



General Assembly Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
30 June 2023

Original: English

General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

Item 61 of the preliminary list*

Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

Economic and Social Council

2023 session

25 July 2022–26 July 2023

Agenda item 16

Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan

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Note by the Secretary-General**

Summary

In its resolution [2022/22](#), entitled “Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan”, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session, through the Economic and Social Council, a report on the implementation of that resolution. The Council, in its resolution [2022/23](#), entitled “Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women”, also requested the Secretary-General to include information on the gender-specific impact of the occupation and the progress made in the implementation of that resolution in that report. The Assembly, in its resolution [77/187](#), entitled “Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources”, also requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its seventy-eighth session. The present document, which was prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, has been submitted in compliance with these resolutions.

* [A/78/50](#).

** The present document was submitted for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.



The report covers persistent Israeli practices and policies, in particular those that are in violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law and that affect the social and economic conditions of the people living under its military occupation, including the gendered impact of the occupation.

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia would like to express its appreciation for the contributions from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the Mine Action Service of the Secretariat, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the World Health Organization.

I. Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution [2022/22](#), expressed concerns about the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan. The Council's resolution [2022/23](#) highlighted the gender-specific repercussions in this regard. The General Assembly, in its resolution [77/187](#), demanded that Israel, the occupying Power, cease the exploitation, damage, cause of loss or depletion and endangerment of natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan.

2. The present document provides information on relevant developments in this regard during the reporting period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

II. Occupied Palestinian Territory

3. The reporting period witnessed a deterioration in the already fragile political and security situation in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in addition to another military escalation in Gaza in August 2022, further compounding the living conditions of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Israeli practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

4. During the reporting period, Israel continued to employ policies and practices inconsistent with its obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Many of the violations disproportionately affect Palestinians,¹ including Palestinian women and girls, who are affected differently. Such policies and practices as settlement expansion, the demolition of Palestinian structures and homes, closures, access and movement restrictions have had a severe humanitarian, economic, social and political impact on Palestinians and their ability to exercise their fundamental human rights.²

5. Palestinians in the West Bank are subject to more than 1,800 Israeli military orders issued since 1967, covering issues from security to land planning and zoning, natural resources and the administration of justice.³ None of the orders specifically provide for the protection of Palestinians or reference Palestinian rights but focus on Israeli settlers. Across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Israeli authorities methodically privileged Jewish Israelis and discriminated against Palestinians.⁴

6. Palestinians in the occupied territory are subject to a complex combination of Israeli and Palestinian legal systems. In the West Bank, Israeli domestic law is applied extraterritorially to Israeli settlers, while Palestinians are subject to Israeli military law in addition to the Palestinian legal system. This raises concerns as to the obligation of the occupying Power to respect the laws in force in the territory that it occupies, unless it is absolutely prevented from doing so.

7. The application of two different legal systems in the same territory, on the sole basis of nationality or origin, is inherently discriminatory and also violates the principle of equality before the law, which is central to the right to a fair trial. The resulting dual legal system provides greater enjoyment of human rights for Israelis than for Palestinians.

¹ United States, Department of State, *West Bank and Gaza Strip 2022 Human Rights Report*, p. 4.

² See [S/2022/945](#), [A/77/493](#) and [A/HRC/52/76](#).

³ [A/77/501](#), para. 30.

⁴ United States, Department of State, *West Bank and Gaza Strip*, p. 75.

8. In this context, the Government of Israel, under an agreement between the Minister of Defence and the newly established Additional Minister in the Ministry of Defence,⁵ transferred effective supervision of the Civil Administration to the Additional Minister. In accordance with the agreement, the Prime Minister on 2 February 2023 also appointed the head of the new “Settlement Administration” within the Ministry of Defence,⁶ which has been tasked with implementing an “equal citizenship reform” aimed at “improving and increasing efficiency of services” provided to Israeli settlers in the West Bank, inter alia, through government ministries.⁷

9. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel found that Israeli policies that cited security as a pretext, including settler-only roads, closures, restrictions on the freedom of movement and punitive home demolitions, were based on discriminatory and otherwise unlawful measures and appeared to constitute collective punishment against an entire population, and that security was often used to justify territorial expansion.⁸

10. The Commission also found that there were reasonable grounds to conclude that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory had become unlawful under international law owing to its permanence and to actions undertaken by Israel to annex parts of the land de facto and de jure. It also found that Israeli actions that were intended to create irreversible facts on the ground and expand its control over territory were reflections as well as drivers of its permanent occupation, and that the settlement enterprise was the principal means by which those results were achieved.⁹

Violence and the use of force

11. Israeli security forces continued to employ measures and practices that raise serious concerns about excessive use of force and unlawful killing, in some cases possibly amounting to arbitrary deprivation of life, including extrajudicial executions.

12. During the reporting period, 257 Palestinians, including 9 women and 56 children (53 boys and 3 girls), were killed by Israeli security forces and settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and another 10,560 Palestinian were injured, including 313 women and 1,040 children (963 boys and 77 girls).¹⁰ One of the victims of Israeli use of force was notable veteran journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, who was shot dead while covering a military raid on the Jenin refugee camp on 11 May 2022.

13. Concurrently, Israel withheld the bodies of 386 killed Palestinians, in what may constitute collective punishment.¹¹

14. In Gaza, during the August escalation between Israel and Palestinian armed groups, 49 Palestinians were killed, at least 26 of whom were civilians, including 4 women and 17 children. According to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, 360 Palestinians were injured, including 151 children and 58 women. Israeli officials

⁵ See Israeli Law Professors’ Forum for Democracy, “Implications of the agreement subordinating the Civil Administration to the Additional Minister in the Ministry of Defense”, Position Paper No. 24 (2023), available at www.lawprofssforum.org/post/pp24-e.

⁶ Decision No. 168 of 23 February 2023, available at www.gov.il/he/departments/policies/dec168-2023.

⁷ Input from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

⁸ A/77/328, paras. 79 and 80.

⁹ Ibid., para. 75.

¹⁰ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Data on casualties”, Protection of Civilians database. Available at <https://ochaopt.org/data/casualties> (accessed on 7 April 2023).

¹¹ OHCHR input.

reported 2 Israelis moderately injured and at least 62 lightly injured, including 9 children.

15. The indiscriminate launching of rockets by Palestinian armed groups from highly populated neighbourhoods in Gaza into civilian population centres in Israel, which also resulted in casualties and violates international humanitarian law, puts the lives of civilians at risk.

