

Current situation and anticipated impacts of the crisis in the West Bank

OVERVIEW

On 7 October 2023, the Qassam Brigades (the armed wing of Hamas, which governs the Gaza Strip) launched the Al-Aqsa Flood, a military operation that killed around 1,200 people in Israel, including 33 children (OCHA 23/11/2023; WHO 10/10/2023; NYT 12/11/2023). Israel responded with a bombardment campaign and a ground operation in the strip that, as at 23 November, had killed over 14,800 people, including more than 6,000 children (OCHA 23/11/2023; UNRWA 22/11/2023). The collapse of communication services at hospitals in northern Gaza Strip has disrupted the flow of information, and the Ministry of Health has been unable to update cumulative casualty figures since 11 November (OCHA 21/11/2023).

The hostilities in the Gaza Strip have also worsened tensions in the West Bank. Israeli settler attacks and military raids against Palestinians in the area, as well as Palestinian armed group attacks on Israeli targets, have increased (The Guardian 24/10/2023; AP 14/10/2023; ICG 06/11/2023; France 24 05/11/2023).

Between 7 October and 23 November in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israeli forces killed 211 Palestinians (including 54 children), while Israeli settlers killed an additional eight Palestinians (including one child) (OCHA 23/11/2023). The number of Palestinians killed in the West Bank since 7 October accounts for 48% of the total Palestinian deaths (452) reported in the West bank for 2023 (OCHA 24/11/2023). As at 21 November, four Israelis have also been killed in attacks by Palestinians in the West Bank (OCHA 24/11/2023; OCHA accessed 22/11/2023). Nearly 66% of fatalities occurred during Israeli military search-and-arrest operations, mainly in Jenin and Tulkarem governorates; 24% during Gaza-related demonstrations; 9% during attacks by Israeli forces or settlers; and 1% during punitive demolitions of Palestinian houses (OCHA 23/11/2023).

During the same period, Israeli forces also injured over 2,866 Palestinians, including at least 364 children. Almost half of these injuries occurred during demonstrations (OCHA 23/11/2023). Israeli settlers also injured 78 other Palestinians, 33% of whom were injured by live ammunition (OCHA 23/11/2023; IMEMC 22/11/2023). Between 7 October and 16 November, 22 Israelis were injured in the West Bank during clashes with Palestinians (OCHA accessed 22/11/2023).

Since 7 October, Israeli authorities have heavily restricted the movement of Palestinians in the West Bank using military checkpoints, concrete roadblocks, and deployed military personnel (OCHA 28/10/2023; Al Jazeera 28/10/2023; UNRWA 07/11/2023). The rising tensions in the West

Bank since 7 October have led to reduced production capacity and supply chain challenges, slowing down economic activities in the area. The situation is affecting livelihoods and overall humanitarian conditions (ILO 06/11/2023).

About the report

Aim: the report provides an overview of the West Bank context and an update on the impact of the hostilities between Israel and Hamas since October 7. It highlights certain key drivers of humanitarian needs that are already affecting the lives of Palestinians in the West Bank and anticipates how they will likely worsen in the coming weeks, shedding light on the situation experienced by specific groups, including Bedouin communities, Palestinian refugees, Gazan workers, olive farmers, and children.

Methodology: this report is based on the secondary data review of publicly available sources.

Limitations: the factors explored in this report are non-exhaustive and focus on the short term. Given the dynamic nature of the situation, it is difficult to anticipate the developments and the scale of the impact that the selected factors may have on humanitarian conditions in the area.

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WEST BANK CONTEXT OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND SITUATION

Location and population: the West Bank is a Palestinian territory located on the west bank of the Jordan River, with Israel to its north, west, and south. Israel has been occupying these regions since the 1967 Six-Day War between Israel and neighbouring Arab states; these regions at that time were under Jordanian control (BBC 25/06/2020; Vox 09/11/2023; UN accessed 15/11/2023). More than 3.25 million Palestinians and 700,000 Israeli settlers (across 279 settlements) live in the West Bank (PCBS 26/05/2021; PCBS accessed 15/11/2023; OHCHR 28/03/2023).

