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## **OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY**

# **No end to internal displacement**

The Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) has a long history of displacement, both as a cause and consequence of the Israeli-Palestinian/Arab conflict over land and resources. Forced displacement has consistently followed Israeli policies intended to acquire land, redefine demographic boundaries and divest Palestinians of ownership guaranteed under international law. In other cases, internal displacement has directly resulted from violence stemming from incursions and human rights violations.

More than 160,000 people are reported to have been internally displaced over the past four decades. Since the second intifada or uprising in 2000, the number of Palestinians displaced or at risk of displacement has risen sharply. Some 90,000 people are currently reported to be at risk of displacement as a result of Israeli policies such as restrictive and discriminatory planning, the revocation of residency rights, the expansion of settlements and the construction of the West Bank Separation Wall.

Human rights and humanitarian organisations have long called for the issue of forced displacement in OPT to be addressed and have warned of the continuing impact of Israeli policies, but the international community has only in the last few years begun to respond to such calls.

Israeli policies continued to cause displacement in 2011 despite international condemnation. More than 1,180 Palestinians were displaced as a result of house demolitions across the West Bank and East Jerusalem from January 2010 to June 2011, while tens of thousands of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the Gaza Strip were still living in inadequate shelters, as the Israeli blockade in force since 2007 continued.



United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs  
**occupied Palestinian territory**  
**West Bank: Area C Map**

February 2011



Source: UN OCHA

More maps are available at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)

## Background

In November 1947, UN General Assembly Resolution 181 recommended the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. During the war which followed the proclamation of the state of Israel in May 1948, more than 750,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled and became refugees (UN, November 1949; Bligh, January 1998). When the war ended, Israel retained roughly 80 per cent of what was formerly British Palestine. Egypt controlled the Gaza Strip, Jordan the West Bank, and Jerusalem was divided between Israel and Jordan along the Green Line set out in the 1949 Armistice Agreements.

Further hostilities in June 1967 between Israel and Egypt, Syria and Jordan resulted in the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and the Sinai peninsula. They displaced between 330,000 and 440,000 Palestinians, close to half them refugees of 1948, most of whom fled to neighbouring countries (Badil, September 2009). In violation of international law, Israel annexed East Jerusalem the same year. In 1980 it declared Jerusalem the united capital of Israel and in 1981 it annexed the Golan Heights. It returned Sinai to Egypt in 1982 as part of the Camp David Accords.

From 1987 to 1993, the first *intifada*, or uprising against the occupation, spread throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). Two years of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians from 1993 to 1995 led to the Oslo Accords. Envisaged as an interim agreement pending a final settlement, the Oslo Accords divided OPT into three zones: Area A under full Palestinian control; Area B under Palestinian civil authority and Israeli security control; and Area C, which included approximately 60 per cent of the West Bank, under full Israeli control. The failure of subsequent negotiations to resolve "final status" issues such as the fate of East Jerusalem, the situation of Palestinian refugees and Israeli

settlements helped trigger a second *intifada* in September 2000.

In June 2002, the Israeli government started building the West Bank Separation Wall. When completed it will be 760 kilometres long. Over 85 per cent of it will lie within West Bank, and the remainder will follow the Green Line. Israel has argued that the Wall is necessary to prevent Palestinian militants attacking its citizens by separating Israel and Israeli settlements from OPT (Israeli Ministry of Defence, 25 April 2005; B'Tselem, December 2005; UNRWA and OCHA, July 2008). The International Court of Justice (ICJ), however, has ruled its construction inside the West Bank illegal, and has called for all sections beyond the Green Line to be dismantled (ICJ, July 2004).

In 2003, UN Security Council Resolution 1515 endorsed the Road Map for Peace, a proposal put forward by the United States (US), Russia, the European Union (EU) and the UN (known collectively as the Quartet on the Middle East) as a means of reaching the two-state solution envisaged in Security Council Resolution 1397 of 2002.

In 2005, Israel withdrew its armed forces and around 7,000 settlers from the Gaza Strip and four settlements in the West Bank. The Gaza Strip remained an occupied territory, however, as Israel retained "effective control" (UN CHR, January 2006; UN HRC, January 2008). In 2007, the Israeli government tightened the blockade of the Gaza Strip it had imposed in 2005 (HPN, September 2009), in effect denying residents a range of human rights and collectively punishing the civilian population (UN SC, 27 January 2009).

