

27 October 2014

## PALESTINE

# A policy of displacement and dispossession amid renewed conflict

IDMC estimates that there were at least 263,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in occupied Palestine as of September 2014. There are, however, no cumulative and confirmed figures for the territories - the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip - so estimates provide only a partial snapshot of the displacement that takes place as a result of human rights violations in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In July 2014, Israel launched a military operation codenamed Protective Edge in the Gaza Strip, which caused biggest wave of displacement and the highest number of civilian casualties in the territory since 1967 ([OCHA](#), July 2014). The number of people killed, injured and displaced rose exponentially during the second week of the operation, when it expanded into densely populated areas ([ICRC](#), April 2014; [OCHA](#), March 2014). Protective Edge and the devastating displacement it caused came at a time when the Gaza Strip was already on the brink of a humanitarian crisis as a consequence of Israel's crippling seven-year blockade on basic goods and services, the severe movement restrictions it places on Palestinians and repeated fighting with Hamas.

Displacement has also taken place in 2014 in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, where wide-ranging Israeli policies and practices linked to the occupation and the increasing geographical fragmentation of Palestine continue to cause the systematic and definitive displacement of an increasing number of people ([OCHA](#), March 2014). Against a backdrop of growing settler violence and human rights violations committed by the Israeli authorities, thousands more are at imminent risk of displacement as a result of the promotion and expansion of settlements, which are illegal under international law, and restrictive and discriminatory residency regulations and construction policies.

NGOs and observers continue to document and respond to violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, which constitute some of the major triggers of displacement, but the underlying causes of these abuses and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in general remain largely unaddressed ([UNHRC](#), 2014). Palestine's IDPs will only be able to achieve durable solutions to their displacement if a political solution to the 47-year old occupation is found, the blockade of the Gaza Strip is lifted and the culture of impunity for Israeli perpetrators of human rights violations ended.



A Bedouin family, forced to evacuate their village, flee on a cart. In the background are the Al Nada Towers, in Gaza. Photo: E. Badwan/August 2014

## Displacement in occupied Palestine

October 2014

**IDMC** internal displacement monitoring centre

- International boundary
  - Separation Wall
  - Separation Wall (planned or under construction)
  - 1949 Armistice (Green line)
- West Bank**
- Areas A and B
  - Palestinian built-up areas
  - Area C
  - East Jerusalem
- Israeli settlements**
- Municipal area
  - Settlement built-up and outer limit

More than 14,500 Palestinians were displaced by the construction of the Separation Wall.

Today the Separation Wall continues to displace by dividing neighbourhoods from each other and "walling out" communities from the urban centre, reducing access to essential services and livelihood.

Around 7,000 Palestinian Bedouins are currently at high risk of forcible transfer due to a "relocation" plan published by the Israeli authorities. Many are residing in an area Israel refers to as "E1" where it plans to expand settlements.

70,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem have changed their place of residence between September 2000 and June 2012 because of Israeli policies and practices. At least 93,100 Palestinians are at risk of displacement in Jerusalem alone because their homes were built without a permit.

6,692 Palestinians were displaced and 75 per cent of Palestinian businesses were closed due to settler violence and Israeli military restrictions

1,300 residents in Masafer Yatta are at risk of forced eviction and displacement in an area designated as a "firing zone" by the Israeli military

More than 5,261 Palestinians were displaced between 2009 and August 2014 following evictions and demolitions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. In 2014 80% originated from Area C.

56,599 IDPs in shelters and schools, as of 29 August 2014  
(+ 50,000 IDPs in host communities)

**GAZA STRIP**

- Beit Hanoun 22,547 IDPs
- Gaza City 11,057 IDPs
- Deir al Balah 6,466 IDPs
- Khan Yunis 7,242 IDPs
- Rafah 9,287 IDPs

**EGYPT**

Sources: OCHA, UNRWA, B'tselem, IDMC, DWG, Badil  
Base map: OCHA

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IDMC.

Map by: IDMC

More maps are available at [www.internal-displacement.org/search?Type=Map](http://www.internal-displacement.org/search?Type=Map)

## Background: a long history of conflict and displacement

### *1948: Palestinian exodus*

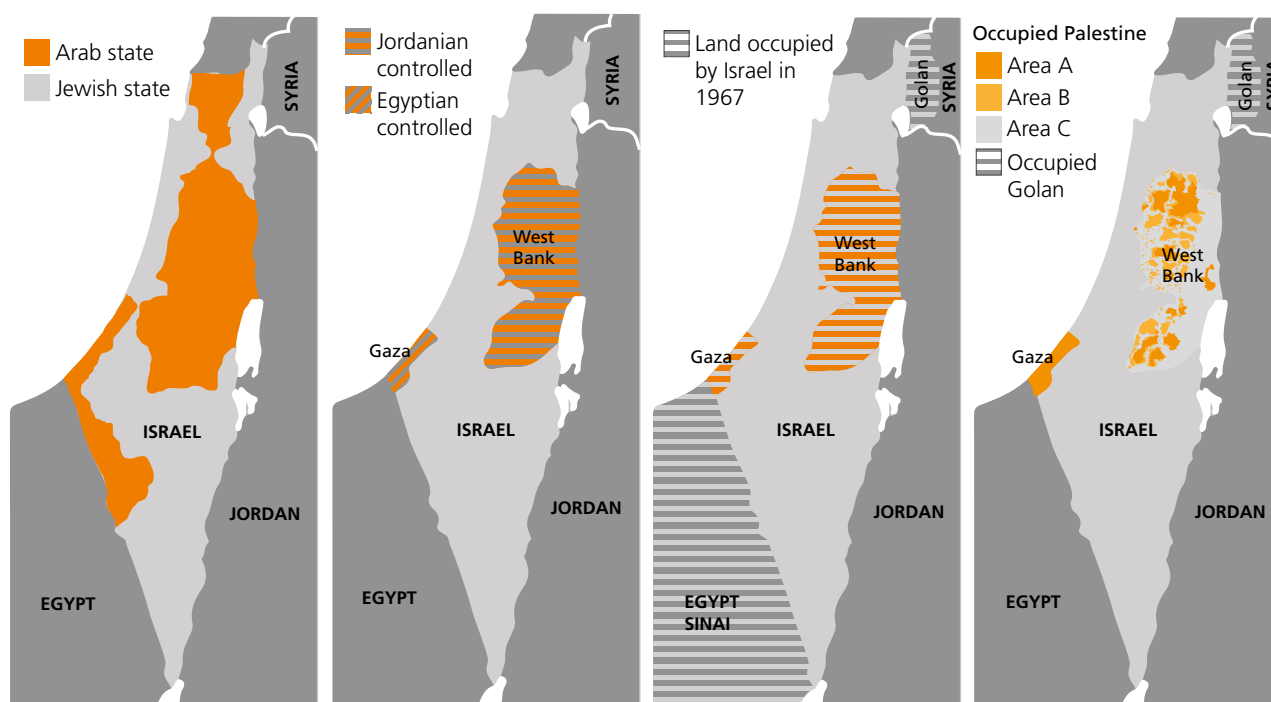
Displacement in occupied Palestine is intrinsically linked to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Its multiple and recurring patterns, frequency and complexity can only be understood in the historical context of clashing Jewish and Arab national aspirations that peaked in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the physical transformation of Palestinian territory that has taken place ([ICRC](#), 2012).