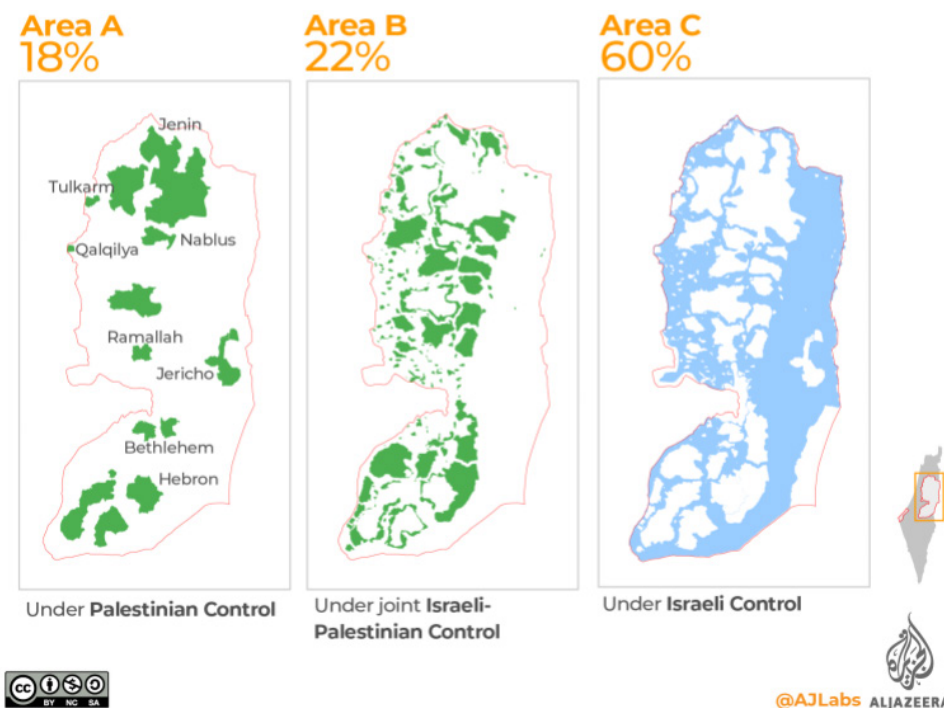
Before 7 October, there were around 871,000 Palestinian refugees across 19 refugee camps in the West Bank (UNRWA accessed 23/11/2023). Palestinian refugees are defined as “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period of 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict” (UNRWA accessed 24/11/2023). The refugee camps are densely populated, with insufficient basic infrastructure and services, resulting in generally poor socioeconomic conditions for Palestinian refugees and high humanitarian needs from years of displacement.

Oslo Accords: between 1993–1995, Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the internationally recognised representatives of the Palestinian people (currently dominated by Fatah, formerly the Palestinian National Liberation Movement), signed the Oslo Accords, formally known as the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. The accords established, among other things, the Palestinian Authority (PA) as an interim body for Palestinian self-determination (UN accessed 26/10/2023; ECFR accessed 26/10/2023; Al Jazeera 11/10/2023; UN 08/10/1993).

The Oslo Accords divided the West Bank into East Jerusalem and Areas A, B, and C, with different security and administrative arrangements shared between Israel and the PA (OCHA accessed 06/11/2023; CoR accessed 26/10/2023; Al Jazeera 11/10/2023). Israeli authorities also extended Israel’s sovereignty and domestic laws to the Israeli settlements across the West Bank (AI 07/06/2017; B’Tselem 11/11/2017).

The PA: recent years have seen a weakening of the PA in the West Bank and an erosion of its legitimacy among Palestinians. A number of factors include high corruption levels, the cancellation of the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2021, political divisions between Fatah and Hamas, challenges in paying civil servants’ salaries, and frustration in the PA’s security cooperation with the Israeli forces (Al Jazeera 11/10/2023 and 12/10/2017; ICG 17/04/2023; JCPA 23/07/2023; Al-Shabaka 14/03/2021).