In 2006, Israel responded to elections which brought in a Hamas-led Palestinian National Authority (PNA) with stringent security measures. The US and the EU imposed sanctions on the PNA and withheld direct aid until Hamas condemned attacks on Israelis, recognised Israel and accepted previous agreements. Palestinian factional fight-

ing led to Hamas seizing control of the Gaza Strip in June 2007. The rival Fatah group led a caretaker government in the West Bank, and the international boycott of PNA was lifted.

In late 2008 and early 2009, Israel launched a major three-week offensive in the Gaza Strip against Palestinian militants. A UN fact-finding mission, the Goldstone Report, subsequently established that Israel had violated humanitarian and human rights law and that its actions may have amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Palestinian militant groups were also identified as having committed possible war crimes (UN HRC, 15 September 2009). Following international pressure, Israel partially loosened the blockade of the Gaza Strip in 2010. Egypt formally opened the Rafah border crossing despite Israeli objections in May 2011; however, some restrictions remain (Al Jazeera, May 2011).

Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have failed to regain momentum. In September 2010, the US government launched new peace talks, but they collapsed after three weeks following Israel's refusal to stop settlement construction in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem (Peace Now, August 2010; Al Haq, September 2010). PNA has continued to call for a complete halt to all settlement construction, as set out in UN Security Council resolutions, as a precondition for negotiations. Palestinian leaders have said that they will call upon the UN General Assembly to recognise Palestinian statehood in September 2011.

In light of recent developments elsewhere in the region, the Quartet has reiterated its support for Palestinian-Israeli negotiations to reach a conclusion before the end of 2011 (UN, February 2011; EU, May 2011; NYT, May 2011; Haaretz, May 2011). In April, Fatah and Hamas announced a reconciliation agreement, reached under Egyptian mediation, that foresees the formation of a unity government.

## Displacement figures

IDMC considers Palestinians who have been forcibly and arbitrarily displaced from their homes in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and who have remained in OPT, to be internally displaced people (IDPs). Under the Oslo Accords, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are considered a single territorial unit and so those displaced between the two areas do not qualify for refugee status. Figures include refugees from the 1948 and 1967 wars who have subsequently been displaced within OPT. These people, though not IDPs, are considered "secondary displaced refugees" to whom the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement still apply; they are included in IDP statistics (IDMC methodology note, August 2008).

There are no confirmed statistics on IDPs in OPT and the numbers provided by various sources are only estimates. Badil, a Palestinian NGO, suggested in 2009 that between 1967 and 2008 more than 129,000 people were displaced (Badil, January 2010). More recent figures available from various sources suggest up to at least 160,000 have been displaced since 1967, including at least 20,000 people still displaced in Gaza (Badil, January 2010; ICAHD July 2010; B'Tselem, January 2011; Inter-Agency Shelter Cluster, June 2011). Most of this displacement has occurred in Area C of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, along the Gaza Strip's border with Egypt and in the buffer zone separating it from Israel.

The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions has reported that 24,800 houses have been demolished in OPT since 1967 (ICAHD, July 2010). The Israeli NGO B'Tselem has reported that over 13,000 people have had their East Jerusalem residency revoked, many of whom may have relocated to the West Bank (B'Tselem, January 2011).

Some 90,000 people are reportedly at risk of displacement in 2011, including more than 60,000 in East Jerusalem alone (OCHA, November 2009:

OCHA March and May 2011). Communities most at risk include those in East Jerusalem; those in Area C of the West Bank, particularly Palestinians in the Jordan Valley, Bedouin communities, and those in "seam zones" between the Green Line and the Separation Wall; and those living in or near the extended buffer zone separating the Gaza Strip from Israel (Save the Children, October 2009; OCHA, January 2008).

## Causes and patterns of displacement

Israeli policies have been responsible, both directly and indirectly, for internal displacement in OPT since 1967. These policies attest to the systematic use of forced arbitrary displacement to acquire land, redefine demographic boundaries and divest Palestinians of ownership rights guaranteed under international law (OCHA, 30 November 2009; ICAHD, March 2007; Al Haq, December 2007; Badil, 22 January 2008; CARE *et al.*, 25 February 2008).

