

## Humanitarian impact of the escalation of violence in northern West Bank in August 2024

### CRISIS OVERVIEW

Violent attacks by the Israeli armed forces against civilians in the West Bank have increased since the beginning of August 2024.

- **On 28 August, Israel launched its largest military operation in the West Bank** since the Second Intifada (2000–2005). The operation targeted Jenin and Tulkarem cities, including refugee camps (AP 29/08/2024; AJ 29/08/2024).
- On the same day, Israel Katz, the Foreign Affairs Minister of Israel, announced that the country's military would order Palestinians to evacuate certain areas of northern West Bank because of a continuing significant military incursion in the area (AA 28/08/2024; TOI 28/08/2024). Between 28 August and 6 September, some people left voluntarily, while others were forced to leave during raids after the Israeli military forces set up several military checkpoints in the cities (MEE 31/08/2024; BBC 29/08/2024). Evacuation orders were issued to Nur Shams Camp in Tulkarem and a hospital in besieged Jenin but remained unclear in other cities (OHCHR 02/09/2024; TOI 28/08/2024; Saudi Gazette 28/08/2024).
- **On 6 September, following ten days of assault, Israeli forces pulled out of Tulkarem city and Jenin city** (AA 06/09/2024; CNN 06/09/2024; MEE 06/09/2024; AJ 30/08/2024). Regardless of their withdrawal, however, they still maintain a significant and consistent presence in the West Bank through military checkpoints that affect access and humanitarian operations.
- On 8 September, a Jordanian gunman killed three Israeli civilians at the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge border crossing (AJ 08/09/2024). This was the first attack along the border with Jordan since the Hamas operations in southern Israel on 7 October 2023. Since 8 September, Israel has closed the crossing, which, along with two other land border crossings with Jordan, mostly served over three million Palestinians in the West Bank (Reuters 08/09/2024; MEE 08/09/2024).

**The Palestinian Ministry of Health reported that between 28 August and 6 September, the violence resulted in 39 Palestinian deaths, 130 injuries,** and four deaths among the Israeli forces in Hebron and Jenin governorates (MEE 06/09/2024; France 24 05/09/2024; AJ 04/09/2024; OCHA 04/09/2024). Hundreds of Israeli troops, using helicopters, drones, and armed personnel carriers, were involved in the operation, targeting the cities of Jenin and Tulkarem, as well as the cities of Tubas and Nablus (MAP UK 28/08/2024; Reuters 28/08/2024; Anera 28/08/2024).

According to the Israeli authorities, their main target was Palestinian armed groups in refugee camps. They stated that they ordered the operation in the specific cities of Jenin, Nablus, Tubas, and Tulkarem because of Iran providing weapons and support to Palestinian armed groups in those areas (Reuters 29/08/2024; AJ 28/08/2024). **Refugee camps in Jenin and Tulkarem are deeply integrated into towns and encircled by densely populated neighbourhoods with no distinct borders.** In 2023, an estimated 24,000 Palestinians lived in Jenin refugee camp, while over 13,000 Palestinians were registered in Nur Shams Camp in Tulkarem (AJ 29/08/2024; UNRWA accessed 07/09/2024 a; UNRWA accessed 07/09/2024 b). **As a consequence, the military attacks on the camps injured civilians and affected entire cities.**

In Jenin city, civilians reported lacking electricity and water for at least 48 hours since 28 August (MEE 29/08/2024). There was no information on whether Nablus, Tubas, and Tulkarem also experienced electricity cuts.

Besides military raids and bulldozer attacks, there have also been reports of Israeli settlers attacking Palestinians in the West Bank even before the recent evacuation orders. Between 13 August and 2 September, Israeli settlers carried out around 74 attacks against Palestinians, killing two people, injuring 29, and causing damage to property (OCHA 04/09/2024, 28/08/2024, and 21/08/2024; BBC 27/08/2024). On 15 August, residents of the Palestinian village of Jit in Qalqiliya governorate reported that attacks by 100 Israeli settlers set cars and houses afire in the village (France 24 28/08/2024). Between 11–20 August, Israeli settler attacks on three communities cut off water access and forced 119 Palestinians to leave their homes and land (NRC 21/08/2024).

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

### Aim

This report provides an analysis of the humanitarian implications of the recent escalation of violence in the West Bank since late August 2024. For more information on the humanitarian situation in the West Bank between 7 October 2023 and July 2024, please see ACAPS' *Palestine: Recent Developments in the West Bank* (published 4 July 2024). For an in-depth examination of the humanitarian needs and developments in the West Bank before 7 October, see ACAPS' *Israel/Palestine: Current Situation and Anticipated Impacts of the Crisis in the West Bank* (published 24 November 2023) and *Palestine: Escalation of Violence in Jenin* (published 12 June 2023).