Accountability

16. Lack of accountability for excessive use of force and other violations by Israeli security forces remained pervasive. There continues to be an almost total failure to ensure accountability for apparent unlawful killing of Palestinians, including in instances that raise concerns of extrajudicial executions and wilful killing. This is indicative of the climate of impunity which prevails with respect to the excessive use of force against Palestinians, including in the contexts of settlement.¹²

17. More than a year after the May 2021 escalation in Gaza, the Israeli army had, according to the non-governmental organization Yesh Din, opened just 1 investigation out of 84 that were flagged for assessment by its internal mechanisms.¹³

18. Similarly, the non-governmental organization found that, in 2019–2020, the Israeli Military Advocate General’s Corps opened criminal investigations in only 22 out of the 273 complaints that it had received for actions and violations committed by the Israeli security forces against Palestinians and their property during that period.¹⁴

Detention and ill-treatment

19. The Israeli military legal system in the West Bank applies to Palestinians, but not Israeli settlers, and is presided over by Israeli military judges. Trials are conducted in Hebrew (which many Palestinian detainees do not speak, in particular child detainees) without adequate translation or interpretation. Few procedural and substantive legal protections are provided. Suspects’ and detainees’ lawyers are significantly restricted in their access to evidence.¹⁵ Furthermore, no Palestinian entity is allowed to provide any services to Palestinians in Israeli prisons, making them exceptionally vulnerable to abuses which may amount to human rights violations.¹⁶

20. At least 6,085 Palestinians, including 452 children, were arrested by Israel in 2022, the highest number of detainees since 2008. The number of those held under administrative detention has more than doubled in the past two years.¹⁷ As at the end of March 2023, 4,900 Palestinians were detained, defined as “security prisoners” by

¹² A/77/493, para. 74.

¹³ Yesh Din, “Investigating themselves: results of the military law enforcement system’s examination of incidents of Palestinians killed and wounded in the Gaza Strip during ‘Operation Guardian of the Walls’”, May 2022, pp. 10 and 11.

¹⁴ Yesh Din, “Law enforcement on soldiers suspected of harming Palestinians and their property”, data sheet, March 2022, p. 9.

¹⁵ A/77/501, para. 30. See also Military Court Watch, “Military legal system”, available at www.militarycourtwatch.org/page.php?id=6a06ck7Rnqa26628AAapuBpjuFE; and Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, campaign paper entitled “In the case of *The Palestinian People vs. Military Courts*”, 2021, available at www.addameer.org/sites/default/files/campaigns/campaign%20Paper_0.pdf.

¹⁶ Input from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

¹⁷ S/2022/945, para. 76.

Israel, including 1,016 administrative detainees, 160 child prisoners and 30 female prisoners.¹⁸

21. On average, 150 Palestinian children were in custody at any given time, 100 of them in pretrial detention.¹⁹

22. Israeli security forces arrest hundreds of Palestinian children every year in pre-planned arrests from their home in the middle of the night, with rarely any summons beforehand. Between 2014 and 2021, only 1–9 per cent of families that had a child arrested received a summons to bring the child in for questioning. However, according to HaMoked – Centre for the Defence of the Individual and Military Court Watch, not a single family reported that it had received a summons before the arrest during 2022.²⁰

23. Palestinian detainees continue to be subjected to ill-treatment at detention centres and reportedly exposed to several torture methods, instances of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment by the Israel police and the Israel Prison Service. Based on cases handled by the Public Committee against Torture in Israel, out of 1,400 complaints of torture since 2001 submitted to the Ministry of Justice in Israel, only 3 criminal investigations were opened, and there were no indictments.²¹

24. In 2022, the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories was briefed that women are often subjected to gender-based violence during the arrest process, including unwarranted body searches and threats of sexual violence, and that mothers are often threatened with the detention of their children if they do not comply.²²

25. Extensive legislative plans aimed at punishing Palestinian “security prisoners” have been approved by the Knesset since the most recent Israeli elections. This includes a law allowing the revocation of Israeli citizenship for Palestinian citizens of Israel convicted of what Israel claims are terror-related offences and those who receive financial support from the Palestinian Authority. Two bills that passed the preliminary reading allow the Israeli authorities to deny security and political prisoners access to health services “that improve their quality of life”; and introduce the death penalty for offences defined by Israel as terrorist in a discriminatory manner that targets Palestinians.²³

Destruction and confiscation of property and infrastructure

26. Demolitions and forced evictions exacerbate the coercive environment and raise concerns about the risk of forcible transfer. They also continue to raise concern about compliance with international humanitarian law provisions that are binding on the occupying Power, including the prohibition of the destruction of property and institutions dedicated to education.

¹⁸ Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, Statistics database. Available at www.addameer.org/statistics (accessed on 1 April 2023).

¹⁹ A/77/501, para. 43.

²⁰ HaMoked, “On flimsy grounds: Israel’s pervasive night arrests of Palestinian children”, January 2023; and Military Court Watch, “Comparative graph – issues of concern”, available at www.militarycourtwatch.org/page.php?id=MmNuAkpGrsa613395AWw2bO0pT3K.

²¹ Public Committee against Torture in Israel, “Torture in Israel: situation report 2022”, December 2022, p. 1.

²² A/77/501, para. 43; and United States, Department of State, *West Bank and Gaza Strip*, p. 10.

²³ See <https://main.knesset.gov.il/EN/Pages/default.aspx>.

27. The Israeli authorities issued almost 20,000 demolition orders in Area C between 1988 and 2020. By September 2022, more than 8,500 structures had been demolished across the Occupied Palestinian Territory.²⁴

28. Israeli authorities demolished 954 structures (including 517 homes and 140 donor-funded structures) in 2022, compared with 911 in 2021. The first quarter of 2023 witnessed a 47 per cent increase in such demolitions (290) compared with the same period in 2022. The number of punitive demolitions (17) carried out by the Israeli authorities against the family homes of Palestinians suspected of attacking Israelis, in what may amount to collective punishment, more than tripled during the reporting period compared with the preceding one (5).²⁵

29. According to the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, over 80 per cent of demolitions across the Occupied Palestinian Territory occurred within 3 km of existing settlements, connecting existing settlements and undermining the contiguity of Palestinian territory.²⁶

30. Israel has used military and other justifications to expropriate more than a third (2 million dunums) of the West Bank since 1967 for a variety of purposes that serve mostly settlers in the occupied territory. This includes much of the land declared as closed military zones (over half of Area C, or 1.765 million dunums) and used for settlement construction, industrial zones, farming and grazing land for settlers.²⁷

31. The wall has isolated more than 10 per cent of the area of the West Bank, affecting more than 219 Palestinian localities. Furthermore, since 1967, the Israeli authorities have confiscated about 353,000 dunums of Palestinian lands and classified them as natural reserves.²⁸

32. Settlement of titles constitutes an irreversible act of sovereignty by a permanent regime and subverts the principle that occupation is inherently temporary. Ongoing action in this regard in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is illegal under international law and increases the risk of illegal appropriation of property and of possible forcible transfer. Concerns have also been raised that the title-settlement procedure was being implemented without transparency and without the knowledge of affected Palestinian residents, effectively denying them the opportunity to file claims.²⁹

33. Overall, in occupied East Jerusalem, at least 218 Palestinian households comprising 970 people, including 420 children, are facing eviction cases in Israeli courts. Most cases were initiated by Israeli settler organizations and are based on the application of Israeli laws that allow for properties in East Jerusalem that were owned by Jews prior to 1948 to be reclaimed. No similar law allows Palestinians to reclaim their property in Israel.³⁰

34. The military escalation against Gaza in August 2022 resulted in 10 houses in Gaza being completely destroyed and 48 severely damaged and rendered

²⁴ A/77/328, para. 60.

²⁵ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Data on demolition and displacement in the West Bank". Available at www.ochaopt.org/data/demolition (accessed on 21 March 2023).

²⁶ A/77/501, para. 33.

²⁷ A/77/328, paras. 31 and 39.

²⁸ State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, press release on the forty-seventh annual commemoration of Land Day, 30 March 2023. Available at www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_LandPalDay47E.pdf.