The state of Israel was established on 14 May 1948, following a 1947 UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution that partitioned the former British Mandate of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. Israel's declaration of independence immediately sparked the first Arab-Israeli war, during which more than 400 Palestinian villages were depopulated and destroyed ([Khalidi](#), 1992). More than 80 per cent of the 850,000 Palestinians estimated to be living on the territory of the newly created state of Israel at the time either fled or

were forced to flee their homes, and as many as 40,000 became internally displaced within Israel's current borders ([UNGA](#), November 1947; PIJ, 2009; [UNRWA](#) 2014; Pappe, 2006).

The exodus, which Arabs refer to as al Nakba or "the catastrophe", began after the UNGA resolution was passed in 1947 and continued after the 1949 armistice (Gresh, Vidal, 2003). The population of the Gaza Strip swelled with thousands of Palestinian refugees fleeing from what was now the state of Israel and areas it seized beyond the partition border. By 1949, the Gaza Strip's population of 80,000 had grown to more than 280,000 ([UNCTAD](#), 1994; [ODI](#), 2012).

By the end of the Arab-Israeli war, Israel controlled almost 60 per cent of the land envisaged for an Arab state. Palestinians who fled these areas had their homes, land, belongings and financial assets expropriated, and no compensation was paid (Flapan, 2002; Hollstein, Pappé, 2006). The 1948 Absentees Property Law legalised the systematic confiscation of property that Palestinians displaced from or within Israeli territory left behind.



Source: UN partition plan 1947, 1948-1967, territories occupied by Israel in 1967. Based on map included in [UNGA Resolution 181](#); [BBC](#), 2001; OCHA, 2012

A December 1948 UNGA resolution stated that Palestinian “refugees wishing to return to their homes ... should be permitted to do so ... and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return” and “for loss of or damage to property” ([UNGA](#), December 1948).

The resolution also established the “inalienable right of Palestinians to return to their homes and property in Palestine, from which they have been displaced and uprooted”. The same right has been reaffirmed in a number of subsequent resolutions since 1974 ([UNGA](#), November 1974), but they have been ineffective in reversing the devastating consequences of the Absentees Property Law, the ultimate goal of which was to prevent displaced Palestinians from returning to their homes.

#### *1967: the occupation and colonisation of Palestine*

During the Six-Day War in June 1967, Israel invaded and occupied the remainder of what had been Mandatory Palestine - the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip - plus the Sinai peninsula and the Golan Heights<sup>1</sup> ([ICRC](#), 2012). The war prompted around 300,000 Palestinians, many of whom had already been displaced several times since 1947, to flee to neighbouring countries ([ODI](#), 2012; Badil, 2010; Zertal, Eldar, 2009; [Haaretz](#), June 2012). Israel annexed East Jerusalem the same year and declared Jerusalem its united capital in 1980.

International humanitarian law strictly forbids an occupying power to deport or transfer members of its own civilian population to the territory it controls (Geneva Convention IV, [art. 49](#)), and to confiscate private property (1907 Hague Regulations, [art. 46](#); [UNGA](#), 2013; [ICRC](#), 2013). Israel, however, allowed the establishment of the first Jewish settlement in the West Bank in 1967. It then introduced a discriminatory system govern-

ing the control, ownership and use of land in the West Bank that facilitated settlement expansion. The same system is still in place and is one of many causes of displacement (see box 3).

#### *1995: The Oslo accords and the fragmentation of Palestinian territory*

From 1987 to 1993, the first *intifada* or uprising, a popular protest against Israel's occupation and settlement expansion, spread throughout occupied Palestine ([Rempel](#), 2006). The signing of the Oslo accords in 1995 established the Palestinian National Authority (PA) as a provisional government and partitioned the occupied territories into

### **The 1995 Oslo accords**

Envisaged as an interim agreement pending a final settlement, the Oslo accords divided the West Bank into three zones: Area A under full Palestinian control, Area B under Palestinian civil authority and Israeli security control, and Area C - which makes up around 60 per cent of the West Bank - under full Israeli control. Despite the collapse of the Oslo peace process in 2000, the same zones remain in place and have been reinforced by a complex system of physical and administrative obstacles that allow Israel to continue its territorial expansion and retain full building and planning control over Area C.

Palestinian communities in Area C have been left with no effective means of taking decisions about planning, construction and zoning, and they have no legal or executive powers to be able to voice their concerns ([UNHRC](#), 2012). Most of the displacement in the West Bank today takes place there. It is the only contiguous area of the West Bank, and contains the largest areas of land available for Palestinian development, agriculture and herding ([World Bank](#), October 2013; [OCHA](#), 2012).

<sup>1</sup> The Sinai peninsula and the Golan Heights were Egyptian and Syrian territories. Israel returned Sinai to Egypt in 1982 as part of the Camp David accords



a complex patchwork of zones with three distinct statuses ([Oslo accords](#), 1995; [ACRI](#), April 2013).

#### *2005: the Gaza blockade*

Israel has, according to international law, maintained “effective control” over all Palestinian territory for almost half a century ([ICRC](#), 2013). This still applies to the Gaza Strip, despite the unilateral withdrawal of its troops and the dismantling of its settlements in 2005. Israel continues to control the Strip’s borders and airspace, and to impose a strict economic blockade in place since 2005 ([ICRC](#), 2014; [Diakonia](#), July 2014; [Gisha](#), July 2014).

Tensions between the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority and Hamas, which won a majority in the 2006 legislative council elections, culminated in June 2007 when Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip. A caretaker government was formed in the West Bank in 2011 and the international boycott of the Palestinian Authority there was lifted, but Israel tightened its blockade of the Gaza Strip further, denying residents a range of human rights and collectively punishing the entire population ([UNSC](#), 27 January 2009; [OHCHR](#), January 2014). The blockade continues to limit Palestinians’ access to basic goods and services, such as housing, education, work, health care and an adequate standard of living.

#### *2014: From peace talks to Protective Edge*

In May 2014, after the collapse of US-sponsored peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians ([the Guardian](#), August 2014), Fatah and Hamas formed a government of national unity ([Reuters](#), May 2014). The new administration was recognised internationally, but not by Israel, which continues to ostracise Hamas and anyone associated with it ([BBC](#), July 2014).

The kidnapping and killing of three Israelis in June, which Israel blamed on Hamas, led to a crackdown on the group in the West Bank and escalating tensions that culminated in the revenge killing of a Palestinian and violent clashes

throughout the West Bank ([OCHA](#), July 2014). After Israeli air strikes killed Hamas members and the group fired rockets towards Israel, the Israeli military launched operation Protective Edge on 8 July ([The Independent](#), July 2014).

## **Displacement figures and limitations**

#### *Who is an IDP in occupied Palestine?*

IDMC estimates that there were at least 263,000 IDPs in occupied Palestine as of September 2014 - 122,000 in Gaza and 141,000 in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem ([IDMC](#), September 2014). IDMC considers Palestinians forcibly and/or arbitrarily displaced from their homes in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and who have remained in occupied Palestine, as IDPs.<sup>2</sup> We also consider Palestinian refugees registered with the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) as IDPs if they have been displaced again since 1967 within or between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip ([UNRWA](#), 2007).

#### *Challenges to monitoring displacement*

Since 2009, the Protection of Civilians database operated by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has provided figures on displacement following demolitions and the eviction of Palestinians in the West Bank. Beyond their being counted when they are initially displaced, however, no organisation or mechanism systematically tracks their number, location and fate. Figures are also likely to be underestimates, given that displacement is caused by the combined effects of a number of triggers that humanitarians have so far failed to consider together.