According to a 2009 report by the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the human rights of IDPs, incursions and military clearing operations, evictions, land appropriations, house demolitions, settlements and related infrastructure, the Wall, violence by settlers and the revocation of residency rights in East Jerusalem have all caused forced displacement (UN HRC, May 2009). Restrictions on freedom of movement that make life untenable for many residents in Palestinian enclaves have also been responsible (UN HRC, May 2009; Al Haq, December 2007; CARE *et al.*, February 2008; Badil, September 2007).

In 2006, the former UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in OPT, referring to displacement arising from the construction of the Separation Wall, commented that the situation in OPT was analogous to what had been described as ethnic cleansing in other contexts (UN GA, October 2006). In 2011, the UN

Special Rapporteur said that Israeli policy in East Jerusalem amounted to a gradual and incremental policy to achieve the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, and that the scale of Israeli settlements amounted to colonialist annexation (UN HRC, January 2011).

### *Israeli incursions in OPT and the situation in the Gaza Strip*

Land clearance operations and military incursions by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) have been among the leading causes of displacement, and the frequency of incursions in response to Palestinian militancy increased during the second *intifada*. Between 2000 and 2007, nearly 30,000 people were displaced by such operations (OCHA, October 2004 and July 2006; ARIJ, April 2006; UNRWA, November 2006; UN HRC, January 2008).

The 2008-2009 offensive in the Gaza Strip caused the highest rate of internal displacement since 1967. At the height of the conflict, nearly 120,000 Palestinians were displaced, and many more trapped in unsafe areas (OCHA January 2009; HRW, May 2010). Nearly 7,900 houses were demolished or seriously damaged, and nearly 59,000 suffered minor damage, caused by IDF as a result of the offensive and subsequent interventions (OCHA, July and September 2009; Inter-Agency Shelter Cluster, June 2011). Israeli incursions since the offensive have resulted in the damage of over 600 homes, affecting more than 3,000 people (Inter-Agency Shelter Cluster, June 2011).

Many of those affected are still displaced because of the Israeli blockade, which has denied Palestinians access to construction materials. At least 20,000 people are still displaced due to the destruction of or damage to their housing (Shelter Cluster, June 2011). By mid-2011 most of the minor damage to housing had been repaired, but only about 200 of the demolished houses and 1,500 of those seriously damaged had been rebuilt (Inter-Agency Shelter Cluster, June 2011).

In early 2011, the flow of construction material into the Gaza Strip was still only 11 per cent of the rate before the blockade (Oxfam *et al.*, November 2010; OCHA, March 2011). In January 2011, the UN estimated that total housing needs in the Gaza Strip had reached over 91,000 units, of which approximately 80,000 were needed to meet natural growth rates and replace derelict and unsanitary housing, and close to 11,000 to house those displaced in successive Israeli interventions (Inter-Agency Shelter Cluster June, 2011). In June 2011, Israel approved the delivery of construction material for UN projects to build 1,500 homes and 18 new schools (Haaertz, June, 2011).

People living in or near the buffer zone or other restricted access areas in the Gaza Strip continue to be at risk of displacement. In some areas, the buffer zone encroaches up to 1.5 kilometres into Palestinian territory, affecting an estimated 30 per cent of the cultivable land available (OCHA, March 2011). Israeli attacks and demolitions have either temporarily or permanently displaced 70 per cent of households living in or near the buffer zone since 2000 (Save the Children, October 2009). In 2010, 24 civilians in the buffer zone were killed and scores injured (OCHA, August 2010).

#### *House demolitions and evictions*

The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) estimated that more than 24,800 Palestinian homes had been destroyed between 1967 and 2010 as a result of military incursions, and punitive and administrative demolitions (ICAHD, April 2011). In 2005, the Israeli government declared it would no longer carry out punitive demolitions (MFA, 20 May 2004; B'Tselem, February 2002), which are illegal under human rights and international humanitarian law (HRW, October 2004; UNSC, 19 May 2004). The practice, however, has continued. In the Gaza Strip, such demolitions accounted for nearly ten per cent of all demolitions during the 2008-2009 offensive (COHRE, May 2009).

