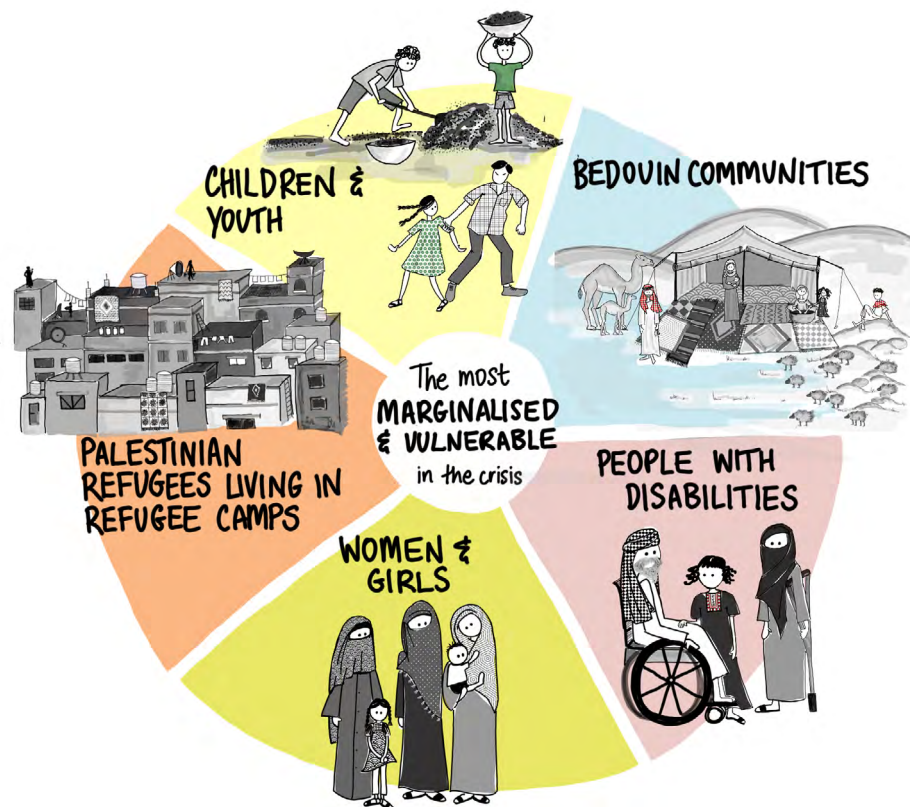
An assessment conducted in 2017 in the Jordan Valley, most of which is in Area C, found that 16% of children under 5 years of age were stunted. Bedouin children were observed to be more vulnerable to chronic malnutrition (23%) compared to children in villages (10%) and camps (9%). Similarly, children from households exposed to any form of forced displacement had a higher prevalence of chronic malnutrition (19%) compared to their peers (10%) (WHO 08/10/2019). The current nutrition status is likely to be worse in Area C, resulting from years of movement restrictions, declining availability of food and services, the impact of COVID-19, and increasing restrictions on humanitarian actors and programming. The likely prevalence of waterborne diseases may also be a driver of poor nutrition status among children in the West Bank.

Education

Throughout the West Bank, and particularly in Area C, the availability and accessibility of education is under constant threat, as education facilities are served stop-working and demolition orders. In March 2021, there were 53 schools (with an estimated 5,250 students) under threat of demolition across Area C, Hebron H2, and East Jerusalem, with the majority located in Area C (Education Cluster 01/01/2021). Schools in the West Bank and East Jerusalem already face issues of overcrowding, substandard physical conditions, and lack of resources resulting from Israel's restrictive planning regime. These schools were unable to accommodate a rising number of students even prior to the demolishing of other existing education structures.

Children who have been displaced and experienced demolition of their home either struggle to find space in overwhelmed schools in their new areas or travel long distances to continue attending their old schools (Save the Children 28/06/2021). The displacement of children creates additional expenses for the families and exposes them to further protection risks, such as settler violence and harassment from Israeli soldiers on route (Al Jazeera 11/03/2021; DCI 27/08/2021; IMEMC 29/12/2018).