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<sup>2</sup> The framework set out by the Oslo accords committed Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation to recognising the Gaza Strip and West Bank as a single territorial unit. As such, those displaced between the two areas are referred to as IDPs

## UNRWA refugees: the permanently displaced

In response to the huge influx of displaced Palestinians the creation of the state of Israel caused, the UN set up UNRWA in December 1949 to implement relief and works programmes in occupied Palestine ([UNGA](#), December 1949). Seventy-two per cent of the current population of the Gaza Strip and 28 per cent in the West Bank are registered with UNRWA as refugees ([PCBS](#), [UNRWA](#), April 2013), defined as “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period of 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict” ([UNRWA](#)).

UNRWA refugees do not enjoy protection as accorded by the 1951 Geneva Convention. Most significantly, they are neither entitled to resettlement abroad nor to the same rights as the citizens of the place where they reside, trapping them in perpetual statelessness. Refugee status is passed down from one generation to the next ([UNRWA](#), 2010; [Ferris](#), 2011).

UNRWA is the only UN agency exclusively dedicated to a single refugee group, most of whom were born in displacement and have never crossed international borders. There are around two million registered refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and 4.3 million Palestinians in the surrounding countries of Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan ([UNRWA](#), 2014).

Territory	Total population	Population density/km <sup>2</sup>
Occupied Palestine	4,420,549	734
West Bank	2,719,112	481
Gaza Strip	1,701,437	4,661

Data: [UNRWA](#), emergency appeal 2014, [PCBS](#), 2013

Given that no cumulative and comprehensive data on IDPs is available, IDMC’s estimates are based on secondary information and limited assessments that use different methodologies, and only reflect specific occurrences of displacement. Some NGOs have produced estimates going back to 1948 and 1967, but their figures are hard to verify because of a lack of baseline data on total population figures and IDPs’ locations. These data and information gaps make it difficult to report analytically on the number of IDPs or to follow displacement patterns in occupied Palestine ([IDMC](#), September 2014).

Local and international NGOs and UN agencies agree that displacement is both a driver and a consequence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and that it lies at the core of the current protec-

tion crisis and humanitarian response (IDMC interviews, March 2014; [ODI](#), 2012; [Ferris](#), August 2014; [Badil](#), 2012). Given the absence of systematic tracking, however, it is all but impossible to determine IDPs’ assistance and protection needs or to respond to their specific vulnerabilities (IDMC interviews; 2013 [ODI](#), 2012).

## Causes and patterns of displacement

The causes and patterns of displacement in the Gaza Strip are very different from those in the West Bank. Israel’s frequent military operations in the Gaza Strip have triggered devastating levels of displacement, with hundreds of thousands of people fleeing their homes in a matter of weeks.

Displacement in the West Bank is the result of a slow but inexorable process of dispossession of Palestinian land linked to the expansion of Israeli settlements and territorial control. In some cases, the systematic nature of such displacement has given rise to concerns that it could amount to “forcible transfer” in contravention of the fourth Geneva Convention ([UNRWA](#), September 2014).

The two situations are, however, intimately linked in that they are the direct result of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the ongoing occupation of Palestine, facilitated by Israeli policies and practices that entrench its control over the territories.

The UN Secretary General’s former representative on the human rights of IDPs identified nine main triggers of displacement in occupied Palestine ([UNHRC](#), 2009):

- evictions and land appropriation
- military incursions and clearing operations
- the illegal expansion of settlements and related infrastructure
- the illegal construction of the “separation wall”<sup>3</sup>
- violence and harassment by settlers
- the revocation of residency rights in East Jerusalem
- discriminatory denial of building permits and house demolitions
- a system of closures and restrictions on the right to freedom of movement: permits and checkpoints

#### GAZA STRIP

##### *Military operations and chronic waves of displacement*

Frequent operations by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) have been the leading cause of displacement in the Gaza Strip, and have seriously vio-

lated the Palestinians’ right to life and freedom of movement. During the last six years, IDF has carried out three major operations at growing human cost to the civilian population:

- Between December 2008 and January 2009, more than 120,000 Palestinians were displaced and 1,400 were killed in a devastating campaign of air strikes and subsequent ground invasion codenamed operation Cast Lead ([shelter cluster](#), 2010; [Amnesty](#), July 2009)
- In November and December 2012, a campaign of air strikes codenamed operation Pillar of Defence displaced more than 15,000 people and killed 174, including at least 101 civilians ([shelter cluster](#), March 2013; [OHCHR](#), March 2014)
- In July and August 2014, a campaign of air strikes and subsequent ground invasion codenamed operation Protective Edge led to an unprecedented wave of displacement, forcing around 520,000 Palestinians - a third of the Gaza Strip’s population - to flee their homes ([OCHA](#), August 2014)

Operation Protective Edge displaced four times more people than Cast Lead, and constituted the largest displacement crisis in the Gaza Strip since the occupation began in 1967. UNRWA described the human cost of the operation as “catastrophic”. More than 2,100 Palestinians were killed, including at least 1,460 civilians of whom 493 were children ([UNRWA](#), August 2014; [OCHA](#), August 2014). Most of those displaced found refuge in UNRWA shelters, schools and public buildings and with host families ([OCHA](#), August 2014).

The prevalence of unexploded ordnance has made comprehensive assessments of Protective Edge’s impact difficult, but preliminary reports reveal a situation of utter devastation, with far greater destruction of civilian infrastructure, private homes and land than in previous conflicts ([OCHA](#), August 2014). An open-ended ceasefire

<sup>3</sup> Also called the West Bank barrier, the separation wall will be around 700 km long upon completion. Some sections are a dual electrified barbed wire fence, and others an eight-metre high concrete wall with turrets

came into force on 26 August, but more than a month later at the beginning of October there were still nearly 54,000 IDPs in 41 UNRWA schools and an estimated 50,000 staying with host families ([OCHA](#), August 2014). Given that the homes of more than 110,000 people were destroyed or severely damaged during the fighting ([OCHA](#), 28 August 2014), and that the import of construction materials is still severely restricted, a large number of IDPs are expected to find themselves in protracted displacement.

The number of homes destroyed during Protective Edge was also more than four times higher than during Cast Lead, which left around 20,000 people homeless (shelter sector factsheets, 2014; [B'Tselem](#), 2014, [IDMC](#), 2012). At least 17,000 Palestinians were already living in protracted displacement before Protective Edge, still waiting to repair or rebuild their homes after Cast Lead (shelter cluster, May 2014).