Israeli authorities have also continued to demolish Palestinian homes, infrastructure and livelihood structures, on administrative or judicial grounds, citing their failure to prove ownership or hold a building permit, or the building's location in a "closed military zone" or Israeli-designated nature reserve (OCHA, 27 May 2008; AI, June 2010). Since the Oslo Accords, administrative demolitions have mainly taken place in East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank. In East Jerusalem, the violation of building regulations is classified as a criminal offence, meaning Palestinian owners can be prosecuted under Israeli criminal law.

Palestinian construction is prohibited in 70 per cent of Area C, and a range of restrictions in the rest of the area make it virtually impossible to get a building permit (OCHA, December 2009). In practice, the Israeli authorities allow Palestinian construction in only one per cent of Area C, much of which is already built-up. Only 13 per cent of land in East Jerusalem is approved for construction, compared with the 35 per cent expropriated for Israeli settlements (OCHA, March 2011).

Over 94 per cent of Palestinian applications for building permits in Area C submitted between January 2000 and September 2007 were denied, leaving little choice for Palestinians but to build "illegally" and so risk the demolition of their buildings and displacement. From 2000 to 2009, 5,600 demolition orders were issued for Area C, and more than 1,600 buildings demolished (OCHA, May 2008 and December 2009). In East Jerusalem there were in early 2011 1,500 pending orders, putting 9,000 Palestinians at risk of displacement (IRIN, January 2011; OCHA, March 2011).

In 2010, more than 430 buildings were demolished in East Jerusalem and Area C, 45 per cent more than in the previous year (DWG, January 2011; AI, July 2010). Nearly 600 Palestinians, almost half of whom were children, were displaced, and the livelihoods of more than 14,300 people affected placing these communities at risk

of displacement (OCHA, January, November, and December 2010; DWG, January 2009 and January 2010). Demolitions whether of houses or livelihood structures often affects entire communities. They include and are often accompanied by the seizure of livestock, equipment and other livelihood assets which heightens the vulnerability of those displaced, and the communities affected. From January to June 2011, the Israeli authorities demolished nearly 230 buildings, displacing more than 580 people (IRIN, April 2011; UNWRA June 2011; HRW June 2011).

#### *East Jerusalem*

Since 1967, Israeli policies, as reported by UN and NGOs alike, have sought to “judaize” East Jerusalem, expanding the municipality of Jerusalem by 62 square kilometres into the West Bank, and maintaining a Jewish majority at the expense of the Palestinians in violation of international law (OCHA, March 2011; ICAHD, March 2007). In 1967, a census revealed 70,000 Palestinians living in East Jerusalem and no Israelis (UNSC, September 1967); in 2011 an estimated 200,000 Israeli settlers reside in East Jerusalem alongside 270,000 Palestinians (OCHA, March 2011).

Given the extreme difficulty in obtaining a building permit, it is estimated that some 86,000 Palestinians have built in violation of Israeli regulations, and so risk having their homes demolished (UN, May 2011; OCHA, March 2011; HRW December 2010). Since 1967, the Israeli authorities have demolished some 2,000 houses (OCHA, March 2011). The same authorities have failed in many cases to implement court orders to seal or demolish Israeli settlers’ illegal buildings (HRW, December 2010).

The Wall isolates East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, dividing Palestinian neighbourhoods and leading to the economic and social decline of entire communities. It also cuts access to livelihoods and public services in Jerusalem from the West Bank (UNWRA and OCHA, July 2008

and July 2007), and has left as many as 55,000 Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem physically separated from the city as they live on the West Bank side of the Wall (OCHA, March 2011).

Palestinians with the right to reside in East Jerusalem, but who now find themselves on the West Bank side of the Wall, risk losing their residency under Israel’s “centre of life” policy, which permits the revocation of the residency rights of Palestinians who stay outside East Jerusalem for seven years, or who are unable to prove that their “centre of life” is in Jerusalem (EU, November 2005; OCHA, March 2011). Israel revoked the residency rights of more than 13,100 people between 1967 and 2009, 4,500 of them in 2008 alone (B’Tselem and Hamoked, January 2004; Hamoked, December 2009; B’Tselem, January 2011).

