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**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

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**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**

## **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**

### **Note by the Secretary-General**

#### *Summary*

In its resolution [2021/4](#), 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-fifth session, through the Economic and Social Council, a report on the implementation of that resolution. In addition, through its resolution [2021/5](#) entitled “Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women”, the Council 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 [76/225](#) 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 submit a report to it, through the Council, at its seventy-sixth and seventy-seventh sessions. The present report, which was prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), has been submitted in compliance with these resolutions.

\* [A/77/50](#).



The report covers persistent Israeli practices and policies, particularly 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.

ESCWA 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 for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 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), the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization.

## I. Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution [2021/4](#), 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 [2021/5](#) highlighted the gender-specific repercussions in this regard. The General Assembly, in its resolution [76/225](#), 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 note provides information on relevant developments in this regard during the reporting period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

## II. Occupied Palestinian Territory

### Israeli practices and policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

3. During the reporting period, Israel continued policies and practices such as settlement expansion, the demolition of Palestinian structures and homes, closures, access and movement restrictions, actions that have raised concerns over the possible disproportionate use of force, and other aspects of its protracted occupation that have had a severe humanitarian, economic, social and political impact on Palestinians and their ability to exercise their fundamental human rights.

4. There continue to be concerns with regard to the compliance of these policies and practices with obligations of Israel under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.<sup>1</sup>

5. Throughout 2021, Israel intensified its repression of Palestinians expressing dissent against the occupation and settlement expansion in particular, raising concerns with regard to respect for Palestinians' right to life and physical integrity as well as their other civil and political rights. Civil society actors and organizations documenting and seeking accountability for Israeli violations of international law, accusing Israel of apartheid and advocating for international sanctions continued to be targeted by Israeli authorities with arbitrary arrest and detention, as well as movement and other restrictions.<sup>2</sup>

6. Israeli military orders in the West Bank allow the army authorities to declare as "unlawful", "hostile" or "terrorist" virtually any association and to detain for incitement anyone showing "sympathy" or "support" for such "unlawful" entities, including the singing of slogans. These broad restrictions carry a significant risk of criminalizing the lawful exercise of freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. As of March 2020, Israel had banned as "unlawful" 430 organizations, including all major political parties, such as the ruling group Fatah.<sup>3</sup>

7. In a concerning development, in July 2021, two organizations learned that the Israeli military commander for the West Bank had declared them as "unlawful associations". On 19 October 2021, the Minister for Defense of Israel designated six Palestinian human rights and humanitarian organizations, namely the Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, Al-Haq, the Bisan Center for Research and Development, Defense for Children International – Palestine Section,

<sup>1</sup> See [E/2021/73](#), [A/76/333](#), [A/76/336](#) and [A/HRC/49/85](#).

<sup>2</sup> [A/76/333](#), paras. 5 and 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 18.

the Union of Agricultural Work Committees and the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees, as "terrorist organizations" under the Counter-Terrorism Law of 2016. The organizations have worked for decades to promote human rights and provide critical humanitarian assistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and are key partners of the United Nations. Some reasonings for the designations referred to entirely peaceful and legitimate human rights activities. The decisions, which were amended after some weeks, state that the organizations are linked to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and that they had obtained financial resources that reached the latter. As of the end of the reporting period, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was not aware of any credible evidence to support these accusations.<sup>4</sup>

8. On 27 May 2021, the Human Rights Council decided to establish an ongoing independent international commission of inquiry mandated to investigate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law leading up to and since 13 April 2021, and all underlying root causes of recurrent tensions, instability and protraction of conflict, including systematic discrimination and repression based on national, ethnic, racial or religious identity.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Use of force**

9. Despite its obligations under international law to protect Palestinian civilians, Israeli security forces<sup>6</sup> continued to employ measures and practices that raised serious concerns about excessive use of force, in some cases possibly amounting to arbitrary deprivation of life, including extrajudicial execution. International human rights law and international humanitarian law are concurrently applicable in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, namely, Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan. This includes the application of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), which is binding upon Israel as the occupying Power.<sup>7</sup>

10. During the reporting period, Israeli military and security forces killed 351 Palestinians, including 22 girls, 64 boys and 46 women, and injured another 20,772 Palestinians, including 519 women and 3,432 children (312 of them girls).<sup>8</sup>

11. A three-fold increase in fatalities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, a five-fold increase in injuries and a seven-fold increase in live ammunition injuries were recorded in 2021 compared with 2020.<sup>9</sup>

12. The reporting period also witnessed a sharp increase in apparent excessive use of force by Israeli security forces in the context of demonstrations, especially during the escalation of hostilities in May 2021. Israeli security forces used live ammunition to suppress mass demonstrations held across the West Bank in solidarity with Palestinians in East Jerusalem and Gaza.<sup>10</sup> OHCHR documented numerous instances of possible unwarranted or disproportionate use of force against Palestinian men,

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<sup>4</sup> [A/HRC/49/25](#), para. 36.

<sup>5</sup> [A/HRC/RES/S-30/1](#).

<sup>6</sup> The term "Israeli security forces" encompasses all security and military institutions of Israel.

<sup>7</sup> [A/75/336](#), para. 4, and [A/76/333](#), para. 11.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Data on Casualties database, available at [www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties](http://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties) (accessed 31 March 2022).

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) input; UNRWA, Protection and Neutrality Department Database, 2021.

<sup>10</sup> [A/76/333](#), para. 13.

women and children gathering to pray or protest or chant, or who merely raised the Palestinian flag in different areas of East Jerusalem, and against journalists covering the events.<sup>11</sup>

13. In many cases, the use of force by the Israeli security forces in response to attacks or alleged attacks by Palestinians against Israelis did not appear to comply with the requirements of legality, necessity and proportionality, resulting in unlawful killings, including possible extrajudicial executions.<sup>12</sup> In at least three instances in which Israeli security forces alleged that they had shot and killed Palestinians in response to an attack or an alleged attack, OHCHR reported that there was no indication that an attack had been carried out or even attempted, and available evidence pointed to an unwarranted use of lethal force resulting in killing.<sup>13</sup>

14. Lack of accountability for the unlawful use of force remained pervasive. Amid a lack of transparency on the opening, status and closure of investigations concerning the killings of Palestinians, according to the Human Rights Committee, investigations have appeared not to meet the minimum standards of transparency, independence, promptness, thoroughness and credibility.<sup>14</sup>

15. The period from 10 to 21 May 2021 saw the gravest escalation of armed hostilities between Israel and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza since 2014, during which 281 Palestinians were killed, including 71 children, and 10,000 Palestinians were injured, including 548 children and 491 women. As in previous escalations, many of the injuries may lead to permanent or long-term disabilities. Nine Israelis, including two children, four women and one soldier, and three foreign nationals, were killed, and hundreds of Israelis were injured during the hostilities.<sup>15</sup>