#### Access restricted areas

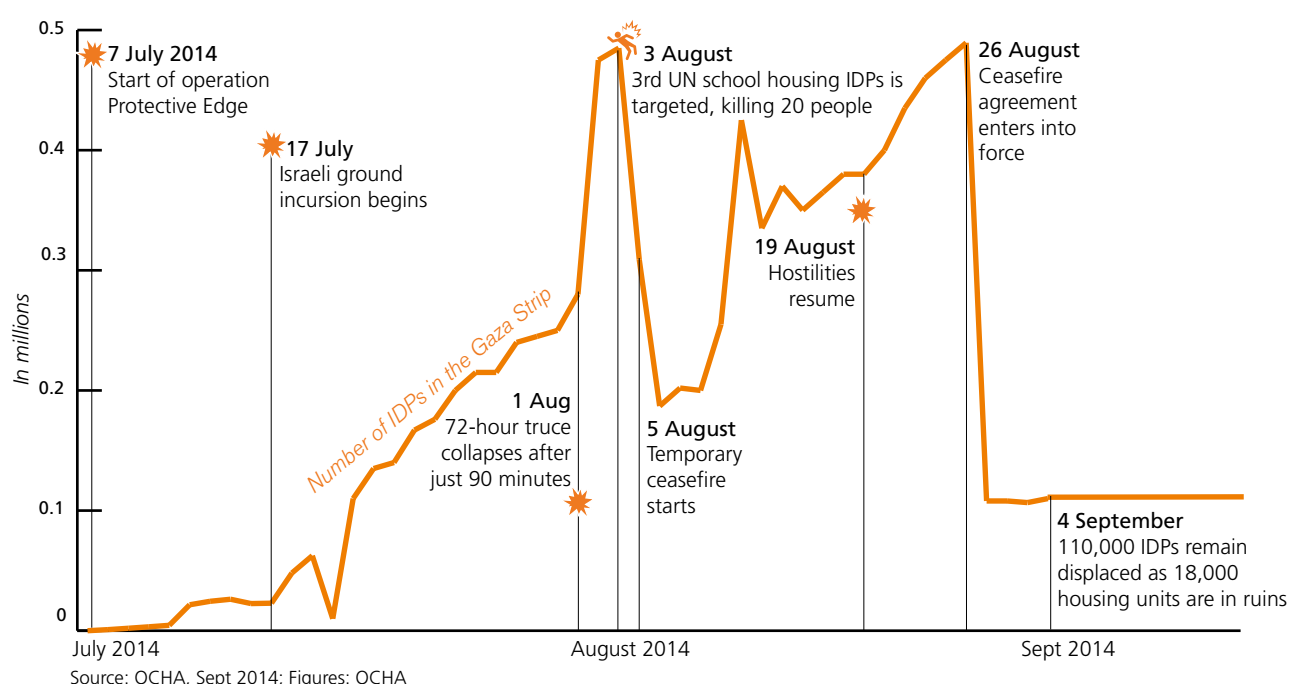
In response to the second *intifada* in 2000, IDF

gradually imposed a 500-metre “no-go” zone along the entire length of the fence that separates the Gaza Strip from Israel. In some areas, however, Palestinians are at high risk of being shot as far as 1.5km from the fence. The access restricted areas (ARAs) also extend from three to six nautical miles (10.8km) at sea and along the boundary with Egypt. In order to enforce the ARAs, Israel has levelled land, destroying crops and buildings, and used live ammunition to deter Palestinians from approaching. Between 2007 and 2013, 127 Palestinian civilians were killed in ARAs ([IDMC/ PCHR](#), February 2014).

Given their loss of access to land and livelihoods, and the imminent threats they face, Palestinians living in or near ARAs continue to be most at risk of displacement ([IDMC/PCHR](#), February 2014). According to a 2009 study, 70 per cent of households living in ARAs had been displaced at least once since 2000, primarily as a result of the demolition of their homes and concerns for their personal safety and security ([Save the Children](#), October 2009). Fifty per cent of the families sur-

### Displacement in the Gaza Strip

From July to September 2014





veyed had lost their sources of income or livelihoods, and 42 per cent had to move house. By November 2012, the imposition of the ARAs had led to an annual loss of around 75,000 metric tons of agricultural produce, valued at \$50.2 million (OXFAM, 2012).

At least 41 per cent of the Gaza Strip's population is food insecure. Farmers are unable to cultivate around 35 per cent of its agricultural land, the activities of its fishermen are severely restricted and many households find themselves in extreme poverty. At least 95 per cent of the Gaza Strip's fishermen are recipients of international aid (IDMC/ PCHR, February 2014), and many former residents in ARAs have chosen to leave for urban areas in search of employment (IDMC interviews, March 2014). For those who remain, financial support is the only thing that prevents their displacement.

#### WEST BANK, INCLUDING EAST JERUSALEM

*'Administrative' demolitions and Palestinians' lack of access to land*

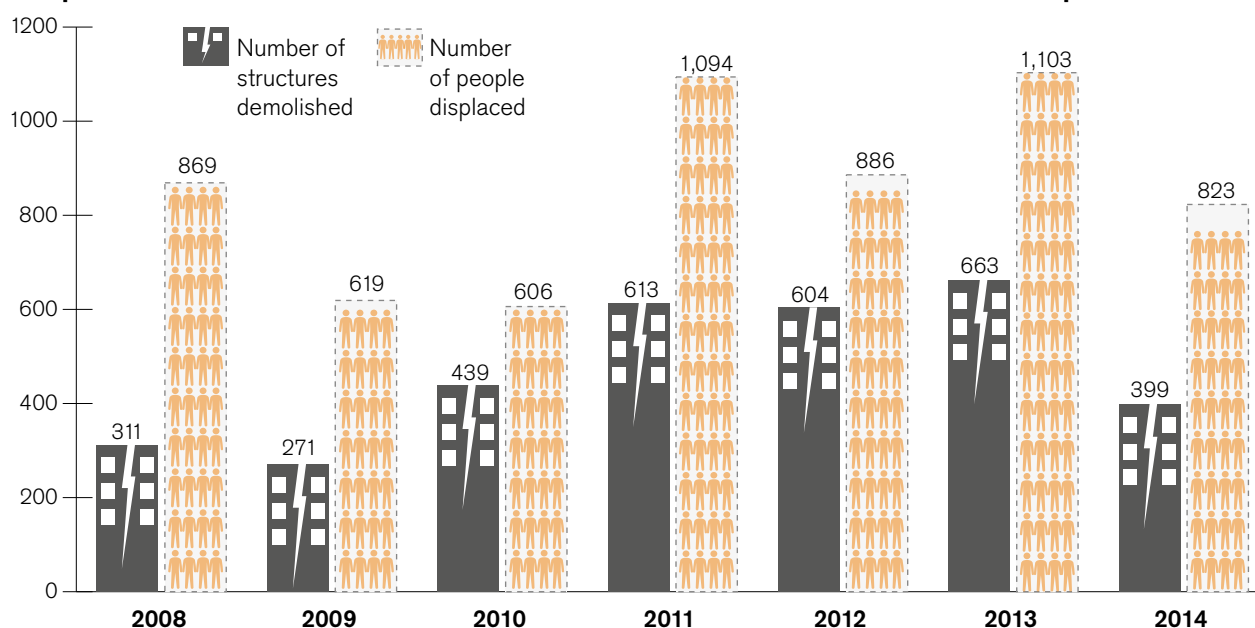
Between January 2008 and September 2014, house demolitions and evictions caused the displacement of more than 5,300 Palestinians in

the West Bank (DWG, 2013; OCHA, May 2014).

2013 was a record year for such displacement, but the figures for 2014 already exceed those for the same date last year, with 823 people displaced and 399 structures demolished as of September 2014. Israel defines the majority of demolitions as "administrative". They involve structures built without Israeli authorisation, but which pose no threat to public order or safety. Given that such demolitions are not born of "military necessity", they violate international humanitarian law (Article 50, first Geneva Convention, ICRC).