²⁹ A/77/493, paras. 12 and 72.

³⁰ S/2022/945, para. 10.

uninhabitable. According to the authorities in Gaza, over 600 housing units were damaged, displacing 84 families.³¹

Coercive environment and population displacement

35. A combination of Israeli policies and practices in Area C, East Jerusalem and the city of Hebron, such as the demolition and threat of demolition of homes and schools and the destruction of livelihoods, the denial of service infrastructure, the restriction of access to farming and grazing land, settler violence and poor law enforcement in response thereto and the revocation of residency rights, among other things, has created a coercive environment, which may force Palestinians to leave their places of residence, placing them at risk of forcible transfer, a grave breach of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.³² Palestinian communities in Area C, East Jerusalem and the Israeli-controlled part of Hebron (H2) are particularly affected.³³

36. These processes of forced evictions and mass³⁴ and individual displacement intensify the coercive environment pressuring Palestinians to leave their homes, raising concerns of the forcible transfer of Palestinians, and occur largely in areas often slated for settlement expansion. In its response to a petition, the Government of Israel noted that it intended to displace the residents of Abu Nuwwar village to allow for the expansion of the Ma'ale Adummim settlement. The community has been subjected to harsh coercive conditions aimed at encouraging their non-consensual displacement.³⁵

37. In another instance, on 4 May 2022, the Israeli High Court of Justice rejected a petition against eviction orders issued to 1,144 Palestinian residents of 12 herding communities in Masafer Yatta (282 men, 293 women, 299 boys and 270 girls) after Israeli military designated the area as a firing zone. The judgment is inconsistent with international law and puts the residents at imminent risk of forced evictions and forcible transfer.³⁶

38. Palestinians in East Jerusalem also continue to suffer owing to the expanding Israeli settlements and measures and policies employed by Israel that may coerce them to leave their homes.³⁷ By mid-November 2022, the Israeli authorities had revoked 66 residency permits for Palestinians in East Jerusalem, citing a regulation that allowed revocation for individuals who stayed outside of Israel for more than seven years or acquired citizenship or permanent residence status elsewhere.³⁸

Israeli settlement activity and settler violence

39. Settlements have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of international law and United Nations resolutions. The establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory have a severe impact on the rights of Palestinians and amount to the transfer by Israel of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies, which is prohibited under international humanitarian law, as consistently confirmed by the competent United Nations organs,

³¹ [S/PV.9139](#), p. 3.

³² OHCHR input; see also [A/HRC/52/75](#), para. 15.

³³ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian Response Plan 2023", January 2023, p. 8.

³⁴ See e.g. the Masafer Yatta case in para. 37.

³⁵ Education cluster, "Education in emergency: protecting education under attack – special focus: Abu Nuwar", 30 December 2022, p. 2.

³⁶ [A/77/493](#), para. 19, and [A/77/328](#), para. 81.

³⁷ OHCHR input; see also [A/HRC/52/76](#), para. 15.

³⁸ United States, Department of State, *West Bank and Gaza Strip*, p. 61.

including the International Court of Justice.³⁹ They further entrench the military occupation by Israel of Palestinian territory, undermine the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and sovereignty, encroach on Palestinian land and natural resources, and hamper the free movement of the Palestinian population. They undermine the prospect of establishing a contiguous, independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian State.⁴⁰

40. In 2022, the Israeli authorities approved about 70 plans to construct more than 10,000 settlement units in Jerusalem. Overall, during the year, in Area C, some 4,800 units were advanced, compared with some 5,400 in 2021, while tenders decreased, from 1,800 in 2021 to 150 in 2022. However, in occupied East Jerusalem the number of housing units that were advanced tripled from the previous year, from some 900 units in 2021 to some 3,100 units in 2022, with tenders also doubling, from 200 to 400.⁴¹

41. Palestinian land has also been used for industrial and economic activity linked to Israeli settlements throughout the West Bank, mainly through the establishment of industrial zones. Israel has encouraged companies to move their operations to those zones by providing financial incentives, permits and licences that are rarely granted to Palestinians.⁴²

Settler violence

42. There has been a steady increase in violence by settlers with the acquiescence and support of Israeli security forces, with continuing impunity for settler violence. Growing instances of Israeli security forces using force in the context of settler attacks against Palestinians, or jointly using force, including firearms, in the same incident is making distinction in violence increasingly difficult to discern.⁴³

43. The level of settler violence against Palestinians during 2022 was the highest recorded since the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs started documenting in 2005. Compared with 2021, there has been close to a 40 per cent increase in the monthly average of settler violence incidents resulting in either Palestinian casualties or property damage, or both, and a 96 per cent increase compared with 2020.⁴⁴

44. During the reporting period, 20 Palestinians were killed in settler-related violence. Settlers are rarely held accountable for such attacks, increasing the level of threat to Palestinians and their property.⁴⁵

45. On 26 February, Israeli settlers, escorted by Israeli forces, physically assaulted Palestinian residents and their property in Huwwarah town and nearby villages. At least 10 Palestinians were injured by settlers, including 1 child and 1 woman. Settlers also caused extensive damage to Palestinian property. At least 37 inhabited houses sustained damage, including some set on fire; at least eight commercial structures were burned, along with 55 Palestinian privately owned vehicles and 1,200 scrapped

³⁹ [A/77/493](#), para. 71.

⁴⁰ OHCHR input; see also [A/HRC/52/76](#), paras. 7–11.

⁴¹ See [S/2022/945](#).

⁴² [A/77/328](#), para 36.

⁴³ [A/77/493](#), para. 73.

⁴⁴ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Humanitarian needs overview: Occupied Palestinian Territory”, January 2023, p. 15.

⁴⁵ [S/2022/945](#), para. 73.

vehicles. In addition, settlers attacked a fire truck, preventing it from entering the town.⁴⁶

46. The increase in settler violence has also resulted in damage to Palestinian olive trees. Between January and October 2022, 1,400 trees were vandalized, and Palestinians reported 1,000 trees harvested, probably by Israeli settlers.⁴⁷

47. With regard to settler actions against Palestinians, there has been ineffective prevention, few police investigations, a low indictment rate, and lenient sentences for convicted offenders.⁴⁸

48. Yesh Din found that the police had failed in the investigation of 81.5 per cent of cases opened into “ideologically motivated offences” against Palestinians since 2005 (1,208 of 1,481 files). Of the closed files, 1,172 were closed on the grounds that the offender was unknown or because of insufficient evidence.⁴⁹ In 2021, only 87 investigations were opened against Israeli suspects, while the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs documented 585 incidents of settler violence. By 31 October 2022, 49 of those cases remained under investigation, while 38 had been closed, including 19 indictments reportedly filed.⁵⁰

49. Israeli police data confirm that charges were filed in under 4 per cent of settler violence cases in the period from 2018 to 2020. In contrast, between 2018 and April 2021, 96 per cent of investigations of Palestinian violence by the military prosecution ended with a conviction, with 99.6 per cent based on plea deals.⁵¹

Movement and access restrictions

50. Palestinians’ rights to freedom of movement and access to services and livelihoods continue to be systematically infringed, including as a result of discriminatory restrictions on accessing key roads for which Israeli authorities cite security reasons.⁵²

51. Movement and access restrictions and closures exacerbate human trafficking, with a particularly negative impact on women and girls. Situations of vulnerability include Palestinians facing difficulties while trying to cross Israeli checkpoints to exit Gaza, or from the West Bank to Jerusalem and Israel, in addition to those leaving Gaza by sea. To facilitate their movement, individuals may seek the aid of smugglers and then fall victim to traffickers along the route.⁵³

Gaza closures

52. The blockade and closures by Israel of Gaza, one of the most densely populated areas in the world, since 2007 following the takeover by Hamas of the Gaza Strip the same year may amount to collective punishment, which is prohibited by international law. It has affected every area of Palestinian life and continues to undermine freedom of movement and the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, such as the

⁴⁶ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Protection of civilians: Occupied Palestinian Territory”, 14–27 February 2023, pp. 2 and 3.