16. Although the Israeli security forces stated that they had targeted members of armed groups and their military infrastructure, and at times had adopted precautions, including warnings, Israeli attacks resulted in extensive civilian deaths and injuries as well as large-scale destruction and damage to civilian objects and civilian infrastructure. While Israel claims that many of the structures were hosting armed groups or being used for military purposes, OHCHR reported that no evidence in that regard was seen.<sup>16</sup> This raises concerns about compliance by Israel with the principles of distinction and proportionality under international humanitarian law.<sup>17</sup>

### **Detention and ill-treatment**

17. Since 1967, the Israeli authorities have detained more than 800,000 Palestinians, bringing many of them before military courts where the vast majority of cases end in conviction.<sup>18</sup>

18. Most Palestinian detainees and prisoners continue to be held inside Israel. The transfer of protected persons, including those accused of offences, to the territory of the occupying Power is prohibited by international humanitarian law.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., para. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., para. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> A/76/333, para. 16.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022: OPT* (2021), p. 13; and United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Data on Casualties database, available at [www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties](http://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties) (accessed 31 March 2022).

<sup>16</sup> A/76/333, para. 7.

<sup>17</sup> A/76/299-S/2021/749, para. 41.

<sup>18</sup> A/76/94-E/2021/73.

<sup>19</sup> A/76/333, para. 26.

19. According to UNRWA, in 2021, the number of Palestinian detentions (5,648) increased by 23 per cent from 2020 (4,582), marking the third-highest year on record.<sup>20</sup>

20. On 10 March 2022, 4,400 Palestinians were held as “security prisoners” in Israeli prisons, including 160 children and 33 women. Included among them were 490 Palestinians held under administrative detention by Israeli authorities without charge or trial.<sup>21</sup>

21. The practice of administrative detention by Israeli authorities remains of serious concern. According to the Committee against Torture, administrative detention for inordinately long periods may amount to a form of ill-treatment.<sup>22</sup>

22. There are also serious concerns that there has not been genuine accountability regarding reported cases of possible torture and ill-treatment of Palestinians in Israeli detention.<sup>23</sup> According to the Public Committee against Torture in Israel, of the more than 1,300 torture complaints submitted to the Ministry of Justice of Israel since 2001, only two criminal investigations have been opened. Both were closed during the reporting period. Furthermore, the validation by the Attorney General of Israel of methods of interrogation used by the Israel Security Agency raises concerns about its disregard for the absolute and non-derogable prohibition of torture under international human rights law.<sup>24</sup>

23. Documented cases of arbitrary arrest and ill-treatment in detention, as well as the administrative detention of children, remain of serious concern. Testimonies from 64 children held in Israeli military detention indicated the persistence of patterns of ill-treatment during initial arrest, transfer, interrogation and detention, and that most children were denied access to a lawyer or parent before and during their interrogation, were compelled to sign documents in Hebrew (a language many do not understand), and were not adequately informed about their rights.<sup>25</sup>

24. Palestinian women were subjected to various forms of physical and psychological ill-treatment throughout the detention process, including humiliating interrogation techniques, prolonged stress positions and sleep deprivation, and/or were held under severe conditions.<sup>26</sup>

### **Destruction and confiscation of property and infrastructure**

25. Demolitions and forced evictions as referred to below entail numerous human rights violations, 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.

26. Israeli zoning and planning policies in East Jerusalem and Area C, which constitute 60 per cent of the West Bank, are restrictive, discriminatory and considered incompatible with requirements under international law. Policies that allocate land almost exclusively to Israeli settlements or to the military and that facilitate the growth of Israeli settlements make it virtually impossible for Palestinians to obtain

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<sup>20</sup> UNRWA input; UNRWA Protection and Neutrality Department Database, 2021.

<sup>21</sup> Addameer, Statistics database, available at [www.addameer.org/index.php/statistics/2022/03](http://www.addameer.org/index.php/statistics/2022/03) (accessed on 31 March 2022).

<sup>22</sup> CAT/C/ISR/CO/4, para. 17, and CAT/C/ISR/CO/5, paras. 22–23.

<sup>23</sup> A/76/333, para. 30.

<sup>24</sup> A/HRC/49/25, para. 30.

<sup>25</sup> A/76/333, paras. 32–33.

<sup>26</sup> United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) input.

building permits, compelling many to build without them, thereby risking eviction, house demolition and displacement.

27. On 28 October and 1 November 2021, Israeli authorities advanced plans for some 6,000 housing units for Palestinians in the occupied East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Isawiyah and some 1,300 housing units for Palestinians in Area C.<sup>27</sup>

28. In Area C alone, there are over 15,500 pending demolition orders against Palestinian structures.<sup>28</sup> In occupied East Jerusalem, at least a third of all Palestinian homes lack Israeli-issued building permits, potentially placing more than 100,000 residents at risk of displacement.<sup>29</sup>

29. During the reporting period, Israeli authorities demolished 813 structures, including 273 homes and 145 donor-funded structures, and confiscated 222 structures, including 48 donor-funded structures.<sup>30</sup>

30. In 2021, a total of 140 donor-funded structures, including residential and livelihood structures, were demolished or seized, marking a 30 per cent increase compared with 2020.<sup>31</sup> A total of 673 structures funded by the European Union were demolished or seized by Israeli authorities between 2016 and 2021.<sup>32</sup>

31. Amendment 116 to the Planning and Building Law of Israel resulted in forcing homeowners to demolish their own property to avoid paying fines of NIS 300,000 (roughly \$95,000) if they failed to do so, a sum far beyond the means of a typical Palestinian household.<sup>33</sup> The number of structures that were demolished by their owners in East Jerusalem in 2021 constituted 55 per cent of the total demolitions, compared with 23 per cent in 2017.<sup>34</sup>

32. Furthermore, 53 per cent of structures were demolished or seized without prior warning compared with an average of 30 per cent during the period 2018–2020, and 10 per cent during the period 2016–2017.<sup>35</sup>

33. Some 16,250 housing and commercial units sustained some degree of damage in Gaza during the May 2021 escalation of hostilities.<sup>36</sup> This included the destruction of 1,663 housing units, which aggravated the chronic and increasing shortage in housing units to meet population growth in one of the most densely populated areas in the world.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, “Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (as delivered by UN Special Coordinator Wennesland)”, 30 November 2021.

<sup>28</sup> See A/75/86-E/2020/62, para. 2; and United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022*, p. 51.

<sup>29</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, “High numbers of demolitions: the ongoing threats of demolition for Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem”, *Humanitarian Bulletin*, December 2017.

<sup>30</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, *Data on Demolition and Displacement in the West Bank* database, available at [www.ochaopt.org/data/demolition](http://www.ochaopt.org/data/demolition) (accessed on 31 March 2021).

