



JOINT SITUATION REPORT: 59 Years of Occupation

The Platform – Israeli NGOs for Human Rights

Akevot Institute for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Research; The Association for Civil Rights in Israel; Bimkom – Planning and Human Rights; Breaking the Silence; B'Tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories; Combatants for Peace; Emek Shaveh; Gisha – Legal Center for Freedom of Movement; HaMoked: Center for the Defence of the Individual; Haqel – In Defense of Human Rights; Human Rights Defenders Fund; Ir Amim; MachsomWatch; Parents Against Child Arrest; Peace Now; Physicians for Human Rights Israel; The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel; Rabbis for Human Rights; Torah of Justice; Yesh Din; Zazim

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This report was written by 21 human rights organizations, some of which receive most of their funding from foreign political entities. Even during this period, we are proud of the support of those who believe, as we do, that the occupation is not an internal Israeli matter and who insist on preserving human rights. Lists of supporters are detailed on the websites of the organizations and on the website of the Registrar of Nonprofits.

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Introduction

The fourth Platform Report, released for the 59th year of the occupation, is presented by 21 Israeli human rights organizations that have been operating, documenting, and conducting research in Israel and in the occupied territories for many years, out of the conviction that human rights are universal and that the occupation, illegal and immoral on its own, leads to widespread human rights abuses, breaches of international humanitarian law, the entrenchment of apartheid and ethnic cleansing.

As the occupation enters its 60th year, this report summarizes a difficult, violent year, during which the Israeli government has continued to aggressively advance policies of forced displacement and annexation, while systemically violating the human rights of Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, and breaching its obligations under international law. At the same time, within Israel the systemic retreat from the principles of the rule of law continues, alongside a persistent erosion of the democratic space.

Gaza: The Gaza ceasefire agreement entered into effect in October 2025. For two years, the fighting in Gaza involved breaches of the laws of war, reaching the level of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Despite, and in violation of, the ceasefire agreement, Israel continues to attack population centers, killing hundreds and injuring thousands of residents, and to systematically destroy buildings and infrastructure in the part of the Gaza Strip remaining under its control. Israel's tight restrictions on the entry of aid and goods, coupled with the concentration of Gaza's entire population in less than half of the territory, are fueling a chronic humanitarian crisis. Gaza's roughly two million residents live in extreme overcrowding, and face deprivation, fear, and uncertainty. Approximately 18,500 sick and wounded people are waiting for medical evacuation, which is allowed only rarely. Amid the regional war with Iran, Gaza seems to have been forgotten, with no progress toward reconstruction on the horizon.

West Bank: The Government of Israel has continued to aggressively advance its policy of annexation in the West Bank, in defiance of international law and through the systemic violations of Palestinians' human rights. Unprecedented settler violence, which is openly and directly backed by State authorities in unprecedented ways, is terrorizing Palestinians and forcing dozens of communities from their homes, helping to translate the vision of permanent control over the West Bank into a reality. By frequently banning human rights activists, Israel blocks the documentation of violations and cuts off non-violent support for vulnerable communities. Israel also imposes numerous movement restrictions on the West Bank's 3.4 million Palestinian residents, with access to vast swaths of the territory denied altogether. The Palestinian Authority, meanwhile, is gripped by an economic crisis increasingly made worse by deliberate Israeli policies.

East Jerusalem: The Government of Israel and the Jerusalem Municipality are advancing measures for a Jewish takeover on a scale not seen since 1967, placing entire Palestinian communities at risk of forced displacement. The policy uses a variety of legal and bureaucratic

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tools, such as administrative acquisition of land by the State, the seizure of homes and their transfer to settler organizations, and planning for large-scale construction solely for the Jewish public. At the same time, the government and municipality discriminate against the city's hundreds of thousands of Palestinian residents by providing inadequate or no access to services and infrastructure, freezing almost all planning and construction for their benefit, demolishing homes, and imposing harsh movement restrictions on communities that are trapped beyond the Separation Barrier.

Violations of detainees' rights: Israel continues to hold more than 9,000 Palestinians, some of whom are minors, on security charges. Whether they are serving prison sentences, detained, or incarcerated without charges or trial as administrative detainees or under the Unlawful Combatants Law, these inmates are held in inhumane conditions and subjected to violence, degradation, overcrowding, starvation, and neglect, including medical neglect.

Israel: Inside Israel, the separation of powers, the judiciary, law enforcement, the free press, and civil society are under attack. The adoption of capital punishment, selective enforcement, attempts to constrain Israeli human rights organizations and activists, and the suppression of freedom of expression and protest corrupt democratic principles and erode the space for civil resistance to the occupation.

The vast majority of the occupation's crimes and injustices are never properly investigated, and, in the absence of enforcement, violence is committed without fear of repercussions by both civilians and security forces. Without resolute institutional action, the occupation, and the State and settler violence that are part of it, continues to escalate, exacerbating the suffering of Palestinians and corrupting Israeli society. The Death Penalty Law, passed in the Knesset to loud fanfare by its supporters, aptly reflects a violent, vengeful mindset and a blatant disregard for human life.

As public and political discourse in Israel grows ever more extreme, the question of the occupation is absent from the discourse. This is also true as the upcoming elections approach, despite its crucial impact on Israeli society and even though the lives and rights of disenfranchised Palestinians depend on the outcome. To initiate the process of redress, the next government will have to reckon with Israel's human rights abuses as a core issue.

The information presented in this report is difficult to read. However, as citizens of Israel we have a duty to bring the full reality to the attention of the public. We hope that this report will serve as a tool to deepen public debate and strengthen demands for change, including in the lead-up to the elections.

Given space constraints, the report focuses on the main trends within the areas of expertise of the partner organizations and does not purport to detail all human rights violations committed in the name of or by the State of Israel against Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. The report does not offer an exhaustive analysis, but refers to the more in-depth publications of the various organizations.

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By definition, this report addresses only human rights violations that are directly related to the occupation and to the civil struggle against it in Israel. Naturally, other human rights violations, in Israel or abroad committed by the State of Israel or by any other actor warrant separate, extensive discussion in other reports.

In preparing this report, every effort was made to compile, verify, and cross-check information and to provide references to its sources. To the best of our knowledge, the information contained in this report is accurate and reliable. Any errors are unintentional.

1. Gaza Strip

The Gaza ceasefire agreement entered into effect in October 2025. Israel, however, has continued to attack population centers and carry out the systematic destruction of buildings and infrastructure in areas under its control, along with indiscriminately firing at anyone who approaches or crosses the Yellow Line. Meanwhile, the Gaza Strip is still gripped by a major humanitarian crisis due to the restrictions Israel imposes on the entry of aid. Hundreds of civilians have been killed and thousands injured in recent months in ceasefire violations, and Gaza's residents continue to live under conditions of harsh deprivation, fear and uncertainty, while carrying the trauma of war and displacement.

As a result of Gaza's partition by the Yellow Line, more than two million residents are crowded into less than half of its area. Almost all of them are internally displaced, living in tents or in ruined buildings and without minimal living conditions, including clean drinking water, electricity, and basic hygiene. Gaza's population is almost entirely dependent on humanitarian aid and in need of essential basic equipment, which Israel continues to restrict or block. The healthcare system, which was decimated during the war, struggles to cope with the high number of patients and a chronic shortage of personnel, medicines, medical equipment, and fuel. Aid organizations warn of the spread of infectious diseases and a deep mental health crisis.

In January 2026, an official announcement was made that the Comprehensive Plan for Ending the Conflict in Gaza had entered Phase Two, following the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners and the exchange of bodies of those killed on both sides. Yet Gaza's civilians remain in crowded displacement sites, with no protection or any ability to influence their future. While Hamas effectively controls the Palestinian side of the Yellow Line, on the other side the Israeli military is entrenching its hold through continued intensive destruction, the construction of new outposts, and the placement of earth berms along the Yellow Line, which the Israeli Chief of Staff referred as "the new border."

The restrictions Israel imposes on the entry of goods, food, and relief supplies directly impact the humanitarian crisis in the Strip, which took a turn for the worse as Israel launched its attack on Iran in late February 2026. Operations at the crossings were significantly scaled back, exacerbating the existing food shortage in Gaza. Additionally, Israel rarely permits medical evacuations out of the Strip for the sick and wounded and denies access to medical treatment in

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the West Bank altogether. Currently, more than 18,500 patients are awaiting medical evacuation, and many die while they wait. The war and displacement also have unique and grave implications for women and girls in Gaza, including on their mental and physical health; personal safety; and pregnancy, birth, and motherhood.

As an occupying power encircling the Strip and fully controlling movement to and from it, and in accordance with the provisions of international law and with the [orders](#) and [advisory opinion](#) of the International Court of Justice, Israel has a duty to protect the civilian population. This also includes immediately allowing the entry of aid and goods in the necessary quantities; allowing the evacuation of the sick and wounded in need of medical treatment outside the Strip, including and especially to the West Bank and Israel (a necessary solution in light of the scale of needs); and lift the significant restrictions on goods cleared for entry into Gaza in order to enable infrastructure rehabilitation and reconstruction. Israel must also take steps towards Gaza's rehabilitation and the establishment of a compensation program for the extensive destruction of civilian infrastructure, homes, roads, and businesses.

Israel must investigate its conduct, including that of the political and military leadership, during the years of the war, acknowledge war crimes and violations of international law, and draw the necessary conclusions. Israel also has a duty to ensure that those responsible are held to account. Should Israel choose to ignore this duty, the responsibility will pass to the international community.

For more on the harm to the civilian population in Gaza during the war:

The Platform, Israeli NGOs for Human Rights: [State of the Occupation Report 2025: 58 Years of Occupation, The Two-Year War in Gaza](#), November 2025

1.1 Deaths, injuries and missing persons

Despite the ceasefire agreement that entered into effect in October 2025, Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip have continued, including during the weeks of the war with Iran from late February until early April 2026.

According to [figures released by the Gaza Ministry of Health](#), which are backed by names and ID numbers and recognized as reliable by international research bodies and even by [the Israeli military](#), from the start of the ceasefire until April 26, 2026, 811 people were killed and 2,278 were injured by Israeli fire. The number of people killed in Gaza from the beginning of the war in October 2023 until April 26, 2026, was 72,587, 45% of whom were women and children [according to UN data](#). Another 172,381 Gazans suffer from various injuries.

The assumption is that the actual number of dead is even higher, since these figures exclude thousands of missing persons, most of whom were likely killed and their remains are still trapped under collapsed buildings. According to a [report in Haaretz](#), as of February 2026, more than 4,000 bodies of missing persons had been located or identified in Gaza since the ceasefire agreement entered into effect, in addition to the hundreds of bodies that were held in Israel and

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returned to Gaza as part of the agreement. Data from the Civil Defense services in Gaza indicate that as of April 2026 [about 8,000 additional bodies](#) are still buried under the rubble in the Strip.

Just as during the war, civilians still account for an unprecedented proportion of the casualties. These include children, the elderly, and families, whom the military considers “collateral damage.” A [Local Call, Guardian and +972 investigation](#) revealed that, according to Israeli Military Intelligence Directorate estimates from May 2025, about 83% of persons killed were civilians. Israel’s permissive open-fire policy, which allows such widespread killing, has also been applied in the months since the ceasefire agreement (including on other fronts).

The large number of civilian casualties, including children, was caused by Israeli attacks that involved aerial bombardments and artillery fire. In addition, hundreds of residents, including children, have been shot because they approached the Yellow Line or accidentally crossed it. Even in cases when Israel claims that military action was carried out in response to violations of the ceasefire agreement by Hamas, the attacks are not confined to the location from which Hamas operated but are instead directed at various areas of the Strip. For example, [on February 4, 2026](#), in response to Hamas fire and the injury of an Israeli officer, the military carried out simultaneous strikes in several densely populated areas, killing 21 Palestinians, including several children, one of them a five-month-old infant.

For ongoing updates:

Gisha – [Gaza: Facts and Figures](#)

1.2 The Yellow Line

Israel’s conduct in the area that was temporarily left under its control under the ceasefire agreement and its treatment of Gaza’s civilians now crowded in the rest of the Strip are a direct continuation of its policy during the war: killing, expulsion, and systematic destruction on the one hand, and entrenching a presence in the territory it controls on the other. This policy aligns with the vision of ethnic cleansing and the renewal of Jewish settlement in Gaza repeatedly expressed by Israeli [ministers](#) and [members of parliament](#) (Hebrew), including since the agreement entered into effect.

The route known as [the Yellow Line](#) separates the area to which Israeli forces withdrew under the ceasefire agreement from the part of the Gaza Strip left to Palestinians. Under the agreement, which stipulates that this is a temporary arrangement, the Israeli military retains control of about 58% of the Strip’s territory, crowding Gaza’s roughly 2.1 million residents into an area that is less than half the size of the territory where they lived before the war. Gaza’s partition resulted in [repeated displacement for many families](#). Hundreds of Palestinians have since been shot and killed, and a new de facto border has been established, encircling residents of the Strip on all sides.

When the Yellow Line map was released in October 2025, residents were warned not to go near it or cross into areas where Israeli forces are present. However, it was difficult to discern exactly

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where the line was located from the map published by the Israeli military, and it was not initially marked on the ground in any way, leaving Gaza residents unable to know with certainty how far they could safely go. Meanwhile, the military's open-fire regulations for the Yellow Line area permit the use of live fire and shoot-to-kill, at anyone who crosses the line, even if they do not pose a concrete and immediate threat. Hundreds of civilians, including women and children, have been shot near or beyond the line, particularly in the first days and weeks, but also in the months since. For example, on November 29, 2025, [two children, ages 10 and 12](#), were reportedly killed by fire from an Israeli drone while gathering firewood near the Yellow Line.

According to a [media analysis](#) of satellite images, once the Israeli army began marking the line by placing yellow concrete blocks, in some places the blocks were placed inside the area left to the Palestinians under the agreement rather than on the Yellow Line itself, meaning Israel effectively expanded the area under its control. In various locations, yellow concrete blocks were later moved farther into Palestinian territory, [changing the border](#) and displacing many IDPs, once again, to the other side of the new line.

Since only about 42% of the Strip's total area is open to Gaza residents, many cannot access their homes and lands, and are forced to continue living in displacement camps, tents, and ruined buildings. Additionally, most of Gaza's [agricultural land](#) lies east of the Yellow Line, inside the Israeli-controlled area. With farmers denied access to their land, essential food sources cannot be rehabilitated, and dependency on outside aid cannot be reduced. Humanitarian aid, on which the vast majority of Gaza's population relies, is also affected by the route of the Yellow Line, since every movement by aid workers and every food, relief, or commercial transport requires coordination and approval from the Israeli authorities, including access to the border crossings, all of which are located in areas under Israeli control.

As noted, the Yellow Line is a temporary arrangement while under the ceasefire. Since the agreement went into effect, the Israeli military has been entrenching itself in the area by [demolishing](#) thousands of buildings and infrastructure, constructing additional military posts in the area, and building an earth berm along the line. As of a [March 2026 report](#), the barrier spans 17 kilometers, about 40% of the line's total length. These actions, which echo statements by the [Chief of Staff](#) about "a new border," and by the [Minister of Defense](#) and coalition members about aspirations to settle northern Gaza, indicate that the Israeli government views this as an opportunity to strengthen its hold inside the Strip rather than as a step toward a long-term political solution.

Physically marking the line does not absolve the military of its obligations under the laws of war regarding the use of force or of its duty to comply with international legal norms that require protecting civilians regardless of where they are and refraining from targeting them.

Further reading:

Gisha: [The "Yellow Line": Approximately 58 percent of the Gaza Strip is still under direct Israeli control](#), November 2025

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Video testimony:

B'Tselem: [Yellow Line of “ceasefire” in Gaza leading to more killing and displacement](#), December 2025

1.3 Humanitarian crisis and restrictions on the entry of aid and goods

Israel has had complete control over the movement of people and goods into the Gaza Strip for many decades. Preventing the entry of food, medicines, fuel, and goods into Gaza during the war was a key factor in the unprecedented humanitarian crisis and the starvation of the population. Even now, the population’s survival depends directly on the opening of the crossings for the transfer of food and essential goods. The restrictions Israel imposes on the entry of humanitarian aid and equipment needed to rebuild the Strip, and on the humanitarian organizations operating there, entrench the crisis and prevent recovery.

While the ceasefire’s implementation has improved the quantities of goods entering the Strip, most approvals given by the military are for the private sector. This means that despite the improved availability of goods and a drop in prices, the food sold in local markets remains beyond the reach of many residents due to poverty and [soaring unemployment](#). As a result, the vast majority of the public in Gaza depends on humanitarian aid. Despite [the military’s claims](#) that requests to bring in aid are approved in accordance with guidelines, the UN and aid organizations struggle to meet residents’ basic needs due to the extremely tight restrictions Israel places on [the types of products](#) allowed in, as well as the quantities and the pace at which aid trucks may enter the Strip. Moreover, reaching isolated communities as frequently as needed is logistically challenging due to the destruction of the road network, particularly during bad weather.

Since the war broke out, Israel has worked systematically to undercut the established humanitarian aid network run by international organizations with proven expertise for many years in Gaza (and the West Bank). Tactics have included introducing a range of bureaucratic and other barriers, revoking visas for international staff, and denying aid workers entry. In recent months, Israel has revoked the operating permits of dozens of organizations, some of which have worked in the Gaza Strip for many years and have run large-scale aid programs that meet international standards. To do this, Israel has relied on a [new registration system it imposed](#) with excessive and unreasonable requirements that undermine aid organizations’ [independence and neutrality](#). [In a March 2026 hearing](#) on petitions filed on this issue, the HCJ upheld the registration system.

1.3.1 Food insecurity data

According to an [April 2026 UN report](#), about 1.6 million people, or 77% of Gaza’s population, are experiencing varying levels of acute food insecurity, with more than 500,000 at the emergency

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level. There is also a chronic shortage of cooking gas due to restrictions on its entry and the high cost.

According to a [World Food Programme \(WFP\) analysis](#) from March 2026, 48% of households are forced to burn waste in order to cook. In January 2026, when the entry of aid through the border crossings allowed it, [WFP and its partners](#) provided assistance to 1,661,496 women, men and children, through food parcels, bags of flour, hot meals, or a cash grant of 1,250 ILS (~ 385 USD) per family. In the following months [deliveries declined](#) because of difficulties bringing food into the Strip, with some recovery seen [in April](#).

1.3.2 Restrictions on the entry and distribution of humanitarian aid

When the war with Iran began in late February 2026, Israel announced (Arabic) a shutdown of all Gaza crossings for movement of people and goods, in violation of the ceasefire agreement. The closures included Kerem Shalom, a commercial crossing through which most aid had been entering, and Rafah, which had resumed limited operations shortly before after remaining closed since its capture by Israel in May 2024. The shutdown triggered a sharp spike in market prices and an almost immediate shortage of food and other basic goods. With the subsequent partial reopening of the crossings, a daily average of only 63 aid trucks entered Gaza in early March 2026, compared to 230 the previous month, a drop of about 70%. The number and pace of trucks entering improved somewhat in April 2026, and access to Palestinian communities in the northern Strip became easier with the opening of the Zikim crossing.

Adding to the fluctuating operations of the crossings, and contrary to the ceasefire agreement, Israel continues to block the entry of thousands of items essential for healthcare, water, and sanitation services, as well as construction and reconstruction, as it considers them [dual-use goods](#) that might also serve terrorist activity, or because they do not fall under Israel's definition of humanitarian aid. For instance, [the UN reported](#) in early March 2026 that ultrasound machines, incubators, and other equipment urgently needed for maternity wards in Gaza's hospitals had not been allowed in.

The destruction of 77% of Gaza's roads and streets during the war has created major obstacles to aid delivery. With no passable roads, food and other goods get stuck at crossings and spoil while communities in the north and center of the Strip suffer acute malnutrition. Given Israel's ban on the entry of materials and heavy equipment to repair and build roads, the humanitarian community is focusing its efforts on temporary fixes and improvised bypass routes, which waste precious time and resources.

The survival of the people of Gaza, any improvement in their living conditions, and, in the future, Gaza's reconstruction all depend on reopening the crossings and lifting the draconian restrictions on the entry of equipment and materials needed to repair infrastructure, clear rubble, and rebuild structures. The restrictions Israel places on the entry of aid and goods harm Gaza's civilian population and violate Israel's international obligations as well as the ceasefire agreement.

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Further reading:

Gisha: [Essential and Denied: Israel's Dual-Use Policy in Gaza](#), March 17, 2026

1.3.3 Gaza remains cut off from electricity

On October 7, 2023, as part of Israel's retaliation for the Hamas attack, the Israeli government decided to halt the direct supply of electricity to the Gaza Strip as well as the entry of fuel needed to operate the power plant. Since then, power inside Gaza has been generated exclusively by local generators and solar panels, many of which have also been [destroyed](#) in Israeli strikes.

According to [estimates by the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company](#) (GEDCO) from September 2025, 70% of its electricity distribution infrastructure has been completely destroyed, and most of the company's buildings, equipment, vehicles, and warehouses sustained extensive damage. [GEDCO data](#) has found that 500 kilometers of power lines and over 2,200 transformers have been destroyed.

As of April 2026, Israel is still blocking the power supply through lines that operated before the war, apart from a single connection to a desalination facility. The entry of fuel to operate Gaza's power plant is also prohibited. In addition, the restrictions Israel imposes on the entry of so-called [dual-use goods](#) into the Strip apply to generators, solar panels, and the spare parts needed to repair them.