WHO ARE THE MOST MARGINALISED AND VULNERABLE WITHIN THE CRISIS?



Demolitions disproportionately affect communities and households that are already vulnerable¹⁴ or marginalised and largely dependent on aid to meet their basic needs. Some geographic locations can also increase vulnerability; for instance, Bedouin communities that live in remote locations or near settlements are particularly affected.

The overall deterioration in living conditions resulting from multiple demolitions and displacement has had a disproportionate impact on small-scale farming and herding Bedouin communities. Children, youth, women, and people with disabilities in most Palestinian communities are marginalised as a result of societal perceptions and limited access to services (UN 24/11/2016). Demolitions have increased pre-existing risks related to the Palestine crisis, including poor mental health, stress, anxiety and depression, lower education outcomes, child labour, and domestic violence. Affected populations are more likely to engage in negative coping mechanisms.

Bedouin communities

A significant proportion of the Palestinian population in Area C is made of Bedouin communities, who are mostly refugees from the Negev desert in Israel since 1948. An estimated 80% of the Palestinian Bedouins live in the Jordan Valley and around Hebron. These areas are mostly closed military training and firing zones (MAP 06/09/2017) or under threat of annexation.

The Bedouins are mainly farming and herding communities and are largely responsible for Palestinian agriculture in the West Bank. The communities' economic sustainability has been severely affected by the increasing demolition of agricultural structures and settler violence (FSC 19/03/2018; UN 16/12/2016). Bedouin communities struggle to obtain water for their agriculture and livestock, which further affects their income-earning abilities. They are left in substantial debt with little to no possibility of rebuilding their businesses on the land where they live as a result of the inaccessibility of building permits and the threat of further demolitions (UN 16/12/2016; UNRWA 29/05/2013; UNRWA 14/04/2010). The repeated loss of their homes, personal possessions, and livelihood structures, combined with demolition-related fees, likely creates a severe negative impact on the communities' coping strategies and their psychosocial and social conditions.

There has been an increasing trend in community-wide demolitions in Area C since 2013. These demolitions and displacement do not occur at once but build up over time (KII 03/08/2021 and 18/08/2021). Bedouin communities are forcibly transferred to cramped townships that do not allow them to continue pastoral farming, pressuring them to sell or give up their livestock owing to the lack of grazing land and space (MAP 06/09/2017). Community-wide demolitions significantly affect the coping strategies available to victims of demolitions. Other community members, who could normally provide support following a demolition, are also under the threat of losing their homes.

Households from herder communities shelter in communal structures after being displaced by demolitions (KII 18/09/2021). The heat in Jordan Valley makes it challenging to seek shelter with family or other community members because shelter structures are very small and not built to withstand heat (KII 18/09/2021). As a result, many displaced people from the community live in public buildings (KII 18/09/2021), which likely puts pressure on available resources such as toilet and bathing facilities and creates further protection issues for women and children.

¹⁴ Vulnerability in this instance is measured by negative social perceptions and or social exclusion experienced by certain groups, along with their ability to cope with the crisis.



Children and youth

Children exposed to conflict-related violence and displacement have various health and protection needs. Beyond the initial trauma of losing their homes, they suffer from emotional distress, as being uprooted negatively impacts their sense of security and isolates them from their communities (Save the Children 28/06/2021). They are also likely to suffer from anxiety, depression, and somatic complaints such as dizziness and problems breathing (Marie and SaadAdeen 29/05/2021; HRW 21/05/2017). In many communities in Area C, a household will have experienced being uprooted several times in their lifetime. Affected children feel a sense of disempowerment, which creates a long-term negative psychosocial effect.