### Methodology

This report is based on a secondary data review of public sources.

### Terminology

**Israeli armed forces** refers to both the Israeli Defence Forces' paramilitary forces and Israeli armed groups.

**Settlers** refers to Israeli citizens living in private Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, mostly in communities that the Israeli Government has built. On 19 July 2024, the International Court of Justice declared that Israel's decades-long occupation of Palestinian land was illegal and ordered the evacuation of all Israeli settlements from the West Bank and East Jerusalem (AA 29/08/2024).

**Palestinian armed groups** refers to armed groups fighting Israeli occupation in both the West Bank and Gaza. Many Palestinian political parties have associated armed groups, including Hamas (ECFR accessed 06/09/2024).

**West Bank:** Israel occupies certain areas of the West Bank, while the Palestinian Authority controls others. For a full overview of how the West Bank is controlled, please see Map 1 below.

## ANTICIPATED SCOPE

- Reports indicate that on 30 August, Israeli forces fired on an ambulance in eastern Jenin city, injuring a doctor and damaging the ambulance (OCHA 04/09/2024). Despite the physical withdrawal of Israeli forces from Jenin and Tulkarem cities, **the lack of security guarantees for humanitarian staff, along with Israel's use of drone attacks, can be expected to limit the humanitarian response.**
- The killing of three Israeli civilians by a Jordanian gunman at the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge on 8 September could increase the likelihood of Israeli forces and settlers scaling up their activities in the West Bank.
- **Insecurity is likely to particularly affect the areas where Israeli armed forces and settlers have more presence, such as Hebron.** On 6 September, Israeli forces killed a US citizen participating in a protest against the expansion of Israeli settlements in the town of Beita, near Nablus, in the West Bank (BBC 06/09/2024). **This indicates the risk of different organisations withdrawing their operations from the West Bank to protect their workers.**
- **Most humanitarian visas of aid workers are set to expire during the last months of 2024,** and the Israeli Government has not renewed any visa permits since October 2023 (The Guardian 29/02/2024). **This is likely to reduce the humanitarian response capacity in the coming weeks.**
- Some people in Jenin city have left to seek refuge with relatives outside the city (MEE 29/08/2024). The exact number of people displaced was unknown by 8 September. **Many people will likely decide to not return because of the state of destruction in the city after the attacks. Those who decide to return may lack shelter and access to services as a result of infrastructure damage.** This is expected to increase the burden on host communities to provide for their displaced families and friends in a context where the economic situation is already dire.
- There is no granular information on the specific needs of people in the affected areas, especially groups that may be more vulnerable to the escalation of violence, such as children, people with disabilities, and older people. **Their exposure to conflict has likely deprived them of access to medical care, food, and, in some cases, water.**

## HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND ACCESS CONSTRAINTS

Since the attack against Israeli civilians in Allenby/King Hussein Bridge on 8 September, Israel has closed the crossing, which, along with two other land border crossings with Jordan, mostly served over three million Palestinians in the West Bank (Reuters 08/09/2024; MEE 08/09/2024).

Humanitarian and health workers face high risks linked to their safety and security (CPJ accessed 31/08/2024; MAP UK 28/08/2024; truthout 07/06/2024). On 30 August, Israeli forces attacked an ambulance in eastern Jenin city, injuring a doctor and damaging the vehicle (OCHA 04/09/2024). The Israeli military forces do not distinguish between civilians and fighters in their use of drones and helicopters in raids, putting everyone, including humanitarian responders, at risk of injury or death.

Until 6 September, access to medical facilities in Jenin city had been severely restricted since 28 August. Israeli military forces surrounded Al-Israa Specialised Hospital and Thabet Governmental Hospital in Tulkarem, blocking ambulance access (AJ 28/08/2024; Anera 28/08/2024). They also attacked health workers, compromising medical activities (MSF 05/09/2024). These impediments and fear of insecurity prevented injured people from accessing the health facilities (AJ 28/08/2024; France 24 28/08/2024).

Israeli forces have closed down the entry points to northern West Bank in Jenin governorate (MAP UK 28/08/2024; The Egyptian Gazette 28/08/2024). It is estimated that the recent attacks have damaged about 70% of Jenin's roads and infrastructure (OCHA 04/09/2024). These constrain the movement of civilians and humanitarians, restricting access to affected areas. Road closures and military operations are also preventing humanitarian organisations from reaching stockpiled supplies and medicine (Anera 28/08/2024; MAP UK 28/08/2024).