Figure 1. Division of the West Bank based on the Oslo Accords

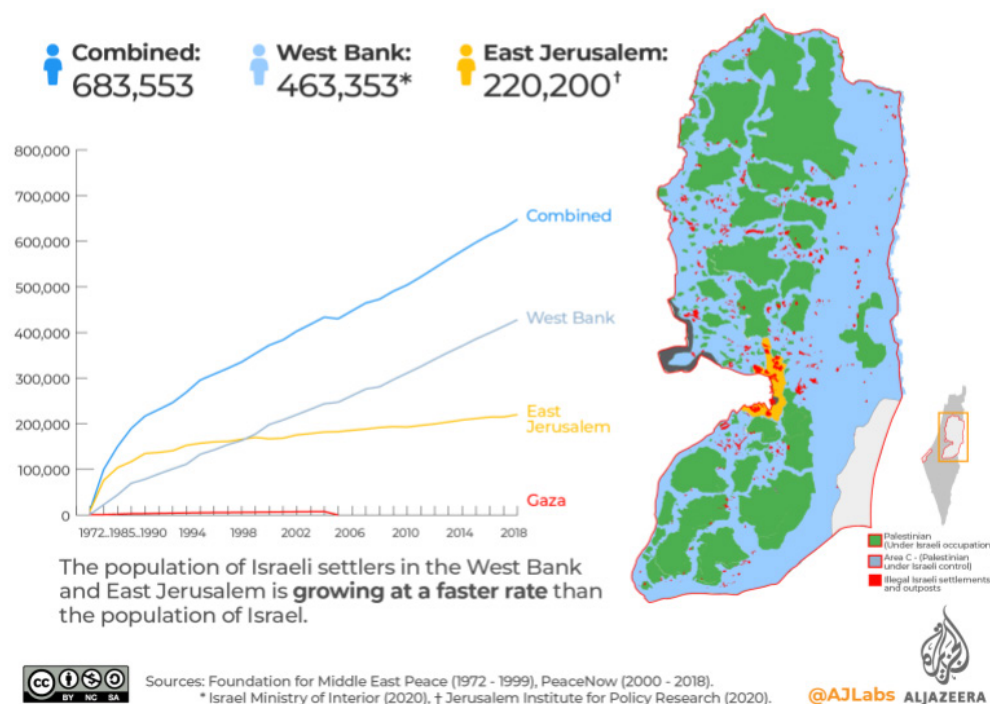


Source: Al Jazeera (18/05/2021)

The Israeli Government: on 29 December 2022, the Likud and ultranationalist parties formed a new Israeli Government led by Benjamin Netanyahu (BBC 29/12/2022; Al Jazeera 29/12/2022). Since coming into power, the new Government has vowed to annex occupied territories, granted approvals for thousands of settlement units, and successfully passed a reform to prevent the judicial system from limiting the executive body’s powers (CFR 26/07/2023; TOI 28/12/2022; Reuters 13/07/2023). Tensions and increased violence in the West Bank have increased since the arrival of the new Israeli Government (UNHRC 06/04/2023; Al Jazeera 02/04/2023; OCHA 19/05/2023).

Israeli settlements are Jewish communities built on Palestinian land considered illegal under international law since they violate the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the occupying power from transferring its own civilian population into the territories it occupies (ICJ 09/07/2004; AI 30/01/2019). Settlers are granted Israeli citizenship and receive state subsidies that lower their cost of living (Al Jazeera 18/05/2021). As at March 2023, 700,000 Israeli settlers were living across 279 settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem (OHCHR 28/03/2023).

Figure 1: Israeli settlements across the West Bank



Source: Al Jazeera (18/05/2021)

Demolitions and forced expulsion: over the years, Israeli authorities have demolished structures, including homes, to build a coercive environment and forcibly expel Palestinians to create space for more settlements (Al-Haq 2018). Prior to 7 October, Israel had demolished a total of 9,880 structures in the West Bank, displacing 14,000 people since 2009 (OCHA 21/11/2023). Israeli forces often confiscate and demolish residential and public structures as retaliation against Palestinians who have harmed or attempted to harm Israeli civilians (punitive), because of a lack of Israeli permits (administrative), or during military operations to clear a piece of land (land-clearing) (OCHA 22/06/2021 and 17/01/2019; AI 06/04/2021). Israel justifies these demolitions as a “pressing military necessity”, as buildings have been used for the manufacturing and concealment of weapons; Israel demolishes the structures to punish people suspected of attacks against Israel and their families and deter other Palestinians from performing similar acts. That said, these demolitions have also severely damaged and affected civilian populations and infrastructure not related to Palestinian armed groups (OCHA accessed 22/11/2023).

Violence from settlers in the form of roadblocks, threats, attacks, and property destruction contribute to Palestinian displacement, the loss of their main income sources, and limited access to public services (such as schools and healthcare facilities) in the West Bank (UNRWA 2013; OHCHR 07/05/2021; B’Tselem 19/10/2023; ICG 06/11/2023; OCHA 21/09/2023; UN 01/11/2023). Israel has established military outposts, with Israeli forces often accompanying and protecting settler attacks (B’Tselem accessed 23/11/2023; Al Jazeera 27/02/2023 and 04/06/2023; OCHA 08/07/2023 and 30/10/2023).

ACAPS’ Palestine: Impact of Demolition Policies in the West Bank provides more information on the situation before 7 October.

Emergence of new Palestinian armed groups: new Palestinian armed groups have emerged in the West Bank in recent years, engaging in armed clashes with Israeli forces and carrying out attacks on Israeli targets, leading to Israeli deaths (ECFR accessed 17/11/2023; ICG 17/04/2023; Reuters 05/07/2023; Al Jazeera 22/03/2023). These armed groups are largely unaligned with the political groups controlling the West Bank or Gaza Strip; they are primarily driven by frustrations with the ineffective Palestinian leadership and conditions under Israeli occupation (ICG 17/04/2023; FP 29/03/2023; NYT 04/03/2023; Reuters 05/07/2023). The two largest Palestinian armed groups that have emerged in the past few years are the Lion’s Den in Nablus and Jenin Brigades in Jenin (ICG 17/04/2023; FP 29/03/2023; Al-Monitor 05/12/2022).

