

STATE OF PALESTINE

Annexation Plan of the West Bank

In April 2020, the Israeli coalition government signed an agreement containing an article allowing the annexation of parts (up to 30%) of the West Bank territories. At the time of the writing of this note, the formal annexation has yet to start, despite initial plans to begin on 1 July. On 13 August, Israel signed a normalisation deal with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which includes suspension of the annexation plans. UAE secured no guarantees on this suspension. Due to this newly signed accord with the UAE, in addition to, the domestic and international criticism towards the annexation, the probability of the plan materialising in the next six months is very low. Despite this latest developments, the potential impact of the annexation remains major for Palestinians, as was seen following the East Jerusalem annexation in 1980. Palestinians will experience greater difficulty in accessing essential services such as health, education, WASH, and shelter. Humanitarian access is also likely to worsen. Humanitarian needs for Palestinians in the West Bank have been steadily increasing since its occupation in 1967, primarily due to restrictive measures by Israeli authorities, expansion of Israeli settlements and the subsequent displacement of Palestinians. There are currently more than 3 million Palestinians living in the West Bank, 0.9 million of whom are in need of humanitarian assistance. This figure is expected to increase if the formal annexation begins. The needs identified as most urgent are protection, shelter, education, WASH, healthcare, and livelihoods. Palestinians living in Area C, East Jerusalem, and H2 will likely be most affected.

Disclaimer

During the drafting phase of this report Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) announced the establishment of formal ties with a normalisation deal that includes the suspension of the annexation of parts of the West Bank. This announcement lowers the likelihood of the formal annexation of the West Bank, but the humanitarian impact on the affected Palestinian population will remain major if the annexation materializes at any time in the future. Thus, the report is being published as, despite the very low likelihood, the threat of a de facto annexation of the West Bank in the future remains. This analysis is still relevant to understand past annexations of Palestinian territories, as well as the current situation and population's living conditions in some areas of Palestine.

PROBABILITY



NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE



IMPACT



Key priorities (in case of annexation)



Protection
needs exacerbated



Shelter
for new IDPs in the annexed area



Livelihoods
as economy deteriorates

Humanitarian constraints



There are several bureaucratic constraints and movement restrictions severely impacting access to services and humanitarian aid in the West Bank. The Israeli West Bank Barrier and other physical constraints such as military checkpoints remain a major impediment to humanitarian access and people's access to services.

Limitations

Details of the annexation plan have not been released, and it remains uncertain which areas will be most affected. Therefore, the expected impact and needs analysis is based on the current humanitarian situation in the West Bank, as well as on past developments.

Context of the Crisis

In April 2019, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to annex Israeli settlements in occupied West Bank if re-elected (The Guardian 09/06/ 2020; Al Jazeera 11/09/2019). In June 2020, Israel's newly elected coalition government headed once again by Netanyahu announced intentions to annex and impose Israeli sovereignty on up to 30% of the West Bank. The annexation comes in line with the American Peace to Prosperity Plan published in January 2020 (DW 04/06/2020; France 24 29/06/2020). The newly signed coalition agreement contains an article allowing annexation of parts of the West Bank that include Israeli settlements and the area of the Jordan Valley, starting from 1 July.

As of 18 August, no formal announcement has been made and implementation has not started. The formal announcement of the plan was suspended following an Israeli and UAE normalisation deal which suspends the annexation, but Netanyahu clearly stated his intentions to extend Israeli sovereignty to the West Bank in the future without stating a timeframe. Also, contributing to the delays in the plan's implementation are the widespread internal and international criticism, and domestic challenges for Netanyahu, including the COVID-19 outbreak in Israel and the subsequent economic downturn. The Israeli public is also opposing the annexation, saying it would hurt their chances to achieve peace with the Palestinians. In addition, the Israeli public is currently primarily concerned with the COVID pandemic and its economic impact. According to the Israeli National Employment Service, the unemployment rate is 21% as of July 2020, rising from a record low of under 4% in March 2020, before the outbreak. (DW 04/06/2020; France 24 29/06/2020; Al Monitor 14/07/2020; The Times of Israel 16/07/2020; WHO 19/07/2020; The Times of Israel 07/06/2020; Al Jazeera 13/08/2020; Independent 15/08/2020).