⁴⁷ Input from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

⁴⁸ Yesh Din, “Law enforcement on Israeli civilians in the West Bank (settler violence)”, December 2022, p. 1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵⁰ [A/HRC/52/76](#), para. 47.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, para. 48.

⁵² [A/77/501](#), para. 28.

⁵³ UNODC input.

rights to an adequate standard of living, health, education, work and family life of Palestinians in Gaza.⁵⁴

53. In 2022, Israel gradually eased restrictions on the movement of people and exports. Exports from Gaza in 2022 through Kerem Shalom, including to the West Bank, were 43 per cent higher than in 2021, while imports decreased by almost 8 per cent.⁵⁵

54. The number of commercial trucks entering Gaza was almost 30 per cent below the monthly average for the first half of 2007, while the population grew by more than 50 per cent during the same period.⁵⁶

55. The 2022 monthly average of exit of Palestinians from Gaza to Israel remained at about 8 per cent of the monthly average of exits in 2000. Some 88 per cent of exits were by Palestinians with permits under the traders and economic needs categories, whereas 6 per cent were by patients referred for treatment in West Bank or Israel.⁵⁷

56. As part of the closures, Israel declared access-restricted areas on the coastal and land areas around Gaza. The lack of clear information regarding these areas creates risks for Palestinians who live or work either on the coast or near the perimeter fence. No official signage exists for the line of demarcation, and official policy changes frequently.⁵⁸

Movement restrictions in the West Bank

57. The movement of Palestinians within the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is restricted through a complex system of checkpoints, permits, military roadblocks, settlements, a bypass road system, parallel legal regimes and the West Bank “barrier”, effectively fragmenting the territory into an archipelago of isolated islands.

58. The continued consolidation by Israel of settlement blocs in the West Bank with networks of bypass roads and the wall east of Jerusalem includes a new “eastern ring road”. This road will reportedly not be accessible to Palestinians.⁵⁹ Israeli authorities have restricted or prohibited Palestinian travel on 29 roads and sections of roads totalling approximately 36 miles throughout the West Bank, including many of the main traffic arteries.⁶⁰

59. In Hebron, citing a need to protect several hundred Israeli settlers residing in the H2 sector of the city, Israeli military authorities continued to restrict Palestinian vehicular and foot traffic and access to homes and businesses of approximately 22,000 Palestinians who reside there.⁶¹

60. In 2022, there was a significant increase in closures and other access restrictions imposed by Israel compared with preceding years, hindering the operations of United Nations organizations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). From 1 April to 31 December 2022,

⁵⁴ OHCHR input; see also [A/HRC/52/75](#), para. 13.

⁵⁵ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Humanitarian needs overview”, p. 11.

⁵⁶ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), “Occupied Palestinian Territory emergency appeal 2023”, January 2023, p. 12.

⁵⁷ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Movement in and out of Gaza: update covering January 2023”, 27 February 2023.

⁵⁸ United States, Department of State, *West Bank and Gaza Strip*, p. 56.

⁵⁹ [A/77/501](#), para. 28.

⁶⁰ United States, Department of State, *West Bank and Gaza Strip*, p. 58.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 55–58.

a total of 166 UNRWA access-related incidents negatively affected its ability to deliver services to the Palestine refugee community.⁶²

Depletion, endangerment and exploitation of natural resources

61. Area C constitutes more than 60 per cent of the area of the West Bank and is the richest in terms of the availability of natural resources. However, Palestinians face severe restrictions on planning, building and access to natural resources in this area. Any investment or economic activity requires Israeli permits. Decades of discriminatory allocation of resources by Israeli authorities, including limitations of Palestinian access to and use of farmland, water and other natural resources, for the benefit of Israelis compound inequalities and lead to the deterioration of living conditions of Palestinians.⁶³ The Gaza closures limit Palestinian access to materials and technologies that could promote the efficient use of energy, water and other natural resources.

62. Palestinians face an acute water problem, which has become more intensified as a result of population growth and restrictions imposed by Israel on Palestinians' access to water resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Since 1967, Israel has placed all water resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory under its military control and prohibited Palestinians from constructing new water installations or maintaining existing installations without a military permit. At the same time, Israel has developed its own water infrastructure for its settlements and has done the same in Israel.⁶⁴

63. In the West Bank, severe water shortages continue to be reported as Israel retains full control of the distribution and extraction of most water resources, including aquifers. More than 77 per cent of the water resources used by Palestinians are extracted from the ground. Palestinians continue to be prevented by Israel from gaining access to and extracting water from the Jordan River.⁶⁵

64. Israeli settlements limit Palestinian exploitation of 13,696 agricultural holdings in the West Bank, while the "barrier" limits the utilization of 6,945 holdings, closed Israeli military areas limit the utilization of 6,463 holdings, and checkpoints limit the utilization of another 8,317. The imposition of access-restricted areas in Gaza limits the utilization of 1,106 holdings. Other Israeli measures limit the utilization of a further 15,794 holdings.⁶⁶

65. Destruction of productive trees belonging to Palestinians continued in 2022 in the West Bank, with 10,721 destroyed from 1 April to 31 December 2022. Nablus was the most affected governorate with 3,725 trees destroyed.⁶⁷

66. The military escalation in August 2022 damaged or destroyed agricultural lands, greenhouses, livestock and poultry farms, causing damages and losses estimated at \$1 million.⁶⁸

⁶² UNRWA input.

⁶³ A/77/501, para. 46.

⁶⁴ A/77/328, para. 35.

⁶⁵ State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and Palestinian Water Authority, joint press release on World Water Day, 21 March 2023. Available at www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_WWD2023E.pdf.

⁶⁶ State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and Ministry of Agriculture, *Agriculture Census 2021: Final Results – Palestine* (2023), table 44.

⁶⁷ UNRWA input.

⁶⁸ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian needs overview", p. 46.

67. Israel continues to exploit the mineral resources of the West Bank and has not issued quarrying permits for Palestinian companies in Area C, where mineral reserves are estimated to be worth \$30 billion, since 1994.

Social and economic conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

68. In 2023, roughly 2.1 million Palestinians (800,000 in the West Bank and 1.3 million in Gaza) are in need of humanitarian assistance, half of them children.⁶⁹

69. Some 38 per cent of Palestinian households were determined to be in a state of “catastrophic”, “extreme” or “severe” conditions in 2022. The situation was particularly dire in Gaza, where 29 per cent of households were classified as living in “catastrophic” or “extreme” conditions.⁷⁰

Economic conditions

70. The system of restrictive policies imposed by Israel on Palestinian economic activity, resources and land since 1967 has systematically hollowed the Palestinian economy of many elements that are vital for its healthy operation, rendering it highly vulnerable to internal and external shocks and highly dependent on Israel and external transfers.