Evictions and house demolitions take place in the context of Israel's discriminatory system of land allocation, which it put in place across the West Bank, occupied Palestine, particularly in Area C of the West Bank (see box 3). Israel's higher planning council reserves the right to approve or deny building permits for Palestinians based on the country's military and settler interests. Settler communities, in contrast, are allowed to designate land for residential use and construction. According to official Israeli documents submitted to the country's high court in 2014, less than one per cent of "state land" in Area C

#### Displacement due to demolitions or evictions in the West Bank: 2008 - September 2014



Source: Displacement Working Group, OCHA

was allocated to Palestinians for construction, compared with 38 per cent for Israeli settlements ([Haaretz](#), 2014; [ACRI](#), 2013). Since 1988, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA), the country's governing body for occupied Palestine, has issued 12,570 demolition orders on Palestinian structures built without permits in Area C ([OCHA](#), March 2014).

More than 80 per cent of people who have been displaced by the demolition of their homes in 2014 lived in Area C, which is home to at least 297,000 Palestinians ([OCHA](#), 2014). Palestinian Bedouins and herders, of whom there are around 27,500 in Area C, are particularly vulnerable to displacement. Their access to grazing, markets, water and basic infrastructure is restricted or denied, and they suffer more demolitions and threats of demolition than other Area C residents ([UNDP](#), September 2013; [OCHA](#), September 2014). IDPs in Area C are often displaced a number of times and tend to stay close to their previous homes. A Save the Children study based on interviews with displaced families confirmed that when they do leave their localities, it is considered to be as a last resort (Save the Children, unpublished, 2013).

House demolitions and displacement in East Jerusalem have risen significantly in recent years, with more people displaced in 2013 than in 2011 and 2012 combined ([OCHA](#), 2014). Only 14 per cent of East Jerusalem's land is zoned for Palestinian construction ([ACRI/Bimkom](#), 2014), and most of it is already built up, making it impossible for Palestinians to obtain building permits. They are left having to choose between building without a permit and risking displacement, or moving to Areas A and B where it is easier to get one (IDMC interviews, 2014; [OCHA](#), 2011). Given that around a third of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem are built without a permit, OCHA estimated in 2012 that at least 93,100 residents were at risk of displacement ([OCHA](#), 2012).

#### *Settlement encroachment and settler violence*

Since the 1967 war, Israel has encouraged its citi-

## **Out of Palestinians' reach: planning and zoning in the West Bank**

Until the Israeli occupation in 1967, Jordanian and Ottoman laws applied in the West Bank. Local communities controlled the planning of their surroundings via participatory roles on district and regional planning committees ([Diakonia](#), November 2013). In 1971, however, the Israeli military commander for the West Bank abolished the committees and transferred their powers to prepare and approve spatial planning schemes and issue building permits to a military-controlled institution that excludes Palestinian participation (Israeli order no. 418, discussed in [Rabbis for Human Rights](#), February 2011).

Israel had already frozen procedures for registering land by military order in 1968, preventing Palestinian development and leaving most residents without proof of registration. This in turn left their land and property vulnerable to expropriation, preparing the ground for their displacement in the years to come (Idith Zertal, Akiva Eldar, 2009).

A 1979 judgement by the Israeli high court prohibited the requisition of private Palestinian land for settlement construction. In its wake, the Israeli authorities have gradually seized large areas of land they deem unregistered and declared them "state land" ([UNHRC](#), 2012, [B'Tselem](#) 2012). The overall area of "state land" has more than doubled since 1967 to over 1,300 square kilometres, and it continues to grow. As recently as September 2014, ICA took over land belonging to five Palestinian villages in Gush Etzion - the largest appropriation in the West Bank for 30 years ([Haaretz](#), September 2014).

zens to settle in occupied Palestine and annexed East Jerusalem. The number of Israeli citizens who settled in the West Bank increased significantly between mid-1977 and the end of 1983, a period

during which authorities approved the establishment of 103 settlements, compared with 22 during the first decade of occupation (Idith Zertal, Akiva Eldar, 2009). Today, more than 200,000 settlers live in East Jerusalem and 350,000 in the rest of the West Bank (CBS, 2014; [The Washington Post](#), September 2014). There are 68 settlers per 100 Palestinians in Jerusalem governorate, and 21 per 100 in the rest of the West Bank (PCBS, May 2013).

Israel's policy of encouraging settlers to live on territory it occupies has had many consequences, including the forced displacement of Palestinians. They have gradually lost land, and with it resources and livelihoods, their access to areas around settlements is restricted and they face violence from settlers. In East Jerusalem, the establishment of settlements in the Old City, Silwan and most recently Sheikh Jarrah, has restricted Palestinians' access to public space, residential expansion and freedom of movement considerably. It has also led to the takeover of private Palestinian property and the eviction of long-term residents (OCHA, 2012).

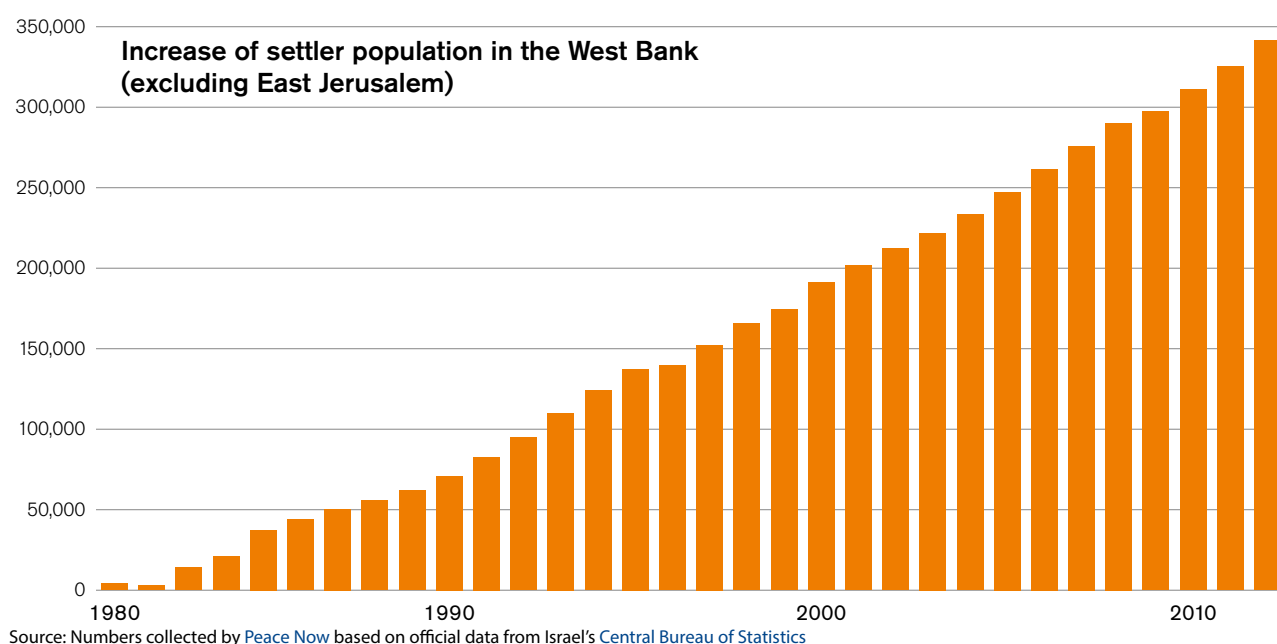
The establishment of settlements has been accompanied by increasing settler violence against Palestinians, particularly those living in the vicinity (OCHA, 2013). In recent years, armed

settlers have wounded hundreds of people and attacked homes, orchards and other property. In some cases, Israeli soldiers present have turned a blind eye to such violence and even taken part in it ([Amnesty](#), September 2014). Some attacks have contributed, along with other factors, to the displacement of Palestinians (OCHA, 2014).