<sup>31</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022*, p. 14.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*; and European Union, “One year report on demolitions and seizures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem”, 14 February 2021, pp. 6–7.

<sup>33</sup> UNRWA input.

<sup>34</sup> European Union, “One year report on demolitions and seizures”, p. 8.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) estimations; and United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, “Response to the escalation in the oPt: situation report, No. 2”, 28 May–3 June 2021.

<sup>37</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022*, pp. 13 and 55.

34. In October, Israeli bulldozers and tanks entered Gaza and levelled at least 13 dunums of land, resulting in the destruction of crops and agricultural infrastructure.<sup>38</sup>

#### **Settlement activities and settler violence**

35. 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.<sup>39</sup>

36. It is estimated that there are 678,800 Israeli settlers in the West Bank living in 170 settlements and 146 outposts, of which 227,100 are in East Jerusalem.<sup>40</sup>

37. Israel continues to unlawfully consolidate settlement blocs with networks of bypass roads and the wall, endangering the viability of a two-State solution and resulting in a severe impact on the rights of Palestinians.<sup>41</sup>

#### *Settler violence*

38. Continuing attacks and intimidation by Israeli settlers, carried out with impunity, are concerning components of the coercive environment that places Palestinians at further risk of forced displacement.<sup>42</sup>

39. During the reporting period, settler violence reached its highest level since 2017. There were 502 incidents of settler violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, compared with 339 incidents in the previous period. The severity of attacks also intensified: of particular concern were incidents of armed settlers carrying out attacks inside Palestinian communities, sometimes in the proximity of Israeli security forces, and of security forces attacking Palestinians alongside settlers.<sup>43</sup> Concern has also been expressed by human rights organizations that there is a “policy of tacit support” for settler violence against Palestinians.<sup>44</sup>

40. During the reporting period, 4 Palestinians were killed and 1,722 were injured as a result of settler violence. Between 2008 and March 2022, settler attacks resulted in the deaths of 226 Palestinians and the injury of 5,252.<sup>45</sup>

41. By September 2021, settlers had burned 338 olive trees and had cut, uprooted or vandalized another 149.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> A/76/333, para. 46.

<sup>39</sup> A/76/94, para. 34.

<sup>40</sup> European Union, “Six-month report on Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem”, 22 November 2021.

<sup>41</sup> A/HRC/49/85.

<sup>42</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022*, p. 14

<sup>43</sup> A/HRC/49/85.

<sup>44</sup> Yesh Din, “The impact of Israeli settlements in the West Bank on the human rights of Palestinians”, April 2021, pp. 8–9.

<sup>45</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Database, available at [www.ochaopt.org/data](http://www.ochaopt.org/data) (accessed on 31 March 2022).

<sup>46</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) input; and Premiere Urgence, “How settler violence and access restrictions jeopardize the Palestinian olive harvest in 2021”, 21 December 2021.



### **Coercive environment and population displacement**

42. There is continued concern that 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, have created a coercive environment, which may force Palestinians to leave their places of residence, placing them at risk of forcible transfer.<sup>47</sup>

43. During the reporting period, 728 Palestinians were displaced in the West Bank, including 365 children and 182 women, due to demolitions.<sup>48</sup>

44. Revoking residency is another measure used by the Government of Israel to reduce the Palestinian population in the city. Specifically, since 1967, more than 14,500 Palestinians have had their Jerusalem residency revoked by the Israeli authorities.<sup>49</sup>

45. Approximately 18 per cent of the West Bank has been designated by Israel as closed “military firing zones” for the purpose of military training. Palestinian communities in such areas are among the most vulnerable, their rights gravely restricted, and continue to face frequent demolitions and confiscation of their property and livestock. Documented cases of transfers of land from firing zones to settlements exacerbate these concerns.<sup>50</sup>

### **Movement and access restrictions and closures**

46. Israel continued to restrict freedom of movement across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, primarily through the permit regime regulating passage between Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and abroad, in addition to movement within the West Bank itself. Such restrictions continued to disrupt the daily life of Palestinians, profoundly affecting other rights, including the rights to work, to an adequate standard of living, to education and to health.<sup>51</sup>

#### *Gaza closures*

47. Since June 2007, the closures in Gaza, which affect the movement of goods and people, have continued to undermine the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of Palestinians in Gaza and affect all areas of Palestinian life, and have further exacerbated the dire humanitarian situation and collapsing infrastructure.<sup>52</sup>

48. Israeli officials have expressly cited hostile acts from Gaza as grounds for imposing such measures. In view of their punitive nature in respect of persons who have not committed any offence, the blockade, which has entered its fifteenth year, may amount to collective punishment,<sup>53</sup> which is prohibited under international law<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> [A/76/336](#), para. 37.

<sup>48</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Database, available at [www.ochaopt.org/data](http://www.ochaopt.org/data).

<sup>49</sup> United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) input; and United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, “High numbers of demolitions”.

<sup>50</sup> [A/76/336](#), paras. 38 and 57.

<sup>51</sup> [A/76/333](#), para. 43.

<sup>52</sup> [A/76/360](#), para. 16.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, [A/76/333](#), para. 38.

<sup>54</sup> [A/75/199](#), para. 31.

and has continued to have an extremely harmful impact on the rights of the entire civilian population.

49. Until late summer and fall 2021, apart from humanitarian and medical cases, virtually no Palestinians were allowed through Bayt Hanun (Erez) crossing. However, restrictions were eased during the last part of the year and the number of transits increased dramatically. The Rafah crossing has remained open since the most recent ceasefire, barring three days in late August.<sup>55</sup>

50. Inside Gaza, Israeli authorities continued to unilaterally enforce a restricted area along the fence. Common practices used by the Israeli security forces to enforce the restrictions include the use of live ammunition against Palestinian farmers, the levelling of farmland and damage to property with bulldozers.<sup>56</sup>

51. Along the coast, the Israeli Navy continued to enforce unilaterally imposed access restrictions, including through the use of live ammunition against Gaza fishers, while conducting patrol operations, often within authorized fishing zones. Boats have been confiscated and a number of boats and fishing equipment have been damaged.<sup>57</sup>

#### *Movement restrictions in the West Bank*

52. The complex system of movement restrictions applied by Israeli authorities has effectively fragmented the West Bank and turned it into an archipelago of isolated islands. It has increased the travel time between all major Palestinian population centres by a median of 51 per cent.<sup>58</sup> The movement of Palestinians in 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”. Approximately 85 per cent of the current 712 km planned route of the barrier lies within the West Bank rather than along the 1949 Armistice Line (the Green Line), isolating 10 per cent of the West Bank, contrary to the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which states that “the construction of the wall being built by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, and its associated regime, are contrary to international law”.<sup>59</sup>

53. This route, which separates some Palestinian communities and farming land from the rest of the West Bank, contributes to the fragmentation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and adds a layer of distress to the livelihoods of farmers, fishers, small business owners and daily workers.