71. The current regime of internal and external closures and prevailing climate of political and economic uncertainty, combined with the fragmentation of the economy, constrains private sector growth and brings about a heavy reliance of the economy on non-tradable sectors such as services, construction, the financial sector and the public sector. This distortion continues as the contribution of productive sectors (manufacturing and agriculture) to gross domestic product (GDP) dropped from 34 per cent in 2021 to 16.3 per cent in 2022, affecting economic growth, employment and trade. Between 2000 and 2022, the agricultural sector’s contribution to GDP decreased by 26 per cent, the manufacturing sector’s by 4 per cent, and the construction sector’s by 33 per cent. Moreover, the challenges facing the Palestinian economy were exacerbated by the effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and global geopolitical dynamics. In addition, decreasing external budgetary support and the deductions by Israel of approximately \$30 million from the tax revenues that it collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, based on a law on withholding payments to cover attacks against Israelis,⁷¹ caused a sizeable economic slowdown and reduced real growth to about 4 per cent, with growth reaching only 2 per cent (year on year) in the fourth quarter of 2022.⁷²

72. Similarly, despite some growth in 2021 (1 per cent) and 2022 (4.4 per cent), not only did GDP per capita fail to recover to its 2019 level, but it remained below its 2011 level.⁷³

73. The contribution of Gaza to the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory remained low at 17.4 per cent of real GDP in 2022, compared with 36 per cent in

⁶⁹ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Humanitarian needs overview: OPT summary”, 25 January 2023. Available at www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-needs-overview-and-humanitarian-response-plan-2023-dashboard.

⁷⁰ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Humanitarian needs overview”, p. 9.

⁷¹ S/PV.9290, p. 4.

⁷² State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, “Press report, quarterly national accounts (fourth quarter 2022)”, March 2023.

⁷³ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics values, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) calculations, and State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and Palestine Monetary Authority, “The performance of the Palestinian economy in 2022, and economic forecasts for 2023”, press release, 28 December 2022.

1994, owing mainly to the severe economic and movement restrictions and the recurrent military escalations against the strip.⁷⁴ The deterioration of the textile and garment sector is illustrative of the destruction of productive sectors. Before 2000, this industry was the second largest employer after construction in Gaza, with around 1,000 establishments employing around 40,000 workers. Currently, only 226 enterprises are active in this sector, employing around 6,000 workers, of whom only 150 are women.⁷⁵

74. International aid to the budget continues to dwindle (from 27 per cent of GDP in 2008 to 1.8 per cent in 2022),⁷⁶ compounding the financial shortages of the Palestinian Authority and rendering it unable to pay, except partial wages to public sector employees. This was among the main drivers of the Palestinian teachers' strike ongoing since February 2023.⁷⁷

75. While the Palestinian economy remains reliant on trade with Israel, the Palestinian trade deficit rose by 35.4 per cent from 2021 to 2022, accounting for -47.8 per cent of GDP in 2022.⁷⁸ Furthermore, customs tax, value added tax and excise tax collected by Israel for the Palestinian Authority represent 65–75 per cent of its revenues. The Authority is required under the Paris Protocol on Economic Relations existing trade regime to conform to Israeli customs regulations for the majority of imports, which are designed to benefit the Israeli economy.⁷⁹

76. During the reporting period, a quarter of the Palestinian workforce (25.6 per cent) was unemployed (13 per cent in West Bank and 45 per cent in Gaza). Youth unemployment was high at 34.9 per cent, with figures exceeding 20 per cent in the West Bank and a startling 61.1 per cent in Gaza. Furthermore, the unemployment rate for educated young people in Gaza reached 73.9 per cent.⁸⁰

77. The unemployment rate for graduates aged 19–29 years stands at 48.3 per cent (28.6 per cent in the West Bank and 73.9 per cent in Gaza), with women facing a particularly high rate (61.3 per cent) compared with men (34.3 per cent).⁸¹

78. Some 22 per cent of Palestinians lived below the \$5.50 (2011 purchasing power parity) a day poverty line in 2016/17. Estimates based on GDP per capita growth indicate that in 2020 the poverty rate spiked to 29.7 per cent and is estimated to have declined to 27.3 per cent in 2021.⁸² The situation in Gaza is particularly concerning, as around 80 per cent of the population is dependent on aid.⁸³ By 2023, 53 per cent of

⁷⁴ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics values and ESCWA calculations; see also ESCWA, *Palestine under Occupation III: Mapping Israel's Policies and Practices and Their Economic Repercussions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (2022), pp. 22–40.

⁷⁵ UNIDO input.

⁷⁶ World Bank, "Economic monitoring report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee", 22 September 2022, p. 36.

⁷⁷ Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, "Palestinian Territory: meeting teachers' demands is crucial for students' exercise of right to education", 21 March 2023. Available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/palestinian-territory-meeting-teachers-demands-crucial-students-exercise-right-education>.

⁷⁸ State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Press report, quarterly national accounts (fourth quarter 2022)", table 3–1, and ESCWA calculations.

⁷⁹ World Bank, "Economic monitoring report", p. 33.

⁸⁰ State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) presents the main findings of labour force survey in 2022", 15 February 2023.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² World Bank, "Economic monitoring report", p. 10.

⁸³ See www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/gaza-strip.

the population was living below the poverty line and 34 per cent below the deep poverty line.⁸⁴

Food security

79. The rate of Palestinian households experiencing severe or moderate food insecurity rose to 64.4 per cent in 2022,⁸⁵ increasing from 9 per cent to 23 per cent in the West Bank and from 50 per cent to 53 per cent in Gaza.⁸⁶

80. While food is available, it is not affordable for most Palestinian households. More than half of Palestinian households' expenditures (56 per cent in Gaza and 50 per cent in the West Bank and East Jerusalem) was on food.⁸⁷

81. The State of Palestine has the second highest food import dependency ratio in the region, with food imports accounting for about 34 per cent of total imports, especially for wheat (91 per cent) and vegetable oil (95 per cent). The war in Ukraine posed additional challenges to the already vulnerable food system, due in particular to price volatility and uncertainty and delays in shipping.⁸⁸

82. Inflation increased by 3.74 per cent from 2021 to 2022, while the food consumer price index rose by 6.74 per cent.⁸⁹ This has had a significant impact on households' capacity to meet basic needs, as price levels in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were already high in comparison to income levels prior to the war in Ukraine.⁹⁰

83. Amid the high level of food insecurity in Gaza, cases of stunting, wasting and underweight children are reported. Some 70 per cent of 1-year-olds and 40 per cent of pregnant women in Gaza are anaemic.⁹¹

Water, sanitation and hygiene

84. The key challenges and vulnerabilities related to the water, sanitation and hygiene sector in the West Bank are posed mainly by the restrictions on construction in Area C, coupled with demolition of water, sanitation and hygiene structures and barriers to access to existing water sources. The closures in Gaza and recurrent military escalation have had negative impacts on the water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure in Gaza.⁹²

85. Most Gaza Strip households have piped water, yet only 3.2 per cent use it for drinking. In the West Bank, households have to revert to other strategies to overcome the lack of sufficient drinking water. In total, 1.4 million Palestinians are in need of humanitarian support to improve access to safe drinking water.⁹³

86. The daily allocation per capita of consumed water for domestic purposes was 86.3 litres (89.0 litres in the West Bank and 82.7 litres in Gaza) in 2021. The Israeli

⁸⁴ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian needs overview", p. 46.