Displaced children, who have experienced high rates of emotional distress, are at heightened risk of being forced into child labour, child marriage, and exposed to abuse and exploitation (UN 16/12/2016). Immediately after the demolition of their home, children are often exposed to physical risks associated with being in a new and unfamiliar location, such as getting lost, abducted, or being in an accident on the way to or from school. In the West Bank, children face multiple challenges in accessing education and other services, such as intimidation from military and settlers on route, settler violence, intimidation and harassment at checkpoints, arrests and detention, and military raids in schools (The Irish Times 09/09/2021; AA 20/11/2020; MEMO 11/09/2018).

Children with disabilities are generally the first to be pulled out of education in the event of a household shock. After a demolition, families may choose not to continue education for their children with disabilities as a result of the compounded risk of travelling to school and experiencing protection risks, as well as additional expenses of transportation support to access education facilities. Children who spend more time in their shelters are at risk of a different set of physical protection issues, such as child abuse and domestic violence. Children affected by demolitions are at greater risk of child protection concerns as a result of the psychosocial distress of their caregivers and community members (World Vision International 08/06/2020). In these situations, children with disabilities are more vulnerable to physical abuse or neglect from their caregivers.

After the demolition of their home, some children enter child labour in order to support their household. This negative coping mechanism is more frequent in female-headed households (Save the Children 28/06/2021). Boys tend to have higher participation in the labour force. Children mainly work in the agricultural sector in the West Bank, engaging in tasks such as carrying water, grazing animals, picking crops, and herding sheep (ILO 04/03/2014). Most of the agricultural land in the West Bank is in dangerous areas either near the border or near settlements. Children involved in child labour in the West Bank are exposed to settler violence and military intimidation and harassment. This has led to arrests and detention in some cases. Other forms of child labour activities, such as spraying pesticides, can expose children to health risks (ILO 04/03/2014).





People with disabilities

There are an estimated 44,570 people with disabilities in the West Bank (UNFPA 21/05/2019). People with disabilities face compounding barriers to accessing essential services, income-earning opportunities, and social inclusion as a result of the protracted conflict, resulting damage to infrastructure and the economy, severe pressure on services, and negative cultural attitudes towards disability (UN 16/12/2016). As a result of the lack of services and opportunities available, people with disabilities generally experience worse health conditions, lower educational outcomes, and higher rates of poverty than people without disabilities (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 02/2018).

These conditions are likely made worse if a person with a disability experiences the demolition of their home. Without sufficient access to income-earning opportunities, people would be unable to financially cope with the loss of their home and other assets, as well as afford further food and medical expenses. Living without adequate shelter and hygiene infrastructure may negatively impact physical and mental health. People with disabilities are also likely to experience greater risks of violence, stigma, and discrimination. The loss of their own space and safety exposes them to further protection risks, such as abuse and exploitation.

Main roads connecting surrounding villages are sometimes destroyed by demolitions. Communities are cut off from their existing social networks as they move away from their homes in search of accessible roads (OCHA accessed 06/09/2021). This mainly occurs in areas where there are large Bedouin communities, such as the governorates of Hebron, Nablus, and Tubas. As a result of demolitions, road infrastructure in Area C poses challenges for people with mobility limitations and hinders their ability to access services (KII 18/08/2021). For example, children with disabilities rely on transportation support to access educational facilities, and people with disabilities need community support to collect water and other essential items such as food and medication.



Women and girls

Women in Palestine have limited access to income-generating opportunities. In such circumstances, women-headed households are vulnerable to poverty if they do not have any men of working age to generate income. As a result, women-headed households are more likely to experience higher rates of food insecurity and malnutrition (OCHA 20/12/2017). Home demolitions and displacement increase the vulnerability of women, particularly those searching for their immediate shelter needs. Demolitions heighten problems such as poverty and further increase women's risk of health and nutrition-related issues.

Settler-related incidents, such as harassment of Palestinians and attacks on electricity networks to trigger movement of Palestinians away from their communities, likely create challenges for women and girls. As security concerns increase, women and girls limit their movement to access essential services such as water. Occupation-related policies, such as forced eviction, demolitions, and increasing settlement activity, significantly impact the mental health and wellbeing of women and girls as a result of interruptions to family life and the inability to perform traditional domestic responsibilities (ESCWA 09/01/2019).