Without electricity, hospitals are operating at limited capacity despite acute needs, sewage is left untreated, and the capacity for refrigerating food and lifesaving medicines is limited. The entire healthcare system currently relies on a small number of generators. The electricity shortage affects Gaza residents' survival, their ability to live in dignity, and their recovery in many other direct and indirect ways. Israel has a duty to take action to repair the lines and restore the electricity infrastructure, allow generators and spare parts in, and immediately resume the supply of electricity through the lines.

Further reading:

Gisha: [Israel's war on electricity](#), April 19, 2026

1.3.4 Ongoing destruction of heritage sites

Restrictions on the entry of materials and equipment, coupled with the inaccessibility due to volatile security conditions and the large number of unexploded ordnances in the area, prevent the restoration of cultural assets and heritage sites in the Gaza Strip. According to [rolling updates](#) by UNESCO, 164 cultural and heritage sites in the Strip have been destroyed or damaged as of March 2026, including religious and archaeological sites, mosques, churches, universities, historic buildings, archives, and museums. International law prohibits the deliberate and systematic destruction of archaeological sites, historic buildings, and cultural and religious institutions during hostilities. Without the immediate restoration and stabilization of what remains of these buildings, many of the damaged sites currently face further deterioration.

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1.4 Population displacement and its impact

1.4.1 Displacement figures and living conditions

According to UN data from 2024, about 90% of the Strip's 2.1 million residents had already been displaced at least once during the war. Many families were displaced multiple times, sometimes 10 times or more, as they escaped Israeli attacks. Displacement was often sudden, sometimes under fire, without proper means of transport and with nowhere safe to go. In most cases, residents were not given enough time to pack essential belongings, which dwindled from one displacement to the next. Today, the overwhelming majority of Gaza's residents are still displaced, because their homes were destroyed and/or because they are barred from accessing the areas where they lived before the war.

As of March 27, 2026, most IDPs, 1.7 million people, were living in [1,600 displacement sites](#), in abject poverty and extremely harsh living conditions. More than half of them, about 900,000 people, lack even the most basic and essential emergency [shelter items](#). Without basic services and infrastructure such as sewage, electricity, and [safe drinking water](#), and without even minimal hygiene, residents in most displacement camps suffer from skin diseases and [infestations of parasites and rodents](#). According to assessments by aid agencies, [in April 2026](#), in about 80% of these sites where approximately 1.45 million people live, pests such as ticks, fleas, rats, and mice, are regularly observed. With [no access to pest-control materials](#), there is no effective way to address this public health problem, which [puts most of the population at risk](#). Since the start of 2026, more than 70,000 cases of illness or infection caused by rodents and parasites have been reported.

According to [UN data from April 2026](#), only about 51% of kindergarten- and school-aged children are enrolled in the 585 temporary learning spaces. These are run with support from the UN and humanitarian organizations, amid a major shortage of learning materials and with most teachers working on a volunteer basis.

1.4.2 Impact of extreme weather on the crisis

In the absence of adequate shelter and even minimal housing conditions, [extreme weather](#) becomes life threatening. For people living in tents or ruined buildings, who lack basic infrastructure such as [sewage and drainage systems](#), winter conditions are especially harsh. Strong winds and heavy rains turned crowded tent camps into bogs, tens of thousands of tents were flooded or blown away, dozens of partially destroyed buildings collapsed, and tens of thousands of families lost even the precarious, temporary shelter they had. The severe shortage of heating materials, winter clothing, and electricity increased illness, particularly among children and the elderly. In December 2025 and January 2026 alone, 39 residents, including 22 minors, [reportedly](#) died from hypothermia or the collapse of unsafe structures due to harsh weather conditions.

In March 2026, the Gaza Strip was hit by a [severe sandstorm](#), causing pollution and serious respiratory problems for people living in tents and exposed structures with no protection from dust and sand particles. The high winds and sand also damaged desalination facilities and hampered the delivery of humanitarian aid.

The restrictions Israel imposes on the entry of essential shelter materials directly contribute to the suffering, illnesses, and deaths resulting from substandard housing that offers no protection from the elements. While tents and plastic sheeting are allowed in, lengthy bureaucratic procedures and limited opening hours at the crossings create delays and shortages that prevent an immediate response to urgent needs. By contrast, the entry of [tent poles](#) has been banned. Bans on prefabricated structures, as well as equipment and materials to repair and build homes, prevent any transition to [housing solutions](#) that are more suitable than tents.

Further reading:

B'Tselem: [After Israel destroyed Gaza's essential infrastructure, 39 local residents, including 22 minors, lost their lives due to severe weather in December and January](#), February 23, 2026

1.5 Impact of the war and displacement on women and girls

According to Gaza Ministry of Health figures, from October 2023 through the end of December 2025, at least 10,983 women were killed in Gaza as a result of Israeli attacks. Thousands of women and girls are living with life-altering injuries, i.e injuries that preclude a full recovery and a return to pre-injury life. Tens of thousands more women have been widowed or have lost children, parents, or other relatives. Around 90% of all residents of the Strip have fled their homes and have been repeatedly displaced.

In addition to the collective loss and trauma, the war and displacement have specific, consequential implications for [women in Gaza](#). Women in Gaza bear an especially heavy burden, materially and psychologically. While carrying the ongoing trauma of Israeli military attacks, displacement, and loss, they are expected to keep functioning fully and to shoulder the responsibility of caring for children and the elderly, even as they cope with acute shortages of food and water, extreme overcrowding, and the absence of hygiene and privacy. All of this creates [an immense emotional burden](#), stress, anxiety, and despair. Meanwhile the rate of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, perpetrated by partners, relatives, or strangers has increased, at a time when the social, familial, and legal structures that previously offered some protection for their lives, bodies, and dignity have been shattered by the war.

The public health crisis and lack of hygiene are particularly harmful to women's and girls' health, causing not only infections and physical discomfort but also deep shame and psychological distress. In the absence of basic hygiene products, menstruation itself has become a source of humiliation and shame. Given the conservative social norms in Palestinian society, women pay a heavy price for the loss of privacy and personal spaces where they once had freedom. Because of the shortage of enclosed structures and showers, [women report](#) that they remain fully

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clothed and with their heads covered at all times, even during extreme heat, illness, or when postpartum, as they constantly fear that someone will intrude on their makeshift living space.

Further reading:

B'Tselem: [Clinging to what's left of life: Palestinian women under genocide in Gaza](#), March 2026

Gisha: [A Safe Space for the Mind: Women and Mental Health Under Attack in Gaza](#), March 29, 2026

1.5.1 Women and girls at risk

More than [57,000](#) single mothers, as well as young women, adolescents, and younger girls who have been separated from their families as a result of the war, are at [high risk](#) of violence and exploitation, including sexual exploitation, due to increased material deprivation and the absence of support and protection from the family members and community networks they relied on before the war. Living conditions, access constraints, social norms, and the sheer scale of the crisis mean that the humanitarian system cannot offer an adequate response. As of [April 2026](#), only 68 safe spaces, two women's shelters, and a single hotline are operating in the Strip.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) report for the first quarter of 2026 notes a concerning rise in [child marriage and pregnancies among adolescent girls](#) between the ages of 14 and 16. In many cases, families who struggle to provide for all of their children marry off their daughters as a dangerous survival strategy in the harsh reality of life in Gaza. According to UNFPA, 63% of girls who are married as children experience some form of violence. At the same time, 10% of all new pregnancies recorded in Gaza in 2025 were among adolescents. Pregnancy at such a young age carries specific risks, and the shortage of medical services for pregnant women and new mothers further increases the danger to both the pregnant girl and her baby.

1.5.2 Pregnancy and childbirth in Gaza's living conditions

In the conditions created by Israel during the war, the destruction of the local healthcare system, displacement, forcible transfer, starvation, and relentless attacks, [pregnancy and motherhood](#) have become high-risk in the Gaza Strip. Adequate nutrition remains unavailable, and harsh living conditions and the shortage of healthcare services persist; in 2026, pregnant women in Gaza continue to lack the conditions, prenatal care and medical services needed to ensure a safe pregnancy for both mother and child.

According to the UN, as of March 2026 there were [about 50,000 pregnant women](#) in Gaza, with 130 to 160 births occurring daily in difficult conditions. Only 15% of health facilities in Gaza provide emergency maternal care, and there is a major shortage of hospital beds, ultrasound machines, incubators, ventilators, and mobile maternity units, resulting in [early discharge](#) after delivery and complex medical procedures, sometimes just hours after caesarean sections.

Imposing living conditions that violate reproductive rights, including starvation and the destruction of infrastructure that supports maternal health, falls within acts defined as genocide under international law. Denying women the conditions needed for personal safety and

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recovery, together with the continued restrictions on humanitarian aid, violates the rights of women in Gaza to health, to live in dignity, and to protection from inhumane treatment.

Further reading:

Physicians for Human Rights – Israel (PHRI): [Mothers under fire: How much can a woman endure?](#), January 2026

1.6 The health crisis

After causing the massive destruction of Gaza's healthcare system during the war, Israel's current policy continues to violate the rights of Gaza's residents to life and to health by imposing restrictions on the entry of medicines and medical equipment needed in the Strip. This forces residents to live in conditions that increase morbidity, and limits the options available to seriously ill and wounded patients to travel for treatment outside of Gaza.

Gaza's healthcare system is struggling to recover from the systematic destruction inflicted on it, while coping with a large patient volume and shortages of physicians, medicines, medical equipment, and fuel. At the same time, there has been a rise in morbidity resulting from overcrowding, shortages, and harsh living conditions imposed on Gaza's residents in displacement sites. Illnesses include the spread of infectious respiratory diseases; skin diseases; gastrointestinal illnesses, including hepatitis A; as well as conditions transmitted by parasites and rodents.

1.6.1 State of the healthcare system

After two and a half years of war, approximately 42,000 people in the Gaza Strip, including 10,500 children, remain seriously injured and in need of rehabilitation and ongoing care. After the ceasefire went into effect, the number and rate of new patients arriving at hospitals declined, and the volume of medicines and medical equipment entering the Strip increased. The number of functioning medical facilities also climbed. However, by the end of April 2026, only [296 treatment facilities](#) out of 683 were operating, almost all of them on a partial basis only. Currently, only 18 hospitals operate in the Strip.

The healthcare system continues to grapple with [severe shortages of medicines, equipment and medical devices](#), including operating tables and spare parts for ultrasound machines, ventilators and incubators, as Israel refuses to allow these items into Gaza. According to [reports](#) from April 2026, based on information published by the Gaza Ministry of Health, more than half of all essential medicines in Gaza were unavailable, and stocks of laboratory testing materials and medical disposables were also running out.

1.6.2 Shortage of medical staff and restrictions on the entry of specialists

The daunting task of meeting Gaza's overwhelming medical needs falls to a decimated healthcare system that has lost more than 1,700 staff members in Israeli attacks, including many senior physicians and hospital directors. Even before the war, Gaza's healthcare system relied on

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assistance from specialists from Israel, the West Bank, and around the world. Ever since the war broke out, Israel has refused to let physicians from Israel or the West Bank into Gaza, and arbitrarily rejected many applications made by volunteer physicians from various countries, without offering any explanation, despite the dire situation and the urgent need for their help.

On February 5, 2026, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), PHRI and Gisha [petitioned the High Court of Justice](#) on behalf of seven volunteer physicians from the UK and the United States who were denied entry into the Strip at the last minute, arbitrarily, with no reasons provided or an opportunity to appeal their case. The petition seeks a reform of the system for approving the entry of physicians into the Gaza Strip. The organizations also demand the issuance and publication of a directive stating that giving testimony, expressing criticism, or providing information about the condition of the healthcare system or the humanitarian situation in Gaza will not constitute grounds for rejecting the applications of medical staff to enter Gaza.

The entry of volunteer medical staff is equivalent to the entry of any humanitarian aid into an active combat zone or an area under belligerent occupation, and as such is governed by the binding framework of international humanitarian law; it is not dependent on the discretion of the State. The State has an obligation to ensure access to medical treatment for Gaza's residents.

Further reading:

Association for Civil Rights in Israel: [Refusing to Allow Volunteer Physicians into Gaza](#), February 5, 2026

1.6.3 Restrictions on medical evacuations from Gaza

With Israel's decimation of Gaza's healthcare system, thousands of patients are unable to receive treatment for serious medical conditions, including care for various types of cancer or rehabilitation for complex injuries. More than 18,500 sick and wounded patients are waiting to be evacuated for medical treatment abroad. However, even those who have made it onto this list face slim chances of leaving the Strip and receiving treatment.

According to UN data, only [1,080 patients](#) were evacuated from the Strip between October 2025 and April 23, 2026, most of whom were war-wounded. In April 2026, only 32 cancer patients were evacuated, while thousands more continue to wait for life-saving treatment. Most medical evacuees were transferred for treatment in Egypt. The main obstacle is the restrictions Israel imposes on exiting Gaza. [Another](#) (Hebrew) is Israel's refusal to allow patients to travel for treatment in hospitals in the West Bank or East Jerusalem, as was the practice before the war broke out in October 2023.

Since October 2023, Israel has blocked all access to medical care between Gaza and the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Israel. With access to medical treatment in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, patients from Gaza would be able to have continuous care and any required follow-up treatment. It is also the only option for them to access treatment quickly and return to Gaza

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once it is completed. Within just an hour's drive, they could reach a network of hospitals that are prepared to receive them and have all of the necessary equipment, which has not been available in Gaza's hospitals for more than two years.

In November 2025, PHRI, Gisha, HaMoked, ACRI, and Adalah filed a petition demanding the reopening of the medical corridor between Gaza and the West Bank and East Jerusalem. A group of 32 senior Israeli physicians asked to join the petition in support of the request to renew the corridor. At a hearing held on March 30, 2026, the justices ruled that the petition could not be heard in light of the war with Iran and postponed the hearing to a date still to be determined. Meanwhile, thousands of patients in Gaza are fighting for their lives without adequate medical care.

Further reading:

Gisha: [Ill will: Israel's Policy on Medical Evacuation from the Gaza Strip](#), February 12, 2026

Physicians for Human Rights–Israel: [There are three possible solutions for patients in Gaza, and Israel is thwarting all of them](#), op-ed by Keren Shavit, Haaretz, April 15, 2026 (Hebrew)

1.6.4 Gaza's mental health crisis

Gaza is in the throes of a severe mental health crisis. UNFPA data published in March 2026 indicate that 61% of adolescents and youths showed signs of post traumatic stress disorder, 38% suffered from depression, and 41% from anxiety. Among adults, 20% of those surveyed reported having suicidal thoughts on a daily basis. UNFPA estimates that about one million children in Gaza are in urgent need of psychosocial treatment. According to World Health Organization estimates, in the beginning of 2025 there were 485,000 people in the Gaza Strip who had mental disorders: persistent and significant impairment in emotional, cognitive or behavioral functioning.

Ongoing displacement, the loss of home and relatives, and the absence of even minimal personal space and basic living conditions lead to cumulative trauma that erodes the ability to cope. This is compounded by the hunger crisis, which poses an existential threat and serves as a source of psychological distress. More than [1.6 million people](#) (77% of the population) continue to suffer from varying levels of food insecurity. Hunger, deprivation, and daily uncertainty intensify anxiety, depression, and mental exhaustion and exacerbate the harm to the civilian population as the crisis persists.

A [report by Gisha](#), produced together with the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme and other professionals, identifies displacement as a central and ongoing traumatic experience of the war. Displacement is accompanied by sudden, terrifying changes, sometimes involving walking long distances under fire, arriving in unfamiliar places without basic shelter, and coping with the loss of any sense of control or stability. Later, the conditions IDPs encounter after fleeing their homes—crowded, flimsy tents that do not protect against harsh weather, disconnection from electricity and water infrastructure, total lack of privacy and widespread illness—preclude psychological recovery or emotional stability. These conditions, and the absence of any horizon

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for improvement, are major factors in the sense of despair and the rising rates of interpersonal violence in the community and within families.

According to the report, the accumulation of risk factors creates patterns of complex, chronic trauma that go beyond standard diagnostic categories. The extremely limited mental health services available in the Strip, together with ongoing displacement, create physical, logistical, and social barriers to accessing care. All of this is taking place when the basic conditions for psychosocial treatment, i.e a safe, private space, social stability, and a clear separation between therapist and patient, simply do not exist.

Gaza's mental health crisis is not just the result of a shortage of services, but also of the deep systemic breakdown and the disintegration of the social fabric. Standard therapeutic interventions, even when available, cannot adequately address a reality of continuous trauma.

Therefore, as an immediate step, it is necessary to create conditions, even minimal ones, that will enable people to begin the process of recovery and healing. This applies to all spheres of life, and requires, among other things, an immediate end to attacks on civilians; the lifting of restrictions on the movement of people and goods; full access to humanitarian supplies; and the promotion of psychosocial support programs adapted to the circumstances in Gaza, with an emphasis on community-focused care.

Further reading:

Gisha: Gisha: [A Safe Space for the Mind: Women and Mental Health Under Attack in Gaza](#), March 29, 2026

2. The West Bank

In the 59th year of the occupation, the Israeli government continued to aggressively advance its policy of annexation in the West Bank, in defiance of international law and amid grave, systemic violations of Palestinians' human rights. Settler violence, which has become unprecedented in its scale and severity, has imposed a reign of terror and fear on Palestinians and forced dozens of communities from their lands, thereby helping to realize the vision of permanent Israeli control over the West Bank.

The annexation policy is advanced through the transfer of powers from the Civil Administration to bodies that answer to elected politicians, the expansion of Israeli control in various civil spheres into Areas A and B, and seismic changes in the land administration. In addition, over the past year, dozens of new settlement jurisdictions and the construction of thousands of housing units in existing settlements were approved. Additionally, approximately 360 illegal outposts and outpost farms established without planning or approval, are scattered throughout the West Bank. They dominate hundreds of thousands of dunams, enjoy military protection, and, in many cases, are ultimately connected to infrastructure even before their "regularization" process begins.

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Dozens of Palestinians were shot and killed this year by soldiers or settlers, and many hundreds were injured, including elderly people, women and children. Hundreds of families, including entire shepherding communities, were forced to leave their homes and lands as a result of settler violence and access restrictions, while some 33,000 residents of refugee camps in the northern West Bank who were forced out of their homes as part of a military operation more than a year ago remain displaced, living in harsh conditions and not permitted to return home.

Human rights organizations and protective presence activists report closer cooperation between settlers and soldiers than previously observed, the increased use of arbitrary arrests by the military as a tool for oppressing Palestinians, and the continued use of temporary area closure orders to remove protective presence activists. Closure orders and restrictions imposed by the military, ostensibly for the protection of public order and the local community, sometimes create favorable conditions for settler attacks by preventing the presence of human rights activists and media, and delaying the arrival of medical assistance. Settlers, meanwhile, violate these closure orders and attack Palestinian residents undisturbed.

Freedom of movement for 3.4 million Palestinians living in the West Bank is restricted daily by nearly 1,000 full or partial roadblocks. Some are permanently closed, while others operate intermittently without coordination or a proper schedule. Tens of thousands of farmers are denied free access to their land and are required to obtain permission and coordination from the military, which are given sparingly. For the third year in a row, more than 100,000 Palestinian workers have not been permitted to return to work in Israel. These restrictions directly contribute to the economic crisis in the West Bank. Israel's refusal to transfer billions of dollars of Palestinian Authority revenues needed for running public services in the West Bank is another factor.

Petitioning the High Court of Justice (HCJ) remains a central tool in the fight against systematic human rights violations and unlawful harm to Palestinian civilians by State agents, whether through policy, activities, or acts of omission. However, the effectiveness of this fundamental tool is limited given the slow pace of legal proceedings compared to the rapid pace at which the violations are carried out, the court's reluctance to intervene in many cases, and the narrow interpretation of its rulings by the military and the Civil Administration.

2.1 Annexation and structural changes to Israeli control

Israel's 37th government continues its steady march toward annexation and application of Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank, as it has done since its formation in December 2022 ([see the 58th year State of the Occupation report](#)). This policy is dictated and implemented by the government through resolutions, directives, programs, and funding allocations, and it is manifested on the ground through the violent seizure of land, settlement expansion, construction, and retroactive approval of unauthorized outposts and the displacement of Palestinian communities.

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The transfer of extensive powers governing civilian life in the West Bank from the Civil Administration, the military body responsible for managing civilian aspects of life in the West Bank, to civilian authorities answerable to elected politicians, particularly the Minister of Defense, Bezalel Smotrich, is one of the main tools used to deepen Israeli control and preparing the ground for the application of sovereignty. Steered by Smotrich, the new Settlement Administration was established under his direct supervision. Within the Civil Administration itself, a civilian was appointed deputy head of the Civil Administration, answerable directly to the minister, rather than to the senior military officer heading the Civil Administration. Core powers in areas such as land management, planning and building, infrastructure, and the economy were transferred to this deputy. These changes weaken the Civil Administration and infuse its operations with undue political considerations that are inconsistent with its obligations toward the Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories. Following a petition by Yesh Din and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), the State announced that the minister's and deputy's powers would be scaled back somewhat, prompting the HCJ to dismiss the petition. Nonetheless, the transfer of powers remains mostly intact.

Granting the authority to govern life in the West Bank to a minister in the Israeli government constitutes a change in the legal structure of Israeli control in the West Bank, in contravention of international law.