⁸⁵ UNRWA, "Occupied Palestinian Territory emergency appeal 2023", p. 10.

⁸⁶ TD/B/EX(72)/2 and TD/B/EX(72)/2/Corr.1, para. 2.

⁸⁷ Input from the World Food Programme (WFP).

⁸⁸ FAO input.

⁸⁹ State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Monthly consumer price index numbers by major groups of expenditure and region for January–December 2022 and percent changes from January–December 2021", 12 January 2023. Available at www.pcbs.gov.ps/statisticsIndicatorsTables.aspx?lang=en&table_id=1628.

⁹⁰ World Bank, "Economic monitoring report", p. 33.

⁹¹ UNRWA input.

⁹² United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian needs overview", pp. 56 and 57.

⁹³ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "Humanitarian action for children 2023: State of Palestine", December 2022, p. 2.

daily allocation per capita is three times higher, at about 300 litres, and more than seven times higher for Israeli settlers.⁹⁴

87. As 96 per cent of the water from Gaza's sole aquifer is unfit for human consumption, the preferred strategic solution to provide its citizens with safe, clean water is the desalination of seawater. However, maintaining the equipment used for the desalination process is a big concern, as the water, sanitation and hygiene sector faces challenges with delays in the delivery of essential materials for repair work and the rehabilitation of water networks, including as a result of the closures in Gaza.⁹⁵

88. Delays in delivering fuel to the Gaza Strip during the August escalation brought about a power supply shortage that decreased water production and distribution by more than 50 per cent. The operation capacity of wastewater treatment plants was also affected, which resulted in more than 130,000 m³ of raw or poorly treated wastewater being discharged to the sea daily.⁹⁶

Health

89. Essential health-care needs among Palestinians are high, driven by the high cost of services, access restrictions and lack of availability of treatment and medicine, particularly in Gaza, affecting 1.6 million people, including 809,000 children.⁹⁷

90. In addition to the 187 attacks on health care in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in 2022 recorded by the World Health Organization (WHO) Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care,⁹⁸ the application of the dual legal and political system governing the Occupied Palestinian Territory contributes to continued health inequities. This has resulted in a weakened Palestinian health-care system, which is suffering from major shortages in specialized personnel, specialized facilities and available drugs. Israeli restrictions obstruct the ability of Palestinians to gain access to essential health services, including primary health care.⁹⁹

91. Challenges and vulnerabilities also extend to sexual and reproductive health and rights, including services for gender-based violence survivors; maternal and child health, including nutrition; and the ability to monitor and document barriers to access to health services for Palestinians.¹⁰⁰

92. The health sector in Gaza is obstructed by closures and other measures that prevent its normal operation, affecting the ability to deliver basic health services.¹⁰¹ Health personnel in Gaza are not commonly exposed to new methods, best practices and medical technology, as their colleagues are elsewhere in the world, which makes it difficult to exchange and access knowledge.¹⁰²

93. The closures in Gaza include restrictions on access to specialized life-saving medical care not available in Gaza. To receive such care, patients require an Israeli exit permit, whose issuance is often delayed or denied. In 2022, 33 per cent of permit applications for patients and 62 per cent of permit applications for patients' companions were not approved in time for patients to reach their hospital

⁹⁴ State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and Palestinian Water Authority, joint press release on World Water Day.

⁹⁵ UNICEF, "WASH: water, sanitation and hygiene – providing clean water to children in the State of Palestine".

⁹⁶ UNICEF, "State of Palestine: flash update – the situation in the Gaza Strip", 10 August 2022, p. 1.

⁹⁷ UNICEF, "Humanitarian action for children", p. 2.

⁹⁸ WHO input.

⁹⁹ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian needs overview", pp. 17 and 53.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁰¹ UNRWA input.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

appointments.¹⁰³ Between January and October 2022, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights documented the death of 11 Palestinians (5 men, 4 boys, 1 woman and 1 girl) while waiting for exit permits,¹⁰⁴ including a 19-month-old girl, Fatma al-Misri, who died while awaiting the outcome of her third permit application to reach a hospital appointment to undergo surgery for a treatable condition. She died on 22 March 2022.¹⁰⁵

94. In the West Bank, over 13,000 patient permits and over 20,000 companion permits were denied by Israeli authorities during 2022. The Palestine Red Crescent Society reported that 93 per cent of ambulances needing entry into Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank were prevented passage at Israeli checkpoints, requiring the transfer of patients to an Israeli-registered ambulance.¹⁰⁶

95. An estimated total of 498,776 adults and children are suffering from mild, moderate and severe psychosocial distress and mental disorders in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Around 299,979 children (50 per cent girls and 50 per cent boys) are suffering from severe, moderate (9.1 per cent) and mild disorders (13 per cent), and 198,797 adults (45 per cent women and 55 per cent men) from moderate or severe mental health disorders. The mental health suffering of Palestinians is affected by exposure to violence and widespread human rights violations as a result of the occupation.¹⁰⁷

96. A total of 324,143 children in Gaza under the age of 5 also have micronutrient deficiencies. In addition to these challenges, the health-care system is not prepared to adequately support children with developmental delays and disabilities.¹⁰⁸

97. Lack of materials and financial resources to sustain the health system negatively affects people who use drugs and people with drug use disorders. The health system in Gaza has limited resources to provide drug demand reduction and treatment for at least 10,500 people with drug use disorders and in need of treatment. At the only drug treatment and rehabilitation centre in Bethlehem, the professional team reported that Israeli-imposed restrictions on travel curbed the ability to build capacities in broader drug treatment and rehabilitation fields.¹⁰⁹

Education

98. Attacks on the right to education contribute to a prevailing coercive environment that gives rise to forcible transfer of communities from their homes and lands, in violation of international humanitarian and human rights law.¹¹⁰ A total of 608,500 people, 96 per cent of them children, will need education support in 2023.¹¹¹

99. Dropout rates in the West Bank are estimated at 19 per cent.¹¹² Of those, 55 per cent of boys and 36 per cent of girls dropped out owing to conflict-related protection risks on the way to and from school. Almost 24 per cent of households reported children feeling unsafe or very unsafe when travelling to and from schools, and when

¹⁰³ WHO input.

¹⁰⁴ OHCHR input; see also [A/HRC/52/75](#), para. 13.

¹⁰⁵ See www.emro.who.int/opt/news/gaza-child-dies-following-repeated-permit-delays-by-israel.html.

¹⁰⁶ WHO input.

¹⁰⁷ Input from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

¹⁰⁸ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian needs overview", p. 26.

¹⁰⁹ UNODC input.

¹¹⁰ Education Cluster, "Education in emergency", p. 2.

¹¹¹ UNICEF, "Humanitarian action for children", p. 2.