Given these developments, it remains highly unlikely that the Israeli government will officially announce the annexation and begin with the formal plan. Despite the very low probability of the plan happening in the next six months, the humanitarian impact on the Palestinian population in the West Bank remains major. The West Bank is not officially annexed but increasing Israeli settlements, structure demolitions, and discriminatory policies applied by Israel have raised concerns that the annexation is already taking place, and having a significant humanitarian impact on the Palestinian population in the West Bank. This is evident by the illegal annexation of East Jerusalem in 1980, in violation of international law, and the subsequent rise in needs, but also by the current developments. (Al-Haq 14/07/2020; Al Jazeera 07/05/2019; Haartez 30/06/2020; Arab News 06/07/2020; The Jerusalem Post 27/07/2020; NRC 12/2013; UN 20/08/1980).

Geographical and administrative divisions

Israel has occupied the West Bank and Gaza since 1967, following the Six-Day War. Those territories are collectively known as the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt). The West Bank is located west of the Jordan River, and bounded by Israel to the north, west and south, and Jordan on its east. In the mid-1990s, the West Bank was divided into three sectors – Area A, Area B, and Area C – as part of the Oslo Accords (1993/1995), signed by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel. Area A (20% of the territory) is under Palestinian control and Area B (20% of the territory) under Palestinian administrative and Israeli security control. Area C is under both administrative and security control of Israel and it constitutes 60% of the West Bank (UN Habitat III 2014). The Jordan Valley (potentially part of the area to be annexed) constitutes almost 90% of Area C, the remaining 10% is between Area A and B (Al Haq 2018; B'Tselem 11/11/2017).

Israel annexed East Jerusalem, contrary to international law, in 1980 (East Jerusalem was occupied by Israel in 1967). Palestinians living in East Jerusalem are considered foreign nationals and were given the status of “permanent residents” but not citizenship, putting them at constant risk of their permit being revoked. The Israeli West Bank Barrier, erected in early 2000s, hinders movement of Palestinians in and out of East Jerusalem and cuts it off from the rest of the West Bank. Since the annexation, Palestinians are only permitted to build on a limited part of the land area of East Jerusalem, while also facing difficulties in obtaining building permits (UNCTAD 2013; The Times of Israel 12/09/2019; Middle East Eye 01/01/2020). East Jerusalem has also seen increased expansion of Israeli settlements. The annexation of East Jerusalem provides an initial understanding of the expected impact of the West Bank annexation.

According to OCHA (2020), around 250 Israeli settlements have been established in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) with some 633,000 Israeli settlers; over 400,000 reside in the West Bank and around 200,000 in East Jerusalem. According to the latest figures by NGO Peace Now, there are 132 settlements officially recognised by the Israeli Military of Interior (excluding East Jerusalem), and about 124 built by Israeli settlers without official authorisation – but with governmental support and assistance – known as “illegal outposts”. These settlements cover almost 10% of the West Bank (B'Tselem 11/11/2017; Peace Now 07/2019; Peace Now 2018; OCHA 21/12/2017; OCHA 25/06/2020). Although settlements built after 1967 are considered by international law as illegal, their construction has continued since then (OCHA 21/12/2017).