54. Movement restrictions are often imposed on Palestinians living nearby in connection with settlements. The area controlled by the regional council of Israeli settlements in the West Bank (including closed areas allocated for expanding those settlements) was about 542 km<sup>2</sup> by the end of 2020, representing about 10 per cent of the total area of the West Bank. The confiscated areas for the purposes of military bases and military training locations represent about 18 per cent of the West Bank area. All those areas are off limits to Palestinians.<sup>60</sup> The barrier and the attendant permit regime also restrict Palestinians who hold West Bank identification cards from

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<sup>55</sup> UNRWA input.

<sup>56</sup> [A/76/333](#), para. 46.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 47.

<sup>58</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) input.

<sup>59</sup> See [A/ES-10/273](#) and [A/ES-10/273/Corr.1](#).

<sup>60</sup> Yesh Din, “The impact of Israeli settlements in the West Bank”, p. 24.

accessing specialized services at the main Palestinian referral hospitals in East Jerusalem.<sup>61</sup>

55. UNRWA reported 31 access-related incidents between April and December 2021 owing to Israeli restrictions on access to Palestine refugee communities in the West Bank.<sup>62</sup>

### **Depletion, endangerment and exploitation of natural resources**

56. 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 and any investment or economic activity requires Israeli permits. The Gaza blockade and closures limit Palestinian access to materials and technologies that could promote the efficient use of energy, water and other natural resources.

#### *Water*

57. 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.

58. 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.<sup>63</sup>

59. Water resources in the region continue to be extremely limited and are projected to decrease further as climate change drives increases in temperature and precipitation declines. 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 accessing and extracting water from the Jordan River.

60. In addition, Israeli authorities treat Israeli settlers and Palestinians residing in the West Bank unequally with regard to their access to water. Israeli settlements have had a significant impact on Palestinians' access to their natural resources, especially as a result of the diversion of water resources, including the seizure of water wells by Israeli settlers. Israeli settlements have taken over, destroyed or blocked Palestinian access to natural water resources. Israeli settlements have also appropriated dozens of Palestinian water springs, assisted by the Israeli military.<sup>64</sup>

61. The coastal aquifer remains the only source of ground water in Gaza. Its yearly sustainable yield is estimated to be up to 450 million m<sup>3</sup> in Israel and a mere 55 million m<sup>3</sup> in Gaza. The aquifer has been depleted by overextraction and contaminated by sewage and seawater infiltration.

#### *Agriculture*

62. Agriculture has been an integral driver of the Palestinian economy, and Area C has been considered the West Bank's green basket. Nevertheless, land confiscation; the demolition of homes and productive assets; restrictions on the movement,

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<sup>61</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022*, p. 17; and World Health Organization (WHO), "Right to health barriers 2021", 2021.

<sup>62</sup> UNRWA input.

<sup>63</sup> A/HRC/48/43; and Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre, *Israeli Military Orders in the Occupied Palestinian West Bank: 1967–1992*, 2nd ed. (1993).

<sup>64</sup> A/HRC/48/43, para. 31.

maintenance and rehabilitation of productive assets; and Israeli control over water resources have undermined this sector.<sup>65</sup>

63. Access by Palestinians to over two thirds of their agricultural resources in the West Bank remains severely restricted. The construction of the barrier has caused the destruction of a large part of Palestinian fertile agricultural land and has limited access to about 170,000 dunums of that land (i.e. about 10 per cent of the total cultivated area in the West Bank).<sup>66</sup>

64. Israeli military orders have rendered approximately 40 km<sup>2</sup> of land used for olive cultivation in the “seam zone” between the barrier and the Green Line as closed areas, and another 18 km<sup>2</sup> adjacent to settlements and outposts as “prior coordination areas”.<sup>67</sup>

65. On average, olive farmers are granted access to their groves during the harvest and ploughing season for a period lasting from 1 to 7 days, whereas it is estimated that 133 days of work per year are necessary to adequately maintain an olive grove. This undermines olive and olive oil production, and negatively affects both the quality and quantity of harvests.<sup>68</sup>

66. Palestinians are only allowed to use 621,000 out of 2.02 million dunums of pasture areas in the West Bank for the grazing of ruminants, increasing pressure and overgrazing in accessible areas.<sup>69</sup>

67. The Israeli-imposed “buffer zone” in Gaza renders 35 per cent of agricultural land off-limits to Palestinians. Moreover, more than 27,000 dunums of orchards, vegetable crops and greenhouses, and more than 450 livestock and poultry farms, were fully or partially destroyed during the escalation of hostilities in May 2021,<sup>70</sup> at an estimated cost of \$40 million to \$45 million.<sup>71</sup>

#### *Minerals*

68. 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.<sup>72</sup>

69. Around 86 per cent of the mineral-rich Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea lies under the de facto jurisdiction of the regional councils of 37 Israeli settlements, of which 6 are allowed to exploit Palestinian fertile lands and extract minerals for agriculture and tourism in that area.<sup>73</sup>

#### *Energy*

70. Israel severely limits the access of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to energy reserves located within their land and coastal waters. This includes

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<sup>65</sup> FAO input; information provided to ESCWA.

<sup>66</sup> Information provided to ESCWA; and the Palestinian agricultural sectoral strategy, available at <https://www.moa.pna.ps/uploads/STRATEGIES/16326559770.pdf> (in Arabic).

<sup>67</sup> FAO input.

<sup>68</sup> FAO input; Premiere Urgence, “How settler violence and access restrictions”.

<sup>69</sup> FAO input citing the Palestinian agricultural sectoral strategy.

<sup>70</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022*.

<sup>71</sup> FAO input; and World Bank, *Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment: June 2021* (Washington, D.C., 2021).

<sup>72</sup> Orhan Niksic, Nur Nasser Eddin and Massimiliano Cali, *Area C and the Future of the Palestinian Economy* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2014), p. 13.

<sup>73</sup> A/HRC/22/63, para. 36.

oil reserves in Area C of the West Bank estimated at about 1.525 billion barrels and natural gas off the Gaza coast worth an estimated \$2.57 billion.<sup>74</sup>

### *Fisheries*

71. The Gaza fisheries sector has been suffering from access restrictions and depleted fish stocks. In addition, the sector has suffered from water pollution due to the release of untreated sewage water into the sea from the facilities damaged during the recent escalation and due to a lack of electricity for treatment plants, though improvement has been reported in this regard.<sup>75</sup>

72. In 2021, the total fish catch decreased by 7 per cent compared with 2020, as Israel prevented all maritime access for a total of 20 days in April and May, after which it allowed limited access. Fish farming, which had improved over the past six years, was also negatively affected by the shortage of fish feed stemming from the closure of all Gaza crossings during the military escalation in May 2021.<sup>76</sup>

### **Social and economic conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory**

73. In 2022, an estimated 2.1 million Palestinians, including 933,994 children, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are in need of humanitarian assistance; 2.4 per cent are people with disabilities. The situation remains one of a protracted protection crisis, exacerbated by the May 2021 escalation, the closures imposed on Gaza, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and a deepening financial and fiscal crisis within the Palestinian economy.<sup>77</sup>

### *Economic situation*

74. The Palestinian economy has been suffering from the cumulative effects of the occupation, and witnessed a steep decline in 2020 as a result of COVID-19 pandemic and other global economic turbulence.