2023 casualties: even before 7 October, 2023 was already the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank since the UN started recording fatalities in 2008 (OCHA accessed 16/11/2023; VOA 09/09/2023; OCHA 14/10/2023; STC 18/09/2023; TWP 31/10/2023). Between 1 January and 7 October 2023, around 205 Palestinians were killed and 9,197 injured in the West Bank, compared to 154 deaths and 10,180 injuries throughout 2022 (OCHA accessed 22/11/2023).

Between 1 January and 7 October 2023, Palestinian civilians and armed groups killed 25 Israelis, including 15 settlers (six of whom were children) and three soldiers, in the West Bank (OCHA accessed 12/11/2023).

Previous acts of violence against Israeli settlers have triggered mob attacks against Palestinians in the West Bank. The most prominent in 2023 occurred in February in Huwara town after two Israeli settlers were killed. During the events, hundreds of Israeli settlers attacked the town, setting fire to Palestinian homes and businesses and killing one Palestinian (CNN 15/06/2023; HRW 01/03/2023; The New Yorker 28/10/2023).

Economy: the economy in the West Bank is characterised by extremely low labour force participation rates and high levels of dependency on employment in Israel and Israeli settlements across the West Bank (WB accessed 23/11/2023). Around 22.5% of working Palestinians in the West Bank were employed in Israel and Israeli settlements in the West Bank prior to the recent developments (UNCTAD 25/10/2023). The unemployment rate in the West Bank reached more than 13% in the second quarter of 2023, with women and youth graduates having the highest unemployment rates (UNCTAD 25/10/2023; WB 13/09/2023; PCBS 15/02/2023).

Background humanitarian situation: in January 2023, the UN estimated that 800,000 of the 3.25 million Palestinians in the West Bank were in need of humanitarian assistance (OCHA 25/01/2023; PCBS 26/05/2021). 25% of the households in the West Bank were classified to face 'catastrophic' (1%), 'severe' (3%), and 'extreme' (21%) conditions, with 'catastrophic' being the worst (OCHA 25/01/2023).

This poor economic situation drives the humanitarian conditions in the West Bank. The Israeli occupation hinders economic and social development, as it limits Palestinian control over economic tools, such as monetary policy, natural resources, and trade policies (UNCTAD 25/10/2023; MEI 02/12/2020; UNCTAD 22/12/2021; UNGA 17/10/2022). Military operations and movement restrictions on people and goods also worsen the economic situation and increase poverty levels in the area (UNCTAD 22/12/2021; UNGA 17/10/2022; PalQuest accessed 14/03/2023; Al Jazeera 28/10/2023).

Movements and humanitarian access in the West Bank have decreased over the years as a result of the Israeli occupation, movement restrictions on people and goods, and insecurity (OCHA 25/01/2023).

30% of the West Bank is inaccessible to Palestinians by military orders, as 20% is classified as firing zones for Israeli military training, while 10% lies within the municipal boundaries of Israeli settlements. Many farmers can only reach their private land within or around settlements twice a year at most, subject to the approval of Israeli authorities (OCHA 25/08/2023).

Palestinians face challenges in accessing humanitarian aid because of physical obstacles in the form of separation barriers, checkpoints, and curfews imposed by Israeli forces (OCHA 25/01/2023; B'Tselem 11/11/2017; HRW 04/11/2022). In early 2023, before 7 October, there existed 565 movement obstacles in the West Bank, including 49 checkpoints constantly staffed with Israeli forces or private security companies, 139 occasionally staffed checkpoints, 304 roadblocks, earth mounds, and road gates, and 73 earth walls, road barriers, and trenches. Since 2021, Israel has been using facial recognition and other artificial intelligence strategies in the occupied West Bank to track people, mostly Palestinians, and restrict their passage through key checkpoints (OCHA 25/08/2023; NYT 01/05/2023; AI 02/05/2023).

Armed confrontations and raids by the Israeli forces in the West Bank frequently affect and damage facilities providing humanitarian services and assistance, including health facilities (WHO 03/07/2023; OCHA 03/07/2023 and 04/11/2023; UNRWA 09/07/2023).

CURRENT SITUATION AND ANTICIPATED IMPACT

As per a November 2023 flash appeal, the recent violence has resulted in an additional 100,000 Palestinians in need of humanitarian assistance, taking the total to 900,000 (OCHA 06/11/2023).