Humanitarian Overview

Years of conflict, political tensions, human rights violations, and displacement as a result of annexations have deepened the humanitarian needs of Palestinians. As a result, Palestinians have little ability to cope with sudden shocks, such as spikes in conflict in Gaza or demolitions in the West Bank. Palestinians also face many structural access and management issues resulting in inadequate water and sanitation services and electricity (OHCHR 16/06/2020). It is expected that with the annexation plan of the West Bank Palestinians living within the annexed zone would experience greater difficulty accessing essential services like health, WASH, and education, while the need for livelihoods, protection, and shelter will increase. Additionally, humanitarian access is expected to be significantly hindered. According to the latest (2020) Humanitarian Needs Overview, 0.9 million people are in need in the West Bank, out of a population of 3 million. Home demolitions, settler violence, and confiscation of humanitarian aid are still taking place despite the ongoing pandemic and consequent health crisis (OCHA 13/02/2020). The monthly average of structures demolished in the West Bank since the beginning of 2020, is 43 structures. This average of structure demolished has demonstrated a rising year-to-year trend, with 26, 34 and 41 houses demolished in 2017, 2018 and 2019 respectively.

In addition, the COVID-19 outbreak is weighing down the already fragile economy in the West Bank: it has damaged the private sector, decreased government revenues and consequently public spending. The economic effects of COVID-19 risk adding to the impacts of annexation, increasing the number of people in need (OCHA 13/02/2020; WHO 24/04/2020; World Bank 16/04/2020; CIDSE 01/04/2020; Alaraby 23/06/2020; OCHA 20/07/2020).

The humanitarian impact of a potential annexation whether formally announced or de facto, is likely to have similar effects on the Palestinian population to the ones faced during the annexation of East Jerusalem. We do not model this scenario as a repeat of the East Jerusalem annexation or second intifada¹ but rather use the example to help better understand the most likely immediate needs of Palestinians in case the latest annexation plan materialises (OCHA 06/2020).

¹ The Second Intifada also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, refers to the second Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation. It began in late 2000.

² Israel has employed a 1974 regulation as a 'legal' instrument to deprive many Jerusalemite Arabs of their IDs and residency rights if they are absent from the city for more than seven years, have acquired other citizenship, or been granted permanent residency rights elsewhere.

Sectoral Needs

Protection

In case of annexation, formal or de facto, Palestinians in the annexed territory will face protection concerns stemming from the new legal status – or lack thereof. Netanyahu stated in an interview in May that Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley would not be granted Israeli citizenship when the region is annexed by Israel (Haaretz 28/05/2020). Palestinians may be declared foreign nationals, and would then be considered residents of Israel and not citizens, rendering them stateless. Being stateless will deprive Palestinians from rights and services associated to their citizenship such as healthcare, education, property ownership, including homes, and state protection. In addition, children whose parents are only permanent residents and not citizens do not gain automatic residency, making it difficult to register them as Palestinian residents (DCI 22/07/2013; NRC 12/2015). Also, having only a residency means that they are at constant risk of having it revoked at any time. Israel often uses discriminatory policies by which they revoke Palestinians' status in the annexed East Jerusalem.

Similarly, in 1967, after the annexation of East Jerusalem, Israel held a census in the annexed area. Palestinians who were displaced outside of the territories at that time lost their right to return home, and were not registered in the Palestinian population registry (NRC 12/02/2015). The residents were declared permanent foreign residents – not citizens – of Israel, rendering them stateless. Permanent residents cannot travel freely across Israeli borders, and can travel in and out of the West Bank only after obtaining a permit. Since 1967, over 14,500 Palestinians in East Jerusalem have had their residency revoked by the Israeli authorities (OCHA 21/12/2017; FMR 04/09/2006)². The Israeli residency system imposes many requirements on Palestinians to maintain their status. Most revocations are based on a failure to prove a "centre of life"³ in Jerusalem; as of 2012, 10,000 Palestinian East Jerusalemites had their permanent residency revoked based on this specific policy. Israel has also used revocations as a punitive measure to punish Palestinians accused of attacking Israelis and as collective punishment against relatives of suspected assailants (HRW 08/08/2017; Al Haq 17/03/2018; OHCHR 15/07/2020).