75. The system of restrictive policies imposed by Israel on Palestinian economic activity, resources and land since 1967 has systematically stripped the Palestinian economy of many elements that are vital for its healthy operation, rendering it highly vulnerable to internal and external shocks. The multilayered restrictive system continues to deny Palestinian control over natural resources and egress, which constrains access to regional and international markets and limits policy space. The Palestinian economy thus continued to operate well below its full potential during the reporting period, with high dependence on Israel and external transfers.

76. The productive base of the Palestinian economy continues to shrink. The combined size of the manufacturing and agriculture sectors fell from 24.1 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2008 to 18.6 per cent in 2021.<sup>78</sup> Aid and remittances have become almost the exclusive source of foreign exchange inflows that stimulate consumption in Gaza, particularly in the light of limited exports and weak investment activity. It can be safely assumed that the Palestinian Government and the expenditures of UNRWA in Gaza, in addition to informal flows to the de facto

<sup>74</sup> *The Economic Costs of the Israeli Occupation for the Palestinian People: The Unrealized Oil and Natural Gas Potential* (United Nations publication, 2019).

<sup>75</sup> FAO input. Damage is estimated as the replacement value of totally or partially damaged physical assets.

<sup>76</sup> FAO input; and Department of Fisheries in Ministry of Agriculture, Gaza.

<sup>77</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022*, pp. 6 and 12; and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "Humanitarian action for children: State of Palestine", 2022, p. 1.

<sup>78</sup> ESCWA calculations taken from State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Press report: preliminary estimates of quarterly national accounts (fourth quarter 2021)", March 2022.

authorities, amounted to almost 100 per cent of Gaza's GDP at certain points, which kept its economy relatively afloat despite restrictions.<sup>79</sup>

77. The Palestinian economy witnessed a rebound, but did not recover fully, after the relaxation of COVID-19-related measures. The economy grew by 7 per cent in 2021, but remained below its pre-pandemic level in 2019.<sup>80</sup>

78. While this partial rebound reflected in part the sharp contraction in 2020 (11.3 per cent), it was mainly driven by the West Bank's economy (7.8 per cent) while Gaza's economy increased by 3.4 per cent in 2021 following a contraction of 12.6 per cent in the preceding year. Gaza's contribution to the overall Palestinian economy fell from 23 per cent in 2005 to 17 per cent in 2021. Its GDP per capita remained 52 per cent lower than it had been in 2005.<sup>81</sup>

79. The relative growth was driven by an increase in total consumption by 77.3 per cent, a 14.2 per cent increase in investments,<sup>82</sup> and an increase in the number of Palestinians working in Israel and the settlements from 125,000 in 2020 to 146,000 in second quarter of 2021.<sup>83</sup>

80. The construction sector recorded the highest value-added growth at 8 per cent. Industry activity grew by 7 per cent and services activity by 4 per cent during 2021. In contrast, agricultural activity witnessed a decrease of 3 per cent.<sup>84</sup>

81. The May 2021 escalation resulted in the destruction of about 2 per cent of Gaza's capital stock,<sup>85</sup> an estimated \$290 million to \$380 million in direct damages, and \$105 million to \$190 million in economic losses.<sup>86</sup> A rapid damage needs assessment indicated that approximately 8,000 households would fall into poverty in the ensuing months.<sup>87</sup>

82. Unemployment rates among labour force participants in the Occupied Palestinian Territory remained high at 26 per cent in 2021, and total labour underutilization reached 34 per cent. The unemployment rate for women reached 43 per cent compared with 22 per cent for men. The disparity in unemployment rates between the West Bank (16 per cent) and Gaza (47 per cent) reflects the particularly difficult economic situation in the latter due to the 15-year closure of Gaza and recurrent Israeli military escalations.<sup>88</sup>

83. It should be noted that, without employment in Israel and the settlements, unemployment in the West Bank would increase by about 16 percentage points, closer to current levels in Gaza.<sup>89</sup>

84. Projections based on GDP per capita growth suggest that the poverty rate has been constantly increasing since 2016, reaching 28.9 per cent in 2020. This represents approximately 1.4 million people living in poverty in 2020. The World Bank estimates

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<sup>79</sup> World Bank, "Economic monitoring report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee", 17 November 2021, p. 17.

<sup>80</sup> State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Press report: preliminary estimates of quarterly national accounts".

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Press report on economic forecasts for 2022", 29 December 2021, p. 2.

<sup>85</sup> World Bank, "Palestinian territories economic update", October 2021.

<sup>86</sup> World Bank, *Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment*.

<sup>87</sup> UNICEF, "Humanitarian action for children", p. 2.

<sup>88</sup> State of Palestine, Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, "Press release on the results of the Labor Force Survey 2021", 2021, p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> TD/B/EX (71)/2, para. 7.

that the May 2021 escalation pushed poverty in Gaza to 59.3 per cent in 2021, 2.3 per cent higher than the COVID-19-induced peak in 2020 and 16.3 per cent higher than in 2016–2017.<sup>90</sup>

#### *Food security*

85. Poverty and unemployment are two key drivers of food insecurity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.<sup>91</sup> Some 1.75 million Palestinians need food assistance, 1.3 million of whom are in Gaza.<sup>92</sup> The closure of Gaza, as well as the increase in unemployment and poverty, have had a negative impact on the status of food security in Gaza.<sup>93</sup>

86. Prior to the May 2021 escalation, the number of food-insecure people had increased from 1.7 million in 2018 to 2.0 million people across the Occupied Palestinian Territory in early 2021.<sup>94</sup> Some 62 per cent of the population of Gaza (or 1.4 million people) were food insecure in May 2021 following the escalation.<sup>95</sup>

87. Despite the divergence between the West Bank and Gaza, where 40 per cent and 60 per cent, respectively, were moderately or severely food insecure in 2020,<sup>96</sup> food security in both regions has been deteriorating, with nearly 2 in 10 people suffering from severe food insecurity in 2020.<sup>97</sup>

88. The war in Ukraine has had an impact on commodity prices and the food supply chain in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and will result in the further deterioration of an already difficult situation. The scale and scope of this impact will depend greatly on further developments in the crisis.<sup>98</sup>

#### *Water, sanitation and hygiene*

89. More than 1.35 million Palestinians across the Occupied Palestinian Territory face public health risks associated with insufficient access to water, sanitation and hygiene services and are in immediate need of humanitarian assistance. During the reporting period, Israeli authorities demolished 42 water, sanitation and hygiene structures in the West Bank.<sup>99</sup>

90. The average consumption of water by Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is around 70 litres a day per person. Approximately 420,000 Palestinians in the West Bank consume 50 litres a day, less than a quarter of the average Israeli consumption of about 300 litres per person.<sup>100</sup> Some 42.3 per cent of households rely

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<sup>90</sup> World Bank, “Economic monitoring report”, p. 8.