Key changes from recent months include measures to expand Israeli control in Areas B and A in addition to Area C, and seismic changes in the land management authority. In two decisions adopted by the Government of Israel and the Security Cabinet in February 2026, the government subsumed powers and discretion vested in the military commander to carry out irreversible acts normally reserved for sovereign rulers. These decisions are in addition to a slew of legal and structural measures, that have been carried out by the government since it was sworn in, as noted above, which have resulted in large-scale dispossession of Palestinians from their lands, more entrenched discrimination, and serious violations of human rights. These decisions, in part intended to thwart any chance of a future peace agreement and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, constitute a grave breach of international law, which prohibits the annexation of occupied territory and the introduction of long-term changes.

2.1.1 Security Cabinet decision to change the legal structure in the West Bank

On February 8, 2026, the Security Cabinet approved [a slew of measures](#) that profoundly changed the legal structure in the West Bank and are expected to lead to gross violations of Palestinians' rights.

The measures, drafted under the initiative of the Settlement Administration in the Ministry of Defense, are intended to strengthen Israeli civilian control and enable accelerated settlement development by:

1. Removing legal and bureaucratic impediments to land purchases by non-Palestinians, including both private actors and the State of Israel;

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2. Strengthening Israeli control by taking municipal management pertaining to the Jewish settlement in Hebron, the Tomb of the Patriarchs, Rachel's Tomb and other heritage sites from the relevant Palestinian municipalities (Hebron and Bethlehem), and transferring it to Israel;
1. Expanding Israeli enforcement powers "with regard to water offenses, harm to heritage and archaeological sites, and environmental hazards" in Areas A and B, following a similar decision from June 2024 and in violation of the Oslo Accords.

The Security Cabinet did not specify how these decisions would be implemented, but it is safe to assume that implementation will take place via military orders signed by the GOC Central Command, who serves as the military commander, standing in for the sovereign in the West Bank.

2.1.2 Government decision to renew settlement of land title in the West Bank

On February 15, 2026, the government adopted [Government Decision No. 3882 regarding the Renewal of Settlement of Land Title in Area C](#) (Hebrew). Settlement of land title, i.e., the process of officially registering land ownership, is a final and irreversible step with profound implications, designed to lock land titles in the occupied territory. This is one of the most consequential measures taken by Israel in recent decades, aimed at applying Israeli sovereignty to the West Bank while stripping Palestinians of their property rights. It is a breach of the provisions set in international law and the law of occupation, which prohibit making permanent, irreversible changes to occupied territory.

The government adopted the decision shortly after the HCJ dismissed a [petition](#) filed by Yesh Din, ACRI, Bimkom, and HaMoked against an [earlier Security Cabinet decision](#) (Hebrew), from May 2025, to renew settlement of land title in the West Bank. As grounds for the dismissal, the Court noted in its judgment of January 27, 2026 that the petition was premature and speculative, based on its finding that the Cabinet decision was a preliminary stage and that no steps that could result in irreversible damage had yet been taken. As noted, about two weeks later, the Security Cabinet adopted an operable decision that laid out a plan and a budget. The plan's key provisions are:

1. Official renewal of settlement of land title in Area C and legislative changes: The government instructs the military commander in the West Bank to authorize the Israel Land Registry and Settlement of Rights Authority in the Ministry of Justice to carry out a full settlement of land title process in Area C. This officially lifts the freeze on land registration laid out in a 1968 military order.
2. Establishment of a dedicated government-military system: An inter-ministerial body, led by the Ministry of Justice Land Registry and Settlement of Rights Authority, will be established. The effective transfer of powers to the Israeli Ministry of Justice eliminates, de facto, the administrative separation between Israel proper and the territories it occupies.

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3. Targets and timetable: The government set a target for registering at least 15% of all unregistered land in Area C by the end of 2030. The entire process is expected to take about 30 years. In other words, the Government of Israel does not foresee an end to the occupation, in fact, quite the opposite. The explanatory notes to the government's decision state that settlement of land title work can begin while the new system is being established (a process expected to take about 18 months), with funding already allocated for the operational phase in the 2026 budget.
4. Funding and personnel: The state is allocating about 244 million ILS (~ 86.41 million USD) over four years, during which it plans a fast-track to register about 15% of unregistered land.

Further reading:

Yesh Din, [Update and Analysis: The Cabinet Approved a Series of Dramatic Annexation Decisions](#), February 10, 2026

Bimkom-Planning and Human Rights: [Israel's Takeover of Area B: de-Facto Annexation in the Contractual Reserve](#), January 2026

Yesh Din, [Annexation Legislation Database](#)

Yesh Din, [GOI Decision to Renew the Land Rights Registration Process in the West Bank is a Breach of International Law, Reflects Israeli Sovereignty Over the Territory and Will Lead to Mass Violation of Palestinians' Rights](#), February 16, 2026

Bimkom-Planning and Human Rights: [Israel Moves to Resume West Bank Land Registration: A Precursor to Annexation and Land Grab](#)

2.1.3 Outpost legalization and settlement development

The current Israeli government has made it its mission to expand the settlement enterprise as much as possible, while pushing Palestinians into ever-smaller areas. Since its formation, the government has announced the establishment of 102 new settlements, an increase of 80%, given that the number of Israeli settlements in the West Bank before it took power was 127. Some of these new settlements are outposts that will be retroactively approved; some are effectively neighborhoods of existing settlements and will receive independent status; and some are entirely new.

[According to Peace Now figures](#), in April 2026, there were 156 outposts and 204 farm outposts (also referred to as shepherding outposts) in the West Bank, 91 of which were established in 2025 and 25 in 2026. According to Peace Now's count, these figures include about 33 outposts that have been retroactively approved and about 48 that are in the process of approval.

[According to a report by Kerem Navot and Peace Now](#), at the end of 2024, these outposts and farms already controlled about 786,000 dunams, which is 14% of the total area of the West Bank. Outposts, including farm outposts, are being established throughout the West Bank, including in Area B. The seizure of land and the establishment of the outposts usually come with systematic harassment of Palestinians in the area [and the displacement of dozens of local communities and shepherding clusters](#), home to thousands of Palestinian men, women and

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children, mainly in the Jordan Valley, South Hebron Hills and near the area of the contractual nature reserve.

Although outposts are established without approval and in violation of the law, according to the testimony of a military officer included in an [investigative report](#) (Hebrew) aired by the Israel Broadcasting Corporation in December 2025, some of the farm outposts were allegedly established with the military's knowledge and in coordination with it, by order of the GOC Central Command, Avi Bluth. According to an [April 2026 report in Haaretz](#), Bluth himself said in a closed forum that 150 farms had been established in coordination with the military. However, even when outposts are established without the military's knowledge, once they are up, they receive protection from the military, which assigns considerable personnel to this task.

The government encourages the establishment of outposts by various means. For example, as early as February 2023, the Security Cabinet issued a decision that permits connecting outposts to infrastructure and constructing public buildings even before they are retroactively approved, provided they are designated as "sites for regularization." In other words, the government permits and funds the construction and infrastructure that by law require a building permit, even in places without master plans (i.e. in violation of the law) and even without a proper decision to establish a settlement or neighborhood. Since this decision was adopted, dozens of outposts have been designated as "sites for regularization" and now receive funding, infrastructure, and civilian services from the State. This occurs despite the fact that many of these outposts do not meet the basic criteria for regularization, such as outposts that are not adjacent to their parent settlement, or those located inside a firing zone, in an environmentally sensitive area, or within a no-building zone along a main road.

As part of the drive to retroactively approve outposts and turn them into official settlements, municipal jurisdictions were drawn for 17 new settlements in the second half of 2025. In March 2026, the GOC Central Command signed off on municipal jurisdictions for eight additional settlements. In addition, seven settlements that had previously been regularized as neighborhoods of existing settlements received independent status in 2025, a step that allows increased state funding.

Retroactively approving outposts and turning them into official settlements with a municipal jurisdiction exacerbates and entrenches the infringements on the rights of local Palestinians in different ways, including: curtailment of their freedom of movement; denial of access to the agricultural land and grazing areas absorbed into the new settlement jurisdiction; and, when it comes to privately-owned land, violating their property rights.

Kanfei HaShachar and Metzokei Ha'aretz, two outposts currently undergoing retroactive approval as official settlements, were established on the ruins of the displaced communities of ['Ein Samia and Mu'arrajat Center](#), respectively. This new trend demonstrates how settler violence and government actions work together to achieve a shared purpose: to permanently

force out Palestinian communities from the areas where they have lived for decades and increase Jewish presence in the West Bank.

Expanding Jewish control in the West Bank is also carried out through the expansion of existing settlements. [According to Peace Now figures](#), in 2025, about 15,700 new housing units were approved in existing settlements. In addition, more than 12,000 additional housing units are in various stages of planning. Meanwhile, the local Palestinian population suffers from [systematic discrimination](#) in terms of obtaining building permits and connections to infrastructure.

In a high-profile case, at the end of April 2026, Israeli authorities approved plans to build [126 housing units in Sa-Nur](#), a settlement dismantled as part of the Disengagement Plan in 2005. The Security Cabinet adopted a decision to re-establish the settlement in May 2025. On April 19, 2026, [16 families took up residence at the site](#) in a publicized event attended by ministers and members of Knesset. An order for the seizure of more than [500 dunams of private land](#) was signed by the GOC Central Command back in December 2025, for purposes of building a roughly six-kilometer-long access road to the settlement.

Further reading:

On decisions to draw municipal jurisdictions and their implications for Palestinian residents, see: Aqraba Municipality and Bimkom-Planning and Human Rights, [Objection to municipal jurisdiction plan](#), March 2026 (Hebrew)

Bimkom-Planning and Human Rights and residents of al-Funduqumiyah, [Objection to Plan No. 108/2 for the Settlement of Sa-Nur](#), March 2026 (Hebrew)

2.1.4 E1 development plans – “Greater Jerusalem”

The development plans approved in 2025 include two in the area known as E1 near the settlement of Ma’ale Adumim. The plans cover an area of about 2,100 dunams and allow for the construction of about 3,400 housing units, while completely disregarding the Palestinian communities living within and around the area included in the plans. The sites are separated from Ma’ale Adumim by a highway (Route 1) and removed from its current urban fabric, indicating that this is not a natural outgrowth of Ma’ale Adumim. The main purpose of these plans is to create a continuous strip of Jewish settlement between Jerusalem and Ma’ale Adumim, carving the West Bank into two separate parts connected by a single, narrow access road. If implemented, the plan would create an Israeli-only zone in the heart of the West Bank, as all Palestinian communities in the area will be forced out, and Palestinians will be denied access to it. This step joins a slew of measures that deepen Israeli control over “Greater Jerusalem” (Hebrew), i.e the West Bank areas surrounding the city, and lead to the removal of Palestinians from the area. They include plans to build roads that will serve settlements and further fragment Palestinian space, roadblocks on routes serving Palestinian traffic, the declaration of new Seam Zone areas, and new stay-permit requirements.

A petition against the statutory validation of these plans is pending before the Jerusalem District Court. Filed by Ir Amim, Bimkom and Peace Now, via counsel, Adv. Michael Sfard, the petition

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has been consolidated with other cases brought by local Palestinian residents. However, in the absence of an injunction, in December 2025 the government issued a call for tender submissions to implement the plan.

Further reading:

Bimkom-Planning and Human Rights, [The E1 Development Plans: Meaning and Implications](#)
Ir Amim, [2025 in Review: Israel's Policy in East Jerusalem - Deepening Annexation and Displacement](#), January 2026 (Hebrew)

2.1.5 Archaeology as a tool for control and annexation

During the period covered in this report, the Israeli government continued to use archaeological sites as a tool for advancing Israeli control in Area C and even for extending powers into Areas A and B. These efforts violate the rights of local Palestinian communities. They are a blatant breach of international law and effectively nullify the Oslo Accords insofar as they relate to archaeology.

After the Security Cabinet decided in July 2024 to grant the Civil Administration certain powers regarding antiquity sites in Area B of the West Bank, [in February 2026](#), the cabinet adopted a decision to permit enforcement also at archaeological sites in Area A. This came as part of a broader decision that authorized Israeli authorities to carry out enforcement in the fields of water management and environmental matters in addition to archaeological sites.

In addition, [a bill](#) that seeks to transfer jurisdiction over antiquities from the Civil Administration to a new statutory authority under the Ministry of Heritage passed its first reading on May 11, 2026. This is [another step toward annexation](#), consistent with the general trend described in this report of shifting powers from the Civil Administration to Israeli civilian authorities. If enacted, management of antiquities in the West Bank will effectively be nationalized. The bill and the Cabinet's decisions contravene international law.

The aforementioned bill and Cabinet decisions were preceded by a string of directives to develop archaeological sites throughout the West Bank in a manner that ultimately pushes nearby Palestinian communities out of much of their living spaces and blocks their access to farmland and the sites themselves. For instance, in Sebastia, the entire site and large areas around it were expropriated. The site is slated to become a tourist attraction under Israeli management, a move expected to negatively impact the livelihoods of local Palestinian residents, who heavily rely on tourism at the site. The expropriation of the Sebastia area is the largest land expropriation for archaeological purposes since 1967 and joins 60 other archaeological site declarations by the Civil Administration in the summer of 2025. Most of the declarations concern sites in the Nablus area in the northern West Bank. Emek Shaveh cautioned that these orders, pertaining to sites that form a circle around the city of Nablus, may be a first step toward future development that could ultimately cut off Nablus from the Palestinian communities around it.

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Further reading:

Emek Shaveh, [Unprecedented Annexation Move: Knesset Committee Votes to Establish a Civilian Authority to Govern Antiquities in the West Bank](#), February 4, 2026

2.2 Military activity and presence

2.2.1 Palestinian fatalities and injuries in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem

The number of Palestinian civilians, including women and children, killed or injured by Israeli armed forces in the West Bank has been steadily rising in recent years. Key reasons for this alarming trend are:

1. Relaxation of the open-fire regulations and the adoption of combat practices used during the fighting in Gaza, which increase the risk of harm to civilians.
2. An increase in the rate and intensity of settler attacks on unprotected Palestinian communities, with security forces either ignoring them or being dragged into responding, which often ends in harm to Palestinians, including killings, physical violence, and arbitrary arrests.
3. Lack of effective investigation and enforcement regarding soldiers who cause harm. According to [military figures](#) provided to Yesh Din, only 0.9% of complaints filed regarding suspected soldier offenses between 2016 and 2024 led to indictments. Investigations were opened in less than one quarter of the cases.

According to [B'Tselem statistics](#), 221 Palestinians were killed in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 2025, including 54 children and five women. The vast majority were killed by Israeli armed forces, nine by settlers, and four by either one of those. According to [UN figures](#), 3,984 Palestinians were injured in 2025, 3,141 by armed forces and 832 by settlers (the injuring party in 11 other cases was undetermined). Many civilians, including women, the elderly, and children, were injured during the large-scale military operation in the northern West Bank in early 2025 and subsequent military actions.

The increase in the number of casualties and the severity of the injuries has continued in 2026. From the beginning of the year until May 18, 2026, the [UN reports](#) 52 Palestinian fatalities: 36 were shot by armed forces, 13 by settlers, and three by undetermined parties. In addition, the [UN reports](#) 1,087 injured Palestinians, including 614 harmed by Israeli armed forces and 473 by settlers.

Yesh Din's data show a clear policy of immunity for soldiers who kill Palestinians: the odds of an Israeli soldier being prosecuted for the killing of Palestinians in the West Bank are less than half a percent (0.4%). The proportion of fatality cases in which the military law enforcement system conducted a criminal investigation is extremely low. Contrary to the military's official investigation policy, immediate investigations were launched in less than half of cases involving a fatality (46%), and the time taken to decide whether to launch an investigation was excessively

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long: 10 months on average. Fatality cases that were actually investigated resulted in, as noted, to an almost negligible indictment rate, and the overall processing times in these cases reached, on average, a little more than two years (746 days).

[The killing of members of the Odeh family](#) in March 2026 offers a stark example. On the day of the incident, an undercover Border Police unit opened fire at a passing car. The officers later claimed they fired after the car failed to stop for a flashlight signal. A couple and their two children, ages five and seven, were killed on the spot, and one of the two surviving children was beaten by a member of the Israeli armed forces immediately after the shooting. Although an investigation was formally opened, according to media reports [the Department of Police Investigations](#) chose not to question the implicated officers and took no other steps to advance the investigation even a week after the incident, nor, as far as is known, since.

For further reading and ongoing updates:

B'Tselem, [Fatalities and house demolitions database](#)

Yesh Din, [Data Sheet: Duration of processing complaints concerning Israeli soldiers' offenses against Palestinians in the West Bank – 2016–2025 data, December 2025](#)

2.2.2 Displacement, destruction and looting as part of military operations

According to [UN data](#) from January 2026, more than 33,000 residents of the Jenin, Tulkarm and Nur a-Shams refugee camps, who were forced out of their homes during the large-scale military operation in the northern West Bank at the beginning of 2025 and the intensive military activity in the city of Nablus in the summer of 2025, remain displaced. The operations, which the Israeli government said were designed to eliminate terrorist cells in the area, resulted in the deaths and injuries of women, elderly people, and children and the forced displacement of tens of thousands of residents from their homes. The military deliberately and systematically destroyed homes, including entire neighborhoods, and decimated civilian infrastructure and roads on a scale that has made returning to many of the affected neighborhoods impossible without major reconstruction.

IDPs are facing a deep humanitarian crisis, and live without shelter, access to property and essential items, and regular access to education and healthcare systems. Most West Bank IDPs have become dependent on relief. In September 2025, ACRI filed a petition demanding to allow displaced refugee camp residents to return to their homes. The petition stressed that forced displacement is a war crime, particularly when carried out on a mass scale, for a long duration, and in violation of the conditions and limitations established under international law. In its response, while asserting that the military did not force residents to leave, the State also argued that security needs required that they remain displaced, even though it is widely known that the bulk of the fighting was done in the first months of the operation.

The petition is still pending, and the State is expected to provide an update on when residents may return in July 2026 (ACRI is trying to push up the schedule). In the meantime, an [investigation by Bimkom](#) (Hebrew), which included a close examination of aerial photographs,

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map analysis, and field documentation of Tulkarm Refugee Camp before and after the demolitions, revealed that the destruction was more extensive than planned and included structures that had not been marked in advance for demolition. The investigation also found that the damage to infrastructure was so severe and extensive that there is serious doubt as to whether a return to living in the area would be possible in the near future.

Additionally, human rights organizations received testimonies and visual documentation of Palestinian homes being seized by the military in various parts of the West Bank amid airstrikes by Iran, and of families being removed from their homes despite the danger posed by missiles. Palestinian communities in the West Bank are not protected from aerial attacks, and missile strikes and interceptor fragments posing a real danger. Nonetheless, homes were seized, and families were either forced out without being given any other option for protection or confined to a single room while Israeli armed forces occupied them and did as they pleased.

Reports of looting in the West Bank and of Israeli soldiers or police officers taking items and cash from Palestinians continue. Fueled by the normalization of looting during military operations in Gaza, the trend is on the rise, with similar conduct now also documented in Lebanon. In the West Bank, looting takes place under the cover of checkpoint security checks and night raids on homes, both of which are carried out pursuant to military legislation that grants soldiers and police officers almost unlimited powers. This framework, which lacks oversight and protection processes, enables abuses of power and looting, which constitutes a war crime.

Further reading:

Bimkom-Planning and Human Rights, [Architecture of Destruction and Control](#) (Hebrew)
Association for Civil Rights in Israel, [Allow the Displaced to Return to Refugee Camps in the Northern West Bank, Increasing Violations of Palestinians' Rights in the West Bank Under Cover of War](#), March 8, 2025

Yesh Din, [Uniformed Theft: Pillage of Palestinians' Money and Property by Israeli Soldiers and Police Officers in the West Bank](#), August 2025

2.2.3 Unlawful arrests by the military

The Human Rights Defenders Fund (HRDF) has reported numerous cases in which [the military arrests or detains](#) Palestinian civilians, including Palestinian human rights activists, illegally and without cause, violating their fundamental rights to liberty, due process, and freedom from torture, as well as from degrading and inhuman treatment. The practice also violates both domestic and international law. Though particularly prevalent in the South Hebron Hills, the practice has been documented elsewhere in the West Bank.

Between November 2025 and the end of February 2026, the HRDF documented 89 cases of unlawful arrests; 46 (more than 50% of all cases) took place in February 2026 alone. In 60 of the cases (67%), the arrests occurred as a follow-up to settler aggression toward the Palestinians arrested, involving physical violence or invasions into their land. In 10 of the documented cases, Israeli armed forces detained the Palestinians who called the police to report settler violence.

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These arrests and detentions are not reported to the police or recorded in any other way, and the apprehended individuals are ultimately released hours or days later, with no investigation or charges. This practice raises serious concerns that detention powers are being abused and illegally exploited for purposes of intimidation and harassment. Moreover, settlers are often involved in apprehending the Palestinians and, worse still, settlers will sometimes seize and detain Palestinians themselves, at times while wearing military uniforms and/or while being escorted by a soldier.

Among the cases documented by HRDF are repeat arrests and child arrests. Palestinians held by soldiers or settlers often suffer degrading treatment and violence, and there have been cases in which their release effectively consisted of being dumped from a military jeep. For example, on March 11, 2026, Parents Against Child Detention [reported](#) (Hebrew) the arrest of a 14-year-old boy by soldiers, after settlers from a nearby outpost harassed youths from his village and accused him of throwing a stone at them. The incident was reported in real time by human rights activists present at the scene, who testified that soldiers took the boy to a nearby post and did not allow his father to accompany him. The boy was beaten and released about an hour later.