Additionally, it is possible that more checkpoints will be placed, likely increasing protection risks, especially at times of increased tensions following the annexation. Israeli Checkpoints are often sites of increased insecurity due to use of excessive force by militaries. Additionally, checkpoints are overcrowded, and lack sanitation facilities

³ In 1995, the Ministry of Interior, reinterpreted the 1952 Law of Entry to permit revocations of residency for those who did not actively maintain a "centre of life" in Jerusalem. Under the new interpretation, Israeli authorities began to also revoke residency when Palestinian Jerusalemites lived in other parts of Palestine outside Jerusalem's municipal borders or studied or worked abroad for extended periods of time.

(despite long waiting hours to cross) (Al Jazeera 2018; The Times of Israel 14/04/2016; Euro-Med Monitor 26/06/2020).

Shelter

A possible annexation in the future will likely mean mass expropriation and nationalisation (by Israel) of privately owned Palestinian land, pushing Palestinians to move out of the annexed zone. Annexation puts thousands at risk of forced eviction and displacement, or into moving into increasingly crowded neighbourhoods with poor infrastructure (UN News 29/06/2020). Palestinians in Area C, East Jerusalem, and the settlement area of Hebron H2 are already at risk of forcible transfer and losing shelter. If more areas of the West Bank are annexed, more people are expected to be at risk of eviction and forced displacement, and with further limited housing options. (OCHA 13/02/2020; UNRWA 03/2018).

Since 1967, approximately 7,401 hectares of East Jerusalem and West Bank were annexed, while 6,500 hectares were expropriated by Israel in order to build government offices and residential neighbourhoods. Due to discriminatory planning, such as hard-to-obtain permits and limited land area allocated for residential buildings for Palestinians, Palestinians found themselves living in overcrowded neighbourhoods, with poor critical infrastructure and services. Palestinian who had no other choice than to build their homes without permits are at constant risk of demolition and displacement. In the past months Israel has stepped up demolitions in the West Bank, under the pretext that they were built without permit. In June alone, 30 Palestinian homes were destroyed, equal to the total number of demolitions across January-May. The demolitions resulted in 100 Palestinians displaced in the West Bank, including 53 minors. These demolitions are to be expedited if the West Bank is annexed. This would lead to a significant shortage of housing as the case in the annexed East Jerusalem (B'Tselem 06/07/2020; OCHA 21/12/2017; UN News 29/06/2020).

It is also likely that Israeli settlements would expand further, leading to increased pressure on Palestinians to leave their homes. Nearly 30% of Area C is already designated as "firing zones" for Israeli military training, and where residency and access is prohibited. These zones, in Area C, are home to over 6,200 Palestinians, many of them have lived in these areas decades before the designation of these areas as such, but are at constant risk of eviction (OCHA 21/12/2017; OCHA 05/03/2014; OCHA 08/2012).

Education

Limited access to education due to insecurity or lack of sufficient services is likely to increase if ever the annexation plan materialises. More building restrictions will be implemented limiting access to schools. Land on which schools are built on are potentially nationalised for Israeli use, threatening all schools built within the annexed areas.

As more checkpoints are erected in and around annexed areas, it is likely that children on their way to and from school will experience incidents of violence between the security forces, and teachers will regularly be stopped at checkpoints, disrupting access to education.

Currently, out of the total 2.4 million people in need in the State of Palestine, 389,000 people are facing challenges in accessing education. In the West Bank, access to education is compromised due to detention of children, military operations, settler violence, and forcible transfer. Military checkpoints and the Israeli West Bank Barrier also affect access to education as teachers and children have to go through them daily, often getting blocked for long hours. In 2018, OCHA reported a rise in incidents of military presence around schools and military activity inside or close to schools, affecting children's safe access to education. Threats of demolitions of schools are also a constant concern. In 2019, H2 was the most affected area of the State of Palestine from violations against education (OCHA 13/02/2020).