<sup>91</sup> World Food Programme (WFP) input.

<sup>92</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022*, p. 39.

<sup>93</sup> WFP, “Gaza emergency food security assessment: following the escalation of hostilities and unrest in the State of Palestine in May 2021”, June 2021, p. 6.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> World Bank, *Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment*, p. 50.

<sup>96</sup> Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute, “Socioeconomic and Food Security Survey 2020: State of Palestine”, 2020.

<sup>97</sup> WFP input; and Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute, “Socioeconomic and Food Security Survey 2020”.

<sup>98</sup> WFP input.

<sup>99</sup> West Bank Protection Consortium, “Palestinian access to water and attacks on wash structures in Area C”, April 2021; and United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Data on Demolition and Displacement in the West Bank database, available at [www.ochaopt.org/data/demolition](http://www.ochaopt.org/data/demolition).

<sup>100</sup> A/HRC/48/43.

on previously stored drinking water and 10.7 per cent of households receive water on credit or borrow funds to afford water.<sup>101</sup>

91. In Gaza, recurrent military escalations, the closure of Gaza and restrictions of the imports of water, sanitation and hygiene items have had negative effects on infrastructure and delivery. Moreover, the coastal aquifer, which is the main water source in Gaza, is virtually depleted, with more than 97 per cent of its water unfit for human consumption.<sup>102</sup>

92. Around 90 per cent of households in Gaza have to buy water from purification or desalination plants, which costs between 10 to 30 times more than piped water. Some 40 per cent rely on previously stored drinking water and 34 per cent receive water on credit or borrow funds.<sup>103</sup> Less than 4.3 per cent of households in Gaza have improved drinking water on the premises that is free of *E. coli* and available when needed.<sup>104</sup> During the May escalation, 400,000 people were affected by irregular access to piped water.<sup>105</sup>

93. A total of 28.4 per cent of households in the West Bank reported waste accumulation for more than three days in their area, compared with 10.2 per cent in Gaza.<sup>106</sup>

94. In addition, 79.1 per cent of households in the West Bank and 90.6 per cent of households in Gaza reported that their daily activities had been affected by flooding, resulting in damages to their shelters. Most of the Palestine refugee camps have dilapidated sewage and water networks and poor storm water drainage that pose public health risks for camp residents.<sup>107</sup>

### *Health*

95. Approximately 1.5 million Palestinians, including some 1.0 million in Gaza, require health-related humanitarian assistance in 2022.<sup>108</sup>

96. When the COVID-19 epidemic broke out, the Palestinian health-care system was already fragile, disconnected, undergoing de-development and lacking human, financial and material resources as a result of the occupation, fragmentation and the closure.<sup>109</sup> The diversion of resources in response to the pandemic and the number of

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<sup>101</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2021 Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment database, available at [www.ochaopt.org/data/2021/msna](http://www.ochaopt.org/data/2021/msna).

<sup>102</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022*, p. 47.

<sup>103</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2021 Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment database, available at [www.ochaopt.org/data/2021/msna](http://www.ochaopt.org/data/2021/msna).

<sup>104</sup> UNICEF, "State of Palestine 2019/2020", Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey database. Available at <https://mics.unicef.org/surveys>.

<sup>105</sup> ESCWA estimations; and United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, "Response to the escalation in the oPt: situation report, No. 2".

<sup>106</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2021 Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment database, available at [www.ochaopt.org/data/2021/msna](http://www.ochaopt.org/data/2021/msna).

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022*, p. 35.

<sup>109</sup> WHO, document A74/22 **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**; Medical Aid for Palestinians, "Dealing with death and distress: the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of Palestinian healthcare workers", July 2021, pp. 1–3.



injuries requiring treatment in the West Bank and Gaza in May 2021 further increased strained scarce health-care resources.<sup>110</sup>

97. Moreover, in 2021, WHO recorded 233 attacks on the health-care sector across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including during the May escalation of hostilities. A total of 106 health-care workers were injured, and 57 ambulances and 123 facilities were damaged.

98. During the May 2021 escalation, one primary care facility was destroyed and 12 per cent of primary care facilities and 30 per cent of hospitals sustained damages.<sup>111</sup>

99. Gaza continues to suffer from a lack of essential medical technology such as radiotherapy facilities and nuclear medicine scanning (e.g. PET scanning), in addition to a long-standing shortage of drugs and supplies. Over the course of 2021, 41 per cent of essential medicines and 27 per cent of essential medical disposables had less than a month of supplies remaining.<sup>112</sup>

100. In terms of human resources, insufficiencies exist for several medical specialties, whereas the density of nurses and midwives, 2.4 per 1,000 people, falls below the WHO suggested threshold of 3.0.<sup>113</sup>

101. This forces thousands of Gazans to seek essential health-care outside the Strip, which is hindered by the Israeli permit regime. During 2021, 36 per cent of applicants for permits experienced delays, and had received no definitive response by the date of their appointments. Of these permits, 27 per cent were for children under the age of 18 years and 47 per cent were for female patients. With regard to patient companions, only 40.4 per cent of applications were approved.<sup>114</sup>

102. Palestinians in the rest of the West Bank are also subjected to a permit regime to access health services in East Jerusalem. In 2021, more than 10 per cent of total patient applications and 16 per cent of total companion applications were denied.<sup>115</sup>

103. Resources in the West Bank are depleted as a result of the need to duplicate services, which have to be scattered across as wide a geographical distribution as possible to provide health care to as many Palestinians as possible, owing to restrictions on freedom of movement.<sup>116</sup>

104. Stunting among Palestinian children under the age of 5 has been increasing. In 2019/20, 8.7 per cent were significantly below average height for their age, compared with 7.4 per cent in 2014. The level of severe acute malnutrition rose from 1.8 per cent of children under 5 in 2014 to 2.4 per cent in 2019/20. Similarly, global acute malnutrition has increased among children aged 1 to 2 years old. For children aged 12 to 17 months, the rate increased from 7.8 per cent in 2014 to 10.5 per cent in 2019/20, whereas the rates for children aged 18 to 23 months rose from 8.2 per cent to 12.4 per cent. Of children aged 2 to 17, 12.3 per cent (14.6 per cent of boys and 9.8 per cent of girls) have at least one functional challenge.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> WHO input.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> WHO input citing information provided by the Palestinian Ministry of Health and the Palestinian National Institute of Public Health (2020).