#### *Displacement caused by the Separation Wall*

Construction of the Wall has displaced a significant number of people and threatens to provoke further displacement. In 2006, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in OPT referred to the creation of a “new generation of internally displaced persons” (UN CHR, 17 January 2006, para.20). A 2003 report estimated that the completed Wall would leave some 90,000 people at risk of displacement (RI, 25 September 2003), and a 2005 estimate by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) suggested that more than 14,000 people had been displaced in the 145 localities through which the Wall passes (PCBS, September 2005).

Construction of the Wall has also involved the confiscation of land and has severely limited access to livelihoods and services for those living alongside it (OCHA, 15 July 2009). As of 2010, an estimated 7,000 Palestinians outside East Jerusalem were living between the Wall and the Green Line in an area known as the “seam zone”, designated by Israeli authorities as a closed military area (OCHA, June 2010). Those wishing to reside or access land in the seam zone face restric-

tive procedures to get a permit to do so (OCHA, October 2009 and June 2010). When completed, the Wall will isolate over nine per cent of the West Bank, mainly areas where Israeli settlements have been built. It was over 60 per cent complete in July 2010 (OCHA/WHO, July 2010).

#### *Israeli settlements, settler violence and restrictions in freedom of movement*

Israeli settlements, military infrastructure, designated closed areas and networks of Israeli-only roads and access points mean Palestinians' access to around 38 per cent of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is either impossible or tightly controlled (OCHA, July 2007 and 22 January 2008).

By the end of 2009, more than 490,000 settlers were living in 149 settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem (B'Tselem, July 2010). There were also more than 100 outposts which were not sanctioned but unofficially supported by Israel (B'tselem, July 2010; Peace Now, June 2009). The presence of these settlements and Israel's two-tier system in the West Bank which has been promoting life in them while stifling the growth of Palestinian communities, have caused forced displacement (Al Haq, September 2010; HRW, December 2010; OCHA March 2011).

Settlers attacks on Palestinians have also contributed to internal displacement (B'Tselem, December 2005 and May 2007; UN HRC, March 2009), and there was a dramatic increase in settler violence between 2008 and 2010. The perpetrators were rarely punished and children were often implicated in order to avoid criminal responsibility (UN HRC, March 2011; OCHA, November 2009; Yesh Din, May 2011). In 2009, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) identified 22 communities with a combined population of nearly 76,000 people as highly vulnerable to settler violence (OCHA, November 2009).

Restrictions on freedom of movement remain widespread in the West Bank although the situ-

ation eased somewhat in 2009 and 2010. There were an estimated average of 520 permanent checkpoints, road obstacles and other restrictions during 2010, plus an estimated monthly average of 420 mobile checkpoints (OCHA, March 2011). Israel says the checkpoints are intended to protect its citizens from militant attacks (NYT, 28 April 2008), but as well as severely restricting the movement of ordinary Palestinians, many are subjected to humiliation and abuse at them. The checkpoints have also contributed to displacement (UN CERD, 17 August 2007; UN HRC, 21 January 2008; B'Tselem, 7 August 2007; ICRC, 12 December 2007; WB, 9 May 2007).

Israeli military orders no. 1649 and no. 1650, which came into force in 2010, have made it easier for the Israeli authorities to forcibly transfer or deport Palestinians from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip or outside OPT, potentially placing thousands of Palestinians at risk of displacement (Al Haq, April, May and June 2010). These new powers come on the back of legislation dating back to 1967 which has resulted in 150,000 Palestinians having their residency rights revoked (Al Haq, April 2010; Al Haaretz, May 2011).

## **Protection of displaced people and access to basic needs**

All Palestinians in OPT, whether displaced or not, face acute protection concerns, including recurrent violence, restrictions on their movement, and discriminatory policies and regulations. Direct conflict between Israelis and Palestinians led to the deaths of 35 Palestinian and four Israeli civilians in 2010. More than 1,500 Palestinians and 45 Israelis were injured. At least 300 Palestinians were either injured or had their property damaged in more than 400 incidents involving settlers (OCHA, March 2011). During the 2008-2009 offensive in the Gaza Strip, more than 1,000 people were killed and more than 5,000 injured, nearly half of them women and children (OCHA, February 2009).