In January 2026, ACRI, HRDF, Haqel – In Defense of Human Rights, and HaMoked: Center for the Defense of the Individual contacted senior military officials about this matter. Despite repeated appeals in February and March, no response was received, and the practice continued. Accordingly, in mid-May the four organizations, together with five individual Palestinian petitioners, filed an HCJ petition demanding that the military cease this policy.

Further reading:

Association for Civil Rights in Israel, [Palestinians Detained By Soldiers Without Cause](#), January 2026

2.2.4 Use of closed military zone orders

Closed military zone orders are frequently issued in areas around Palestinian communities following settler violence. Ostensibly a tool to reduce tension and violence, they often play into the attackers' hands: while they freely violate the orders, protective presence activists and the media are removed from the area. Closure orders are usually issued on site and result in the removal of the last protections for local Palestinian communities.

For example, in early March 2026, Israeli activists, including from Torat Tzedek and Combatants for Peace, were removed by the military pursuant to an order prohibiting the presence of Israeli civilians. Meanwhile, settlers ignored the order without repercussions and intensified their attacks on the [Ka'abaneh community](#), which lies on the outskirts of the village of Duma, ultimately displacing the small hamlet. Torat Tzedek has reported that soldiers enforcing the orders have looked for activists in Palestinians' homes, and asked family members about specific activists by name.

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Moreover, Israeli activists and Palestinian residents report that the orders themselves often lead to the forcible transfer of families, who flee once they realize that their lives, flocks, and meager property are in greater danger. For instance, after the closure order was issued in the Duma area, three families left their homes in Khirbet al-Marjam, another local village. According to a report from the community, after they left, settlers destroyed one of their houses, and military forces called to the scene made no arrests.

Although closing the area did not prevent settlers from remaining in it and attacking local Palestinian communities, the closure order was extended for another year, until April 2027, an unusually long period for such orders.

Closure orders also prevent staging non-violent protest activities against the occupation, and deny Palestinians access to their land, negatively impacting their livelihoods and violating their property rights and freedom of movement. Settlers freely breach these orders, access these lands and do as they please in them.

At a January 2026 hearing on several [petitions](#) filed by HRDF, the HCJ held that closed military zone orders have generally been overused beyond legal justification. The justices demanded that clear justifications and an evidentiary basis demonstrating an immediate security threat be provided for all future closed military zone orders. The Court also stated that when an order is intended to deny access to human rights activists, it must be based on tangible intelligence showing that the activists intend to disrupt public order. While the specific orders challenged in the petitions could not be retroactively revoked, the justices cautioned that if arbitrary and unjustified closed military zone declarations without evidence of an immediate security need persisted, further judicial intervention may be warranted. Unfortunately, in the roughly two months following the judgment, HRDF documented about 15 closed military zone orders issued in contravention of the HCJ's position. A letter on the matter addressed to the State Attorney's Office and the military elicited a response that disregarded the circumstances of the cases described and claimed that, in the State's view, the HCJ had permitted the use of the orders.

Further reading:

Human Rights Defenders Fund, [Legal Win: HRDF Petition Leads Supreme Court to Curb Arbitrary Closed Military Zone Orders](#), January 26, 2026

Times of Israel, [Year-long IDF closure said to bolster settler violence by only barring Palestinians' allies](#), April 15, 2026

2.3 Settler violence

Through 2025, and even more so since the beginning of 2026, violent attacks carried out by Israeli civilians, most of whom are residents of settlements and outposts, against Palestinians and Palestinian property in the West Bank (settler violence) have grown in number and severity. From early 2026 until mid-May, the UN documented over 800 violent settler attacks that resulted in injuries or property damage in more than 220 Palestinian communities. Settler

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violence is backed by the State and carried out as part of its policy of annexation and Palestinian dispossession.

The war with Iran between late February and early April 2026, brought another spike in the number of attacks and the resulting injuries. According to [Yesh Din data](#) (Hebrew), based on cross-referencing publications and reports from various sources, 378 incidents of settler violence were reported in 148 Palestinian communities during the 40 days of war, an average of 10 incidents per day. Settlers shot and killed eight Palestinians during this time and injured about 200. The acts of violence do not spare women, children, or the elderly.

Settler violence has also continued to surge after the war with Iran, with dozens of settler attacks on Palestinians documented each week. Despite recent [condemnations](#) by the Prime Minister, the Chief of Staff and the GOC Central Command, the situation shows no signs of changing.

As in the past, many settler attacks originate in outposts established near the targeted Palestinian communities and villages. Settlers use staged violent provocations, home invasions, and persistent harassment to terrorize these communities and erode their sense of security to the point of forcing them out, clearing the way for the ultimate goal of [seizing their land](#). In almost all instances, Israeli forces do not protect Palestinians during these acts of violence and intimidation and often assist the perpetrators. Palestinian residents, human rights organizations, and protective presence activists consistently document repeated appeals to the police, which receive no immediate response, if any.

Access restrictions imposed by the military, framed as measures to protect targeted communities, often create conditions conducive to violence by keeping human rights activists and the press out. They also delay ambulances, risking the exacerbation of injuries and endangering lives. Meanwhile, Palestinian medical crews themselves are at risk of settler attacks, as is evident from interviews conducted by Physicians for Human Rights Israel with paramedics, medics, and volunteers operating in the South Nablus area.

Further reading:

Yesh Din, [About 10 incidents of settler violence occurred daily in each of the 40 days of the war with Iran. Every day](#), April 15, 2026

B'Tselem, [Under cover of the war with Iran: Settler militias are increasing their lethal shooting of Palestinians as part of the ethnic cleansing in the West Bank](#), March 9, 2026

MachsomWatch, [Jordan Valley: Israeli activists blocked on their way to the blocked shepherd communities](#), March 9, 2026

2.3.1 Settler violence – figures and trends

According to [statistics published by B'Tselem](#), settlers shot and killed nine Palestinians in 2025. In four other incidents resulting in fatalities, it was not clear whether the victims were killed by settlers or soldiers. Since then, from January to early May 2026 alone, the [UN](#) has reported 13 Palestinians killed by settler gunfire.

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The number of injuries, already extremely high in 2025, has soared since the beginning of 2026. According to [UN figures](#), by May 3, 2026, settlers had injured 473 Palestinians since the start of the year, compared with 181 in the same period in 2025, an increase of 160%. In 2025, a total of 832 Palestinians were injured by settlers. Among the injured were dozens of women, elderly people, and children. Settlers use various means to attack or threaten Palestinians, including firearms, knives, clubs and sticks, stones, zip-ties, and dogs.

Between January and March 2026, the UN [documented 545 settler attacks](#) against Palestinians that resulted in bodily harm or property damage, compared with [355 such attacks](#) between January and March 2025, an increase of 53%. These figures exclude incidents of harassment, including verbal abuse, maintaining a menacing presence, and invasions of homes and private spaces, which occur daily. While these may not end in physical harm to people or property, they spread fear and anxiety among communities and farmers and disrupt daily life, sometimes to the point of driving people from their homes and lands.

A roughly 25% year-over-year increase in settler attacks was recorded in 2025: According to [UN data](#), the number of settler attacks against Palestinians resulting in bodily harm or property damage reported in 2025 was 1,835, compared to 1,449 reported in 2024. [Israeli defense establishment figures](#) reported in January 2026 also indicate a 25% increase in ideologically motivated crime against Palestinians between 2024 and 2025, though the number of incidents reported is lower than the UN's. The Israeli military has also identified an increase in the number of settler attacks directed at security forces.

[Settlers continue to sabotage the regular water supply](#) (Hebrew) of Palestinian communities with tens of thousands of households. For example, throughout 2026 settlers have continued damaging infrastructure that supplies water to more than 100,000 Palestinian residents in villages in the Ramallah area. Other prominent features of settler violence include attacking Palestinian farmers working their land, attacking medical teams and ambulances dispatched to treat the wounded, uprooting or destroying thousands of olive trees and saplings, torching buildings and vehicles, stealing sheep and goat flocks that many of the targeted communities depend on for their livelihood, [abusing and killing animals](#), breaking into homes and maintaining a menacing presence near women and children, and threatening rape and murder.

As the number of attacks increases, the level of planning and cruelty also appears to be on the rise, as reflected in the casualty figures and reports by Palestinians and activists. For example, on the night between March 12 and 13, 2026, dozens of masked Israelis [attacked the Khirbet Humsa community](#) in the northern Jordan Valley. The assailants beat and bound men and women, including protective presence activists who were staying with the community, sexually assaulted one of the men in front of his family, destroyed and looted property and food, stole hundreds of sheep and goats, and threatened that if the community remained at the site, they would abduct and rape the girls and kill the children. Community members and activists testified that it took the military about an hour to arrive at the scene, while police arrived two and a half hours later. The livestock, upon which the families' livelihoods depend, has still not been

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returned as of this writing. The Israel Police said it [arrested seven suspects](#) on suspicion of assault, armed robbery, violence, and indecent acts. The detainees are [reportedly](#) residents of various settlements, as well as of Jerusalem and Ra'anana.

Meanwhile, activists report that tensions run so high in targeted communities that in some cases the arrival of settlers or the removal of protective presence activists is enough to scare residents away or stop them from going about their daily lives. Likewise, trespassing by settlers into homes and tents, and their physical proximity to women and children as a result, also triggers intense fear and may lead to displacement.

For further reading and updates:

B'Tselem, [Settler violence = State violence, updates](#)

2.3.2 Proliferation of firearms and military equipment as a violence multiplier

After the October 7, 2023 attacks and the war that broke out in its wake, regional defense forces in the West Bank were reinforced. Ostensibly tasked with protecting Jews living in the West Bank, these are reserve battalions stationed in the West Bank and made up mostly of settlers living in it. As part of this reinforcement, the military distributed thousands of firearms. Meanwhile, the Ministry of National Security also instituted a liberal firearm policy for civilians. Both of these measures contributed to an increase in the number of cases of threats and violence against Palestinians in general, and the use of firearms in particular. Although many of the settlers recruited into regional defense units are no longer on active reserve duty, most of the firearms and military equipment distributed remains in their possession, and it is being used in attacks on Palestinians.

In many cases, armed settlers, sometimes in full or partial military uniform, have been documented shooting or physically assaulting Palestinians, as well as trespassing on Palestinian property and causing property damage. It is difficult to discern in such cases who the attackers are and what powers they have, if any. Some are soldiers in active service, some are soldiers on leave, and others are non-serving civilians who have military firearms and equipment distributed to the regional defense forces. As an example, in early March 2026, [a settler in military uniform shot and killed](#) two Palestinian brothers during a settler attack on the Palestinian village of Qaryut. According to a B'Tselem investigation, the shooter arrived at the scene with the attackers, and not with the military force that was called to the scene later.

Activist organizations, including Torat Tzedek, say some of the off-road vehicles settlers use for attacks and harassment still have stickers indicating they were given to outposts by the Ministry for Settlement and National Missions.

Research by Yesh Din indicates that when complaints are filed, law enforcement authorities tend to avoid taking responsibility. The Military Advocate General's Corps will claim that it has no jurisdiction if no official military action was taking place. The Israel Police may refuse to investigate, claiming that it cannot because uniformed military personnel were involved. This

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creates an enforcement vacuum that allows the violence to continue without accountability and contributes to the general sense of immunity among the settlers.

An examination of the situation leads to the grave conclusion that, in essence, Israel consistently, and as a matter of policy, enables the deliberate blurring of lines between settlers and military forces, thus promoting violence against Palestinians in the service of settlement interests.

Further reading:

Yesh Din, [Settlers in Uniform: Violence Against Palestinians by Israelis in Military Uniforms](#)

2.3.3 Impunity for offenders and incitement on social media

There is a direct link between the Israeli government's land-grab policies in the West Bank and the rise in settler violence. The violence complements government action, or sets the stage for it, without Israel having to explicitly declare its policy or bear responsibility for the violent forcible transfer of Palestinian communities. In practice, settlers and Israeli citizens who join them in exercising systematic, ideologically motivated violence against Palestinians can be seen as spearheading the implementation of Israel's annexation policy.

As violence against Palestinians proliferates, assaults are publicly flaunted, and incitement to violence is spread without any fear of law enforcement. In messages posted on WhatsApp and Telegram groups associated with far-right activists living in outposts, perpetrators openly brag about physical assaults, arson, and property destruction in Palestinian villages, sometimes while using their actual names. For example, Hadshot Anash (Ally News), a WhatsApp group described as a group for "news and reports on the struggle against the Arab enemy," has over 750 members. The group posts monthly summaries detailing dozens of attacks on Palestinian villages, the number of Palestinians injured, the number of vehicles and homes torched, the thousands of olive trees cut down, and the extensive property damage. On March 22, 2026, [calls for "revenge and expulsion of the enemy"](#) were posted on far-right social media groups, after Yehuda Sherman, a teen, was killed when a Palestinian vehicle struck his ATV. Subsequently, dozens of violent assaults, arsons, and riots by Israeli civilians were documented in Palestinian areas.

[Yesh Din monitoring](#) of 1,750 investigations into suspected offenses by Israeli civilians against Palestinians in the West Bank, conducted from 2005 to October 2025, yielded the following data: Roughly 93% of the 1,685 concluded investigations were closed without an indictment, and only 6.7% ended in indictments. Just 57 cases, or 3%, resulted in a full or partial conviction. This ongoing, systemic failure to address Jewish ideologically motivated violence against Palestinians normalizes and effectively endorses such acts.

Human rights NGO Haqel helped residents of several Palestinian villages in the South Hebron Hills document hundreds of incidents of violence, most of them in 2025. They included physical assault, arson, tree cutting, break-ins, and trespassing on private land to graze livestock. Despite

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the complaints filed and the State's acknowledgment in petitions that it was aware of many of the incidents, there were no indictments in any of the cases.

It is therefore little wonder that most Palestinian victims choose not to file a complaint at all. From early 2023 to October 31, 2025, Yesh Din documented 513 incidents of harm to Palestinians by Israeli civilians. In 299 of them, 58.3%, the victims chose not to file a complaint. Other factors contribute as well. Many of the police stations that are supposed to process complaints by Palestinian victims are located inside Israeli settlements. To access them, Palestinians must be escorted by a police officer from the settlement gate to the station. In practice, complainants sometimes wait for hours at the settlement gate in vain; even when they are allowed in, there are often no Arabic-speaking police officers available at the station to take the complaint. Many Palestinians fear that lodging a complaint against an Israeli civilian may lead to further harm to them or their family members. And, ultimately, their lived experience demonstrates that the odds of a complaint leading to a proper investigation in which the offenders are brought to justice and the harassment ends, are slim.

Further reading:

Yesh Din: [Data Sheet: Law Enforcement on Israeli Civilians in the West Bank \(Settler violence\) 2005-2025](#)

2.3.4 Attacks on human rights activists and restrictions on protective presence activities

In the past, protective presence by Israeli and other human rights activists has had a moderating impact and helped stave off settler violence. In recent months, however, threats and violence by settlers against activists have increased and intensified. This has included physical violence resulting in injuries and hospitalizations; the use of physical restraints; abuse; vandalism; torching vehicles; and the theft of personal effects such as phones, wallets, and passports.

HRDF reports that between November 2025 and March 2026, its hotline received a record 196 reports of settler attacks against human rights activists and protective presence volunteers. The pattern that emerges from the analysis of these and previous cases includes assault, lack of protection by security forces and at times even soldiers' involvement, followed by an ineffective investigation and the closing of the criminal file without an indictment. This occurs even when there is extensive, clear visual documentation of the assault, sometimes even when the attacker's identity is known, and even in cases in which the victim suffers a serious injury requiring hospitalization and a lengthy recovery period. Investigation files are closed without justification, sometimes without even interviewing the victim, and without any notice of the closure given to complainants.

Even in cases when HRDF appeals the closure of investigation files with the State Attorney's Office Appeals Department, the department's foot-dragging renders the appeals meaningless. This was the case, for example, in the investigation of [the assault on activist Dr. Hagar Gefen](#). Dr. Gefen, a 70-year-old woman, was viciously assaulted in October 2022 during the olive harvest in the village of Kisan and required prolonged hospital care due to rib fractures and a punctured

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lung. In January 2024, after repeated inquiries, it emerged that the investigation into her assault had been closed, but the date and grounds for the closure were not disclosed. After the authorities stalled the transfer of the investigation material, an appeal was filed against the closure, and when no response came, legal action was taken. In its judgment, delivered in March 2026, the Court ordered that a resubmitted appeal would be reviewed within three months. In her opinion, Justice Barak-Erez described the authorities' mishandling of the complaint as harmful to society at large.

Despite the scathing criticism, no change has been observed in the conduct of law enforcement and prosecution authorities.

2.4 Community displacement and ethnic cleansing

The West Bank is dotted with Palestinian shepherding communities subsisting on herding and agriculture. Most of these communities were driven out of the Negev desert upon Israel's establishment, and have lived at their current sites in the West Bank for decades. Over the past decade, and with growing intensity since October 2023, families and entire communities have been forced out through settler violence that is systemic and ongoing, together with the lack of protection from Israeli authorities and the use of bureaucratic and military processes to remove them.

With communities displaced at a growing pace each year, a series of factors point to efforts amounting to [ethnic cleansing](#), and serious violations of international law. These factors include the scale and systemic nature of the violence, the failure of security forces to prevent attacks or to create conditions for a safe return home, and State support for outposts and broader land-seizure measures.

2.4.1 Community displacement – figures and trends

According to [B'Tselem figures](#), October 7, 2023 to mid-March 2026 saw the forcible displacement of 763 families, a total of 4,530 women, men and children from their homes and lands. They belong to 59 communities that were fully displaced and 16 that were partially displaced, including some of the largest shepherding communities in the West Bank.

The first quarter of 2026 saw a spike both in the number of attacks and in the level of violence used against community members, as well as in the number of ousted communities. An analysis of [B'Tselem figures](#) indicates that about 30% of all persons displaced in recent years were forced out of their homes in the first two and a half months of 2026. From early January 2026 until March 16, 15 communities were fully displaced and eight were partially displaced, a total of 329 families, including 853 children.

Though most of these communities have resided at their locations for decades, the Civil Administration has persistently refused to officially recognize most of them or plan for their regularization. Consequently, the Israeli authorities consider most homes, public buildings, and

even water cisterns in these communities to be illegal construction, placing them under constant threat of demolition or sealing. This exclusionary policy has created fertile ground for the establishment of outposts nearby, which serve as launching pads for violence. Settlers from these outposts routinely harass and physically assault community members and block their access to the grazing fields and water sources they have used for many years. By leaving these communities without official recognition or protection, the State effectively enables settlers to invade, hurt, and expel them from Area C and, recently, from Area B as well.

[The modus operandi](#) involves a series of interconnected measures: surrounding the communities with outposts, sometimes [adjacent](#) to the Palestinian village itself, and applying systemic, persistent settler violence that, according to visual documentation and testimonies, includes physical assaults; humiliation and degradation; threats, including threats of sexual violence; harm to livestock and livestock theft; property damage and theft; blocking access to grazing land, water sources and vital resources; home invasions; and maintaining a menacing presence.

The State either turns a blind eye to the harassment or actively adds to the pressure faced by communities by issuing and executing demolition orders against so-called illegal construction, confiscating property, issuing closed military zone orders, and imposing other restrictions on movement. This is also furthered when [soldiers present during attacks](#) back up the settlers.

In many cases, homes and equipment that displaced Palestinians are forced to leave behind [are destroyed or set on fire immediately after the expulsion](#) by settlers or Civil Administration personnel. In other cases, Palestinians destroy their own homes or property before fleeing.

Security forces not only fail to prevent the displacement in the first place but proceed to ignore the communities' right to come back to their homes and do nothing to create the conditions necessary to enable it. In a petition filed by Torat Tzedek and representatives of the Wadi a-Siq community demanding to ensure the community members' safe return to their place of residence after they were violently forced out back in 2023, security officials replied that they would make preparations for the return, but provided no guarantee that they would act to prevent renewed attacks by settlers from the nearby outpost. These are the same settlers whose actions forced the community out in the first place. The petition is pending.

[A letter sent by ACRI and Bimkom](#) to security and law enforcement officials in July 2025 detailing dozens of incidents of violence and displacement has gone unanswered. The policy of tolerating violence and forced displacement appears to remain in force, given that in the months since, additional communities have been expelled at an increasing rate.

For further reading and updated information:

B'Tselem, [Rolling list: Ethnic cleansing of Palestinian communities and lone families in the West Bank](#)

Association for Civil Rights in Israel, [Stop the Ethnic Cleansing and Expulsion of West Bank Palestinian Communities](#), April 16, 2026

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Yesh Din and Physicians for Human Rights Israel, [Displaced Communities, Forgotten People: Israel's Forcible Transfer of Palestinians in the West Bank](#)

2.4.2 Forcible transfer of the West Bank's largest shepherding community, Ras 'Ein al-'Auja

[In January 2026](#), Ras Ein al-'Auja, the West Bank's largest shepherding community and the last one remaining in the southern Jordan Valley, underwent an expulsion. Community residents were forced to leave after years of relentless and well-documented settler harassment, which included daily intimidation, incursions into the residential area, theft of sheep and goats, damage to property and water sources, and blocked access and shrinking grazing areas. The village was home to about 150 families, some of which arrived in the 'Ein al-'Auja area before 1967 and some in the 1970s. The families leased privately-owned Palestinian land and made their living from shepherding and small-scale agriculture. Although they leased private land registered under the Jordanian land-settlement regime, the Civil Administration did not recognize the community as an official locality: no plan was prepared for it, and no "demarcation line" was set to define its boundaries and strengthen its status on the ground. Outposts established in the area over the years took over grazing areas and water sources, causing ongoing harm to the livelihoods and daily lives of Palestinian residents. [In 2024, the situation deteriorated](#) when a shepherding outpost was built just a few hundred meters from the community. Harassment and attacks became a daily ordeal, but [appeals to the police went unanswered](#) (Hebrew).