In the Old City of Hebron, Israeli settlers live cheek by jowl with Palestinian residents, who have faced restrictions on their freedom of movement, harassment from settlers and military orders ordering the closure of their businesses. According to some research, more than 40 per cent of Palestinian apartments in the Old City had been vacated by 2007, and more than 75 per cent of Palestinian businesses closed, leading to the displacement of almost 7,000 people (B'Tselem/ACRI, 2007).

#### *Access restrictions and closed military zones*

Palestinians' vulnerability to displacement in Area C is increased by additional restrictions on their movement and their access to livelihoods, shelter and basic services such as health care, education, water and sanitation (OCHA, 2014). In 2012, the UN special rapporteur on adequate housing warned that the difficulties Palestinian herding communities face in accessing water were likely



to lead to their displacement. Communities such as the Bedouin often live in remote areas and depend on wells and springs to water their livestock, but IDF regularly destroys or takes control of water sources, and confiscates tanks and cisterns ([OHCHR](#), 2012).

During an April 2014 meeting of a Knesset foreign and security subcommittee on what it deemed “illegal Palestinian construction in Area C”, Israeli officials explicitly acknowledged that IDF was enforcing special planning regulations, performing military drills, destroying homes and infrastructure needed for livelihoods and seizing humanitarian aid – and that it was doing so in order to cause the displacement of Palestinians from the Jerusalem periphery, the Jordan valley and the southern Hebron hills ([Haaretz](#), 2014). Such practices would constitute violations of international law, and concerns have been raised that the Israeli authorities’ ultimate aim is to cleanse Area C of its Palestinian population.

Israel has designated around 18 per cent of the West Bank as “closed military areas”, mainly for the purpose of training its armed forces ([OCHA](#), March 2014). The areas are, however, also home to 38 Palestinian communities, or more than 6,200 people, who make their living from farming and herding. Most of the communities have lived on the land in question since long before the creation of Israel and the occupation of the West Bank in 1967, but IDF declared them “illegal”, forcing their displacement to areas where it allows construction to take place ([OCHA](#), July 2014). Most of the Masafer Yatta area near Hebron was declared a closed military area in the 1980s, and the Israeli authorities forcibly evicted 700 of its residents and destroyed their property. Many were allowed to return a few months later following an Israeli high court ruling, but IDF did not give them building permits and they live in constant fear that their existing homes will be demolished. More than 30 years later the area remains closed, and the 1,300 or so people still living there remain at risk

of forcible eviction ([OCHA](#), May 2014; [OHCHR](#), Jan 2014).

#### *Trapped in, walled out: the West Bank ‘separation wall’*

In 2004, Israel began construction of its 712km-long “separation wall” in the West Bank, further entrenching the fragmentation of Palestinian land that began with the Oslo accords. Only 15 per cent of the wall follows the armistice line, with rest cutting into the West Bank itself. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) concluded in a 2004 advisory opinion that these sections, and the “gate and permit regime” imposed to control access to areas beyond them, violated Israel’s obligations under international law. The court called on Israel to cease construction of the wall, dismantle the sections already completed and repeal all legislative measures related to it ([ICJ](#), February 2004).

Ten years later the wall is still in place, and its consequences have included the destruction of civilian property, the expropriation of land and the imposition of severe movement and access restrictions. The 11,000 or so Palestinians who live in the “seam zones” between the wall and the armistice line have been particularly hard-hit. They require permits and other special arrangements to access their homes, land and livelihoods. A section of the wall near Tulkarm was rerouted in 2013, allowing 350 people in the Khirbet Jubara community free access to the rest of the West Bank, but there has been no application to this date ([OCHA](#), July 2013).

The wall also affects communities in East Jerusalem, including some who have been “walled out” of the city centre, which has had a devastating impact on their economic and social life ([Global protection cluster](#), 2014-2016). Elsewhere, the situation is particularly dire in the village of Arab ar Ramadin, which is home to nearly 50 Palestinian Bedouin families. It is located in an enclave established by the wall south of Qalqilya in order to create a corridor between the Alfei

Menashe settlement and Israel itself ([Palestine monitor](#), 2012). Palestinian residents of the enclave are not allowed to enter Israel, making almost every aspect of their lives dependent on being able to pass through checkpoints on the roads leading to and from the rest of the West Bank.

In May 2005, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) estimated that the wall and the hundreds of IDF checkpoints along it had caused the displacement of nearly 14,500 people in 145 localities ([PCBS](#), 2005).

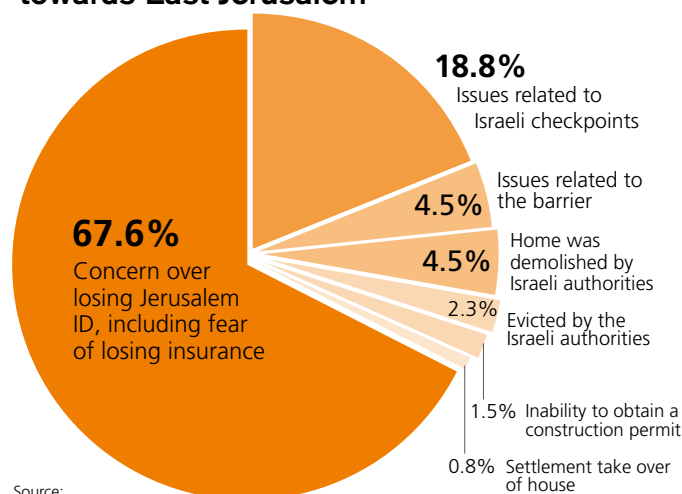
#### *East Jerusalem: discriminatory residency and urban policy*

Under Israeli law, most Palestinians living in East Jerusalem are considered permanent residents of Israel, rather than Israeli citizens. Their status is conditional on their proving that their “centre of life” lies within municipal boundaries as defined by the Israeli authorities or in Israel proper. Those who leave the city for extended periods risk having their Jerusalem ID cards revoked ([OCHA](#), 2011). Israel has revoked the residency status of around 14,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem since 1967. There were more than 4,500 revocations in 2008 alone, in what OCHA has referred to as “quiet deportation” ([OCHA](#), 2011).

Current laws and practices make it extremely difficult for spouses from the West Bank or Gaza Strip to obtain residency rights in East Jerusalem through family reunification processes, and children face a number of legal challenges in securing their residency status. Between 2000 and 2013, Israel rejected 43 per cent of family reunification applications and 24 per cent of child registration requests. There are currently at least 10,000 unregistered children in East Jerusalem ([St Ives](#), September 2013; [CESCR](#), March 2011).

Israel’s restrictive policies and practices in East Jerusalem were identified as a major cause of displacement in 2013 when a UN-commissioned survey revealed that around 70,000 Palestinians

#### **Triggers of forced displacement within and towards East Jerusalem**



living there had changed their place of residence between September 2000 and June 2012 (OCHA, 2013). Most of the displacement was triggered by the fear that Israel might revoke their Jerusalem IDs and concern about the difficulties involved in family reunification and the registration of children ([OHCHR](#), January 2014). The majority of IDPs who were living in the suburbs of Jerusalem moved back into the city to avoid the possible revocation of their status.

East Jerusalem has been the centre of Palestinian social, economic, political and religious activity for centuries, but in recent years it has become increasingly isolated from the rest of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The construction of the “separation wall” cut the central business district off from other Palestinian cities, resulting in the closure of more than 5,000 Palestinian businesses and rising unemployment rates ([ACRI](#), 2014).