Displacement has led to long periods of instability for many Palestinians. More than half of the IDPs in the West Bank surveyed in 2007 had taken at least two years to find a permanent residence again (Save the Children, October 2009). In the Gaza Strip, as many as 40,000 people were still displaced after two years, as Israel's ban on the import of construction materials left them no choice but to remain with their relatives, in rented apartments, in makeshift accommodation next to the ruins of their homes, or in camps (HRW, May 2010).

House demolitions have led to children interrupting their education, and enduring a fall in living standards and reduced access to basic services. Six months into their displacement, some were still suffering psychological and behavioural problems (Save the Children, April 2009). In the Gaza Strip, children already marked by the trauma of displacement and chronic insecurity have also been exposed to rising domestic violence among displaced families (UN HRC, 15 September 2009; UNIFEM, 2009; OCHA, May 2009). At the peak of the offensive, more than half of those displaced were children (Save the Children, April 2009).

Displacement has had a major impact on the livelihoods of those affected. Many families have lost their homes and other property, and in the case of demolitions they face significant outlay in the form of fines for "illegal" building and the costs of demolition, which the Israeli authorities oblige them to pay. In the West Bank, families often continue to pay instalments long after their homes have been demolished, in many cases pushing them into debt (OCHA, March 2011). In the Gaza Strip, IDPs whose land lies in buffer zone face considerable difficulty in accessing it, while many others continue to live in damaged or makeshift homes (OCHA, October 2009 and November 2009; Aida, 3 September and 9 November 2009).

People at high risk of displacement, such as those living in the Jordan Valley, in seam zones and in the Gaza Strip buffer zone, are also likely to face

greater protection concerns and economic, social and cultural isolation (Save the Children, October 2009). Assistance from local and international organisations is often not available, particularly in remote areas of the West Bank. More than half of displaced families surveyed in the West Bank in 2009 said they had received no humanitarian assistance at all (Save the Children, October 2009).

## Durable solutions

There are no figures for IDPs who have returned to their places of origin, or for refugees in secondary displacement. The few cases of restitution or return in the West Bank have generally been in Areas A and B under PNA jurisdiction, while most displacement has taken place in Area C and East Jerusalem. In the Gaza Strip, returns have been limited by the import ban on construction materials and the continued expansion of the buffer zone.

Final status negotiations are likely to be the main platform for determining the parameters of durable solutions for IDPs and refugees alike. These negotiations should be subject to the international legal framework, particularly humanitarian law and human rights law as expressed in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The international community should be aware of the dangers of a "peace process between unequals" that does not adhere to such standards (UN HRC, January 2008).

## Humanitarian access

Humanitarian agencies face a number of obstacles to the provision of assistance. West Bank staff need a permit to enter East Jerusalem, and their access to other areas is compromised by closures and other restrictions. Agencies trying to operate in Area C are particularly affected (OCHA, May 2010). The work of those in the Gaza Strip is impeded by the Israeli blockade, the buffer

zone, unpredictable access and onerous administrative restrictions (OCHA, March 2010; Oxfam, November 2010).

Humanitarian agencies have also had to tread a careful line in respecting the policy of no contact with Hamas insisted upon by the international community and the organisation's role in coordinating aid delivery (HP, September 2009). Hamas itself has also impeded the humanitarian response, seized humanitarian shipments and suspended some programmes (OCHA, March 2010; HPN, 30 September 2009; PCHR, June 2010).

In mid-2011, a grouping of international NGOs highlighted the impact of Israeli restrictions in compromising the reach and quality of humanitarian and development interventions, and estimated their annual cost to international donors at \$4.5 million (AIDA, June 2011).

## National and international responses

### *Israel's response as the occupying power*

International organisations and NGOs have repeatedly condemned Israel's occupation of OPT as a breach of international law (UN HRC, January 2008 and January 2011). As the occupying power, Israel has obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law (UN HRC, January 2011, February 2009, ICJ, July 2004; ICRC, May 2008) which mean it is responsible for the basic needs of the occupied population. If it is unable or unwilling to comply, it is obliged to allow access for humanitarian agencies (ICRC, December 2009; UN HRC, January 2008).