In March 2025, six community residents filed a petition demanding that the State protect them from the daily attacks. After repeated postponements, and after the community's residents had already been forced to leave their homes, [in February 2026, the court ordered](#) the military, the police, and the Civil Administration to help them return to the site and ensure their safety. The Court later ordered the military to provide an update by May 19, 2026, of the measures taken to enable residents' return to their land. As of this writing, the State has yet to file the update, and no known steps have been taken.

Further reading:

B'Tselem, [Ras 'Ein al-'Auja, south Jordan Valley: Israel forcibly transferred the largest shepherding community in the West Bank using state-backed settler violence](#)

Bimkom-Planning and Human Rights, [Largest Palestinian Herder Community in Area C Under Threat of Displacement](#)

2.5 Violence, destruction and access restrictions during the olive harvest

Olive trees and the olive harvest occupy a central place in Palestinian life and tradition in the West Bank. Olive groves cover much of the West Bank's farmland, and, [according to UN figures](#), the olive harvest is the sole or main source of income for 80,000 to 100,000 families. For years,

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the harvest season has been a flashpoint for settler violence against Palestinians. The 2025 harvest season was particularly difficult.

During the harvest months of October and November 2025, the [UN documented](#) 178 settler attacks directly related to the harvest that resulted in bodily injuries and/or property damage. The number of incidents involving “only” threats or not directly concerning the harvest was much higher. On average, three harvest-related violent incidents were documented every day, including assaults on farmers and human rights activists inside the olive groves or on their way there, denial of access to groves using threats or force, crop theft, theft or vandalism of agricultural equipment, and a record number of more than 6,000 trees and saplings damaged. [In many cases](#), soldiers, Border Police officers, and settlement security personnel were present during the incidents and sometimes took part in them.

In two cases, in the villages of Beita and Deir Jarir, [a Palestinian child and a young man were killed](#) during the harvest. In Beita, a child died from inhaling tear gas fired by a military force in the groves. In Deir Jarir, a young man was shot by soldiers who arrived following a settler attack. Dozens of other harvesters and several protective presence activists were injured and required medical treatment, and many [reported](#) severe psychological distress.

Over the olive harvest season, incidents of violence and vandalism were recorded in 88 Palestinian communities in Area C, and in Area B as well. In many places, Palestinian farmers [were unable to harvest](#) their olive trees at all this year.

In addition to the violent incidents, Yesh Din reports that this year, formal restrictions imposed on the harvest by Israeli authorities have increased. The military blocked the harvest altogether in large areas by issuing closed military zone orders for farmland and denying landowners’ access to it for prolonged periods, including before the harvest. Denial of access throughout the year, especially during a drought, as occurred last year, prevents irrigation and care for the trees, which contributes to serious damage to the yield and to the livelihood of the farmers and their families.

In areas where Palestinian farmers are required to obtain permission and coordinate access to their land for the harvest with the military, the military provided access dates late into the season and for very short periods of time, sometimes only one or two days, leaving farmers unable to complete the harvest. Assigning dates at a late stage in the harvest season impacted the quality of the olives and the oil produced from them. Meanwhile, in other cases, restrictions on Palestinians’ access left settlers from nearby outposts free to steal olives. In practice, the so-called coordination system created by the military to protect Palestinians from settler violence and enable a safe harvest has become an effective tool for preventing it, harming farmers’ livelihoods and their property rights.

Haqel has also documented cases in which the military removed farmers from their groves even in areas where no closure order was in force and no approval was required, by presenting an ad-

hoc demand for approval. This conduct contradicts the military's statements that it aims to protect harvesters and that harvesters were not forcibly removed.

Although violence and tree destruction are especially severe during the harvest, it is important to note that farmers are attacked and olive trees and saplings are uprooted or damaged year-round. For example, [the UN reports](#) that in the first two weeks of February 2026, more than 800 olive trees and saplings were vandalized in settler attacks. Additionally, the common, unlawful practice of settlers deliberately grazing livestock in Palestinian groves also [causes extensive damage](#) to the trees.

Attacks by civilians are not the only threat to trees. Over the years, tens of thousands of trees have been uprooted [in planned military operations](#) for alleged security reasons; [to clear space for roads](#) (Hebrew) that will serve the Jewish public; [to expand settlements](#) (Hebrew); or as “design measures,” the phrase used by the GOC Central Command in August 2025 to justify the uprooting of 3,100 olive trees in response to an attempted attack, all of which are, in practice, [tools for collective punishment](#). Orders issued by the military for so-called tactical clearing authorize the “relocation” of olive trees in a designated area, but, in practice, Palestinian farmers are not given the chance to relocate the trees. Tactical clearing is often carried out in a wider area than is specified in the order, as the State was forced to admit in response to ACRI's petition against the tactical clearing orders issued on land belonging to the village of Ya'bad.

Damaging or felling trees, imposing restrictions on farmers' access to their olive groves, and violent attacks violate a wide range of economic, property, and cultural rights and run counter to Israel's obligations towards the Palestinian population in the West Bank under international law.

Further reading:

Haaretz, [‘They Behave Like an Army:’ Israeli Settlers Ramp Up Their Annual Onslaught on Palestinian Olive Growers](#), December 5, 2025

Yesh Din, [2025 Olive Harvest Season: Violence, denied harvest and olive tree destruction](#), December 22, 2025

2.5.1 Suppression of agriculture

The government-backed expansion of settlements and outposts and the takeover of large areas impair Palestinian farmers' access to farmland throughout the West Bank. Military policy includes sweeping denial of access to some areas, requirements for prior coordination to access agricultural areas within a certain radius of settlements or outposts, including unauthorized outposts, or the removal of Palestinian farmers from their land under the pretext of concerns about clashes. Informal or military roadblocks are often placed on agricultural access roads, preventing the passage of farming machinery. This policy, which defies HCJ rulings on farmers' right to free access to private agricultural land, has intensified since October 7, 2023. As a result, while Palestinian landowners are kept away, settlers and outposts often take over Palestinian farmland, cultivate the plots, and later claim ties to the land and a right to use it.

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The widespread denial of Palestinian farmers' access to their land since October 2023, whether by security forces or settlers, contributes to the unprecedented and growing economic crisis in the West Bank over the past two years. According to a 2025 UN Food and Agriculture Organization survey, 90% of agricultural families in the West Bank have lost income due to a decline in agricultural output, with violence, restricted access to water sources, and movement restrictions acting as major factors undermining their ability to engage in farming and make a living from crops or livestock. In addition to the economic impact, these developments undermine food security throughout the West Bank. The decline in agricultural output is compounded by the many movement restrictions imposed across the West Bank. Additionally, as food production has fallen, transport costs have risen sharply, resulting in a significant increase in food prices.

2.6 Roadblocks and restrictions on freedom of movement

Freedom of movement is a basic right and an essential element of human liberty in its most fundamental sense. Restrictions on freedom of movement directly impinge on other human rights as they impede access to healthcare and education facilities, workplaces, farmland, places to buy food, and more. For the millions of Palestinians living in the West Bank, freedom of movement within the West Bank has been restricted to varying degrees since the early days of the occupation. Since October 2023 and more recently in the wake of the war with Iran in late February 2026, these restrictions have intensified dramatically. Nearly 1,000 obstacles of various kinds fully or partially block roads and entrances to Palestinian communities, with no system in place to inform residents which of them might open and for how long.

Meanwhile, [and as previously reported](#), more than 100,000 Palestinian workers have not been allowed to return to their jobs in Israel for the third consecutive year. These restrictions directly contribute to the economic crisis in the West Bank.

2.6.1 Roadblocks in the West Bank and East Jerusalem

Immediately after the war in Gaza broke out in October 2023, the Israeli military imposed extreme movement restrictions on Palestinians throughout the West Bank, including communities in the Jordan Valley and in the Seam Zone. This policy, which has grown more restrictive since, significantly limits Palestinian travel on main roads or requires crossing numerous checkpoints and waiting in long traffic jams. Many Palestinian communities have effectively been encircled with gates and various permanent or temporary roadblocks, and access routes to villages and towns have been blocked.

The movement restrictions imposed by the military, and at times also by settlers, profoundly disrupt Palestinians' daily lives and curtail their rights to move freely, earn a living, receive an education, and access essential services and goods. The checkpoints, gates, barriers, and area closures undermine the territorial continuity necessary for emergency medical services, directly

impacting the condition of the sick and wounded, as well as the safety of medical teams and their ability to perform their work.

According to a UN monitoring report, as of [April 2026](#), there were 925 obstacles throughout the West Bank that block restricting and controlling the movement of 3.4 million Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and Hebron's H2 area on a permanent or intermittent basis. There are various types of obstacles, including permanently and partially staffed checkpoints, road gates, concrete blocks, dirt mounds, and boulders.

MachsomWatch activists report that in 2025 and early 2026 they were unable to gain access to Palestinian villages they had regularly visited in the past. In many of these communities, vehicle entrances were blocked with iron gates and dirt mounds, and side roads were closed off with concrete blocks. In some cases, only one route remains for entering and exiting the village, with a checkpoint staffed by soldiers. These checkpoints are also kept closed for many hours.

A notable feature of the tightening movement restrictions has been the installation of gates at the entrances to villages and towns, as well as on main access roads to major urban hubs. These gates were installed in several rounds, the latest of which occurred in March 2026. They provide the military with an easy way to confine Palestinian residents inside villages and prevent access to shared roads used by settlers. The gates are often closed and opened without notice and without any order being published.

According to [UN reports](#) and testimonies from Israeli and Palestinian activists from early March 2026, security forces have tightened movement restrictions even further since the start of the war with Iran on February 28, 2026. Even before that date, 221 of 420 road gates were closed, and since then, most of the remaining gates have also been shut. These gates form a central part of the checkpoint system and have a decisive impact on movement, including by preventing the passage of humanitarian aid to communities in need.

Human rights organizations [petitioned the HCI](#) as early as February 2025 to demand that the military and the head of the Civil Administration regularly publish the orders imposing movement restrictions on Palestinians in the Occupied Territories so that they are aware and able to adjust accordingly. The updating notice filed by the military and the Civil Administration on March 24, 2026 revealed that they themselves did not know which movement restrictions were in force on the ground and needed to hold a series of meetings and conduct extensive staff work just to map restrictions that had been in place for some time. In other words, movement restrictions were imposed outside of the proper procedures and without authority, to the extent that the authorities themselves had no clear knowledge of where the obstructions were or how they operated. The military proposed a partial measure to mark certain movement restrictions, which is of no use to Palestinian residents who need to know when and where road use is restricted.

Further reading:

Association for Civil Rights in Israel, [Transparency in Imposition of Movement Restrictions](#), April 2026

2.6.2 Entrenching Seam Zone access restrictions

Since the outbreak of the war in October 2023, the military has imposed unprecedented access restrictions in the Seam Zone, an area that covers 9.4% of the West Bank and is trapped between the Separation Barrier and the Green Line. After the construction of the barrier, Israel imposed a permit regime governing Palestinian access to the Seam Zone. The restrictions prevent about 20,000 farmers whose land is trapped within the Seam Zone from regularly accessing and cultivating it. In addition, owners of businesses located in the Seam Zone still struggle to obtain enough permits for workers to keep their businesses running. Following a [petition on the matter](#), the military began issuing permits last year, though the numbers remain far too limited.

Although the Seam Zone restrictions were portrayed as temporary emergency measures, the military has chosen to make them permanent and incorporate them into formal procedures. On November 16, 2025, the Civil Administration released an update to the Seam Zone entry procedure. The new version fundamentally alters the eligibility criteria for a Seam Zone entry permit from a right rooted in ownership and ties to the land to temporary eligibility predicated on “agricultural needs” as determined by the military. With this change, the emergency declared in late 2023 and the updated procedure from November 2025 together erode farmers’ status in the Seam Zone. In practical terms, the November 2025 change deprives about 95% of farmers, primarily olive growers, of year-round access to and cultivation of their land, limiting access to seasonal entry only during the olive harvest.

The implications are already evident on the ground. The forced and prolonged absence of Palestinian farmers from their land during the war has damaged yields and enabled Israeli civilians to seize land and turn it into grazing and dumping sites.

In January 2026, the HCJ dismissed a petition filed by HaMoked against the restrictions, after more than two years of proceedings. In the court’s view, the violation of farmers’ rights was proportionate in relation to the military commander’s duty to maintain public order and safety in the Seam Zone. The judgment did not specify what recent security developments justified keeping the restrictions in place.

Further reading:

HaMoked: Center for the Defence of the Individual, [From emergency measures to permanent policy: The military formalizes draconian war-time limitations on “Seam Zone” farmers](#), January 6, 2026

2.6.3 Seam Zone expansion

[In September 2025](#), approximately 20,000 dunams around the settlement of Giv’at Ze’ev were declared a closed zone. This step forced residents of the villages of Beit Iksa, Nabi Samwil and al-

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Khallayleh to seek individual stay permits to continue living in their own homes. As of spring 2026, this has led to a wave of “security” refusals that put hundreds of families at risk of displacement.

Meanwhile, pressure on the area has increased with the establishment of a new outpost near Beit Iksa in March 2026. The outpost’s construction, which brought an increased military presence, is another tool for limiting the freedom of local farmers and undermining the personal safety of Palestinian residents.

2.7 Economic crisis and impaired services

The West Bank is in the grip of a [severe economic crisis](#), with the situation continuing to spiral due to Israeli policies: Israel’s refusal to release billions of dollars of tax and duty revenues belonging to the Palestinian Authority, the continued ban on the entry of tens of thousands of Palestinians who previously worked in Israel, and harsh travel restrictions that prevent or delay access to workplaces and agricultural land and thereby reduce output.

According to [International Labour Organization data](#), unemployment in the West Bank stood at 28.7% in 2025. Even now, more than 100,000 Palestinians who had Israeli work permits in October 2023 are still barred from returning. With no available alternatives, some workers risk their lives to cross into Israel without a permit, whether by jumping off the Separation Barrier or taking the risk of being gunned down by Israeli security forces. According to a [UN report](#), from October 7, 2023, to May 11, 2026, 17 Palestinians were killed and 290 injured while attempting to cross into Israel. In a high-profile incident in April 2026, 68 Palestinian job seekers who attempted to cross into Israel crammed inside a garbage truck were [caught](#) and arrested.

Israel is withholding about 14 billion ILS, or roughly 4.8 billion USD, in tax and duty revenues collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, at the direction of the Cabinet and the Minister of Finance Bezalel Smotrich. Without this income, the Palestinian Authority is unable to pay full salaries to about 170,000 public sector employees, which has exacerbated the public’s plight and hurt essential services, including healthcare and education. Since October 2023, Palestinian Authority public schools have been open only three days a week, instead of five. As this situation continues into the third year, the impact on children and their families is becoming increasingly serious.

Israel plays a direct and decisive role in the economic crisis in the West Bank. It is another way in which Israeli policy leads to violations of the basic human rights of West Bank Palestinians, such as the right to education, the right to health, and the right to a dignified standard of living.

3. East Jerusalem

Jerusalem is home to about one million residents, 40% of whom are Palestinians. About 90% of Jerusalem's Palestinian residents have [permanent residency status](#) (Hebrew) in Israel, and 9% are Israeli citizens. Sixty percent of Jerusalem's Palestinian residents live [below the poverty line](#) (Hebrew), twice the poverty rate among the city's Jewish population.

Despite having permanent residency status, and citizenship in some cases, Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem (the parts of the city annexed by Israel in 1967) suffer from longstanding, systematic, multi-faceted discrimination, which has only intensified in recent years. Basic municipal services, such as education, water, infrastructure maintenance, and garbage collection, are not provided on a consistent basis and, at times, are not provided at all. Roadblocks disrupt the daily lives of tens of thousands of residents. During the war with Iran between late February and April 2026, additional movement and access restrictions were imposed, some of which remained in force even after the ceasefire was declared.

A review of government and municipal decisions, the Settlement of Land Title procedures, planning and construction policies, and urban development paints a grim picture of land grabs and systematic measures to increase the Jewish presence in East Jerusalem at the expense of its Palestinian residents, who, meanwhile, suffer from overcrowding and have no adequate housing solutions. For instance, since Israel renewed the Settlement of Land Title (SOLT; the process of assigning land titles and officially registering land) in East Jerusalem in 2018, only 1% of the land whose status was finalized has been registered in the name of Palestinian owners, while most has been declared State land. The government is simultaneously approving plans to build tens of thousands of housing units, some on these newly registered lands, for the Jewish public, discriminating against local Palestinian residents and pushing them out.

In January 2026, the government decided to accelerate SOLT and set a target of completing title settlements for 100% of the land in East Jerusalem within four years. At the same time, the number of housing units approved for Palestinian residents of the city has dropped significantly, while the demolition of Palestinian homes and structures steadily rises. In March 2026, 15 Palestinian families were forced out of their homes in the Batan al-Hawa neighborhood by a court order, and hundreds of additional families are under threat of expulsion.

3.1 Dispossession and settlement expansion

3.1.1 Settlement of Land Title as a tool for dispossession

In 2018, the Government of Israel decided to renew Settlement of Land Title (SOLT) proceedings, which had been suspended since 1967. Since then, SOLT has effectively served as an additional tool for dispossessing Palestinian residents of their land and has bolstered settler activity in the city's Palestinian neighborhoods. In January 2026, the government resolved to expedite the process, setting a four-year deadline to complete SOLT on 100% of the land in East Jerusalem.

Israeli NGOs Bimkom-Planning and Human Rights and Ir Amim have been monitoring the progress of the SOLT process since its launch; the information is publicly available on a dedicated

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[monitoring website](#). The organizations' work reveals that SOLT proceedings have been launched for about 20% of East Jerusalem land without finalized status, i.e 9,000 dunams out of 41,000. By the end of 2025, about 2,300 dunams, or about 5% of all unregistered land, had been finalized and registered.

A mapping of the titles that were actually registered that was undertaken by Bimkom reveals that 82% of the 2,300 dunams where SOLT was completed by the end of 2025 were registered in the name of the State, its various arms, or under the Jerusalem Municipality. Four percent were registered in the name of private Jewish owners, individuals, or companies, most of whom are connected to settlement efforts in the city. Only 1% - one full bloc and a few individual plots - was registered in the names of Palestinian owners. In at least one known case, land with houses built with permits was registered in the name of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) without the knowledge of the Palestinian homeowners. A petition was filed against the title registration and the ensuing eviction notices in this case. It is still pending.

These figures clearly indicate that SOLT does not serve the city's Palestinian residents, but rather facilitates the takeover of lands still in their possession, as evidenced by the urgency with which the Israeli government is now pursuing the process in East Jerusalem. In January 2026, the government passed a decision entitled [Registration and Settlement of Land Rights in East Jerusalem \(Resolution no. 3792\)](#) (Hebrew), stipulating the completion of SOLT proceedings in East Jerusalem by 2029. The decision allocated about 30 million ILS (~ 61.3 million USD) over the next four years to advance SOLT in East Jerusalem and added positions and personnel for the Land Registry and Settlement Authority, the Custodian of Absentee Property, the Israel Land Authority, and Survey of Israel.

Further reading:

Bimkom-Planning and Human Rights, [Land Registration = Land Confiscation: Analysis of land registration in East Jerusalem 2018–2024](#)

Ir Amim, [2025 in Review: Israel's Policy in East Jerusalem - Deepening Annexation and Displacement](#), January 2026 (Hebrew)

3.1.2 Planning, construction and demolition

Cross-referencing planning data against SOLT data clearly shows that the purpose of SOLT is to enable the expansion of settlements in East Jerusalem while deepening discrimination against the city's Palestinian residents.

Sixteen new settlements are planned for East Jerusalem, some new, some expansions of existing neighborhoods, with close to 20,000 housing units designated for the Jewish public and located beyond the Green Line. At least eight of these settlements are located in areas where SOLT was completed at the same time, and the land was transferred to the state or one of its arms. Close to 10,400 new housing units have been approved for these neighborhoods, and some are already under construction.

As planning and construction that benefit the city's Jewish population accelerate, the number of housing units approved for Palestinians has plummeted. According to Bimkom figures, in 2025

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the drop in approved units for Palestinians was sharper than in previous years, with only 641 housing units approved compared with 8,898 for Jews, including 2,500 units beyond the Green Line. In other words, only about 7% of all housing units approved in 2025 were intended to serve Palestinian residents, who make up 40% of the city's population.