The shortage of school infrastructure is caused by building restrictions in Area C and East Jerusalem as building permits are nearly impossible to obtain. In 2019, a total of 51 Palestinian schools across the West Bank had pending "stop work" or demolition orders. These include 43 schools in Area C, affecting around 4,100 students, and eight schools in East Jerusalem, affecting around 1,100 students. The orders prevent both the maintenance and expansion of school infrastructure. Israel has systematically demolished schools built without permits, leaving thousands of children without education, or forcing parents to send their children to schools at a distance in neighbouring villages, having to go through checkpoints daily (UNICEF 17/03/2020; HRW 25/04/2018; Ma'an Development Center 2015).

WASH

The State of Palestine has a problem of chronic shortage of clean water, and access to adequate sanitation continues to be a challenge. Those at most risk of not receiving adequate clean water access if the annexation plan is implemented, are Palestinians living in Area C, East Jerusalem and Hebron H2. As Israel will likely extend its control to all critical infrastructure in the annexed area including WASH infrastructure, Palestinians will be further limited in their ability to develop and maintain these infrastructures. It is likely that the West Bank will face significant difficulty in accessing water, which will subsequently affect health and the livelihoods of farmers.

Given Area C has the highest number of people in need of WASH and suffers from severe lack of water, more Palestinian residents will be affected if the settlements expand further. Palestinians will be forced out of the settlement areas, into more congested and overly populated Palestinian neighbourhoods, further limiting the per capita consumption

of water. It is likely that Palestinians will resort to installing more water storage tanks in areas annexed, but these will be at constant risk of demolition. The shortages of WASH facilities and contaminated water pose a serious public health problem in the West Bank and increase the risk of waterborne diseases such as parasite infections, kidney diseases, and watery diarrhoea. In addition, it is expected that areas beyond those to be annexed are going to be affected if their grids remain under land that is annexed, limiting Palestinians' control over their WASH infrastructure (End Water Poverty 29/11/2018).

The average water consumption by Palestinians in the West Bank is 73 litres per capita per day (lpcd), while the recommended amount by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to ensure basic needs are met is 100 lpcd. In Area C, around 95,000 people receive less than 50 lpcd, while 83,000 people consume bad quality drinking water. In Area C, 180 Palestinian residential areas (30,199 residents) are not connected to a running-water network as of 2013, while in the annexed East Jerusalem only 59% of Palestinian residents connect legally and properly to the water grid - primarily because they do not have housing permits. For Palestinians living in Area A and B, despite being under PA control, the WASH infrastructure lies inside or crosses into Area C, limiting their ability to develop, repair or maintain these networks (OCHA 13/02/2020; B'Tselem 04/07/2018; UN; Al Haq 2013).

Health

In the case of annexation, Palestinians will be further limited in their movements in and out of the annexed areas, including to seek health assistance. Permits are likely to remain one of the main challenges for patients, causing delay or denial of healthcare. Palestinians who live outside the annexed areas wanting to seek medical assistance in one of the healthcare facilities of the potentially annexed areas, would have to apply for a permit, to allow them to enter Israeli territory. These permits are often hard to obtain and costly (WHO 01/05/2019; WHO 21/01/2019; World Bank 2011). According to OCHA, 1.18 million people are in need of healthcare across the State of Palestine due to limited access to essential lifesaving health services, maternal, reproductive and child health, nutrition services, and healthcare for the elderly (OCHA 13/02/2020).

Access to healthcare in the West Bank is already restricted due to the Israeli West Bank Barrier and checkpoints. 159,000 people have limited access to Primary Health Care (PHC), and 83% of healthcare facilities are located in Area C (WHO 30/03/2019). Palestinian patients, health workers, and ambulances are refrained from accessing referral hospitals in East Jerusalem or Israel, as entrance to the city is only possible for holders of Israeli-

issued permits. In May 2020, only 59% of the West Bank patient permit applications were approved (WHO 23/06/2020).

Any sort of annexation, demolitions, and/or movement restriction imposed on the West Bank would also risk increasing psychosocial distresses and mental disorders such as stress, anxiety, depression, and educational difficulties. It is estimated that some 29,290 children are already in need of psychosocial support and child assistance (OCHA 13/02/2020; B'Tselem 30/06/2020; MAP 2017).