<sup>114</sup> WHO input.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Yotam Rosner and Ghada Majadli, *Responsibility Shirked: Israel and the Right to Health in the Occupied West Bank during COVID-19* (Physicians for Human Rights, 2021), p. 27.

<sup>117</sup> UNICEF, "State of Palestine 2019/2020", Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey database, p. 16.

105. High levels of exposure to violence and insecurity for Palestinians living under occupation affects their physical and mental health and well-being. Severe injuries have a cumulative impact on long-term needs and disabilities, while the lack of control and the unpredictability of many aspects of life under occupation contribute to increasing stress and anxiety.<sup>118</sup>

106. In this context, children are particularly vulnerable to experiencing high rates of mental distress, and have significant risks of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, behavioural problems and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, as well as functional impairment. Notably, 82 per cent of adolescents aged 13 to 19 in Gaza reported overall poor to very poor levels of mental well-being,<sup>119</sup> and 63 per cent of persons with disabilities lacked accessibility to mental health and psychosocial support services.<sup>120</sup>

### *Education*

107. In 2022, 600,000 Palestinians might miss access to education and need humanitarian assistance. Of those, 74 per cent live in Gaza, 56 per cent are women and some 13,400 are children with disabilities.<sup>121</sup>

108. Households in the West Bank reported safety concerns in relation to their children's education, such as travelling to or studying in education facilities. Concerns include the firing of tear gas on schools and students, the detention of students at school by Israeli security forces, delays at checkpoints and military presences around schools, in addition to violence and harassment while travelling to school.<sup>122</sup>

109. Between 1 April and 31 December 2021, UNRWA documented five separate incidents in which live ammunition, plastic-coated metal bullets, tear gas canisters or other weapons landed in its schools in the West Bank.<sup>123</sup>

110. More than 50 schools in the West Bank face the risk of demolition, which, if such a risk materialized, would jeopardize the learning process for more than 5,000 Palestinian children attending these institutions.<sup>124</sup>

111. In Gaza, 331 educational facilities were damaged during the May 2021 escalation with an estimated cost of \$3.5 million.<sup>125</sup>

112. School closures due to COVID-19 and the May 2021 escalation resulted in an early end to the school year for 1.3 million children, who ended up losing at least three months of education.<sup>126</sup>

113. The frequent and long electricity outages also have a major impact on the school performance of children, who are enrolled in both online and in-person learning

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<sup>118</sup> WHO input.

<sup>119</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022*, p. 30.

<sup>120</sup> WHO input.

<sup>121</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022*, p. 18.

<sup>122</sup> UNRWA input.

<sup>123</sup> UNRWA input.

<sup>124</sup> Save the Children, "Number of displaced Palestinian children at a four-year high as demolitions in West Bank continue", 3 February 2021.

<sup>125</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022*, p. 13.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

systems in Gaza.<sup>127</sup> This is compounded by Internet outages and damage to streets and school infrastructures.<sup>128</sup>

114. In the 2020/21 academic year, the student per class rate was 41.20, 39.56 and 21.65 at UNRWA, public and private schools, respectively. This high-density rate (in view of the overcrowded classes) affected the efficiency and quality of education in Gaza. The digital gap between Gaza and the world, particularly with the adoption of the online learning modality in schools, was increased by Israeli restrictions on the import of technological devices to Gaza, limiting the ability of Palestinians to shift to online learning.<sup>129</sup>

115. In Gaza, the non-attendance rate for basic education is 2.8 per cent and increases to 21.5 per cent in secondary classes.<sup>130</sup> Economic conditions constitute the main obstacle for children to attending school, followed by the educational environment and reasons related to security.<sup>131</sup>

#### *Impact of the occupation on women and girls*

116. Women and girls across the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to disproportionately suffer during the reporting period. During 2021, 48 Palestinian women were killed by Israeli forces across the Territory.<sup>132</sup>

117. Women and girls in Gaza experienced several forms of harm and deprivation during the May 2021 escalation, increasing their vulnerabilities. Shelters and UNRWA schools were not well equipped to serve as shelters and receive those who were displaced or to address the unique needs of women and girls.<sup>133</sup>

118. Instances of gender-based violence and violence against children were exacerbated by increasing family/household tensions, the limited availability of basic necessities, forced displacement and a lack of safe shelter. Local service providers faced several obstacles in providing necessary services and placed their own lives at risk.<sup>134</sup> Three gender-related killings were reported within the month following the end of the escalation.<sup>135</sup>

119. During the May escalation, elderly women and those with disabilities, as well as prisoners, those with serious illnesses and pregnant and lactating women were at particularly high risk and they did not have access to emergency shelters or services.

120. In the aftermath of the escalation, a minority of women reported to ESCWA that they had access to humanitarian assistance (food parcels, dignity kits and hygiene supplies, financial assistance and in-kind aid), and many stated that aid agencies had not consulted with them about their needs.<sup>136</sup>

121. During the reporting period, house demolitions in the West Bank resulted in the displacement of 302 girls, 275 women, 275 men and 353 boys.<sup>137</sup> House demolitions

<sup>127</sup> Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, "Fact sheet on obstacles to accessing education in the Gaza Strip", 2021, p. 6.

<sup>128</sup> Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster, "Report on damage in educational facilities: Gaza Strip", July 2021, p. 4.

<sup>129</sup> Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, "Fact sheet on obstacles", p. 7.

<sup>130</sup> UNICEF, "State of Palestine 2019/2020", Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey database, p. 9.

<sup>131</sup> Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, "Fact sheet on obstacles", p. 8.

<sup>132</sup> State of Palestine, Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, "H.E. Dr. Awad, highlights the reality of the Palestinian women on the eve of International Women's Day", 7 March 2022.

<sup>133</sup> *Gendered Needs during the May 2021 Conflict in the Gaza Strip (E/ESCWA/CL2.GPID/2021/TP.6)*.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Global Protection Cluster, "Occupied Palestinian Territory protection analysis update", August 2021.

<sup>136</sup> *Gendered Needs during the May 2021 Conflict in the Gaza Strip (E/ESCWA/CL2.GPID/2021/TP.6)*.

<sup>137</sup> European Union, "One year report on demolitions and seizures", p. 6.

further burden women and girls who have traditional gender norms by exacerbating their role as caretakers and persons in charge of domestic responsibilities. Internal data collected by UNRWA in the West Bank show that home incursions and demolitions have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, with female- and child-headed households experiencing 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 as a result of exposure to violence and trauma.<sup>138</sup>

122. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau for Statistics, in 2021, 184 women<sup>139</sup> were detained or arrested by Israeli forces, including prominent activists and human rights defenders.<sup>140</sup> The occupation continues to hamper the work of Palestinian civil society, including women's rights organizations, some of which were raided or labelled as "terrorist organizations" during the reporting period.<sup>141</sup>

123. Increasing insecurity has had a negative impact on the rights of Palestinian women and girls to freedom of movement and security of the person. For example, some 7,500 nuclear families across the Occupied Palestinian Territory (12 per cent and 47 per cent of women and girls in Gaza and the West Bank, respectively), reported that they intentionally avoided areas near settlements, checkpoints and restricted areas because they felt unsafe.<sup>142</sup>

### III. Occupied Syrian Golan

124. 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.