Increased movement restrictions, detentions, and violence

Since the recent flare-up of hostilities, protests against Israel have erupted in multiple cities in the West Bank, including Hebron, Jenin, and Nablus. Israeli forces have responded to some of these protests with live ammunition and tear gas (TWP 18/10/2023; Al Jazeera 28/10/2023). Several general strikes have also taken place across the West Bank, such as East Jerusalem, in solidarity with the Gaza Strip (Crisis24 08/10/2023; WAFA 07/10/2023; TOI 18/10/2023). As a result, Israeli authorities have further imposed heavy restrictions on the movement of Palestinians within West Bank towns and cities (Al-Bireh, East Jerusalem, Hebron, Nablus, and Ramallah) (OCHA 28/10/2023; Al Jazeera 28/10/2023; UNRWA 07/11/2023). Citing security concerns, Israel has historically tightened movement restrictions in the West Bank following escalations in violence (B'Tselem 11/11/2017; DOS 20/03/2023).

Since 7 October, Palestinians have been struggling to obtain permits to access lands in Area C (which makes up 60% of the West Bank) and behind the seam zone separating Israeli settlements (Jacobin 10/11/2023; OCHA 28/10/2023 and 13/01/2021; Al Jazeera 14/10/2021). There have also been calls from members of the Israeli government cabinet and the Israeli Knesset (parliament) to increase security and checkpoints and create settler-only roads around Israeli settlements to help reduce confrontations between settlers and Palestinians (Reuters 06/11/2023; MEMO 06/11/2023; Haaretz 05/11/2023).

Intensified violence in the West Bank will worsen movement restrictions and increase protection needs for Palestinians. Protection concerns in the West Bank remain extremely high and are expected to increase given the continued use of excessive force by Israeli and Palestinian security forces, military incursions into refugee camps, movement restrictions, mass detentions, forced displacements, and the expansion of settlements (OCHA 06/11/2023; OHCHR 15/12/2022; ICG 06/11/2023; Al Jazeera 30/10/2023).

Administrative detention of Palestinians

Since 7 October, the administrative detention of Palestinians by Israeli forces, a form of incarceration without charge or trial, has increased (AI 08/11/2023). Palestinian advocacy groups reported at least 3,000 Palestinians detained in the West Bank between 7 October and 21 November, a notable increase from the 2,700 detentions reported by 18 November (Xinhua 22/11/2023; Reuters 18/11/2023). As at 12 November, two Palestinians had died in the custody of Israeli authorities. As at 17 November, Israeli authorities reported 1,750 Palestinians arrested in the West Bank, 760 of whom were alleged to be affiliated with Hamas as at 3 November (OHCHR 20/10/2023; Reuters 18/11/2023 and 03/11/2023; Al Jazeera 09/11/2023). As at 18 November, the cumulative number of Palestinians detained by Israel in the West Bank pre- and post-7 October had increased to over 7,800, including 300 children and 72 women (Reuters 18/11/2023).

Militarisation of settlers and settler violence

Settler violence has seen a significant increase in 2023 and has further intensified since 7 October, with an average of six daily incidents compared to three previously reported (OCHA 21/11/2023 and 30/10/2023; BBC 21/10/2023; UNSC 24/10/2023). Israeli settlers have killed eight Palestinians, including one child, in the West Bank (OCHA 23/11/2023; UNRWA 21/11/2023). There are also continued reports of settlers killing and threatening Palestinians, damaging and destroying their property, blocking roads, and displacing communities (B'Tselem 19/10/2023; ICG 06/11/2023). Between 7 October and 23 November, around 281 Israeli settler attacks against Palestinians were recorded, including 210 incidents of property damage (OCHA 23/11/2023). One-third of the incidents involved the threat of firearms, and Israeli forces accompanied almost half of the recorded settler attacks (OCHA 21/11/2023 and 23/11/2023).

In parallel, there is a noticeable surge in Israeli gun ownership, especially among settlers in the West Bank, in anticipation of an escalation in violence. The Israeli Government has relaxed gun laws, making it easier to obtain gun licenses. In October, after the Hamas attack, the Israeli National Ministry distributed approximately 10,000 rifles to settlers, increasing the risk of settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank (CBC 27/10/2023; Euronews 24/10/2023; AA 13/10/2023). The increase in settler violence can restrict access for Palestinians (The New Yorker 26/10/2023; Al Jazeera 06/11/2023).

Increased demolitions and displacement

Between 7 October and 21 November, Israeli forces demolished 165 structures, including seven donor-funded structures, displacing 386 Palestinians in the West Bank (OCHA accessed 21/11/2023). The most affected areas were Jenin, Nur Shams Camp, and Tulkarem Camp.

On 21 November, Israeli forces demolished two structures in two separate locations in Al Isawiya, East Jerusalem, and Silwan because of a lack of Israeli-issued building permits (OCHA 21/11/2023).