Livelihoods

The macro-economic impact of any form of annexation could be significant as shown by previous tensions and periods of unrest (World Bank 05/2003; UNRWA 01/01/2011). The Palestinian economy is already struggling. According to the World Bank, the economy is expected to contract in the State of Palestine by 2.5% in 2020. Measures put in place by the PA since early March 2020 to halt the spread of COVID-19 resulted in disruptions in economic activity, especially in the West Bank (World Bank 16/04/2020). However, in case of annexation the projections are likely to be worse. The West Bank is likely to face steep economic decline driven by a drop in employment rates and real wages as Palestinians become unable or unauthorised to cross, and then lose their jobs in Israel (World Bank 01/06/2020; Al Jazeera 01/06/2020). Poor communities in the West Bank already lack financial mechanisms (e.g. savings) to cope with financial shocks such as inflation, decrease in purchasing power, and decline in trade (UNCTAD 08/2009). The impact on livelihoods and food security is forecast to be high, as the Palestinian economy deteriorates further.

In the West Bank, Israel controls Palestinian livelihood activities through legal restrictions (including the permits system), destruction of infrastructure, and expropriation of Palestinian land. The Israeli civil administration in the West Bank maintains decision-making processes over expanding access to the most basic forms of infrastructure and its maintenance —water, energy and agriculture. This has limited Palestinians' ability to maintain and develop their own critical infrastructure, not allowing Palestinians to sustain their livelihood activities (OCHA 18/03/2019).

Due to high unemployment rates in the Palestinian territories, Palestinians often have to work beyond the Green Line⁴, in Israel. This means Palestinians have to wait in overcrowded queues, with the wait lasting up to three hours, to go to work. There are 30 permanent entry-to-Israel checkpoints in the West Bank, which hundreds of thousands of Palestinians owning an Israeli permit have to cross daily to work inside Israel. The Israeli permit is difficult to obtain and its price can be as high as USD 700 per month (Machsom

⁴ The Green Line refers to the 1949 armistice lines established between Israel and its Arab neighbors in the aftermath of Israel's 1948 War of Independence. The war led to Israel's sovereignty over 78.5% of historic Palestine, referred to as "Israel inside the Green Line."

Watch; Al Jazeera 2018). If Israel increases barriers with annexation, Palestinians will suffer a reduction in trade and economic activity. Palestinians will also face increased unemployment if anticipated violence leads to a clampdown. In case of violence there will be more closures of the checkpoint and a cutback in the issuance of Israeli work permits – similar to the events of the second intifada that led to the closure of the Israeli labour market to Palestinians. At the same time, Palestinians will risk losing jobs as their activities close in potential newly annexed areas (IMF 27/12/2012; ODI 03/2015).

Annexation would also have severe effects on agriculture (and farmers) in the West Bank, which is a vital source of livelihood, food, and employment. Palestinians living on or farm lands in Area C are particularly at risk. Area C includes many Palestinian farmlands. Israeli settlements and outposts were already built in close proximity to these farmlands in Area C (Yesh Din 04/2020). Therefore, the annexation of Area C, or even the construction of new settlement blocs, would entail the annexation of Palestinian farmland and possible risk of expropriation. Currently, nearly one-fifth of West Bank agriculture land is inaccessible. Palestinian farmers must obtain special permits - which are difficult to get – in order to reach their isolated lands in the Seam Zone⁵, all of these restrictions are expected to be tightened in case of annexation (ANERA 03/2017; OCHA 13/02/2020; OCHA 25/05/2017).