A combination of other socio-economic factors has also pushed many Palestinians to move towards the suburbs on the eastern side of the wall ([Al Haq](#), 2014; [Grassroots al Quds](#), 2014). Some areas, such as Shu’fat, Kufur Aqab and Ras Al Amud, are still within the boundaries of Jerusalem municipality, and they are particularly attractive to Palestinians. The cost living is lower there,



housing is more secure and Jerusalemites are able to live with spouses, children and other family members who hold West Bank ID cards. The areas are, however, heavily overcrowded and neglected by service providers ([UNRWA](#), 2012; [Palestine Monitor](#), November 2013). Jerusalemites who move there also fear that Israel could redraw the city's municipal boundaries along the route of the wall, which could permanently exclude them from East Jerusalem ([LA Times](#), 2012; [Al Haq](#), 2014).

## IDPs' basic needs and protection

### *Gaza Strip*

The IDF's shelling of the Gaza Strip's only power plant and its water infrastructure towards the end of July 2014, and the huge influx of IDPs into UNRWA shelters and schools, placed enormous strain on already overstretched local authorities and humanitarian agencies ([ACAPS](#), July 2014; [OCHA](#), August 2014). Schools were sheltering an average of 45 people per classroom, and some were hosting as many as 80. As UNRWA's commissioner general observed: "There is no water for personal hygiene, very few showers and latrines are totally inadequate. Disease outbreak is beginning, with skin infections, scabies and others. There are thousands of pregnant women in our schools, deliveries are precarious and we are sheltering newborns in these appalling conditions. Our ability to mitigate this situation is of course heavily restricted by ongoing hostilities" ([UN](#), July 2014).

Displaced women particularly suffered from the lack of privacy in overcrowded shelter and homes, which made them vulnerable to harassment and more affected by poor living conditions. In conservative environments where many deem public spaces unsuitable for their presence, women are often confined indoors where they care for their children and elderly relatives. This also makes them disproportionately affected by water shortages and uncollected rubbish ([NRC](#), November 2013).

The challenges IDPs face are made worse Israel's seven-year blockade of the Gaza Strip, which has caused chronic economic and social distress. The unemployment rate stands at 40 per cent, 57 per cent of the population are food insecure and 80 per cent depend on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs ([Oxfam](#), July 2014; [FT](#), 2014). The decade-long restrictions on Palestinians' movement in and out of, and within, the Gaza Strip have a dramatic impact during Israeli military operations, because they prevent people from seeking refuge elsewhere in occupied Palestine or in neighbouring countries.

This was particularly the case during operation Protective Edge, when the lives of civilians caught up in the fighting and heavy bombardments were seriously threatened. In a highly urbanised environment with a population density of 4,661 inhabitants per square kilometre, many people had no safe place to flee to. UNRWA schools, government education facilities and informal shelters were already seriously overcrowded. It is likely that violations of Palestinians' right to freedom of movement resulting from Israel's blockade and the closing of the border with Egypt contributed to the high civilian death toll. Overall, more than 2,000 people were killed of whom just under 1,500 were civilians many of them women and children ([UNWRA](#), September 2014).

At least 38 civilians were killed when Israeli shells hit six UNRWA schools hosting thousands of IDPs in what the UN secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, described as a "moral outrage and criminal act" ([UN News](#), August 2014). Eleven UNRWA workers were killed during the conflict, and 108 UN installations were damaged. Palestinian rockets were stored in some schools, which also constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law. ([UNRWA](#), July 2014; [UNSC](#), August 2014).

*Palestinian Bedouins: forcible transfers and plans to relocate 7,000*

The cumulative effects of Israel's administrative,

planning and land confiscation policies over the years have led to increasing concerns that its actions in displacing Palestinian communities amount to forcible transfers that are contrary to Israel's obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, and constitute a grave breach incurring the individual responsibility of officials ([UNSG](#), September 2012, [OHCHR](#), August 2014). Palestinian Bedouins are particularly at risk of such transfers ([OCHA](#), September 2014). In August 2013, Israel demolished a number of Bedouin structures in Tel al Adassa, forcibly transferring around 40 people. The following month it carried out further demolitions in Az Z'ayyem on the edge of East Jerusalem and in Makhul in the north of the Jordan valley, rendering dozens more people homeless ([UN](#), August 2013; [UN](#), September 2013). The Israeli authorities have offered no alternative housing options to those affected, and did not allow humanitarian organisations to provide emergency relief.

In September 2014, Israel published a series of plans to move Palestinian Bedouins from a politically sensitive area referred to as the Jerusalem periphery or "E1", where it has long intended to expand its territory and link its settlements together ([Al Jazeera](#), January 2013). Without consulting the residents themselves, ICA drew up six plans for the relocation of around 7,000 people to new "permanent sites" in the Jordan valley and the Ma'ale Adumim area ([B'Tselem](#), September 2014; [OCHA](#), 2014).

If implemented, the plans would not only unlawfully transfer vulnerable Bedouin communities against their will. They would also effectively cut the West Bank in two, further disrupting movement and social and economic ties between major Palestinian cities, and reducing what little access Palestinians in the West Bank have to Jerusalem ([NGO joint statement](#), September 2014). Such a move would have dire humanitarian consequences for all of the West Bank.

Herding communities had already been forcibly transferred between 1997 and 2007, when Jahalin Bedouin families living in areas targeted for the expansion of the Ma'ale Adumin settlement were moved in three waves from isolated rural areas into a cramped space next to a municipal rubbish dump near the town of Eizariya. An anthropological study carried out in 2014 painted a bleak picture of the appalling conditions the Bedouin IDPs have endured, with no running water, few and dysfunctional latrines and insufficient shelter. They were found to be living in an environment counter to decades of social norms and traditional livelihoods, in which ten separate kinship groups were crowded into a densely populated and contaminated area ([UNRWA](#), May 2013).

Their plight, which has proved socially and economically unsustainable, has become a point of reference for other Bedouin communities in Area C, who have reinforced their calls for sustainable rural development in their current locations and secure access to natural resources. Israel, however, has earmarked their land for settlement expansion.

## Durable solutions

Given the stalled peace process, Israel's 47-year occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the annexation of East Jerusalem and ongoing systematic violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law, IDPs are in no position to make voluntary choices about durable solutions to their displacement, never mind achieve them (AIDA, IDMC interview, 2014).

A Save the Children study on displacement conducted in 2013 surveyed 82 households forced to leave their communities in the Gaza Strip and West Bank since 2008. It found that two-thirds would return to their communities given the choice, freedom and support to do so. Those displaced from Area C were the most keen to do so,

followed by those from the Jerusalem periphery and the Gaza Strip (Save the Children, unpublished, 2013).

Without fair and inclusive planning processes and access to livelihood opportunities, however, neither return nor local integration are genuine options. IDPs and communities at risk of displacement in the West Bank, such as the Jahalin Bedouins, suffer from a set of coercive measures linked to settlement expansion and “closed military areas” that prevent them from freely choosing their place of residence ([UNRWA](#), 2014).

In the Gaza Strip, Israel’s restrictions on the import of building materials and the dire consequences of its economic blockade are the main obstacles to reconstruction and return ([OCHA](#), April 2014; [OCHA](#), July 2014; shelter cluster, May 2014). Even those IDPs whose homes were not damaged or destroyed during operation Protective Edge are in most cases unable to return because there are no water and electricity supplies or sanitation services. In the meantime, the provision of housing for IDPs before the onset of winter constitutes one of the most urgent challenges the Palestinian authorities and the humanitarian community face.