Housing demolitions and forced eviction disproportionately affect women and girls. Women lose their own domestic space and are unable to fulfil their societal roles as primary caregivers of their families as they become reliant on others for shelter and support (Marie and SaadAdeen 29/05/2021; UN Women 03/2017). After demolitions, Palestinian women and girls are denied their privacy and exposed to gender-based violence and sexual assault from community members sharing the same space in the public areas and buildings they take shelter in. Intimate partner violence, sexual abuse, and forced marriage are prevalent in communities affected by demolitions and displacement (OCHA 20/12/2017).

In the long term, women and girls are likely to experience violence within their own homes if the male heads of household turn to violent behaviour as a negative coping mechanism to loss of control over their lives. Such situations can contribute to long-term negative impacts, including depression and insomnia, which affect the personal development of young girls (WCLAC 23/09/2017).

Women and girls with disabilities are at an increased risk of violence compared to their peers without disabilities. They have limited access to services on account of negative social perceptions and limited mobility as a result of the lack of appropriate infrastructure (UNFPA 21/05/2019).





Palestinian refugees living in refugee camps

The systematic occupation has resulted in a large number of refugees in the West Bank. As at February 2019, approximately 15% of all registered Palestinian refugees¹⁵ (846,465 individuals) lived in the West Bank. Roughly 25% of this population lives in UNRWA refugee camps, while the rest lives in towns and villages near the camps (Anera accessed 11/08/2021). Many of the registered refugees are Bedouins who have faced repeated demolitions. Registered refugees have different rights from West Bank citizens and face difficulties accessing jobs, land, education, and other essential services. The situation is compounded by the pre-existing, poor socioeconomic conditions of the West Bank. Refugee camps are either on Israeli state land or land that is leased from local landowners by the controlling government. Refugees do not own the land they live on and do not have the right to build on it (UNRWA accessed 16/09/2021). Israeli authorities sometimes demolish residential structures within refugee camps as a punitive measure and confiscate education and other service-provision facilities (OCHA 17/01/2019). More information on the impact of demolitions and confiscations on refugees living inside camps is unavailable, so the coping strategies available to refugees in camps are not clear.



IS THE RESPONSE ABLE TO MEET THE HUMANITARIAN NEEDS OF PEOPLE AFFECTED BY DEMOLITIONS IN THE WEST BANK?

The responsibility for the provision of many services (e.g. health and education) for Palestinians in Area C was given to the PA in the Oslo II Accord. Challenges in obtaining building permits from the Israeli authorities for the construction of public buildings, such as clinics and schools, impedes the PA's ability to fulfil its role (Al-Haq 31/01/2018). Palestinians in Area C are therefore largely dependent on humanitarian assistance, but only 6% of all humanitarian funds for Palestine (USD 21.98 million) in 2021 were allocated to the West Bank – a drastic decrease from USD 12.3 million in 2020 to only USD 1.5 million in 2021. Out of four million recipients of aid, three million are located in the West Bank. The deepening needs of the West Bank population affected by continuing demolitions and the pandemic may not be fully addressed by the humanitarian response (OCHA accessed 16/09/2021).

Humanitarian responses to displacement (both as a result of home demolitions and other factors of a coercive environment) are inconsistent. Considerable gaps remain in the protection of and delivery of assistance to displaced people in West Bank (Save the Children 06/04/2010).

The existing first response to demolition victims is coordinated by certain humanitarian actors in collaboration with the PA. Through humanitarian assistance, people can access emergency shelter, food, and other basic supplies to help cope with the immediate losses of their home and assets (KII 18/08/2021; Save the Children 06/04/2010). Only a few humanitarian actors provide assistance in relation to demolitions in the West Bank. It is likely that affected people in remote locations either do not have enough information on the availability of support or face challenges accessing it. Access to certain areas within Area C has to be negotiated between humanitarian actors and the authorities, which causes response delays (KIIs 18/08/2021 and 09/09/2021). Emergency assistance also does not appropriately address the needs of families or communities that host victims of demolitions. There are gaps in the response and information regarding host families and communities.