An increase in violence between Israeli authorities and Palestinian armed groups may result in heightened cases of punitive demolitions. Palestinians displaced because of Israel's demolition policies are expected to have immediate and long-term shelter and protection needs, along with requiring livelihood assistance.

Increased military raids in refugee camps

Israeli raids targeting Palestinian armed groups often focus on the refugee camps where these groups are said to be active (Al Jazeera 10/11/2023). On 19 November, several operations of Israeli security forces were reported across refugee camps in the West Bank, besides other military raids that had occurred since 7 October targeting members of these armed groups (UNRWA 21/11/2023 and 15/11/2023; Al Jazeera 10/11/2023). On 13 November, Israel conducted a large-scale raid in Tulkarem refugee camp that involved an exchange of fire between Israeli forces and Palestinians. The raid killed seven Palestinians and extensively damaged public and private infrastructure (UNRWA 15/11/2023; The Cradle 14/11/2023). On 10 November, a major raid in Jenin involved clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups (Al Jazeera 10/11/2023; BBC 09/11/2023).

Prior to 7 October, Israeli forces had conducted a large-scale raid in Jenin refugee camp in July, clashing with the Jenin Brigades (Al Jazeera 03/07/2023). The raid killed 12 Palestinians, including four children, and injured more than 100 (BBC 05/07/2023). In February, Israeli forces conducted a raid on Nablus, clashing with the Lion's Den armed group. The raid killed 11 Palestinians. According to Israeli forces, the Lion's Den was responsible for 61 attacks on Israeli targets in 2022, resulting in one fatality (TOI 03/05/2023; NYT 04/03/2023).

Specific groups at risk of increased violence and movement restrictions

Palestinian refugees in the West Bank

Palestinians living in refugee camps face elevated poverty with limited access to services, resulting in high dependency on humanitarian aid, notably from UNRWA (UN 24/11/2016). Increased insecurity and conflict in and around refugee camps disrupt the ability of humanitarian organisations to access people in need, aggravating their humanitarian needs (UNRWA 21/11/2023). Humanitarian disruptions limit service provision for groups already experiencing high protection concerns and socioeconomic vulnerabilities (WHO 03/07/2023; OCHA 03/07/2023 and 04/11/2023; UNRWA 09/07/2023).

Displacement of Bedouin communities

Settler violence against the Bedouin communities has been on the rise in 2023 and has intensified since 7 October. Settlers frequently attack these communities, creating shelter protection needs, including fences, gates, and steel protectors for windows (OCHA 25/01/2023; UN 04/08/2023; Al Jazeera 20/10/2023).

Between 7 October and 23 November, settler violence displaced more than 1,014 people, including 388 children, from at least 143 households in 15 Bedouin communities (OCHA 23/11/2023). Many are being displaced as they are unable to access grazing land near settlements while facing violence and demolition by settlers, including physical and verbal violence, water source vandalism, and crop destruction (OCHA 21/09/2023; Al Jazeera 20/10/2023).

The Bedouin communities are highly dependent on humanitarian assistance. The intensified movement restrictions imposed after 7 October have restricted their access to services, including health and education (OCHA 01/11/2021).

Movement restrictions affect their nomadic style, with around 90% dependent on herding as their primary source of income (UN 24/11/2016).

Bedouins are among the groups most vulnerable to Israeli restrictions and settler violence, especially in Area C, where around 40,500 Palestinians from the Bedouin and herding communities live in extreme and severe conditions in substandard basic shelters (OCHA 25/01/2023; UN 04/08/2023). Area C falls under Israeli security and civil control, and Israeli forces frequently demolish and confiscate their donor-funded structures, property, and livestock. Large areas where Bedouin communities live in Area C are designated as closed military firing zones or under threat of annexation (Al Jazeera 20/10/2023; MAP 19/10/2018).

Limited access to natural resources, such as water and food, resulting from movement restrictions, violence, and property damage by Israeli forces and settlers affect the livelihoods and lifestyle of Bedouin communities, 60% of whom are children. This places them among the most at risk of increased food insecurity (OCHA 25/01/2023; UN 04/08/2023; Al Jazeera 28/10/2023).

Children in the West Bank

Protection needs in the West Bank are very high, with children being among the most vulnerable groups to the impact of occupation and socioeconomic conditions. Between 150–200 schools are suspended per day because of movement restrictions, the risk of demolitions, settler violence, and fear of harassment. Before 7 October, an estimated 19% of students in the West Bank have dropped out of school, with protection risks being one of the main reasons (OCHA 06/11/2023 and 25/01/2023; STC et al. 03/08/2023). Harmful coping strategies, such as child labour and early marriage, also contribute to children dropping out of school (OCHA 16/12/2021 and 25/01/2023).