On 3 September, the Israeli authorities denied access to multiple aid organisations set to carry out an assessment in Jenin (AA 03/09/2024).

Internet and landline services were cut off in Jenin on 29 August after Israeli bulldozers ploughed into critical infrastructure. The lack of communication weakened the humanitarian response and prevented people from receiving essential information (MEE 29/08/2024). Until 9 September, it was unclear whether the services had been fully or partially restored.

Although the humanitarian response is sectoral, it is important to highlight that during a crisis, all needs are linked, meaning food, water, health, and shelter are interdependent. For example, inadequate access to clean water can aggravate malnutrition and spread disease, while poor health conditions can increase the demand for food and medical care. The current insecurity constrains humanitarian responders' capacity to provide a thorough and comprehensive response to all crisis-affected Palestinians.

Prior to the assaults, Israeli settlers had already blocked water access for several Palestinian communities in northeastern West Bank, forcing them to leave their homes and land (NRC 21/08/2024).

## CURRENT HUMANITARIAN NEEDS IN NORTHERN WEST BANK SINCE AUGUST 2024

### Protection

The Israeli raids and operations threaten the safety of civilians. Between 28 August and 6 September, the attacks killed **39 Palestinians, including at least seven children, and injured around 130 others in northern West Bank** (France 24 05/09/2024; AJ 04/09/2024; DN 04/09/2024; OCHA 04/09/2024).

On 29 August, an Israeli bomb blew up a house in Al Manshiya neighbourhood in Tulkarem. Despite the fire spreading to other homes and reports of older people suffering from smoke inhalation, Israeli soldiers prevented anyone from leaving, putting people's lives at risk (MEE 29/08/2024).

**Between 28 August and 3 September, Israeli armed forces arrested around 150 Palestinian civilians in the northern governorates of the West Bank.** Further arrests are likely throughout the territory in light of the current conflict and tension with the Israeli military (Jordan News 31/08/2024; QNA 03/09/2024; FP 19/08/2024). Since 7 October 2023, Israeli forces have arrested over 10,300 Palestinian civilians across the West Bank, including the arbitrary arrest and torture of thousands (Jordan News 31/08/2024; PIC 30/08/2024; OHCHR 28/08/2024).

**Since 28 August, Palestinians have confined themselves to their houses out of fear of attack and detention,** especially with testimonies describing Israeli forces taking several men from their homes for interrogation (MEE 29/08/2024). People in the West Bank live in constant fear that the military operations in Gaza will be repeated in the West Bank. The conflict in Gaza is also likely psychologically affecting the people in the West Bank, many of whom have relatives and friends who have been affected (Time 03/09/2024).

### Displacement/shelter

Despite an evacuation announcement in the West Bank by the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs on 28 August, information about evacuation and designated shelters remains inconsistent and unclear (OHCHR 02/09/2024; AA 28/08/2024). Some people are afraid to leave and follow evacuation orders because of the uncertainty of their safety during evacuation, as they have seen in Gaza. Many of those forced to move have sought refuge with host families, relatives, or friends. People without shelter have created temporary settlements, increasing protection risks and their exposure to adverse climate conditions.

Some people from Jenin have reported leaving the city and seeking refuge with relatives. In Tulkarem, residents in Nour Shams Camp said that they have been unable to move since 28 August because the checkpoints around the camp have been closed, halting movement (WAFA 31/08/2024; MEE 29/08/2024; IR 29/08/2024). **Between 28–31 August, the violence displaced and destroyed the homes of a total of 120 people, including over 40 children, in Tulkarem city** (QNA 04/09/2024).

Between 20–26 August, the Israeli armed forces demolished 30 Palestinian-owned structures in the West Bank, including 13 in Areas A and B (OCHA 28/08/2024). The displacement of Palestinians could facilitate the establishment of Israeli outposts and settlements in the northern governorates (OCHA 21/09/2023).

## Health/wash

Israeli armed vehicles surrounded Al-Israa Specialised Hospital and the Thabet Governmental Hospital in Tulkarem between 28 August and 6 September. **As part of a military operation in the area, they also blocked ambulances from accessing these hospitals** (WAFA 02/09/2024; QNA 28/08/2024). The severely hindered access to medical care for injured or sick civilians has affected the overall health situation in Jenin and Tulkarem (WHO 24/08/2024; MoFA 28/08/2024). These mobility restrictions also prevent healthcare staff from travelling home as freely as they used to. This has forced many to work 24-hour shifts, affecting their health and the quality of care they can provide (France 24 05/09/2024).