One reason residential plans are not approved for Palestinians in East Jerusalem is the protocol for proving land ownership, which was significantly tightened at the end of 2022. The [changes](#) made then effectively raised the bar for proving ownership for the purpose of planning and obtaining building permits to equal the requirements for registration of title, a move that defies both law and logic, and has an especially big impact on Palestinian residents. The result is a sharp drop in the number of plans that meet the prerequisites for advancement. The average number of files submitted for construction approval in Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem from 2023 to 2025 fell from about 140 per year to about 40 per year. On non-regularized, unregistered land, which makes up roughly 70% of all land in Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, only a handful of files have been opened since the protocol was changed.

As construction in East Jerusalem, including plan advancement and permit approval, has practically ground to a halt, the upward trend in demolitions continued through 2025. According to [UN data](#), a total of 250 structures were demolished in East Jerusalem in 2025, and 118 more from the beginning of 2026 until May 12, 2026. Thousands of additional homes and structures are under imminent threat of demolition.

Further reading:

Bimkom – Planning and Human Rights, [East Jerusalem in numbers](#), January 2026

3.1.3 Eviction and displacement

Israel is working to change East Jerusalem's demographics across the legal, planning and executive spheres, while exploiting power gaps and legal disparities to transfer land and assets from Palestinians to Jews. This systemic dispossession utilizes a range of instruments: the biased use of SOLT, discriminatory planning and construction policies, the acceleration of Palestinian home demolitions, discriminatory laws (the Absentees' Property Law and the Legal and Administrative Matters Law), and the declaration of national parks (such as the King's Garden in Silwan, which led to the demolition of dozens of homes in the al-Bustan neighborhood and the displacement of their residents). The ultimate goal is the expulsion of Palestinians from East Jerusalem, and the efforts to achieve it are hidden behind a veneer of legality and carried out via multiple State authorities and the procedural tools available to the State (Hebrew).

Consequently, six Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem, in Batan al-Hawa and al-Bustan in Silwan, Sheikh Jarrah, Umm Tuba, Walajeh, and Nu'man, have been under real threat of displacement from their homes.

In a particularly large-scale eviction operation between March 23 and March 25, 2026, [15 Palestinian families were displaced from their homes in the Batan al-Hawa neighborhood](#). Nearly all of them had lived there for decades and were evicted by a court order after a prolonged legal

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battle against Ateret Cohanim, an organization that has been working to turn Batan al-Hawa into a Jewish neighborhood. The organization claims title as the representative of the Benvenisti Trust, a charity that purchased the land in the late 19th century, and then moves settler families into the homes. These 15 evicted Palestinian families join dozens of families evicted in recent years. According to [B'Tselem figures](#), 28 families are under threat of eviction in the near future, after the court dismissed their request for leave to appeal and ruled that the legal proceedings in their cases had been exhausted. Several additional claims concerning 25 families from the neighborhood are being heard in the Magistrates' Court or are awaiting rulings on appeals filed with the HCJ.

Meanwhile, to make way for [the King's Garden national park](#), 48 homes were demolished in the nearby neighborhood of al-Bustan from October 2023 to April 2026, pursuant to municipal demolition orders. Fourteen of the homes, housing 56 people, including 20 children, were demolished in March and April 2026. The Jerusalem Municipality has already issued demolition orders for 17 more homes, but the threat of expulsion looms over [all 123 families](#) remaining in the al-Bustan neighborhood, a total of 1,450 people, including 900 children.

Further reading:

B'Tselem, [Ongoing ethnic cleansing: Home demolitions, expulsion and dispossession in Silwan](#), March 22, 2026,

Ir Amim, [Expulsion: Israeli Instruments of Dispossession in East Jerusalem](#) (Hebrew), January 29, 2026

3.2 Discrimination in services and infrastructure

Although residents of East Jerusalem make up 40% of the city's population and are charged municipal taxes like any other resident, they suffer from systemic discrimination in the provision of municipal services and in the quality of municipal infrastructure in their neighborhoods. [Deficiencies covered](#) in the previous State of the Occupation Report marking 58 years of occupation, continue to undermine quality of life for Jerusalem's Palestinian residents, and in some cases, they have worsened. For example, a petition filed in August 2024 demanding that State authorities meet their legal obligation to ensure a [regular, adequate water supply](#) for residents of the Kafr Aqab neighborhood is still pending. The water supply has not yet been fixed, and the authorities continue to drag their feet and evade responsibility.

Meanwhile, in accordance with Knesset legislation, UNRWA operations in East Jerusalem were shut down, and its headquarters, located in the city, [was demolished in January 2026](#) by the Israel Land Authority. UNRWA was targeted in response to allegations that employees in Gaza took part in the October 7 massacre. UNRWA schools were shut down in 2025, and in early 2026 a [medical clinic](#) the organization had operated in the Old City since the 1950s was also closed and barred from reopening. The Jerusalem Municipality is obligated to provide the education, health, welfare, and sanitation services previously provided by UNRWA.

Further reading:

Association for Civil Rights in Israel, [East Jerusalem](#)

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3.2.1 Education

A total of 107,290 students attend Arab schools. According to an [Ir Amim report](#), based on an analysis of Jerusalem Municipality data, East Jerusalem's education system suffers from a massive shortage of about 1,461 classrooms needed to accommodate tens of thousands of students. Only 20 new classrooms were built ahead of the 2005-2026 school year, despite a municipality projection of about 1,200 additional classrooms in the coming years.

Opening new classrooms will require hiring hundreds of additional teachers, even as East Jerusalem already faces a shortage of teaching staff. Given that roughly 60% of teachers in East Jerusalem hold academic degrees from universities in the West Bank, the [Law Preventing the Employment of an Educator Holding an Academic Degree from an Institution in the Palestinian Authority](#) (Hebrew) passed by the Knesset in January 2026 will likely undermine the Arab education system and exacerbate staffing shortages in East Jerusalem.

The law, which stipulates that graduates of Palestinian academic institutions cannot work as educators in Israel, harms the entire Arab community. In East Jerusalem specifically, in addition to contributing to the teaching crisis, the law presents another hurdle, as many residents of East Jerusalem enroll in Palestinian academic institutions due to structural and economic barriers to access to post-secondary education in Israel. In addition to infringing on the right to education, including access to higher education, the law violates equality, freedom of occupation, and human dignity. The bill's sponsors claimed, without offering factual support, that individuals who earn degrees in West Bank institutions are steeped in "neo-Nazi ideology," "jihadist thinking," and harbor "intentions to destroy Israel." In February 2026, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), Ir Amim, and other organizations [petitioned the High Court of Justice](#) to repeal the law and issue an injunction forestalling its implementation until a ruling is handed down.

Further reading:

Association for Civil Rights in Israel, [Repeal the Law Disqualifying Teachers with Degrees from the Palestinian Authority](#), February 2026

3.2.2 Waste collection

Tens of thousands of East Jerusalem residents, particularly in neighborhoods beyond the Separation Barrier, are still denied many public services, contend with poor infrastructure, and receive lower-quality, less accessible municipal services compared to the western part of the city. In the final quarter of 2025, waste collection in Jerusalem neighborhoods beyond the Separation Barrier was plagued by failures. The affected neighborhoods, Shu'fat Refugee Camp, Ras Khamis, Ras Shahadeh and Dahiyat al-Salam, are home to tens of thousands of Israeli residents and citizens. Mounds of garbage were left to collect on the streets, and public bins overflowed. Stray dogs attracted to the waste attacked residents, and rats proliferated. Mounds of garbage also blocked major traffic routes. This serious sanitary, environmental, safety, and aesthetic hazard violates residents' fundamental rights to health, dignity, and equality.

The legal responsibility for garbage collection and for safeguarding public health lies with the municipality, which struggled to find a reliable waste removal contractor and failed to respond to repeated requests from ACRI on behalf of neighborhood residents. In February 2026, a final

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notice before legal action was sent, and since then, after months of suffering, the situation has improved somewhat following the implementation of a new contract.

Further reading:

Association for Civil Rights in Israel, [Mountains of Garbage are being Allowed to Pile Up in East Jerusalem Neighborhoods](#), February 2026

3.3 Old City Basin

3.3.1 Archaeology

Archaeology, heritage, and tourism continue to be used as tools for taking over spaces, sites, and assets in East Jerusalem, and the trend is growing. The daily lives of Silwan residents, for example, are regularly disrupted by archaeological digs, while homes in the al-Bustan neighborhood are demolished and entire neighborhood face displacement due to the King's Garden national park project. In February 2026, the government approved [250 million ILS](#) (~88.6 million USD) in funding for the cable car tourism project, which would offer quick cable car rides to the Western Wall above the homes in Silwan. This [ambitious project](#) is expected to impinge on local residents' privacy and to create environmental and aesthetic hazards, without offering residents any real benefit.

3.3.2 Freedom of worship violations and erosion of the status quo

Ramadan, which began on February 19, 2026, saw an unprecedented escalation in Israeli policy toward Muslim worshippers in East Jerusalem. Rather than the anticipated return to normalcy after two years of conflict, the stringent restrictions enforced since October 2023 were tightened even further.

[According to police data](#) obtained by Ir Amim, the number of Muslim worshippers at Haram a-Sharif/Temple Mount in 2025 fell to less than half the number of a decade before. The sharp decline can be attributed to the Israeli policy of restricting the range of ages permitted to worship and denying access to West Bank residents, as well as police brutality.

As Muslim worshippers were increasingly excluded, [deliberate measures](#) were taken to erode the status quo, a policy whereby Haram a-Shaif is reserved for Muslim worship while members of other religions may visit but not pray. The Israel Police has increasingly permitted Jewish prayer at the site under heavy security, including, this year, allowing worshippers to bring in prayer shawls, at times Muslims were all but barred from entry.

Once the war with Iran began on February 28, 2026, holy sites across the Old City were closed, leaving Muslim worshippers without access to Haram a-Sharif for the remainder of Ramadan. [Jews were also denied access](#) (Hebrew) to the Western Wall plaza, and prayer was allowed only in protected spaces inside the Western Wall tunnel and restricted to residents of the Jewish Quarter. Christian holy sites were also closed. On March 29, for the first time in over a century, [the Latin Patriarch was denied entry](#) to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for the Palm Sunday ceremony, despite prior coordination and plans for the service to proceed with only three

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attendees. The move sparked international outrage, after which the ceremony was permitted to take place several days later.

3.3.3 Ban on Palestinian entry into the Old City

During the war with Iran, which began on February 28, 2026, the [Jerusalem Police](#) imposed a sweeping ban on the entry of Palestinian residents and citizens of Israel into the Old City of Jerusalem unless they resided there. The police also prohibited commercial activity and ordered shops to close, even though no ban had been imposed on commerce in the Old City or in Jerusalem at large. Dozens of business owners were issued hefty fines for opening their shops and trying to earn a living during the war, with the police citing catch-all provisions in the law. Jews, on the other hand, could enter the Old City without restriction, and businesses throughout the rest of the city remained open to the public.

On March 18, 2026, [ACRI and Ir Amim](#) contacted the police on behalf of residents of East Jerusalem, asserting that there was no legal basis for the police to deny access to a certain area based on origin, religion, or nationality, nor was there a Home Front Command prohibition on commercial activity in the Old City or Jerusalem in general. No public interest was served by the disruption of Palestinian residents' daily lives and the violation of their rights, and the wrongful discrimination between Jews and Palestinians was entirely unjustified. Restrictions have abated since the ceasefire was declared, although, according to Ir Amim, they have not been fully removed.

3.3.4 Flag March violence and racism

Jerusalem's annual Flag March took place on May 14, 2026. This event is funded by the city and received about 0.5 million ILS (~ 175k USD) from the Jerusalem Municipality this year. Thousands of Jewish youths and children marched through the Muslim Quarter in the Old City, chanting racist vitriol and attacking Palestinian residents and business owners. Locals remained in their homes, fearing attacks, and businesses shut down. Churches in the Old City (Hebrew) also sent notices that their doors would remain closed during the march, given past experiences and the prevalence of hate crimes against Christians in the Old City, which have included spitting at clergy.

On the day of the march, the police tightly restricted Muslim prayer, denying access to al-Aqsa to men under the age of 60 and women under 50. In addition, in violation of the status quo, Minister of National Security Itamar Ben Gvir and dozens of Jewish Temple Movement activists visited the Temple Mount.

3.4 Movement and access restrictions

About one-third of East Jerusalem's Palestinian residents, more than 100,000 people, currently live on the other side of the Separation Barrier and permanent checkpoints. [As noted in the report on the 58th year of occupation](#), immediately following October 7, 2023 all peripheral checkpoints surrounding East Jerusalem were closed, abruptly cutting off Palestinian residents living beyond the barrier from their urban hub. The placement of temporary checkpoints and roadblocks between neighborhoods within East Jerusalem further restricted freedom of

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movement for Palestinian residents, resulting in their forced isolation. With the exception of localized mitigations, movement restrictions continue.

Kafr Aqab, a Jerusalem neighborhood and home to tens of thousands of Israeli permanent residents and citizens, lies beyond the Separation Barrier. Traffic to and from the neighborhood is funneled through a handful of crossings, all of which have checkpoints that restrict both pedestrian and vehicular traffic and which have disrupted the daily lives of neighborhood residents for more than two years. Not only have conditions failed to improve after the Gaza ceasefire was announced, they have, in fact, worsened, as detailed in the November 2025 update to the [petition on the matter](#) (Hebrew). Unlike in the past, the pedestrian terminal at the main crossing, Qalandia, is now closed in the evening; screening procedures have been tightened; and those attempting to cross the checkpoint face arbitrary and inconsistent demands, including requiring teenagers to recite their ID numbers. The vehicle crossing also randomly shuts down on some nights without notice. Public transportation users, including the elderly, medical patients and people with disabilities, are often required to disembark from buses and undergo physical searches. Movement was further restricted when the war with Iran broke out and a roadblock was installed in another entrance in late February 2026. Framed at the time as a temporary measure, this checkpoint continues to operate and is intermittently closed at varying times of day and night without notice.

Movement restrictions impede medical evacuations and rapid responses by emergency services. Expedited passage is available only to individuals with special permits, but no new permits have been issued since January 2025. In August 2025, ACRI and HaMoked filed an HCJ petition on behalf of [seven seriously ill patients from Kafr Aqab](#), seeking expedited passage through the less-congested Al-Jib checkpoint. The petition argued that the current policy is arbitrary and unreasonable and that it violates patients' rights to life, health, and dignity. The petitioners' demands were accepted after several hearings and motions. The Jerusalem District Border Police would let patients travel to hospitals and other medical facilities in the city through the Al-Jib checkpoint, which allows safe and rapid access, waive arbitrary conditions for approving passage (for instance, having only one person escort the patient when two individuals have permits, or restricting permits to six months), and provide reasons for rejecting applications. On May 6, 2026, the Court ruled that the petition had been exhausted, struck it, and issued a costs order against the respondents.

The a-Sawahrah a-Sharqiyah enclave: The Separation Barrier cut off part of the village of a-Sawahrah a-Sharqiyah and the Abu M'eira neighborhood of Jabal al-Mukkaber, both located within Jerusalem's municipal boundaries, from the rest of the city. In a-Sawahrah a-Sharqiyah, this has forced 6,000 residents to cross a checkpoint daily to enter Jerusalem where they work, study, receive medical care, and more. Until recent years, and based on the undertaking by the State in the Salameh High Court case, most enclave residents were allowed to cross the checkpoint on foot around the clock and by vehicle during the day. In recent years, however, many residents have encountered bureaucratic hurdles pertaining to registration and approval for vehicle passage. Numerous appeals by residents on this matter have been fruitless, and their freedom of movement has been unlawfully restricted in breach of the legal framework set for

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travel in this section of the Separation Barrier. In the absence of a response, HaMoked filed a [petition](#) on behalf of the residents, and a hearing has been scheduled for June 2026.

Further reading:

Association for Civil Rights in Israel, [Allow Seriously Ill Residents of Kfar Agab to Pass Through a Less-Congested Checkpoint](#), May 6, 2026

HaMoked: Center for the Defence of the Individual, [Petitioners' response in the petition against the closure of Qalandia Checkpoint – HCJ 8026/23](#) (Hebrew)

Association for Civil Rights in Israel, [To Open the Qalandia Checkpoint for Regular and Full Movement](#)

3.5 Expulsion and status revocation

As noted in the previous State of the Occupation report, in November 2024, the Knesset enacted the [Deportation of Families of Terrorists Law, 5785-2024](#) (Hebrew), which empowers the Minister of the Interior to deport Israeli citizens or residents who are first-degree relatives of individuals accused of terrorism for several years, under certain conditions set out in the law. This law is unique to Israel, and is an infringement on the universal right to residency and citizenship and the array of rights associated with such status, and sets no standards for application. In March 2025, [HaMoked](#) contacted the Attorney General and the Knesset's legal advisor, demanding that they order the suspension of the law's implementation due to its illegality. At this stage, the law is not being implemented.

In July 2025, several months after this law was enacted, the Knesset passed an amendment to the Entry into Israel Law, which allows revoking the residency of terrorists' relatives. The amendment, which was rushed through the legislative process and is opposed by the Knesset's legal advisor and the Attorney General, allows for the sweeping revocation of status, with no individual examination, from Palestinians with relatives who are implicated in security offenses, even if they maintain no contact with these relatives and even if the relatives are from broader family circles. The amendment also stipulates that any Palestinian who ever stayed in Israel without a permit, even for a single moment and regardless of their family and individual circumstances, will not be granted status in Israel for any reason for a period of 10 years. In August 2025, ACRI, HaMoked, and Physicians for Human Rights – Israel petitioned the High Court of Justice, seeking to repeal the amendment and for an interim order to halt its implementation pending a ruling. In the petition, the organizations stated the obvious, that punishing a person for someone else's actions contravenes the most basic principles of justice and that the amendment enables the collective punishment of individuals who have committed no offense. The petition is still pending.

This amendment follows two previous amendments that directly target individuals accused of terrorism. The earlier [amendment, from 2018](#), authorizes the Minister of the Interior to revoke the permanent residency of East Jerusalem residents for acts constituting a breach of allegiance to the State of Israel, such as acts of terrorism, espionage, or treason. The second [amendment, from 2023](#) (Hebrew), permits stripping the residency or citizenship of individuals convicted of terrorism, sentenced to prison, and receiving financial support from the Palestinian Authority for

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their acts. The rule also applies if someone else receives support on their behalf. This later amendment contradicts the principles laid down by the High Court of Justice in July 2022, whereby citizenship revocation proceedings must include procedural safeguards that guarantee due process and ensure that no person is left without any status. The first two applications for status revocation pursuant to the law were submitted to the Jerusalem District Court [in February 2026](#). Both cases concern residents of East Jerusalem who are citizens of Israel. A separate petition seeking the repeal of this amendment is pending.

In March 2026, under the 2018 amendment, an East Jerusalem resident was downgraded from permanent residency to an A/5 temporary stay visa. While the downgraded status allows him to reside in Jerusalem lawfully, it must be renewed every few years, subject to security screening and at the discretion of the Ministry of the Interior.

Should Israel continue to implement them, these laws and amendments will have singular, though not exclusive, impacts on residents of East Jerusalem. Beyond their punitive function, they also expand the bureaucratic toolkit used to facilitate the expulsion of Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem and the revocation of their residency status.

Further reading:

HaMoked: Center for the Defence of the Individual, [Revocation of Residency in Jerusalem](#)

4. Detention and incarceration

In 2026, detention conditions for Palestinians held for alleged security offenses remain extremely harsh. More than 9,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees (administrative detainees and detainees under the Incarceration of Unlawful Combatants Law), are subjected to violence, degradation, overcrowding, starvation, and neglect, including medical neglect.

As a result of these incarceration conditions, inmates have been released from custody with irreversible physical injuries, including amputations. Moreover, according to Physicians for Human Rights – Israel (PHRI) figures, at least 103 Palestinians, including a 17-year-old boy, died in Israeli custody between October 2023 and March 2026, due to severe injuries, lack of medical treatment and harsh living conditions. This is a record number, which attests to the gravity of the situation.

Nevertheless, as far as is known, no indictments have been filed against any soldier or prison guard in relation to a death in custody, and there is only one known case in which a soldier was convicted of abusing detainees during their transfer from the Gaza Strip to a detention facility.

The Incarceration Emergency Order issued for Israel Prison Service (IPS) facilities at the start of the war in October 2023 has been repeatedly extended. It is currently in effect until the end of July 2026. This order provides the legal framework for the major overcrowding in incarceration facilities, which includes packing thousands of prisoners and detainees on the floor, as well as the denial of family visits to all security inmates. In accordance with the policy steered by

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National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, other aspects of incarceration conditions, including nutrition and medical care, are kept at a bare minimum or below, resulting in starvation and detrimental health impacts, some of which have been fatal, for many inmates. Israel's High Court of Justice (HCJ) recently ruled unanimously that the IPS must comply fully with its decisions (Hebrew) and provide every inmate with the nutrition required for their sustenance and health.

The absence of a proper system for registering detentions, which continues in 2026, leaves many Palestinian families from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip without basic information regarding the whereabouts of their detained relatives, both adults and children.

As of May 2026, Israel has continued to deny the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) access to inmates, defying the provisions of humanitarian law. This means that lawyers representing inmates are the only people permitted to visit. However, even these visits are subject to various restrictions, including a sweeping ban on certain lawyers from entering IPS facilities, constituting an infringement on the rights of both counsel and the inmates they represent.

An overview of incarceration conditions today, more than six months after the Gaza ceasefire agreement entered into effect, reveals that change is slow and slight. The situation requires constant intervention by Israeli human rights organizations that document, report and take legal action to improve incarceration conditions, which the Public Defender's Office has succinctly described as "inhumane."