Reduced access to income, salaries, and livelihoods

The hostilities following 7 October have significant repercussions on the livelihoods and income-generating activities of Palestinians in the West Bank.

Palestinian labour in Israel and Israeli settlements

Since 7 October, Israel has imposed a closure between the West Bank and Israel, blocking the entry of Palestinian workers who mainly work in agriculture and construction in Israel. This has put around 152,000 of the 160,000 Palestinians from the West Bank working in Israel or

Israeli settlements at risk of losing their jobs temporarily or permanently (ILO 06/11/2023; JPost 25/10/2023).

Following requests from the construction sector, the Israeli Government has been in bilateral talks with India to allow companies to hire around 100,000 Indian workers to replace Palestinian labour in Israel and Israeli settlements in the West Bank (VOA 01/11/2023; MEMO 29/05/2023; Walla 28/05/2023).

A complete ban or replacement of the Palestinian labour force in Israel and Israeli settlements could raise unemployment to rates as high as in the Gaza Strip, which reached almost 46% as at August 2023 (PCBS 08/08/2023; UNCTAD 22/12/2021; WB accessed 23/11/2023).

Specific groups at risk of increased impacts on income and livelihoods

Disruption of the harvest season for olive farmers

Challenges in obtaining permits to access lands, compounded by increased harassment and violence by Israeli settlers, restrict Palestinians from accessing their lands to harvest olives, typically from October–November (Reuters 06/11/2023; MEMO 06/11/2023; Haaretz 05/11/2023; ACAPS accessed 29/10/2023; OCHA 28/10/2023 and 13/01/2021; Al Jazeera 14/10/2021). From the beginning of the 2023 harvest season until 28 October, there were more than 32 incidents of settler violence against Palestinians harvesting olive trees, resulting in fatalities and injuries. Between 21–22 November, settlers vandalised 70 olive trees in Khirbet Zanuta, and on 4 November, Israeli settlers vandalised a total of 500 olive trees and crops (OCHA 24/11/2023 and 28/10/2023). Since 1967, Israeli forces and settlers have uprooted more than 800,000 olive trees (The New Yorker 26/10/2023; Time 01/11/2019; Al Jazeera 14/10/2021).

Olive production accounts for around 14% of the Palestinian economy, with 80,000–100,000 Palestinian families relying on olive production (Al Jazeera 14/10/2021; OCHA 28/10/2023; MIFTAH 21/11/2012). Around 45% of agricultural land in the Palestinian territories is planted with olive trees, and the olive oil industry makes up to 25% of the income generated from the agricultural sector, with the vast majority being in the West Bank (Time 01/11/2019; UN 18/10/2011; OCHA 16/10/2008).

Because of movement restrictions and security concerns, landlords are likely to be compelled to stop cultivating their lands or resort to cultivating less profitable crops that are rain-fed and less labour-intensive (OCHA 25/08/2023).

As a result, olive farmers can be expected to face decreased purchasing power and access to essential services, such as healthcare.

Gazan workers in Israel or Israeli settlements

On 10 October, Israel's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories revoked all Israeli work permits issued to Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip to work and live in Israel and Israeli settlements in the West Bank (Gisha 24/10/2023). Consequently, the mass detention and displacement of Gazan workers took place across the West Bank; as at 5 November, around 5,850 cross-border Gazan workers who used to work in Israel or Israeli settlements were displaced within the West Bank according to estimates by the Palestinian Labor Ministry (TWP 16/10/2023; AA 04/11/2023; UNRWA 26/10/2023). However, numbers of Gazan workers detained by Israel, displaced across the West Bank, or sent back to Gaza vary across sources and remain unclear as at 24 November. The majority of the displaced are staying in public facilities and with host communities, especially in the cities of Bethlehem, Hebron, Jericho, Ramallah, and Tulkarem (AA 04/11/2023; UNRWA 26/10/2023; Al Jazeera 28/10/2023; CNN 16/10/2023). Their immediate needs include cash assistance, WASH, shelter, and NFIs, such as blankets, hygiene and kitchen kits, and towels (PRCS 29/10/2023; UNRWA 26/10/2023). They also need protection services, especially legal services and psychosocial support for physical and psychological violence (UNRWA 26/10/2023; Al Jazeera 03/11/2023; TWP 04/11/2023).

ACAPS' Palestine/Israel: Spotlight on the Situation of Gazan Workers provides more information on the humanitarian impact of the detention and displacement of Gazan workers since 7 October.