Israel prohibits the entrance of items it defines as dual-use, which aside from their civilian application it deems could be used to enhance Hamas’s military capabilities. The list includes building materials, fertilisers, drilling equipment, fuel and certain types of vehicles, to name but a few. Tunnels under the border with Egypt allowed Gazans to circumvent the blockade and bring in some banned and restricted items, but since the Egyptian army destroyed them in July 2013, reconstruction projects have all but ground to a halt ([NRC](#), July 2014; [Middle East Monitor](#), November 2013; [Haaretz](#), October 2013).

The only construction materials allowed into the Gaza Strip since 2007 were designated for international organisations and were subject to a com-

plex and lengthy approvals process ([Gisha](#), August 2014). Based on the current operating capacity of Kerem Shalom, the only official crossing point for the transfer of goods in and out of the Gaza Strip, it would take around 20 years to import the aggregates required to complete housing reconstruction ([NRC/shelter cluster](#), August 2014).

## National response

### *Israel*

As the occupying power, Israel holds primary responsibility under international humanitarian law for the welfare of the Palestinian population. It is duty bound to prevent internal displacement, protect people who become displaced and facilitate voluntary durable solutions ([ICRC](#), 2012; [Guiding Principles](#), no. 28)

For the past four decades, however, Israel has failed to implement any of the UN Security Council resolutions relevant to displacement, such as the requirement to dismantle settlements and to stop all measures that “change the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure or status of the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem” ([UNSC resolution 465](#), March 1980). It has also refused to comply with a resolution reaffirming the “overriding need” to end its occupation ([UNSC resolution 476](#), June 1980).

The Israeli supreme court has on several occasions addressed causes of displacement by ordering sections of the “separation wall” to be rerouted, but in the vast majority of cases the country’s civil and military courts have upheld government practices and policies that have displaced Palestinians in the West Bank ([OCHA](#), November 2009; [B’Tselem](#), March 2006). In a 2013 report, a UN fact-finding mission on settlements highlighted Israel’s failure to investigate settler violence and take measures against the perpetrators. It concluded: “There is institutionalised discrimina-

tion against the Palestinian people when it comes to addressing violence” ([OHCHR](#), March 2013).

#### *Palestinian authorities*

The Palestinian authorities’ capacity to respond to displacement has been hampered by political tensions between Fatah and Hamas, poor governance, their limited jurisdiction, which extends only to Areas A and B of the West Bank, and repeated fiscal crises ([World Bank](#), September 2012).

Since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007, a lack of funding and poor coordination between Palestinian organisations have impeded the provision of assistance to both IDPs and the general population. After operation Cast Lead, Hamas helped IDPs with rent subsidies and compensation for destroyed homes, and it was instrumental in coordinating the reconstruction effort ([Al Jazeera](#), January 2009; [shelter cluster](#), January 2011).

That said, neither the Palestinian Authority nor political parties such as Fatah or Hamas have put forward a specific policy on displacement. In some cases, Palestinian organisations have even been caused the displacement of their own people. Local authorities demolished more than 100 homes in the Abu Amra neighbourhood of Gaza City in July 2012, displacing 771 families who were living on state land ([OCHA](#), August 2012).

## International response

#### *Coordination of humanitarian assistance*

UNRWA’s large-scale cash for work programme in the Gaza Strip was pivotal in staffing the emergency response at the height of operation Protective Edge, awarding 3,720 contracts to Palestinians ([UNRWA](#), September 2014). Given the scale of the destruction, a humanitarian appeal of unprecedented proportions was launched on 8 September 2014. It requested \$551 million for more than 100 early recovery and reconstruction

projects proposed by 54 organisations, including 13 UN agencies ([OCHA](#), October 2014).

The Humanitarian Country Team describes the situation in occupied Palestine as “a protracted protection crisis with humanitarian consequences driven by lack of respect for international law” ([OCHA](#), 2013). No international agency currently has a specific mandate to assist and protect IDPs, but the humanitarian community has of late become more aware of the causes of Palestinians’ displacement, and it is increasingly looking laws, policies and practices to address them ([FMR](#), 2012).

Since 2009, the UN has used the cluster system to coordinate the international humanitarian response ([OCHA](#), accessed August 2014). The Displacement Working Group (DWG), which was set up in November 2009 to develop coordination mechanisms and advocacy material to address the issue, has recently been replaced by two different structures. The response to displacement has been mainstreamed into the shelter, protection, water sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health and education clusters, and in early 2014 the Civil Society Advocacy Working Group on Displacement (CSAWGD) was established. It is intended as an open group for international, Palestinian and Israeli NGOs, UN agencies and donors.

An NGO-led tracking mechanism articulates and documents early responses to demolitions in the West Bank (IDMC interview, June 2014; [OCHA](#), 2013), and one of the objectives of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is to monitor and report on human rights violations such as arbitrary displacement ([OHCHR CAP](#), 2013; [HPN](#), 2009).

#### *Access restrictions and other obstacles*

Israel’s administrative procedures create a number of obstacles for international humanitarian in their efforts to provide assistance to vulnerable communities, including IDPs ([OCHA](#), July 2014). Staff living in the West Bank need a permit to

enter East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, and their access to other areas is hampered by closures and other restrictions. Between May 2013 and March 2014, at least 300 incidents at Israeli checkpoints were reported, including access for UN and NGO workers being delayed or denied ([UN](#), July 2014).

Between 2001 and 2011, Israel demolished infrastructure associated with development projects worth €49.1 million (\$62.3 million), of which 60 per cent was funded by the EU or its member states ([European Commission](#), March 2012). Donors have called for a systemic and coordinated effort to seek compensation as a first step to ensuring effective remedy for both themselves and the beneficiaries of their aid ([Euractiv](#), April 2014).

In February 2014, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) suspended the distribution of tents in the relief kits it provides in the Jordan valley to families whose homes have been demolished. Its decision followed a review of Israel's proscription on their delivery and the pattern of confiscation and obstruction of its items ([ICRC](#), February 2014). OCHA reports that between January 2011 and May 2014, Israel destroyed 365 internationally funded structures and items, including water cisterns, emergency tents and livelihood infrastructure, depriving IDPs and other vulnerable people of aid and support ([UN](#), January 2014; [OCHA](#), 2014; AIDA interview, June 2014).

Humanitarian agencies working in the Gaza Strip have to tread a fine line when delivering aid, as they have to adhere to a policy of no contact with Hamas, which the US, EU, Canada and Japan list as a terrorist organisation ([OCHA](#), 2013, [HPN](#), July 2013). The agreement Hamas and Fatah signed in September 2014 paves the way for the Palestinian Authority to regain control of the Gaza Strip, but it is too early to anticipate the effect such a development might have on much needed reconstruction efforts or its benefit to IDPs.



## About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement. For the millions of people worldwide displaced within their own country, IDMC plays a unique role as a global monitor and evidence-based advocate to influence policy and action by governments, UN agencies, donors, international organisations and NGOs.

IDMC was established in 1998 at the request of the Interagency Standing Committee on humanitarian assistance. Since then, IDMC's unique global function has been recognised and reiterated in annual UN General Assembly resolutions.

IDMC is part of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), an independent, non-governmental humanitarian organisation.

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