Humanitarian aid organisations face increasing impediments in delivering emergency assistance (i.e. temporary shelters) in Area C, particularly in locations near settlements. Humanitarian actors are confronted with the obstruction of their aid delivery, as well as the confiscation and demolition of aid structures by the Israeli Civil Administration and Israeli forces (KII 18/08/2021; OCHA 31/12/2020; UNRWA 2013). Political instability, risk of further demolitions, and confiscation of assistance materials also prevent effective long-term humanitarian programming to support the resilience of affected communities. Access

¹⁵ People whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict (UNRWA accessed 16/09/2021).

constraints include restrictions on obtaining permits required by Israeli authorities to move within the West Bank, particularly for national employees of NGOs. Other physical obstacles to humanitarian aid organisations include the separation barrier, checkpoints, and administrative procedures that continue to restrict Palestinian access to services (OCHA 31/12/2020). Access restrictions continue to hamper the delivery of materials needed for the implementation of humanitarian projects, including the building or maintenance of infrastructure in Area C and responding to demolitions of housing or essential infrastructure. Access has been further limited by restrictions introduced following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. While containing the spread of the virus is essential, the restrictions further constrain the operational capacity of humanitarian actors in Palestine (KII 25/08/2021; OCHA 31/12/2020).

INFORMATION GAPS AND NEEDS

- Differences in the impact of demolitions on populations in East Jerusalem and Area C (including Hebron H2) are difficult to capture as the two areas are often combined in literature.
- A better understanding of the needs and coping mechanisms of host families and communities that provide support to victims of demolitions is required.
- Disability prevalence according to geographic location (e.g. urban, rural, refugee camp, and different neighbourhoods of the West Bank) or socioeconomic status is missing.
- Waves of violence over the years have resulted in large numbers of Palestinians sustaining injuries and developing disabilities. Without appropriate baseline data according to areas, it is difficult to understand how the rate of disability may have increased over the years as a result of violence, particularly in relation to injuries from demolitions or settler violence in certain zones such as Area C.
- Data on violence against women and girls with disabilities is lacking. It is therefore difficult to understand the prevalence of this form of violence in relation to socioeconomic conditions and geographical location, as well as whether/how housing demolitions compound the issue.
- Information on the specific impact of natural disasters such as cold and heatwaves on populations displaced by demolitions and forced evictions is unavailable.
- The West Bank is often hit with extreme weather conditions, such as cold/heatwaves, heavy rain, and floods (Reliefweb accessed 06/09/2021). It is unclear how the weather affects victims of housing demolitions.

Shelter

- There is limited information on the proportion of homelessness as a result of housing demolitions.
- It is unclear how geography affects the ability of households to rebuild their lives.
- The concept of household is difficult to capture in Area C, as many families often live under one roof. This is mainly a result of one family being targeted for demolitions, moving in with another family as a coping strategy, and then experiencing uprooting again as their host household is threatened with demolition (KII 25/08/2021). Information on the relationship and roles within households in Area C is limited and may affect our understanding of certain sectoral needs.

Food security, livelihoods, and nutrition

- There is limited information on food security coping mechanisms after demolitions.
- There is a lack of recent data on child health and the nutrition status of the Palestinian population, specifically in the West Bank.