¹¹² United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian needs overview", p. 38.

in school.¹¹³ In Gaza, around 5.7 per cent of school-age children dropped out of school during the 2021/22 academic year, mainly for financial reasons or owing to schools not being inclusive.¹¹⁴

100. In total, 56 schools with an estimated 6,550 students in Area C and East Jerusalem are currently facing stop-work or demolition orders, owing to a lack of building permits. These schools face the risk of demolition, in breach of the occupying Power obligations prohibiting the destruction of institutions dedicated to education.¹¹⁵

101. Moreover, Palestinian schools in East Jerusalem remain chronically underfunded. The lack of space and the inability to obtain construction permits have translated into a chronic shortage of classrooms, leading to overcrowding and hindering the delivery of quality education.¹¹⁶

102. In July 2022, the Israeli Ministry of Education suspended the licences of six East Jerusalem schools and gave them a one-year notice to amend their curriculum or have their licences revoked entirely because they continued to use textbooks from the Palestinian Authority instead of those approved by Israeli authorities. In September 2022, around 150 schools in East Jerusalem went on strike against Israeli attempts to impose the Israeli curriculum.¹¹⁷

103. Some 33 per cent of children with disabilities aged 6–9 years are out of school, compared with less than 1 per cent of their peers without disabilities.¹¹⁸

Gender-specific impact of the occupation on women and girls

104. The closures and recurrent military escalations in Gaza and the coercive environment in the West Bank exacerbate instances of sexual and gender-based violence and curtail the availability of life-saving services and access thereto.

105. According to the violence survey in July 2022, 59.3 per cent of married or previously married women between the ages of 15 and 64 experienced violence in the 12 months preceding the survey (70.4 per cent in Gaza and 52.3 per cent in the West Bank). Of those, 57.2 per cent experienced psychological violence, 18.5 per cent physical violence, and 9.4 per cent sexual violence, while 9.6 per cent experienced cyberviolence.¹¹⁹ The August 2022 escalation in Gaza exacerbated the already elevated risk of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, especially among displaced families and those with dead or injured family members.¹²⁰

106. During the reporting period, 68,000 female-headed households reported damages and/or defects at their shelters, with 11,000 living in conditions that do not meet any minimum standards of habitability.¹²¹ Such households were also more

¹¹³ Ibid., pp. 50 and 51.

¹¹⁴ UNICEF, “Humanitarian action for children”, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ OHCHR input; see also [A/HRC/52/76](#), para. 26.

¹¹⁶ Input from the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People of the United Nations Development Programme.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., citing Hadas Gold and Abeer Salman, “How a debate over textbooks closed 150 schools in East Jerusalem”, CNN, 30 September 2022.

¹¹⁸ World Vision, “Education programmes 2019–2022”, fact sheet, p. 5.

¹¹⁹ UNFPA input.

¹²⁰ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Humanitarian impact in Gaza of escalation of hostilities: immediate needs and funding requirements”, August 2022, available at www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-impact-gaza-escalation-hostilities-immediate-needs-and-funding-requirements-august-2022; and input from the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

¹²¹ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Humanitarian needs overview”, p. 35.

likely to take on debt for basic household expenditures in both the West Bank and Gaza. In Gaza, they were also more likely to report taking on debt for food.¹²²

107. Despite high levels of education, women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory face record levels of unemployment. During the reporting period, 18.6 per cent of women participated in the labour force, compared with 70.7 per cent of men, whereas the female unemployment rate reached 40 per cent, compared with the 20 per cent male unemployment rate. Among young people (19–29 years) holding an intermediate diploma or higher, the female unemployment rate reached 61.3 per cent, compared with 34.3 per cent for males.¹²³

108. Women and girls continue to face barriers in gaining access to health services with permits to travel to the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, for necessary specialized treatment. In October 2022, 48 per cent of patient permit applications from the Gaza Strip were for female patients, whereas 52 per cent of patient permit applications from the West Bank were for female patients for treatment in East Jerusalem or Israel.¹²⁴

109. Home incursions and demolitions place a unique gender-specific burden on women and girls when considering traditional gender norms. Female- and child-headed households experience greater protection risks, and families with pregnant women, infants and young children, elderly persons, and persons with disabilities are in need of greater mental health and psychosocial support owing to exposure to violence and trauma.¹²⁵

110. In the West Bank, 12.3 per cent of households (15.3 per cent refugees and 11.3 per cent non-refugees) expressed concern about the safety and security of girls and women.¹²⁶ In 2022, 172 women were detained or arrested by Israeli forces. By the end of 2022, 29 women were in Israeli prisons, including 2 female minors.¹²⁷

111. In an open letter to the Secretary-General on the Security Council open debate on women and peace and security, the Palestinian Women's Civil Coalition highlighted the lack of concrete measures for the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and that Palestinian women seeking to implement resolution 1325 (2000) faced enormous obstacles due to the prolonged Israeli military occupation. The Coalition noted that the lack of implementation of Security Council resolutions relating to the question of Palestine curtailed the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the rest of the region.¹²⁸

III. Occupied Syrian Golan

112. The Secretary-General continues to reaffirm the validity of Security Council resolution 497 (1981), in which the Council decided that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights was null and void and without international legal effect.

¹²² WFP input.

¹²³ State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) presents the main findings of labour force survey in 2022".

¹²⁴ See www.emro.who.int/images/stories/palestine/Oct_2022_Monthly.pdf?ua=1.

¹²⁵ UNRWA input.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ See www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4458.

¹²⁸ See www.miftah.org/PrinterF.cfm?DocId=26811; see also <https://ardd-jo.org/news/letter-to-the-joint-donors-to-womens-peace-and-humanitarian-fund-and-jonap-pooled-fund-call-to-activate-the-united-nations-security-council-resolution-1325-2000-on-women-peace-and-security/>.

113. In 2021, there were approximately 52,000 people living in the occupied Syrian Golan. The population was roughly split between Israeli settlers and Syrians, with Syrians mainly residing in five villages that form approximately 5 per cent of the territory of the occupied Syrian Golan near the United Nations-maintained area of separation, separating the Syrian Arab Republic and the Golan. In contrast, Israeli settlers were distributed among 35 different settlements.¹²⁹

114. On 1 June 1967, approximately 90,000 Syrians were living in the Golan. The population growth rate in the Syrian Golan was 3.7 per cent when Israel occupied the Syrian Golan in 1967. By 2009, it had dropped to 1.7 per cent, and then to 1.4 per cent in 2018, lower than that of Israeli settlements (1.7 per cent).¹³⁰ The Syrian population is projected to become a minority and comprise only one third of the population by 2025.¹³¹

115. Since the 1967 occupation, Israel has annexed 11,000 dunums of land within its administrative borders to adjacent nature reserves, which it established after the occupation. As a result, the potential for these natural areas to be utilized for the development and benefit of the indigenous population has been stripped away.¹³²

116. In December 2021, the Government of Israel approved a plan to add 7,300 housing units in the Golan over the following five years to double the number of residents there, as well as to establish two new settlements.¹³³

117. Settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan violate international law, and Israeli policies therein amount to the transfer of its own population into an occupied territory, which is also in violation of international humanitarian law.