Between 28 August and 6 September, **medical personnel and ambulances were unable to access the Jenin and Tulkarem areas affected by the Israeli military operation** (MSF 05/09/2024; AJ 29/08/2024). Injuries and illnesses among Palestinians that could otherwise be treated or managed were left untreated, possibly leading to severe complications or death.

**Some patients with chronic illnesses face growing obstacles in obtaining their medication, often leading them to adopt coping strategies with potentially harmful outcomes**, such as extending the interval between doses or switching medication (MSF 05/08/2024). People with chronic diseases, such as diabetes, have also been unable to obtain their medicine (MEE 29/08/2024). Despite the lifting of movement restrictions, a lack of medicine and income is likely to worsen their health.

Prior to the recent violence, the health system in the West Bank had already been overwhelmed and depleted since 7 October 2023 because of movement restrictions, financial difficulties affecting the ability to buy medication, the cancellation of health insurance, the closure of Ministry of Health clinics because of Israeli-imposed restrictions, and interruptions in the supply of medication in pharmacies (MSF 05/08/2024). Between 7 October 2023 and 20 August 2024, clashes affected 54 health facilities throughout the territory (WHO 24/08/2024).

**Damage to water systems has also been affecting health facilities since 28 August 2024**, when Israeli armed forces deployed bulldozers into the city of Tulkarem. The bulldozers demolished infrastructure and water networks surrounding Al Alami Roundabout, enclosing the area with earthen barriers (QNA 28/08/2024). **Water has also been cut off in Jenin city, including Jenin public hospital. According to medical staff, water was cut off around seven times between 28 August and 5 September** (France 24 05/09/2024; AJ 01/09/2024; AA 31/08/2024). Between 28–31 August, around 13,000 people in Nur Shams Camp faced water shortages because of infrastructure damage and sewage overflow (QNA 04/09/2024). Although the Israeli armed forces have withdrawn, infrastructure damage and limited water access still posed issues until 7 September, leading some areas to rely on water tanks (MEMO 07/09/2024; NYT 06/09/2024). The water system in the West Bank had already had limited capacity since 7 October 2023, with clashes and raids affecting over 100 WASH facilities (OCHA 28/08/2024). The lack of water affects the medical response and poses risks to people's health, such as by causing dehydration and increasing the risk of waterborne diseases, such as cholera, dysentery, and typhoid, when people resort to drinking contaminated water.

## Livelihoods

The attacks and raids that started on 28 August have disrupted people's livelihoods. **The siege, which lasted until 6 September, confined people to their homes and interrupted all their productive activities** (MEE 29/08/2024). People report that the raids have so severely damaged many homes and shops in Jenin city that they are no longer habitable. Bulldozers have also ravaged the streets, rendering them impassable for cars (NYT 06/09/2024). The level of damage is expected to affect returnees' livelihoods given the lack of shops and the impassable streets hindering transportation and the delivery of goods, aggravating the economic strain and making it difficult for people to access essential services and resources.

Many of the Palestinians in the refugee camps under evacuation orders worked in Israel prior to 7 October 2023. Since then, they have experienced a decline in income because of their inability to travel to Israel for work. Before 7 October, approximately 150,000 Palestinian workers from the West Bank entered Israel daily. Although around 2,400 businesses and institutions in Israel have received exemptions to employ Palestinians from the West Bank, **daily travel remains risky because of clashes and arbitrary detentions** (TOI 24/03/2024; INSS 04/03/2024). The recent attacks have aggravated the economic shocks that many households are ill-positioned to cope with, especially residents forced to evacuate at short notice with no post-displacement support.

In August 2024, the Israeli Government also announced plans to seize more than 12km<sup>2</sup> of Palestinian land near Bethlehem for a new illegal settlement, the largest land seizure in the West Bank in 30 years (Anera 28/08/2024). This will displace individual Palestinian farmers,



who will face the economic shock of losing their land. It will also further reduce the amount of land available to the remaining Palestinian farmers for their livelihoods.

The incidence of armed Israeli settlers attacking Palestinian farmers, destroying crops, and attacking villages has significantly intensified since 7 October 2023 and particularly in August 2024 (BBC 27/08/2024; Anera 28/08/2024; AJ 15/08/2024). Palestinians in the West Bank have suffered the destruction of more than 300 agricultural structures and 200 livelihood structures since 7 October (OCHA 14/08/2024). The destruction of crops has affected the farmers relying on agriculture for their income and primarily disrupted communities' access to staple foods. As a result, people have increasingly become reliant on limited humanitarian aid.

### Food security

Between 28 August and 6 September, Israel imposed movement restrictions for Palestinians in the West Bank, hampering food delivery from humanitarian organisations (AJ 01/09/2024; Education Cluster et al. 29/08/2024; MSF 06/08/2024). Based on anecdotes, some people have food reserves, but it is unclear how long these supplies will last without additional food sources (France 24 05/09/2024). There is no updated information on food security and malnutrition in the West Bank, but needs are likely to increase as a result of the recent clashes and access restrictions.