Palestinian labour in the West Bank

Since 7 October, around 67,000 Palestinian workers have reported challenges in accessing their jobs in governorates other than their place of residence. Around 56,000 jobs in the private sector have already been lost in the West Bank (ILO 06/11/2023). A further increase in movement restrictions and insecurity will affect economic activities, especially production capacity and supply chains, affecting thousands of workers likely facing decreased wages as a result.

Salaries for thousands of Palestinians working for the PA in the West Bank, including in public services and administration, could be at risk of further salary cuts and delays because of fiscal challenges regarding revenue and spending. This will add pressure on the labour market, which has already been affected by the economic slowdown resulting from the

conflict since 7 October (ILO 06/11/2023). Since 2021, the PA has already been paying only partial salaries to most of its employees because of these fiscal challenges (IMF 13/09/2023; Asharq Al-Awsat 02/10/2023; UNCTAD 11/09/2023 and 14/09/2022; UNSCO 03/05/2023; Axios 04/11/2023). As at 5 November, there were around 140,000 employees and 53,000 retirees on the PA payroll (AA 05/11/2023).

Israel collects tax revenue known as maqasa on Palestinian imports and exports on behalf of the PA (Al-Shabaka 15/02/2023). As at 4 November, the Israeli Government was planning to withhold 40% of the approximately USD 150 million it transfers monthly to the PA in tax revenue. This cut corresponds to the public sector salaries and social assistance programmes the PA allocates to the Gaza Strip (Axios 31/10/2023 and 04/11/2023; Reuters 02/11/2023 and 01/11/2023; Haaretz 03/11/2023). The PA, in return, has refused to receive incomplete tax funds (AA 05/11/2023; Al Arabiya 08/11/2023). Tax revenue is a major source of income for the

PA, especially in recent years, because of a decline in foreign aid (Axios 04/11/2023; UNCTAD 14/09/2022). In recent years, Israel has also refused to transfer tax revenues on a number of occasions (TOI 06/01/2023; Al Jazeera 17/02/2019).

A reduction in PA revenue would have significant impacts on their ability to pay salaries, social assistance, and protection programmes, such as the Palestinian Cash Transfer Program, affecting the livelihoods of thousands of Palestinians (IOM 09/12/2021; CALP 05/2021; WB 13/09/2023).

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE CAPACITY IN THE WEST BANK

Insecurity and access constraints

As at 16 October, UNRWA staff reported facing access and movement restrictions because of closures, checkpoints, and road blockages by Israeli forces in the West Bank (UNRWA 16/10/2023). Israeli forces often target facilities and assets providing services to Palestinians, including health staff and ambulances (UNRWA 15/11/2023; WHO 03/07/2023; OCHA 03/07/2023 and 04/11/2023). 108 UNRWA workers were killed between 7 October and 21 November in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; 40% were killed south of Wadi Gaza alone. This is the highest number of UN aid workers killed in a conflict in the history of the UN, and the level of violence puts responders at an elevated risk of attacks, even in the West Bank (UNRWA 22/11/2023).

NGOs in East Jerusalem face high financial burden to carry out activities. Administrative barriers, such as obtaining visas for international staff, have also been challenging and time-consuming (HRW 23/01/2023; AA 08/12/2022). Bureaucratic requirements limit free movement, as permits from Israeli authorities are often required for work, land access, and hospitalisation in East Jerusalem (OCHA 25/08/2023; WHO 03/07/2023). In areas under the control of the PA, recent policies, besides the Law of Charitable Associations and Community Organizations, have increased the administrative burden on NGOs, with accompanying difficulties in financial procedures (ICNL accessed 23/11/2023).

Funding and response capacity

At at 23 November, USD 218.2 million had been disbursed to support the response plan for 500,000 Palestinians in the West Bank, as well as 2.2 million people in the Gaza Strip (OCHA 23/11/2023). This is only 18% of the USD 1.2 billion requested in the flash appeal launched by the UN and its humanitarian partners (OCHA 06/11/2023).

Following 7 October, Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Sweden announced suspending their development aid for Palestinians, only keeping humanitarian aid. The European Commission also said that it will review its development portfolio financial support of EUR 691 million (USD 755 million) for Palestinians (Euronews 09/10/2023; Barron's 11/10/2023).

In 2021, total foreign aid for Palestine amounted to USD 317 million, but this was reduced to USD 250 million in 2022 (UNCTAD 14/09/2022 and 25/10/2023; CTech 05/11/2023). In 2022, a combination of decreasing resources, the war in Ukraine, and escalating hostilities in the West Bank affected the operational capacity of humanitarian responders across the West Bank (OCHA 25/01/2023). Foreign aid for the PA from donors such as the US and Saudi Arabia has been in decline since 2008 (Al-Monitor 23/10/2020; UNCTAD 25/10/2023; JCPA 23/07/2023).