4.1 Detention and incarceration systems

Fewer than 15% of security inmates held in IPS facilities, almost all of whom are Palestinians, are convicted offenders serving a prison sentence. More than half of the 9,384 inmates (according to figures from early May 2026) are being held without trial, charges or a fixed release date, either as administrative detainees or under the Incarceration of Unlawful Combatants Law. Among the inmates are children, patients, women, elderly people [and medical staff](#).

For ongoing updates on the number of Palestinian inmates held by the Israel Prison Service: HaMoked: Center for the Defence of the Individual: ["Security" inmates held in prisons in Israel](#)

4.1.1 Detainees under the Incarceration of Unlawful Combatants Law

Thousands of Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip have been detained under the Incarceration of Unlawful Combatants Law, 2002, since October 7, 2023. According to [figures from HaMoked – Center for the Defence of the Individual](#), in May 2026, Israel was holding 1,283 detainees under this law in IPS facilities. The number of detainees currently held under this law in military prison facilities is unknown.

The number of inmates in military facilities has dropped significantly after the release of approximately 2,000 detainees as part of the ceasefire agreement that entered into effect in

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October 2025. However, in December 2025, according to an update by the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI), the State notified the HCJ that it had continued detaining Palestinian Gaza residents under this law after the agreement entered into effect.

Importantly, unlike in IPS facilities, there is no external oversight of incarceration conditions, treatment of prisoners, or prisoner health in military facilities. Additionally, while the IPS is required to release incarceration figures, the military does not release information about military prison facilities.

The law was originally designed to regulate the detention of individuals who are not Israeli citizens suspected of being combatants affiliated with armed organizations and is typically applied to individuals apprehended outside of Israeli territory. By using the unlawful combatant designation, the law denies detainees rights conferred by international law on civilians and prisoners of war. Since October 7, 2023, the law has been amended several times and, according to [its current wording](#) (Hebrew) as of April 2026, it allows holding a detainee for 25 days (15 days for minors) without a formal incarceration order by a military authority noting the cause of the arrest, up to 40 days (25 days for minors) before being brought before a judge, and up to 25 days before being allowed legal counsel. Judicial reviews are conducted via video conferences, sometimes using a cell phone held by a soldier. These conditions do not allow for reasonable communication with the detainee and preclude their counsel and the judge from assessing their physical condition. Contrary to past practices, families of detainees are not informed of the arrest or place of incarceration, and ICRC representatives are not permitted to visit detention facilities.

Once a detention order is issued under this law, it remains valid indefinitely, as long as a judge approves its extension every six months, without any requirement to file an indictment. Detainees and their legal counsel are not given an opportunity to review the evidence that ostensibly justifies their incarceration. In the context of post–October 7 detentions, this has amounted to many months in conditions that put the health and lives of detainees at risk. A [petition](#) (Hebrew), filed by human rights organizations arguing that the law gravely and disproportionately infringes on the rights to liberty, due process, and legal representation, is still pending.

The release of thousands of Palestinians before the ceasefire agreement who were detained under the Unlawful Combatants Law and never indicted, as well as [information leaked from Israeli military intelligence](#) and reported by +972, indicates that the law often serves as a tool for excessive, collective, and unjustified arrests.

Further reading:

The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel: [HCJ – Unlawful Combatants, press release, January 6, 2026](#)

Local Call, Yuval Abraham: [Israeli intelligence data: Militants account for only 1 in 4 Gaza detainees](#)

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4.1.2 Administrative detentions

As of May 2026, and based on IPS data alone, Israel was holding [3,376 people in administrative detention](#), almost all of them residents of the West Bank. Administrative detainees [are held without charge or trial](#), based on “reasonable grounds to believe that they will harm the security of the Area or public safety”, typically because of classified information that neither they nor their lawyers can access. Administrative detention can last for months and even years, with extensions approved by a military judge advocate every six months.

In recent years, the use of administrative detention against Palestinian children has increased. According to IPS figures, a monthly average of 350 Palestinian children were held in its facilities over the course of 2025. According to data collected by Parents Against Child Detention, at least half of them were or are administrative detainees. The youngest child held in administrative detention in 2025 was only 14 years old. Many children in the West Bank are arrested during night raids on their homes in front of their family members, while others are arrested in public spaces, usually for alleged stone-throwing.

4.2 Deaths in military or IPS custody

PHRI documented at least 103 deaths of Palestinian security detainees and prisoners in IPS prisons (52% of the cases), military detention facilities, or during transport to these facilities by the military, between October 7, 2023 and March 2026. This number represents nine additional deaths in custody since the publication of the previous State of the Occupation report, which covered information up to October 2025. While some of these nine victims died in recent months, others died earlier, but the authorities did not disclose their passing. One of the deceased is a medical worker who was arrested in Gaza in December 2024 and died in Ketziot Prison on February 13, 2026. The fate of hundreds more Palestinian residents of Gaza who were held in military custody is unknown, raising concerns that the number of deaths is even higher. It should be noted that the identities of some of those who died in military custody are not known.

Information about deaths in custody is not made public, nor shared with families. In some cases, post-mortem examinations are withheld or conducted without a family-appointed physician present.

Cases that could be examined revealed that deaths resulted from a range or combination of causes: harsh incarceration conditions, including [severe food deprivation](#); pre-existing medical conditions that were not properly addressed during incarceration; untreated injuries; or violence inflicted while in custody.

As far as is known, as of May 2026 not a single soldier or prison guard has been prosecuted in connection with deaths in custody.

Further reading:

Physicians for Human Rights Israel: [Deaths of Palestinians in Israeli Custody: Enforced](#)

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[disappearances, systemic killings and cover-ups](#)

Haaretz: [Two Years After Gaza Paramedic's Death at Sde Teiman, Israel Has Yet to Provide Answers to His Family](#)

Zman Yisrael: [Dozens of Palestinians died in prison during the war. Only one case was transferred for investigation, February 16, 2026](#) (Hebrew)

4.3 Incarceration conditions

Incarceration conditions in both military and IPS facilities continue to be extremely harsh and, as noted, have resulted in deaths. The entire security inmate population of prisoners, detainees, administrative detainees and detainees under the Incarceration of Unlawful Combatants Law, adults, and minors, including those incarcerated before October 2023, lives in conditions that had already been deliberately and significantly worsened before October 7, 2023, and even more so since. Starvation and poor nutrition, severe overcrowding, lack of basic hygiene, and medical neglect create an unbearable daily reality.

Following a series of official inspection visits to IPS facilities, the Public Defender's Office (Hebrew), a statutory government agency under the Ministry of Justice, issued a warning regarding the substantial deterioration in incarceration conditions overall, and for security detainees specifically, categorically describing them as "inhumane." Nevertheless, even after the Public Defender released its report in 2025, the Israeli government and official state authorities continued their policy of abuse, fully ignoring the findings, in part by extending the Incarceration Emergency Declaration (Hebrew), which allows for major overcrowding, evading proper implementation of the High Court's instructions regarding inmates' nutrition, and withholding adequate treatment for the infectious diseases that are spreading in detention facilities.

Further reading:

B'Tselem: [Living Hell](#), January 2026

The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, HaMoked – Center for the Defence of the Individual, Parents Against Child Detention and Physicians for Human Rights Israel, shadow report to the UN Committee Against Torture, November 2025: [Torture as State Policy: Abuse of Palestinian Detainees in Israel and Absence of Accountability Since October 7, 2023](#)

4.3.1 Starvation

Security inmates, including children, are given poor-quality food in insufficient quantities, in keeping with Minister Ben Gvir's [declared policy](#) (Hebrew). Conditions have deteriorated further since the war broke out in October 2023. Many inmates have [reported](#) suffering as a result of daily hunger and significant weight loss. Food deprivation and poor nutrition had severe health implications, sometimes leading to death.

In September 2025, Israel's High Court of Justice accepted a petition (Hebrew) submitted about a year and a half earlier by ACRI and Gisha, and ruled that the IPS is legally required to provide

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security prisoners and detainees with basic living conditions, including food of sufficient quantity and composition to preserve their health. The majority opinion found cause for concern that the current supply of food fails to meet the legal standard, and accordingly, the judgment clarified the state's obligations and set out a series of measures the IPS must adopt. However, in the months since the judgment was handed down, information and testimonies that have been collected have indicated that no significant change has been made in inmates' nutrition, and their situation has not improved. At the request of the petitioning organizations, the court issued a clarification to the IPS that the judgment requires improving the nutrition of all inmates, not only monitoring and treatment for individuals whose body mass has dropped significantly. Given the narrow interpretation the IPS has given the judgement, and concerns that the hunger will continue, on April 23, 2026 the High HCJ issued a decision in contempt-of-court proceedings, stating the IPS must interpret the ruling in a manner that enables providing security inmates with additional food according to individual needs.

Further reading:

Association for Civil Rights in Israel: [End the Policy of Starving Security Prisoners](#)

4.3.2 Withholding medical care

Physicians for Human Rights Israel has identified medical neglect as a key factor in the spike in prison deaths, finding [medical neglect](#) in six out of 10 autopsy reports reviewed. In other cases, the lack of medical care resulted in [irreversible health consequences](#), including amputations and physical deterioration due to chronic illnesses that did not receive timely treatment.

The inhumane incarceration conditions, including starvation, prolonged shackling, overcrowding, and lack of basic hygiene, and the severe, routine physical violence against inmates, all create or aggravate injuries or chronic illnesses and serious, sometimes life-threatening conditions. Nevertheless, prisoners' medical conditions are either ignored or receive late and inadequate treatment.

The [human rights organizations' report](#) to the UN Committee Against Torture notes, based on testimonies, that incarcerated women, including pregnant women, did not receive hygiene products or access to gynecological care.

Massive overcrowding leads to the spread of infectious diseases, chiefly scabies, an agonizing but treatable condition. Contrary to the statements given by the IPS in a petition filed regarding this issue (and dismissed based on the IPS's assurances), the issue is not being addressed as required to eradicate the disease, and infections among inmates continue. For example, according to a B'Tselem report, in November 2025 a lawyer was denied a meeting with his client, an inmate at Ketziot Prison, on the grounds that the entire prison population in three wards had scabies. As of April 2026, information collected regularly by PHRI indicates mass outbreaks of scabies and an infectious intestinal disease at Megiddo, Ofer and Gilboa prisons.

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In March 2025, Waleed Ahmad, a 17-year-old, died at Megiddo Prison. He was arrested about six months earlier, healthy and in good physical condition. An autopsy revealed that at the time of his death he was suffering from starvation, colitis and scabies. Nonetheless, the court, despite finding that he was “likely starved,” closed the investigation file in March 2026.

4.3.3 Overcrowding

While overcrowding in Israeli prisons is not new, the crisis has worsened significantly since the war broke out in October 2023, with no substantial relief even following the ceasefire and the release of about 2,000 Palestinian inmates in October 2025. As of the end of March 2026, [according to a Ministry of National Security report](#) (Hebrew), about 93% of security inmates are held in conditions that do not comply with the HCJ ruling on minimum living standards, with many sleeping on the floor. Severe overcrowding has led, among other things, to a scabies epidemic.

In October 2023, ACRI, PHRI, and PCATI filed an HCJ petition seeking to revoke the emergency order permitting prison administrators to have detainees sleep on the floor and maintain unlimited overcrowding during the incarceration emergency. The Court dismissed the petition immediately, without a response from the State, stating, among other things, that the order had been issued temporarily for a relatively short time and that the emergency was expected to stabilize. However, two and a half years later, most recently on March 15, 2026 (Hebrew), the Israeli government continues to extend the incarceration emergency temporary order and the orders issued pursuant to it, to allow major overcrowding and for inmates to sleep on the floor, in a departure from legal provisions.

Human rights organizations updated a longstanding and still pending petition on the matter to demand a solution. At the State’s request, the hearing (Hebrew) has been repeatedly postponed, and aside from expressing discomfort with the situation the justices have so far refrained from taking significant steps. This has left massive overcrowding, as a policy choice, continuing in 2026.

4.4 Systemic abuse of inmates

As noted in the [State of the Occupation report for the 58th year of occupation](#), violence, abuse and humiliation have become a fixed, inseparable part of daily life for security inmates. Information collected and testimonies taken by human rights organizations published in [reports](#) and in investigative journalism, depict a horrifying reality in which inmates, including children, older adults, medical patients, and people with disabilities, are subjected to threats and violence from the moment of their arrest until their release, including detainees who were ultimately released without charge. Detainees from Gaza released in October 2025 described being subjected to violence and beatings even on the bus that took them back to Gaza. [Testimonies](#) recently collected by B’Tselem describe the use of electric shocks, tear gas and stun grenades, cigarettes being extinguished on inmates’ bodies and boiling liquids poured on them, dogs set on

inmates, and more. Psychological violence, humiliation, and threats to the lives and safety of family members have also been used. The many testimonies given by released detainees, soldiers, officers and physicians over the past two years, reveal a consistent and deliberate pattern of physical violence, humiliation and threats.

Despite feelings of fear and shame among many released inmates, testimonies and information about sexual violence and threats of sexual violence have been collected in recent months. Sexual assaults, reported by Israeli human rights NGO B'Tselem, included physical violence directed at genitals using blows, shackling, electric shocks or dog attacks, unnecessary removal of clothes, sometimes in front of other inmates or prison staff, filming degrading videos of a sexual nature, and even acts of anal rape using various objects. In one such assault, which later received widespread media coverage and came to be known as 'the Sde Teiman incident', a detainee suffered internal bleeding after a stick was inserted into his rectum. The assault was caught on the facility's cameras, and the injuries were medically documented. In some of the reported cases, the abuse resulted in major injuries and disability, as well as extreme psychological trauma for the victims themselves and for other inmates who witnessed it, as recounted by released inmates interviewed by B'Tselem.

Despite the many testimonies of abuse and violence against inmates since October 2023, [only one reservist](#) is known to have been tried and punished for beating shackled Palestinian detainees from Gaza he transported to a prison. The five indictments filed for aggravated assault in the Sde Teiman incident were [dropped in March 2026](#) by the Military Advocate General (MAG), after the detainee was returned to Gaza in October 2025 and no testimony was collected from him. Other considerations, pertaining to the investigation but not the assault itself also played a role, as [detailed by the MAG in the decision](#) (Hebrew).

Withdrawing indictments as serious as these, when supporting evidence and medical documentation are available, and allowing the defendants to [return to active reserve duty](#) (Hebrew), illustrate that, in practice, Israel currently has no effective investigation, enforcement, or legal systems to protect Palestinian inmates from abuse in all of its forms, investigate suspected violations of their rights, and prosecute perpetrators.

Further reading:

B'Tselem: [Living Hell](#), January 2026

The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, HaMoked – Center for the Defence of the Individual, Parents Against Child Detention and Physicians for Human Rights Israel, shadow report to the UN Committee Against Torture, November 2025: [Torture as State Policy: Abuse of Palestinian Detainees in Israel and Absence of Accountability Since October 7, 2023](#)

UN Committee against Torture: [Concluding Observations on the Sixth Periodic Report of Israel](#), Advanced Unedited Version, November 25, 2025

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4.5 Incarceration conditions and violence against Palestinian children

In 2025, Palestinian children under the age of 18 held in the Israeli detention and incarceration systems continued to suffer from increasingly severe harm. On any given month, an average of about 350 Palestinian children are held in Israeli incarceration facilities, about half of them in administrative detention, without charge or trial, with the youngest administrative detainee being a 14-year-old child.

Israeli military law, which governs the detention and incarceration of Palestinian children who are residents of the West Bank, affords them less protection than Israeli criminal law and international law, yet in practice even this law is often not implemented.

Information and testimonies collected by Parents Against Child Detention from Palestinian children who were arrested and incarcerated, and data published in reports by international child rights organizations, indicate that more than 70% of the children suffered violence at the time of their arrest and/or during their incarceration. The figures are based, in part, on a report released by [Save the Children in July 2023](#), which included interviews with 228 Palestinian children. Later reports and testimonies point to continued, and even worsening, patterns of violence, isolation, and the use of administrative detention against Palestinian children in 2025–2026. Many of the children are interrogated without a parent or lawyer present, and more than a quarter reported that their interrogation was conducted under significant duress, such as being bound and blindfolded during transfer, interrogations at night or after sleep deprivation, threats, shouting and humiliation, pressure to sign documents in Hebrew (a language they do not speak), isolation, or being prohibited from contacting family or counsel.

As noted, in March 2025, 17-year-old [Waleed Ahmad](#) died in Megiddo Prison. An autopsy found that at the time of his death he was suffering from starvation, colitis, and scabies.

These figures point to systemic violations of the rights of Palestinian children by the Israeli detention and incarceration system, with a disregard of the protections afforded to them even under the Israeli military law applied in the West Bank, and certainly in contravention of international law and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The manner in which arrests are carried out and the incarceration conditions have numerous long-term psychological and social consequences.

The scope of reported harm to Palestinian children during detention and incarceration, and the small number of cases in which an investigation is conclusive and results in effective measures being taken, add to the overall picture indicating the ineffectiveness of oversight and accountability systems meant to ensure protection of the rights of Palestinian detainees and inmates in general, and of children in particular.

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4.6 Disappearances

In the absence of a proper system for registering arrests, and as the number of Palestinian detainees held by Israeli security forces grows, in 2026 many Palestinian families from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip remain without basic information as to the whereabouts of arrested family members, adults and children alike.

In October 2023, in a breach of its obligations under international law, Israel stopped providing the ICRC with information on detainees and banned it from visiting them. ACRI, PHRI, HaMoked and Gisha [petitioned](#) the High Court of Justice demanding that the State renew ICRC visits with Palestinian inmates more than two years ago. In [its latest response](#) (Hebrew) in May 2026, the State agreed for the first time to allow ICRC visits to incarceration facilities, but persisted in its refusal to allow the organization to meet with inmates. Such an arrangement fails to meet inmates' needs, does not align with the ICRC's working methods, and fails to comply with Israel's obligations under international law. In practice, at the time of this writing, the sweeping ban imposed in October 2023 remains in force.

Given these circumstances, human rights organizations have, in many cases, become the only place to which families seeking basic information about their loved ones can turn. In 2024–2025, HaMoked processed an unprecedented number of requests to trace Palestinian detainees' whereabouts, with 29,137 requests in 2025 alone. Of these, 11,781 were new requests, and 17,356 were repeat requests concerning detainees HaMoked had traced and who were then transferred to another facility with no notice to the families, detainees HaMoked had been unable to trace, and detainees released and rearrested. By comparison, in 2022, the number of tracing requests handled by HaMoked stood at 4,481.

With regard to tracing Gaza residents, the situation is even more dire. In many cases, tracing requests lead to dead ends, including where the individuals in question were last seen in the custody of the military.

Over the past two years, HaMoked has also had to file 119 habeas corpus petitions in an effort to compel the authorities to inform families of their loved ones' whereabouts. In most cases, the petitions revealed the detainees' location. However, in 39 cases (about a third of all cases) the authorities did not provide any information in response to the petition. In three cases, the court stated it would give a decision once the High Court gives its ruling in the aforementioned petition, which, as noted, has been pending for more than two years. Despite the evidence presented in the petitions and in two [letters of complaint](#) sent by HaMoked to the MAG, the state has not launched an investigation or conducted a review of military procedures regarding the registration of detainees.

Habeas corpus is one of the oldest and most important tools for protecting human rights, originally intended to safeguard every person from unlawful or arbitrary arrest. Petitions for a writ of habeas corpus may be filed only when a first-degree relative can sign a power of attorney

and submit a detailed affidavit describing the circumstances of the arrest. In practice, in thousands of cases handled over the past two years obtaining affidavits from relatives of Gaza detainees was impossible due to war or displacement. As a result, there remain information gaps with respect to thousands of Gaza residents who were last seen when taken into detention.

Further reading:

HaMoked – Center for the Defence of the Individual: [Enforced Disappearances of Gaza Residents in Detention: Patterns, Legal Implications, and Oversight Gaps Since October 2023](#), May 2026

4.7 Denial of visits

4.7.1 Denial of family visits

The incarceration emergency declared in October 2023 is anchored in a temporary order that has since been repeatedly extended. The order serves as the source for the sweeping denial of family visits to security inmates in Israeli prisons. When the declaration was issued, provisions were made for periodic reviews and amendments in accordance with security and other developments. Since then, more than two and a half years after the outbreak of the war, and despite the ceasefire in Gaza, the extreme policy banning visits remains in force, currently until the end of July 2026.

In November 2025, HaMoked, ACRI and PCATI [petitioned the High Court of Justice](#) on behalf of seven West Bank residents, demanding the ban on visits be lifted. The petitioners argued that a general and vague claim of “security needs” was insufficient justification for the ongoing infringement of inmates’ basic right to family life, particularly after a ceasefire agreement was reached in the Gaza Strip. The petition maintained that extending the ban on family visits under the guise of an ever-extended state of emergency, without any indication of the conditions for ending it, denies the fundamental rights of tens of thousands of people, inmates and their family members, including children, thereby rendering hollow the State’s commitment to uphold the rights of inmates living in areas under its military control.

The HCJ took just one week to dismiss the petition, citing the failure to exhaust administrative proceedings vis-à-vis the IPS, whose response came that same day, noting it refused to renew visits as the security risk persists. In January 2026, the IPS repeated its refusal in another letter to HaMoked, claiming that there had been no significant change in the security situation following the ceasefire in Gaza.

