



threat of forced displacement

According to International Law, Israel, as the occupying power in the West Bank, has the obligation to administer the territory for the benefit of the Palestinian people, and forced displacement and transfer of civilians are prohibited. Despite this, in 2011, 1094 Palestinians, including 618 children, were displaced from their homes due to evictions and the administrative demolitions of homes and livelihoods structures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem¹. This marks a sharp increase on 2010 figures, which saw 606 Palestinians lose their homes. Of the 1,094 displaced Palestinians in 2011, 278 were Palestine Refugees of which 169 were children.

A number of Israeli policies and practices contribute to the displacement of Palestinians living in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, making it difficult for Palestinians to remain present on their land.

Planning and Zoning Policies

Restrictive Israeli planning and zoning policies severely limit Palestinian construction and use of their land. Inability to build legally is the main trigger of forced displacement.

Area C

- Over 60 percent of the West Bank is Area C, under full Israeli control and administration.
- 70 percent of Area C is off limits to Palestinian construction, and 29 percent is heavily restricted.
- In 2011 90 percent of all home demolitions and 92 percent of all displacement occurred in Area C².

Area C refugee displacement: In April 2012, the Khalayleh Bedouin community comprising of 54 refugees experienced its third demolition by Israeli authorities, rendering the community homeless for the third time in six months. The eviction order leading to the demolitions was issued as a consequence of restrictive zoning and planning policies in Area C.

East Jerusalem

- Only 13 percent of the land in East Jerusalem is available for Palestinian construction³.
- 35 percent of East Jerusalem has been expropriated for Israeli settlements⁴.
- Restrictive planning means 93,100 Palestinians in East Jerusalem live in structures without permits, at risk of demolition⁵.

East Jerusalem refugee displacement: In April 2012 the Natsheh family was evicted from their home in Beit Hanina. Thirteen refugees were left homeless. The building was immediately occupied by Israeli settlers, establishing the first Israeli settlement in this Palestinian neighbourhood.

Settlements and Settlement Expansion

The seizure of land to allow for the expansion of settlements in the West Bank decreases the space available to Palestinians to build homes and sustain livelihoods.

- 60 percent of the Palestinian structures that were demolished in 2011 were located on land allocated for settlements⁶.
- Approximately 43 percent of the West Bank including East Jerusalem is allocated for Israeli settlements and off limits to Palestinian construction⁷.
- Settler violence has risen 144 percent since 2009⁸.
- During 2011, 139 Palestinians were displaced as a result of harassment⁹; over 70 percent of these were registered refugees.

Settler induced displacement: In July 2011, an entire Area C Bedouin community of 127 people, the majority refugees, moved from their home of 40 years following a settler attack which resulted in the imprisonment of three community members. The community reported leaving due to a lack of protection from the duty bearer, the Israeli authorities.

Land Fragmentation and Permit Regime

Israeli policies, including checkpoints, the permit system, the Barrier and its associated regime, closed military areas, nature reserves, settlements and outposts restrict Palestinian movement and limit access to land; fragmenting society and undermining livelihoods. Inability to maintain agricultural and pastoral livelihoods forces Palestinian families to move in search of employment.

Herders: Some 5000 families in approximately 155 communities located in Area C are, or have until recently been, livestock dependent. Over 50 percent of these herders are refugees. Restricted access to natural resources as a result of Israeli policies and practices in Area C has rendered the pastoralist economy increasingly unsustainable.

Impact of Forced Displacement

Forced displacement has serious short and long term socio-economic and emotional consequences for Palestinians. Disruption to employment and livelihoods causes increased poverty, a reduced standard of living and a greater dependence on humanitarian aid. Access to essential services can also be affected.

Refugee communities which experience displacement report a deterioration of mental well being and frequently express feelings of helplessness. Many refugees have experienced multiple counts of displacement since their initial dispossession in 1948.

UNRWA Programmatic Response

Monitoring and Reporting

- Monitor violations of international humanitarian and human rights law and systematically document abuses perpetrated against refugees.

Private and Public Advocacy

- Intervene with relevant authorities to remind them of their obligations under the relevant body of law;
- Raise awareness and mobilise international stakeholders on protection issues;
- Advocate an end to violations of international humanitarian and human rights law through UN Human Rights mechanisms.

Mitigation

- Ensure that refugees victim of the armed conflict or IHL abuses have access to basic psychosocial first aid and counselling services;
- Provide cash assistance and referral services to victims of home demolitions evictions and damaged property resulting from the conflict.

1. OCHA - Demolitions and Forced Displacement in the Occupied West Bank. January 2012

2. Ibid.

3. OCHA- East Jerusalem: Key Humanitarian Concerns. December 2011

4. OCHA- Demolitions and Forced Displacement in the Occupied West Bank. January 2012

5. Ibid.

6. OCHA- Demolitions and Forced Displacement in the Occupied West Bank. January 2012

7. OCHA- The Humanitarian Impact of Israeli Settlement Policies. January 2012

8. OCHA- Israel Settler Violence in the West Bank. November 2011

9. Ibid.



united nations relief and works agency
for palestine refugees in the near east

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UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection to a population of some 5 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip to achieve their full potential in human development, pending a just solution to their plight. UNRWA's services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.