118. Discrimination between settlers and residents of Syrian villages in terms of building permits has been an ongoing trend. In 2012, the residents of Syrian villages, whose number was around 1.15 times more than that of settlers, received less than one third of the building permits received by settlers. In 2021, the number of residents of Syrian villages became approximately equal to that of Israelis in settlements, yet settlers obtained almost double the number of building permits.¹³⁴

119. In 2020, the total area of zones designated for construction in all Israeli settlements amounted to 42,755 dunums, equivalent to 1.6 dunums per person, compared with 0.25 dunum per person in all Syrian villages. This has compounded the population density in the Syrian villages, which reached six times the population density of Israeli settlements, directly congruent with the inequitable distribution of land.¹³⁵

120. Overcrowding in Syrian villages has been worsened by the confiscation by Israel of over 80,000 dunums extending from north of Majdal Shams to Ayn Qinya.¹³⁶

121. This has led to the increased urbanization of Syrian villages, but without the availability of the necessary facilities, amenities, local services, infrastructure or sustainable economic structures. Before the occupation, the Syrian population in five villages owned over 100,000 dunums of land. However, in the four decades since

¹²⁹ International Labour Organization (ILO), document ILC.110/DG/APP, para. 136.

¹³⁰ Al-Marsad – The Arab Centre for Human Rights in the Golan Heights, “Ethnic planning: a comparison between Israel’s ethnic spatial planning policies in Israeli Jewish settlements and Syrian villages in the Occupied Syrian Golan”, June 2022, p. 12.

¹³¹ ILO input.

¹³² Al-Marsad, “Ethnic planning”, p. 17.

¹³³ [A/77/328](#), para. 18, and [A/77/493](#), para. 68.

¹³⁴ Al-Marsad, “Ethnic planning”, p. 11.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹³⁶ [A/77/520](#), para. 20.

then, the Israeli authorities have confiscated 56 per cent of this land for military and settlement activities.¹³⁷

122. Confiscation of grazing lands and restrictions on livestock breeding led to the crumbling of the livestock sector. Landmines on agricultural land have also had a negative impact on agriculture and farming. Agriculture and livestock rearing were the primary sources of livelihood for the indigenous people, with over 90 per cent of the population working in these sectors before the occupation. Currently, settlers utilize approximately five times more dunums of land for agriculture than the indigenous population.¹³⁸

123. As a result, agriculture, mainly apple farming, has lost its significance, and competition with Israeli industrialized agriculture has made it more challenging for Syrian farmers to survive. Consequently, some households that were solely reliant on agriculture have turned to agritourism as a supplementary source of income.¹³⁹

124. The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories was briefed on the discriminatory allocation of drinking and irrigation water, as well as discriminatory access to work and health care, in the occupied Syrian Golan, which favoured Israeli settlers over the local population.¹⁴⁰

125. The Israeli-owned Mekorot Company is also active in groundwater extraction in the Golan, drilling more than 40 artesian wells in 17 sites across the Golan, 5 of which are located on Syrian farmers' land. The amount of extracted water is estimated to reach tens of millions of cubic metres per year.¹⁴¹

126. Israeli discriminatory water allocations among Israeli and Syrian farmers persist. An Israeli farmer receives 750–800 cups of water per dunum of agricultural land, compared with 250 cups per dunum received by a Syrian farmer. Syrian farmer water associations are compelled to purchase water at high prices from the Mekorot Company and have to cover the cost of delivery, which results in a total expense that is three times higher than that paid by Israeli farmers in the settlements, who are exempt from infrastructure fees.¹⁴²

127. Syrians in the occupied Golan who reject Israeli nationality are reported to have their nationality labelled as “undefined” in travel documents, hindering their travel abroad.¹⁴³

128. Most Syrian workers in the occupied Golan seek employment in Israel or settlements owing to a lack of opportunities. The construction sector employs 21.8 per cent of Syrian citizens, followed by education, which employs 19.5 per cent, and wholesale and retail trade, at 13.7 per cent.¹⁴⁴ Syrians earn less than Israelis, with an average income of 6,002 new shekels, which is only 57.3 per cent of the Israeli average and 72.6 per cent of the Jewish settler average.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁷ Al-Marsad, “Ethnic planning”, pp. 10–16.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹³⁹ ILO input.

¹⁴⁰ [A/77/501](#), para. 58.

¹⁴¹ Al-Marsad, “Ethnic planning”, p. 23.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 23 and 24.

¹⁴³ [A/77/501](#), para. 60.

¹⁴⁴ ILO input.

¹⁴⁵ Al-Marsad, “Ethnic planning”, p. 20.

IV. Conclusion

129. The protracted Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory and the Syrian Golan continues to have a detrimental effect on the living conditions of the Palestinian and Syrian populations, as well as on social and economic development in the occupied territories.

130. Israeli-imposed restrictions, expansion of the illegal settlements and other practices not only prevent development but have also exacerbated the fragmentation of the Palestinian territory. These policies and practices have had a severe humanitarian, economic, social and political impact on Palestinians and their ability to exercise their fundamental human rights. Their repercussions have had a cumulative, multilayered and intergenerational impact on the Palestinian society, economy and environment and have caused the deterioration of the living conditions of the Palestinians, their forced displacement, “de-development” of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, entrenchment of the Palestinian economy’s asymmetric dependence on Israel, and exacerbation of Palestinian institutional dependence on foreign aid.

131. Prospects for the Palestinian economy are negative, should the current situation persist. The funding crisis facing UNRWA and the decline in donor aid is another factor that only exacerbates the already precarious conditions of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.

132. The occupation has a different and disproportionate impact on women and girls, especially from home demolitions, destruction and incursions. The closures and military escalations in Gaza and the coercive environment in the West Bank exacerbate instances of sexual and gender-based violence and obstruct the access of women and girls to education and health care. Moreover, despite greater female attendance at school across all ages, women continue to be underrepresented in the labour force and female-headed households are more likely to have to take on debt to provide for basic needs. Female-headed households rely on support from family and friends as a primary source of income, compared with 7 per cent of male-headed households.¹⁴⁶

133. The August 2022 escalation between Israel and armed groups in Gaza compounded the severe situation, which was created by the closures imposed on Gaza, other restrictive Israeli measures and recurrent escalations, in addition to declining donor funding. This requires the urgent attention of the international community.

134. The alarming escalation in tension and violence during the first part of 2023 demonstrates the urgent need to address the root causes of the conflict. Israel continues to employ policies and practices that are contrary to relevant Security Council resolutions, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Some of these practices may be considered discriminatory, and others may amount to the forcible transfer or collective punishment of protected persons, a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and prohibited under international law. Adherence to international law is imperative, ensuring that no party enjoys impunity and securing justice and peace for all those living in the region, including Palestinians and Syrians living under occupation. Furthermore, lack of implementation of Security Council resolutions pertaining to the question of Palestine undermines the prospects of the implementation of

¹⁴⁶ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Occupied Palestinian Territory multi-sectoral needs assessment: gender and inclusion”, brief, July 2022. Available at www.ochaopt.org/msna/2022/OPT2201_MSNA_2022_Gender_Brief-2.pdf.

internationally agreed frameworks in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and across the region, including the women and peace and security agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

135. The United Nations maintains its long-standing position that lasting and comprehensive peace can be achieved only through a negotiated two-State solution. The Secretary-General will continue to ensure that the United Nations works towards the establishment of an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, living side by side in peace with a secure Israel, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States, consistent with relevant Security Council resolutions and international law.