The livelihoods of the Bedouin communities are also likely to be impacted in case of annexation, especially those residing in Jordan Valley (Area C). Currently, Israel movement restrictions and restrictions to build prevent Palestinians from entering or using about 85% of the Jordan Valley. These also apply to construction of private houses as well as infrastructure, and shepherding or farming. Some 60% (15,000 people) of the total Palestinian Bedouin population live in the Jordan Valley (Area C), of whom 3,400 reside in proximity of military zones. This puts them at risk of forced expulsion. In case of annexation, Bedouins will likely have even less land for grazing and be forced to sell their livestock, losing their source of income. (Vox 28/02/2020; UNDP 09/2013, Middle East Eye 15/05/2020; Al Haq 2018; B'Tselem 11/11/2017)

Humanitarian constraints

Currently in the West Bank, strict movement and access restrictions, coupled with extreme limitations on planning and development, have prevented people from accessing essential services, particularly those who live in Area C, East Jerusalem, and H2⁶ (OCHA 13/02/2020). Many Palestinians are forced to take alternative underdeveloped roads that greatly extend travel times due to temporary roadblocks and permanent travel bans on some West Bank roads. It is highly likely that the annexation would worsen this situation.

⁵ Seam Zone term refers to the land area in the West Bank located east of the Green Line and west of Israel's separation barrier.

⁶ H2 is 20% of Hebron City which remains under Israeli control. It includes 4 Israeli settlements, home to a few hundred Israeli settlers and a population of over 40,000 Palestinians.

Limiting Palestinians' access to some of these roads would severely restrict their ability to move within the West Bank, and across the State of Palestine, violating their freedom of movement, preventing them from accessing services, and disrupting their livelihoods (Yesh Din 04/2020). There are already a total of 98 permanent checkpoints, 59 inside the West Bank and 39 entry-to-Israel checkpoints, in addition to temporary checkpoints scattered on main and side roads throughout the West Bank (Machsom Watch; Al Jazeera 2018).

If the annexation extends to the Jordan Valley (as outlined in the January 2020 plan) the only land border crossing between the West Bank (Palestine) and Israel becomes within the annexed area. Palestinians would be forced to travel through Israeli territory in order to cross the border, which would entail the need of Israeli permits and visas, which are difficult and costly to obtain (OCHA 08/2014; Haaretz 21/07/2017).

Physical obstacles that limit both the movement of Palestinians in the West Bank, and the ability of humanitarian organisations to deliver aid, include the Israeli West Bank Barrier⁷, checkpoints, roadblocks, and administrative requirements, particularly permits. These constraints impede the population's access to services and resources, and disrupt livelihoods (OCHA; OCHA 13/02/2020).

Besides physical barriers, a number of restrictions affect organisations operating in the area, including occasional and unannounced closures, and confiscation of aid (OCHA 13/02/2020).

Response capacity

There are several INGOs and UN agencies working within the West Bank providing basic services for Palestinians. A formal or de facto annexation risk affecting the legal status of organisations working in the areas that are to be annexed, and the conditions under which they have to operate, including possible movement restrictions. Israeli laws and regulations will likely be imposed on organisations operating in these territories, limiting their response capacity and service delivery (PAX for Peace 11/06/2020).

In addition, in 2018, the United States, one of the main donors for UNRWA, ended funding for the organisation. In June 2019, UNRWA raised USD 110 million but is still cash-strapped and operations are crippled, resulting in cut-backs to services provided by UNRWA such as healthcare and education.

⁷ In 2002, the Government of Israel approved construction of a Barrier in and around the West Bank. It physically separates East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, but also cuts into other parts of the West Bank, creating an area called the "Seam Zone".

Local NGOs such as the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) will also likely face the same restrictions as INGOs. In terms of the national response, it is possible that the Palestinian Authority (PA) will be restricted in providing essential services to Palestinians living in the annexed areas previously under their administration. The Palestinian government's provision of essential services and ability to address the population's humanitarian needs are already reducing. Shortly after Israel's announcement of its intention to annex parts of the West Bank on 19 May, the PA announced the cessation of security coordination with Israel, including in the issuance of Israeli permits for Palestinians. These permits enable Palestinians to access essential services in Israel, including specialised healthcare. Additionally, the PA decided to no longer accept transfers of funds from taxes Israel collects on its behalf, which make up 80% of the PA's monthly revenues. The funds are normally used to finance government employees' salaries and public services in both the West Bank and Gaza (OCHA 20/07/2020; WAFA 27/07/2020).