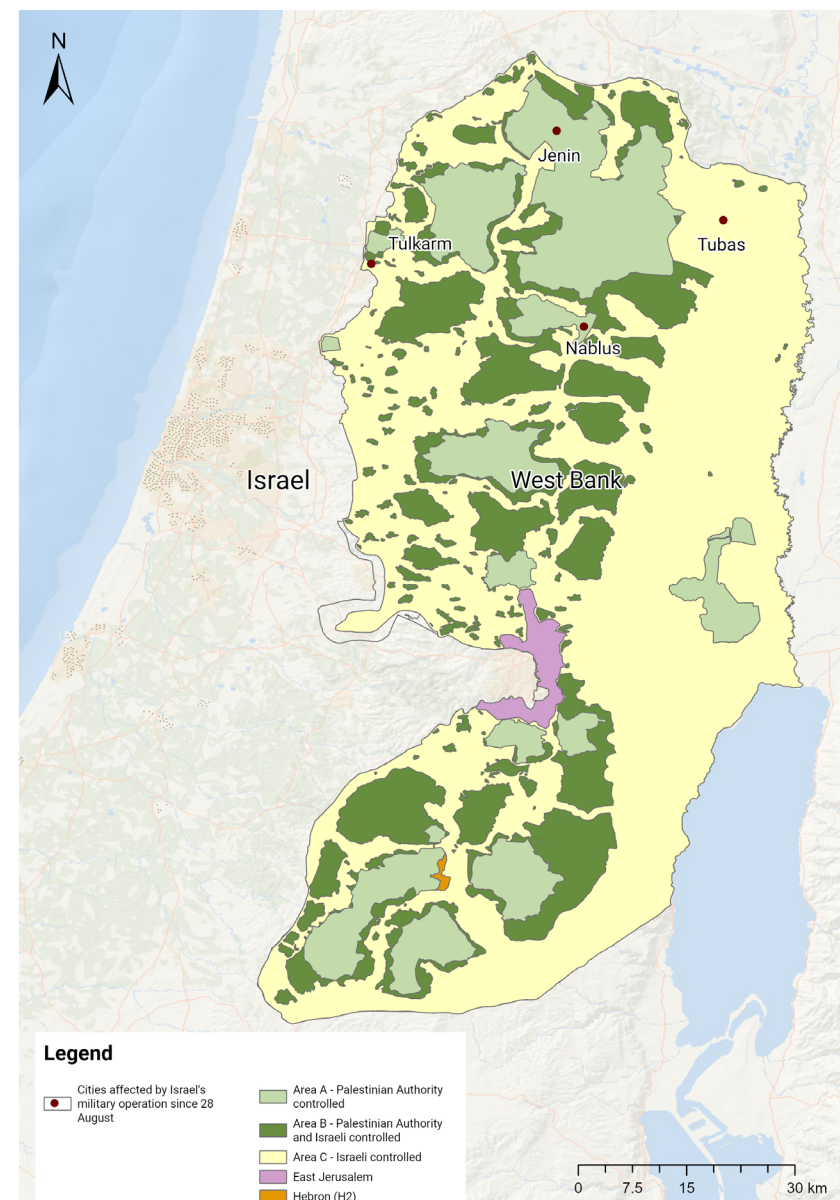
### HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Between 28 August and 6 September, organisations coordinated by OCHA could not gather information for assessments in Jenin city as a result of access restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities to the affected areas (OCHA 04/09/2024; UN 03/09/2024). The most urgent needs of the people in these areas were not fully known until 9 September.

Since 7 October 2023, Israel has delayed and sometimes stopped issuing visas for the international staff of humanitarian organisations working in Gaza and the West Bank. The visas issued to all humanitarian workers in 2023 will expire by September 2024. Consequently, these workers will have to leave Israel and the Palestinian territories or face the possibility of deportation if they exceed the duration of their visas (El País 07/03/2024; The Guardian 29/02/2024). This is likely to reduce humanitarian aid capacity in the coming months.

Since 7 October 2023, movement restrictions in the West Bank have been restricting the access of humanitarian responders to the area. Until 5 June 2024, there were approximately 790 recorded obstacles, including checkpoints, roadblocks, road gates, and earth mounds (NRC 26/03/2024; OCHA 05/06/2024).

Map 1. West Bank cities affected by violence between 28 August and 6 September 2024



Source: ACAPS with data from OCHA (20/10/2023)