Israel's policies in OPT, however, remain the main cause of arbitrary displacement in violation of human rights and humanitarian law. It tends neither to recognise the phenomenon nor provide solutions to it, durable or otherwise (Badil, September 2007; UN HRC, September 2009; OCHA, May

2009). In a few cases, compensation has been paid to those affected by the construction of the Wall, but applicants face formidable procedures and requirements to obtain it (IDMC, March 2008). The Israeli Supreme Court has, on occasion, addressed the causes of displacement by ordering the re-routing of the Wall, but in the vast majority of cases Israeli civil and military courts have upheld the government's decisions (OCHA, November 2009; B'Tselem, March 2006; Adalah, July 2008).

### *Response of PNA and Hamas*

PNA has been marred by political turmoil, poor governance, the limiting of its jurisdiction to Areas A and B, and repeated fiscal crises. It has, nevertheless, provided legal and financial help to victims of house demolitions and communities at risk of displacement in accordance with its limited means (Badil, 12 September 2007; IDMC, March 2008 and October 2010). The current Fatah-led PNA has included support for those affected by the separation Wall, demolitions and Israeli documentation policies (PNA, 2 March 2009). Since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip, the lack of funding and poor coordination between Palestinian organisations have impeded the assistance of displaced and non-displaced groups alike. Hamas has, however, sought to help IDPs through rent subsidies, compensation and rehabilitation, and is instrumental in coordinating the reconstruction effort (AFP, 24 January 2009; IDMC, December 2010; Haaertz, January 2011).

Hamas has taken in the lead in reconstruction efforts, and in January 2011 it announced plans to construct 1,000 housing units (Inter-Agency Shelter Cluster, January 2011). However in mid-2010 it was heavily criticised for destroying at least 20 homes, reportedly in an effort to rein in illegal construction, causing the displacement of 150 people (PCHR, May 2010; Al Jazeera, July 2010).

### *International response*

There is no agency in OPT with a specific mandate to assist and protect IDPs, and this has led to short-

falls despite greater efforts in recent years to coordinate a response. In November 2007, the Inter-Agency Protection Sub-Working Group on Forced Displacement (DWG) was established under the auspices of the Protection Working Group (HPN, September 2009). DWG has a broad membership, and aims to ensure an effective response to the different phases of displacement and to appeal to the international community for the phenomenon to be addressed (HPN, September 2009).

The lack of protection for Palestinians, including IDPs and those at risk of being displaced, and the relative impunity of those causing the displacement, represent serious challenges for DWG (HPN, September 2009) in an operational environment that remains severely constrained by Israeli policies.

The cluster system, an initiative intended to ensure better coordination of the international humanitarian response, was applied in OPT in 2009. The UN's Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) has also made forced displacement one of several priorities (OCHA, 30 November 2010).

The international community, including the UN Secretary-General, the US and the EU, has repeatedly condemned Israeli actions in OPT and particularly in East Jerusalem (UN HRC March 2010). Though international agencies and NGOs have applauded such statements, many also criticise a persistent failure to take any meaningful action in the face of continued Israeli violations of international law, including arbitrary displacement (UN HRC, January 2011; Al Haq *et al.*, February 2011; CARE *et al.*, February 2008; Oxfam *et al.*, December 2009; UN HRC, 15 September 2009).

**Note:** This is a summary of IDMC's internal displacement profile on the OPT. The full profile is available online [here](#).

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## About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) was established by the Norwegian Refugee Council in 1998, upon the request of the United Nations, to set up a global database on internal displacement. A decade later, IDMC remains the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement caused by conflict and violence worldwide.

IDMC aims to support better international and national responses to situations of internal displacement and respect for the rights of internally displaced people (IDPs), who are often among the world's most vulnerable people. It also aims to promote durable solutions for IDPs, through return, local integration or settlement elsewhere in the country.

IDMC's main activities include:

- Monitoring and reporting on internal displacement caused by conflict, generalised violence and violations of human rights;
- Researching, analysing and advocating for the rights of IDPs;
- Training and strengthening capacities on the protection of IDPs;
- Contributing to the development of standards and guidance on protecting and assisting IDPs.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)

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