Information gaps and needs

The following are the main information gaps regarding affected areas and/or population and/or humanitarian needs:

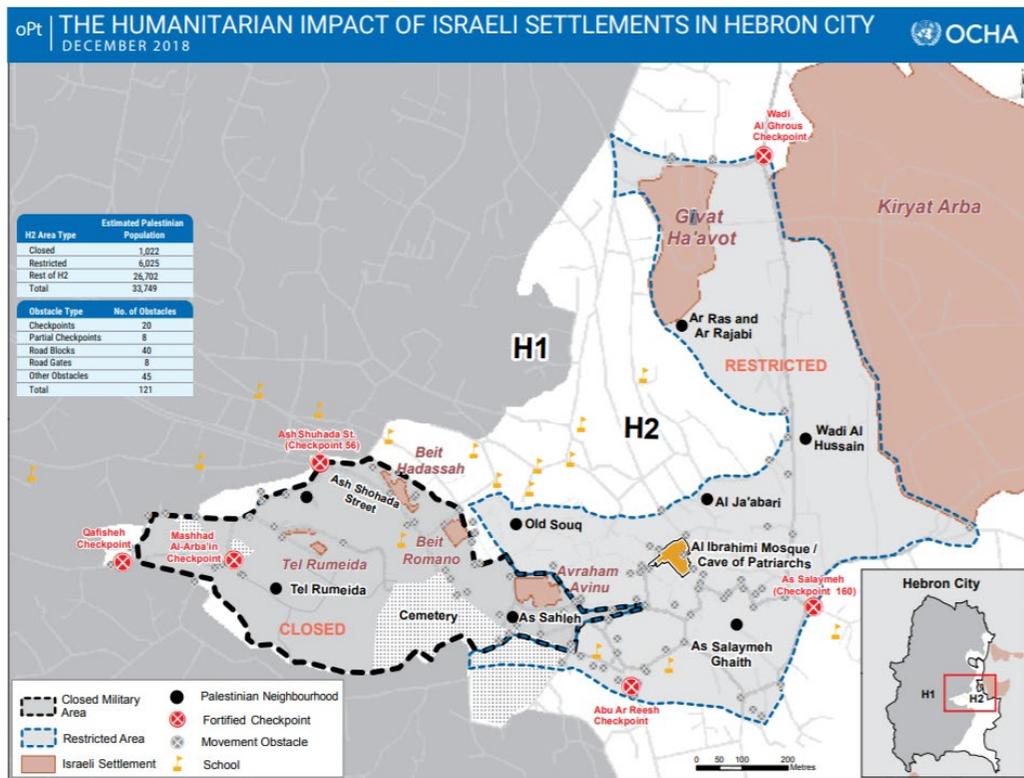
- Gender related data on the humanitarian impact of physical barriers and movement restrictions
- Information on living conditions of IDPs and the barriers to returns
- Education, health and WASH sector emergency preparedness
- Vulnerability profiles of people in need of shelter assistance
- Information about the future legal status of the Palestinians living in areas to be annexed remains unknown

Methodology

ACAPS anticipatory briefing notes provide a brief outline of the likelihood and impact of a particular crisis or spike in crisis. Likelihood describes the certainty that a particular outcome will happen, and is therefore a subjective measure. The objective of estimating likelihood is to indicate how certain we are that the identified risk will occur. Likelihood estimates help prioritise the most significant risks. This can contribute to better decision making with regards to preparedness.

H2 and Estimated Palestinian Population

Source: OCHA 11/12/2019



1. In 1997, pursuant to an agreement with the PLO, Israel handed control over 80% of the city (H1) to the Palestinian Authority.

West Bank: Area C

Source: OCHA 22/02/2011