Access

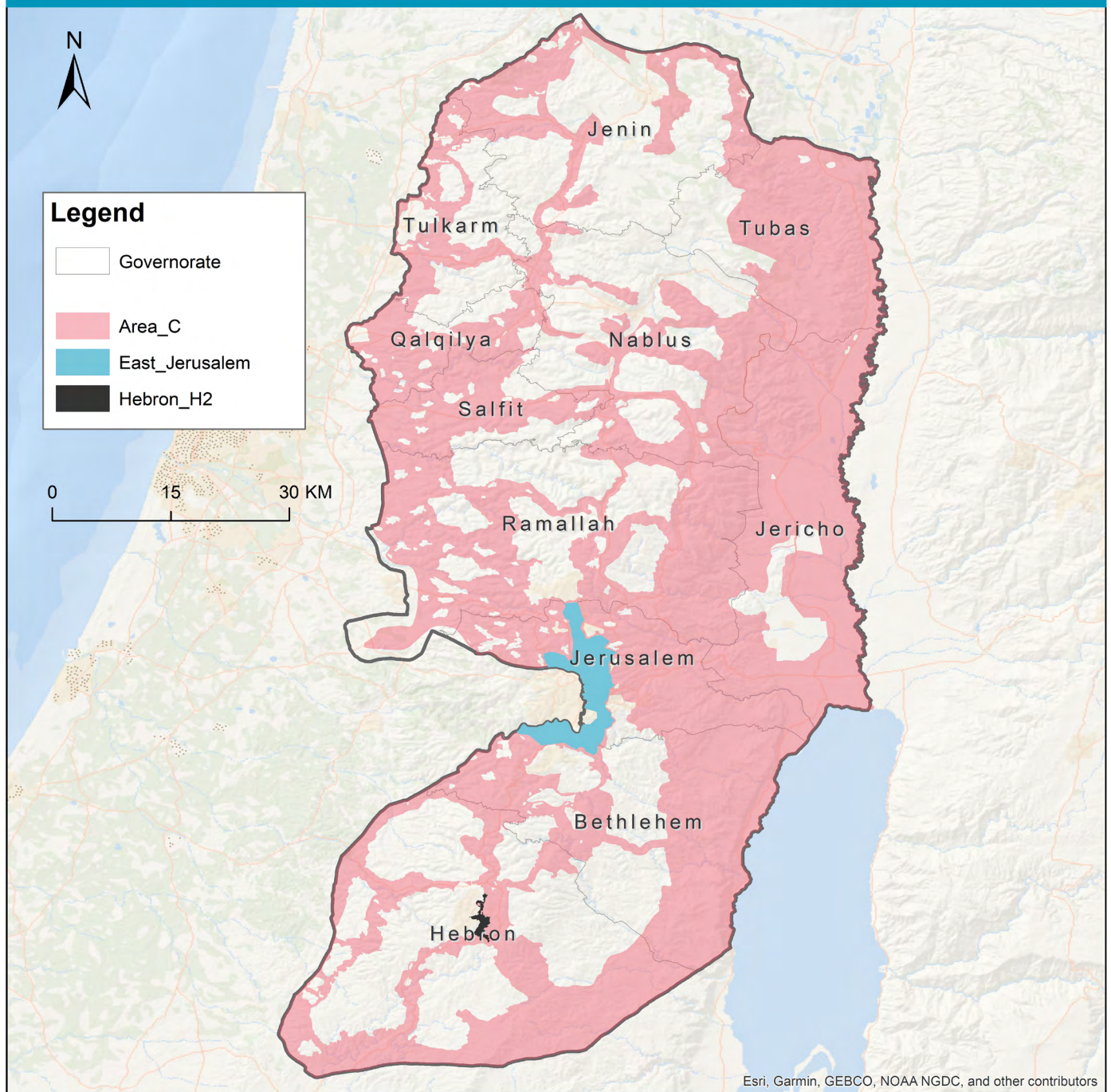
- Needs and vulnerabilities may have changed in certain areas as a result of the most recent escalation of violence in May 2021. Movement restrictions imposed because of COVID-19 have presented challenges for humanitarian actors and limited their ability to meet the current needs and vulnerabilities (KIIs 09/08/2021).
- There is limited information on the vulnerabilities and access in the big urban centres in the West Bank as a result of the systematic restrictions on movement in densely populated areas (KII 25/08/2021).

This report is part of a series of independent analysis products to support humanitarian decision-making in Palestine in the aftermath of the escalation of violence in May 2021. Read more [here](#).

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Palestine: West Bank



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Source: ACAPS

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