4.7.2 Denial of meetings with counsel

The right to legal representation and to meet with counsel is a cornerstone of due process and is well-established in international law, including humanitarian law. Israeli law acknowledges that these rights are also afforded to Palestinian inmates, whether they are detainees, defendants, or convicted prisoners. At the same time, the law permits restrictions on the right to

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representation, such as temporarily suspending detainees' right to meet with counsel for purposes of an investigation.

Curtailing the right to meet with counsel can have critical consequences for any inmate, and risks false confessions and violations of the rights to due process, dignity, life, health, and access to justice. For security inmates, who have been denied family and ICRC visits since October 2023, meetings with counsel are crucial. They are the only avenue for assessing incarceration conditions and inmates' legal status, thus exposing systematic abuse and harassment, and enabling legal and public advocacy actions to stop them.

For security inmates, obstruction of meetings with counsel has spiked since October 2023, as lawyers, most of whom are Palestinian citizens of Israel, have been denied entry to prison facilities. Information released by the IPS indicates that by August 2025, 52 lawyers had been declared ineligible to enter IPS facilities for allegedly transmitting messages to prisoners or acting on behalf of terrorist organizations. The Human Rights Defenders Fund represents 10 lawyers who have been denied access for months, and sometimes for more than a year. A legal review reveals that in most cases, the request to bar entry is based on classified information that the lawyer has no way of challenging. In other cases, bans on entry were based on the claim that the lawyer planned to give an inmate information about their family members and to pass on their regards. In addition to the harm caused to the inmate, these bans also damage the lawyer's reputation, livelihood, and right to freedom of occupation. Many lawyers have also found themselves facing disciplinary proceedings before the Israel Bar Association, based on complaints lodged with the Bar by the IPS, most of which rely on confidential information.

4.7.3 Revocation of restriction on visits by members of Knesset

In April 2026, following a petition filed by MK Dr. Ahmad Tibi and Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights, the High Court of Justice [revoked](#) (Hebrew) an arrangement dictated by National Security Minister Ben Gvir, whereby only one member of each Knesset faction would be permitted to request a meeting with a security inmate. The justices found that the arrangement raised fundamental and practical difficulties, harmed the ability of Knesset Members to fulfill their role of parliamentary oversight of the executive branch with regard to incarceration conditions, and infringed on the independent status of each MK as a “constitutional unit”. The justices also ruled that the arrangement was tainted by inconsistency and discrimination between MKs based on party affiliation.

5. Israel's shrinking democratic space

Over the past decade, and especially under Israel's 37th government (its latest), the defining features of a democracy: separation of powers, effective and equal systems of government and law enforcement, a free press and an active civil society, have come under attack and been weakened and undermined. Meanwhile, the government is working to strengthen its own powers and to politicize systems whose independence is essential for good governance, such as

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the judicial appointment process, the role of the Attorney General, the role of the Civil Service Commissioner and others.

Additionally, the State and its authorities have been backsliding on their commitment to human rights, including the rights to life, human dignity, liberty, and equality. Advancing legislation to apply the death penalty, impunity for violence against Palestinians in the West Bank, selective enforcement, attempts to restrict the work of Israeli human rights organizations and activists, and curtailment of freedom of expression and protest likewise corrupt the principles that guide democratic rule and erode the space for civil resistance to the occupation.

For reports and updates, see the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) website, [The Attack on Democracy, Freedom of Expression](#)

5.1 Death Penalty Law

The Knesset passed the [Death Penalty for Terrorists Law](#) (Hebrew) on March 30, 2026. The law, which violates the right to life and is directed solely against Palestinians, was vigorously promoted by coalition parties, chiefly Otzma Yehudit, headed by Minister of National Security Itamar Ben Gvir, as well as by the opposition party Yisrael Beiteinu. The law was passed by a majority of 62 out of 120 Members of Knesset (MKs), with 48 opposing. As soon as the law was enacted, human rights organizations and MKs filed several High Court petitions to have the law repealed as immoral, unconstitutional, discriminatory, and racist. The Court consolidated the hearing of the different petitions and ordered the State to respond to the petitioners' arguments and their motion for an interim injunction by May 24, 2026, but dismissed the petitioners' motion for a temporary injunction to prevent the implementation of the law.

The law establishes two tracks for its application: one in the West Bank, through military law (an amendment to the Order regarding Security Provisions); and the other inside Israel, through Israeli criminal law (an amendment to the Penal Law). In the military courts in the West Bank, the law prescribes death by hanging as a mandatory sentence (with limited exceptions at the discretion of the court) only for Palestinian defendants convicted of murder motivated by nationalist ideology. These provisions will not apply to settlers, even if they are convicted of murder in the West Bank, since they are not tried in military courts. In Israeli courts, the law provides for death or life imprisonment for persons convicted of terrorism-related murder, as defined in Israeli law, that was found to have been committed with the intention of denying the existence of the State of Israel. This provision is deliberately inapplicable to persons convicted of terrorism-related murder under other motives and is effectively irrelevant to Jewish defendants. In other words, this process will not apply to Jews either.

Each of these tracks is a grave violation of the fundamental rights to life, dignity, and due process. In addition, provisions for the application of the death penalty in the occupied territories are far stricter than in Israel, adding another dimension of discrimination beyond the fact that capital punishment effectively applies to Palestinians only. These provisions restrict

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judicial discretion and remove the requirement for a unanimous conviction, thereby violating the rights of criminal defendants and creating a risk of imposing irreversible punishments, including in cases of wrongful convictions.

Until now, Israel has refrained from imposing the death penalty with a single exception, the trial of Nazi Adolf Eichmann in 1962. The Death Penalty Law is at odds with international law and democratic values. Introducing it runs counter to the global trend that has seen the abolition of capital punishment in most countries in the world for being a cruel, irreversible penalty that flies in the face of the most basic human rights values. No conclusive evidence has been found, in Israel or the rest of the world, that the death penalty serves as a deterrent, especially when it comes to ideologically or religiously motivated crime.

For further reading and listening

Petition by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel: [Abolish the Death Penalty Law, March 30, 2026](#)

Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, [Urgent Petition to Israeli Supreme Court Against the Death Penalty Law: Racist Legislation Enshrining Inhumane Punishment and Systemic Oppression](#)

The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel: [The Public Committee Against Torture podcast on the Death Penalty Law](#) (Hebrew)

5.1.1 Bill on Prosecution of Defendants Accused of Participation in the October 7 Massacre

On May 11, 2026, the Knesset [passed](#) another law with the potential for capital punishment by a majority of 93 with no nay votes. The [Law on the Prosecution of Defendants Accused of Participation in the October 7 Massacre](#) (Hebrew) provides for the establishment of a special military tribunal vested with powers that include executions in keeping with provisions in existing Israeli public law as well as in military law (legislation predating the new Death Penalty Law and separate from it). While the law permits death sentences which, given their severity and irreversibility, require extra care, it also allows the tribunal to depart from the procedural rules and the laws of evidence normally followed in criminal proceedings, which are designed to protect defendants' rights. The tribunal may do so at its discretion, in circumstances that meet the criteria set out in the law.

The need to prosecute people who took part in the atrocities of October 7 is beyond dispute. However, the opening for a departure from procedural norms raises concerns about rights violations in criminal proceedings. Additionally, the continued normalization of the death penalty and executions as legitimate tools of punishment in Israel is particularly troubling.

For further reading

The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel: [Yes to justice. No to show trials, torture & executions](#), May 5, 2026

The Platform – Israeli NGOs for Human Rights: Akevot Institute for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Research; The Association for Civil Rights in Israel; Bimkom – Planning and Human Rights; Breaking the Silence; B'Tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories; Combatants for Peace; Emek Shaveh; Gisha – Legal Center for Freedom of Movement; HaMoked: Center for the Defence of the Individual; Haqel – In Defense of Human Rights; Human Rights Defenders Fund; Ir Amim; MachsomWatch; Parents Against Child Arrest; Peace Now; Physicians for Human Rights Israel; The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel; Rabbis for Human Rights; Torah of Justice; Yesh Din; Zazim

5.2 Bill to Split the Role of the Attorney General

In recent months, the Constitution, Law and Justice Committee has been discussing the Bill to Split the Role of the Attorney General – 2025 (Hebrew), initiated by the Committee Chair, MK Simcha Rothman. The bill seeks to divide the position of Attorney General into two: an Attorney General and a Chief Prosecutor. The bill also proposes a slew of structural changes that significantly erode the independence of the legal advisory and law enforcement systems. Among other things, the bill shifts the appointment process to the government, based on the recommendation of the Minister of Justice; effectively renders the Attorney General's legal opinions nonbinding; makes it easier to dismiss the Attorney General on vague grounds and based on broad governmental discretion; and allows the government to choose independent legal representation without the Attorney General's approval. Additionally, the bill limits the Attorney General's freedom to present in court a legal position that contradicts government policy, and places the role under closer political oversight.

The Attorney General plays a central role in the system of checks and balances, particularly since Israel's legislative and executive branches are not fully separated. Over the years, the Attorney General has been regarded as a key gatekeeper, charged with protecting the rule of law and the public interest. The proposed changes effectively eliminate the Attorney General's status as a gatekeeper and remove significant constraints on the power of those in political office. This raises concerns about the influence that political considerations will have on law enforcement and the reduced capacity to curb governmental abuse of power. Subordinating the Attorney General to the government could substitute political loyalty for an independent commitment to the rule of law and the principles of equality and fairness toward the public as a whole, thereby putting human rights protections, election integrity, and the fight against governmental corruption at risk.

Public debate over the multiple powers currently entrusted to the Attorney General is legitimate, but this bill does not offer an appropriate solution. Rather, it is part of a broader effort by the government aiming to change the balance of power between the branches of government for the stated purpose of eroding the status of gatekeepers, law enforcement authorities, and the judiciary.

Under the current government's policy, law enforcement agencies already fail to provide full protection to citizens, especially when it comes to crimes motivated by nationalist ideology against Palestinians in the West Bank. Further undermining the Attorney General's role is likely to undermine the already-low capacity and willingness to enforce the law as well.

For further reading

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel: [Getting Rid of the Gatekeepers](#), January 20, 2026

The Platform – Israeli NGOs for Human Rights: Akevot Institute for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Research; The Association for Civil Rights in Israel; Bimkom – Planning and Human Rights; Breaking the Silence; B'Tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories; Combatants for Peace; Emek Shaveh; Gisha – Legal Center for Freedom of Movement; HaMoked: Center for the Defence of the Individual; Haqel – In Defense of Human Rights; Human Rights Defenders Fund; Ir Amim; MachsomWatch; Parents Against Child Arrest; Peace Now; Physicians for Human Rights Israel; The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel; Rabbis for Human Rights; Torah of Justice; Yesh Din; Zazim

5.3 Suppression of freedom of expression and protest

Although freedom of expression and freedom of protest are fundamental rights enshrined in Israeli and international law, in recent years attempts to restrict the space for protest against the occupation and against government policies have intensified.

Curtailing freedom of expression and protest narrows the civic space and enables continued human rights violations in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and inside Israel, without scrutiny or constraints. Even in times of emergency or war, the State may not revoke or restrict these rights disproportionately or without justification, since it is precisely during such times that they become critically important as tools for public oversight of government policy and the use of military force.

5.3.1 Demonstrations and protests

Following petitions filed over the past two years in dozens of cases in which the police or local authorities withheld permits for demonstrations against the wars in Gaza and Iran, the High Court of Justice clarified that the right to protest applies even during times of war. Nevertheless, on the ground, it is clear that police actions against demonstrations have a chilling effect.

[The police have stepped up action](#) against anti-government activists since the war with Iran began in late February 2026. [Selective](#) and at times violent dispersals of demonstrations and protest vigils and the [failure to protect peaceful protesters](#) (Hebrew) from assault and harassment by right-wing activists effectively serve as tools of intimidation and deterrence against participation in lawful protest activities.

Recently, there have also been documented cases in which business licensing regulations were used as a tool to restrict [protests](#) or [political events](#) critical of government and military actions, or in support of Palestinian rights.

Incidents of full or partial strip searches of protestors without cause have also increased over the past year. Physical searches used as a tool for humiliating and degrading women and men are an abuse of police authority, a major violation of the rights to human dignity and privacy, and to freedom of expression and protest, and may amount to sexual harassment. As set out in repeated letters sent by ACRI to the Israel Police Commissioner, the Legal Adviser to the Israel Police and the Attorney General, the law gives the police the power to carry out a full strip search in rare instances, when there are reasonable grounds to suspect that evidence is concealed on a suspect's body. The police certainly do not have the power to carry out these searches on protesters. Under police procedures, even a partial strip search may be conducted only after taking into account considerations such as the nature of the offense, its severity, and the danger it poses. When protesters are detained or arrested solely because they demonstrated, there are clear and reasonable concerns that the purpose of the search is deterrence, degradation, and humiliation.

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[Photographing protesters](#) is another measure that the police have employed in recent years to deter demonstrators. Officers conspicuously film protesters on their personal devices, often bringing the device close to people's faces, share the images among themselves via messaging apps, and sometimes use the images to identify, detain, arrest, or remove protesters without legal cause. This is an unjustified practice that disproportionately violates personal space, privacy, and, of course, the right to protest. Aside from the direct harm to the individuals being photographed, this conduct also has a chilling and intimidating effect on the public at large.

Following [a petition ACRI filed on this matter](#), in November 2025, the police presented a new procedure for photographing protesters. However, the procedure is flawed and fails to fully protect protesters' rights. ACRI filed an amended petition in February 2026.

5.3.2 Clampdown on free speech

In November 2025, the Knesset Constitution Committee approved the [Bill to amend Section 24 of the Counter-Terrorism Law – Incitement to terrorism](#) (Hebrew) for second and third readings. The bill, which now awaits a plenum vote and could pass in the coming Knesset session, combines several private member bills submitted in 2023 and 2024 by MKs Limor Sonn Har Melech and Yitzhak Kroizer of Otzma Yehudit, Eliyahu Revivo of Likud and Tzvi Sukkot of Religious Zionism. It seeks to expand criminal liability for speech and relax the rules for investigation and criminal action. The bill eliminates the requirement to seek approval from the State Attorney's Office before launching investigations into suspected incitement to terrorism. The requirement currently applies to all speech offenses as a way to safeguard the balance between freedom of expression and the prohibition on incitement to terrorism or racism.

Under the bill, a police officer with the rank of brigadier general would be authorized to approve investigations into suspected incitement to terrorism. The press reported that [officials inside the police opposed this change](#) (Hebrew), expressing concerns over the politicization of the process. The bill further seeks to lower the probable test for proving a statement could actually lead to the commission of an act of terrorism. This change shifts the focus of the offense from the probability that the statement in question would actually lead to an act of terrorism to the content of the statement itself, even though a statement, however extreme, is not prohibited by law so long as it does not incite a concrete act.

If the bill passes, the State Attorney's Office, whose role is to strike a balance between preventing unlawful incitement and protecting freedom of expression, will lose the authority currently available to it, potentially leading to a surge in arrests and speech suppression. A further concern is that the revised wording will deepen the selective enforcement against Arab citizens who are already almost exclusively targeted by the Counter-Terrorism Law.

As the bill is being promoted, Minister of National Security Ben Gvir is working to transfer incitement investigations to an officer handpicked by him. In January 2026, the media reported that [Minister Ben Gvir appointed an officer responsible for incitement investigations](#) (Hebrew), outside the police investigations division, apparently without proper staff work. The position

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itself lacks defined powers, and in March 2026 the media reported that the head of the police investigations division [was denying this officer access to police information systems](#) (Hebrew). However, in the same month it was also reported that the officer had approached police officers directly to request information on [“names that concern them”](#) (Hebrew). An official [response](#) (Hebrew) received after ACRI sent a letter and before it took [legal action](#), stated the Police Commissioner had informed the Attorney General that he was looking into the issue and that, until his review was complete, the work of the new unit and the officer assigned to it had been suspended. The response stated that once the review was completed the Attorney General would respond to the arguments raised in the petition.

5.3.3 Suppression of speech in academic institutions

In the spirit of the times, universities and colleges across the country have, to varying degrees, adopted a [policy of silencing](#). Toward the end of 2025, Tel Aviv University issued [new directives](#) that significantly restrict the ability to hold demonstrations, public events, or cultural events on campus. The directives ban on-campus protests, require police approval for every cultural event, add significant restrictions on setting up booths, and forbid the distribution of flyers. Minister of Education Yoav Kish continues to [intimidate](#) (Hebrew) higher education institutions, and under his leadership the government is promoting bills aimed at [silencing academic institutions](#) (Hebrew) and [controlling their funding](#) (Hebrew).

5.3.4 Targeting foreign media in law and practice

Placing restrictions on journalists or banning media reporting undermines freedom of the press and the public’s right to know. Ever since the war in Gaza broke out in October 2023, and including the period since the ceasefire agreement entered into force in October 2025, Israel has denied journalists free and independent access to the Gaza Strip. A petition against this ban, filed by the Foreign Press Association, is still pending. Additionally, journalists critical of Israeli policy in general and in the occupied territories in particular have seen their visas revoked.

Meanwhile, the police continue to restrict the work of foreign journalists. In the winter of 2025–2026, treatment of journalists in the al-Aqsa/Temple Mount area deteriorated further, as the Israel Police made extensive and unlawful use of its power to bar the general public from the site to deny journalists access to the compound.

In April 2024, under the cover of the war in Gaza, the Knesset passed the Law for Preventing a Foreign Broadcasting Organization from Harming State Security (Temporary Order - Iron Swords) - 2024, commonly known as the [Al Jazeera Law](#). Passed as a temporary law, it authorizes the Minister of Communications, with the approval of the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, or the Ministerial Committee on National Security, to impose sanctions on foreign media outlets broadcasting from Israel, including blocking broadcasts via Israeli providers, restricting access to the channel’s website, closing the channel’s offices in Israel, and seizing devices used by the channel to transmit content, including mobile phones. The temporary order expired in October 2025, but in December of that year, the Knesset passed the [Law for Preventing a Foreign](#)

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[Broadcasting Organization from Harming State Security \(Temporary Order\) - 2025](#) (Hebrew), which bears a striking resemblance to the expired law. [The new law, which is valid for two years](#), grants the minister unprecedented powers to order social networks to stop broadcasting a media channel whose content is deemed to pose a substantial threat to national security, as well as to interfere with the channel's satellite broadcasts. About a month after the new law was passed, restrictions were imposed on Al Jazeera.

In March 2026, under cover of the war with Iran, two foreign journalists, CNN correspondents, were arrested after reporting from the Kirya area [Israel's military headquarters]. In addition, the police used the new law to shut down broadcasts by AP, as Al Jazeera subscribes to the agency's feed. However, AP reporters were allowed to resume broadcasting shortly thereafter.

5.4 Targeting human rights organizations

5.4.1 Advancing legislation to restrict human rights organizations' operations

The government has been promoting The Associations Bill (Amendment – Donation from Foreign State Entity) - 2024 since February 2025. In its original version, the bill sought to tax donations received by Israeli nonprofit organizations from foreign governments or official state institutions at a rate of 80% and to divest the courts of jurisdiction to hear petitions filed by organizations whose primary funding comes from such entities. In July 2025, a new draft was presented by the chair of the Constitution, Law and Justice Committee, MK Simcha Rothman, together with the bill's original sponsor, MK Ariel Kallner. Under the new draft, donations from foreign political entities would be taxed at 23%, and organizations would be given the option of declaring they that they would not engage in a range of activities defined as "political:" organizing protest actions, promoting legislation, engaging in Knesset advocacy, and similar activities. Violations would result in higher taxation and financial penalties. The option to provide a declaration disincentivizes social activism, and since it encompasses major tools available to and used by Israeli human rights and anti-occupation NGOs, it may be effectively irrelevant for them. The bill also includes a provision requiring organizations that receive funding from a foreign political entity to pay a particularly high filing fee for High Court petitions: 50,000 ILS (~ 17,225 USD) instead of 2,000 ILS (~ 700 USD). If passed, this provision would significantly limit access to the courts, one of the main avenues available to civil society organizations and to the communities they represent.

In practice, this is a tool for silencing organizations that are critical of government policy and a threat to their survival. If passed, the law would harm freedom of expression, freedom of association, and the right to access justice. Moreover, by focusing solely on donations from foreign state entities, the bill violates the principle of equality and discriminates against these organizations as compared to organizations that receive donations from private foreign entities or from any other source.

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Over the past year, the Constitution, Law and Justice Committee has held several discussions on the bill. Although it has not been approved for a first reading, [the debates themselves have served as a platform for vilification](#) and incitement against human rights organizations, including organizations that oppose the occupation.

5.4.2 Harassment of human rights organizations using bureaucratic tools

In addition to these legislative efforts and incitement aimed at civil society organizations, administrative tools are being weaponized against these organizations, often following vexatious complaints by right-wing organizations or MKs. These include complaints made to the police or the Registrar of Associations alleging support for terrorism. Such actions are meant to hound organizations and force them to divert time away from their regular work in order to deal with the allegations, in an attempt to disrupt operations and threaten their survival. Another tactic is lodging complaints with the Registrar of Associations alleging irregularities in organizations' reporting on foreign donations and donations in general. These complaints trigger audits and tie up organizations in unnecessary administrative proceedings that usually end in nothing. Banks sometimes refuse to receive or transfer organizations' funds on the basis of false claims of concerns about support for terrorism, and in recent years organizations have been forced to take legal action to resolve these issues.

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