125. In 2020, 26,300 Syrian citizens lived in five villages comprising approximately 5 per cent of the territory of the occupied Syrian Golan, while the same number of Israeli settlers are spread over 35 settlements.<sup>143</sup> The Syrian population, of which more than 80 per cent have refused to accept Israeli citizenship, continue to suffer its discriminatory policies and practices.<sup>144</sup>

126. Consecutive Israeli Governments have sought to significantly increase the number of settlers living in the occupied Syrian Golan by offering incentives for Israelis to reside there, including granting tracts of land for housing and commercial agricultural development and offering financial incentives that may reach \$12,000. The settler population has thus steadily increased in recent years.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> UNRWA input.

<sup>139</sup> State of Palestine, Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, "H.E. Dr. Awad, highlights the forty-sixth annual commemoration of Land Day in statistical figures", 30 March 2022.

<sup>140</sup> Global Protection Cluster, "Occupied Palestinian Territory protection analysis update" **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**; A/76/333, paras. 21 and 28; and OHCHR, "Israel must safeguard human rights defenders in Occupied Palestinian Territory and within its borders – UN expert", 11 August 2021.

<sup>141</sup> A/76/333, para. 25, and A/HRC/49/25, para. 36.

<sup>142</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, "OPT MSNA key analysis findings". Available at <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/18fuv35AMjhtliZpAQkUZBNCBb56d5N8D/edit#slide=id.p26>.

<sup>143</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), document ILC.109/DG/APP/2021, para. 135

<sup>144</sup> Al-Marsad, "Report on Israel's violations of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights", 31 January 2022, p. 3

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

127. A plan to add 7,000 housing units to the town of Katzrin by 2026 is reportedly currently being prepared as part of a programme seeking to double the settler population by the end of the decade. The plan also calls for the creation of two new settlements in current open spaces, new solar energy projects and industrial, commercial and tourism zones.<sup>146</sup>

128. Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan are illegal under international law. Furthermore, settlement expansion and Israeli commercial activity have negative impacts on the health, environment and agriculture of Syrian citizens in the area.<sup>147</sup>

129. A total of 95 per cent of the land is occupied by Israeli settlers, military and the authorities, leaving only 5 per cent for the Syrian population.<sup>148</sup>

130. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reports that Israel employs several methods to confiscate land and natural resources in the occupied Syrian Golan, including the expropriation of land owned by Syrian Arabs who have been displaced; the expropriation of land in close proximity to the ceasefire line for the laying of landmines; the confiscation of land for military purposes; the expropriation of land for the building of settlements and agricultural and industrial facilities; and the fencing off of areas, under the pretext of placing them at the disposal of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority.<sup>149</sup>

131. For example, by 2021, Israel had declared approximately 370,000 dunams in the occupied Syrian Golan as nature reserves and national parks. The ratio of nature reserves in the occupied Syrian Golan is double (0.04) that inside Israel (0.02). Furthermore, most nature reserves in the occupied Syrian Golan have been established atop the ruins of 145 Syrian villages that were destroyed during and after the 1967 war. In addition, the approximately 11,000 dunams of these natural reserves are part of the 58,000 dunams that comprise the municipal boundaries of the five Syrian villages in the occupied Syrian Golan, effectively removing this area from the control of the Syrian municipalities.<sup>150</sup>

132. Israel continues to implement a multi-year plan to develop and strengthen agriculture in Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan, including those under development. In this context, Israeli settlers have seized and exploited large areas for agricultural purposes, imposing a further economic burden on the Syrian population.<sup>151</sup>

133. Israel has continued to take steps to implement a wind turbine project during the reporting period. The 45 turbines are being erected over an area of 6,000 acres of agricultural land adjacent to Syrian villages and belonging to Syrians. This project would limit the expansion of villages, have an impact on the livelihoods of the Syrian population and expose them to health and environmental risks.<sup>152</sup>

134. Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan continue to suffer from discriminatory practices with regard to access to land and water and from restrictive zoning and building policies.<sup>153</sup> It is almost impossible for Syrians to obtain building permits in the occupied Syrian Golan. This restricts the expansion of their towns and villages

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<sup>146</sup> Zafrir Rinat, “Bennett advances Golan Heights construction plan in bid to double population”, 11 December 2021.

<sup>147</sup> [A/76/336](#), para. 58.

<sup>148</sup> Al-Marsad, “Report on Israel’s violations of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights”, p. 10.

<sup>149</sup> [A/HRC/49/84](#), para. 34.

<sup>150</sup> Al-Marsad, “Nature reserves in the Occupied Golan”, November 2021, pp. 1, 6 and 10.

<sup>151</sup> [A/76/360](#), para. 64.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 63.

<sup>153</sup> ILO, document ILC.109/DG/APP/2021, para. 139.

despite population growth, forcing many Syrians to build without permits, thereby risking demolitions, displacement, the incurring of heavy fines or even imprisonment. The Israeli authorities have issued more than 1,500 demolition orders since 1973, along with steep fines and prison sentences for unpermitted construction.<sup>154</sup>

135. In 1973, the number of livestock in the five villages of the occupied Syrian Golan reached 20,820 heads. Today, the number of livestock does not exceed a few hundred, due to the confiscation of grazing lands for the benefit of nature reserves and for the purposes of military activities conducted by the occupying army. In addition, these reserves deprive inhabitants from access to wild plants that form an important part of Golani cuisine culture.<sup>155</sup>

136. Discriminatory practices with regard to access to water and land reportedly continue to impede the efforts of Syrian citizens of the occupied Syrian Golan to keep a foothold in agriculture.<sup>156</sup>

137. Labour force participation rates of the Syrian citizens of the occupied Syrian Golan steadily increased until 2017, when they reached a peak of 51 per cent; however, they declined thereafter, dropping to 40 per cent in 2020. About one quarter (25.4 per cent) of Syrian women of working age took part in the labour force in 2000.<sup>157</sup>

138. The Syrian Arab Republic has expressed concerns about the imposition of fees and taxes by Israel, in particular on Syrian Arab workers, especially in agriculture. These include taxes on the output of daily or regular work, ranging from 15 to 35 per cent; income taxes at 25 per cent; general taxes of up to 60 per cent of wages; and a 30 per cent tax on storage refrigerators for apples. In addition, Israel refused to pay for the hospitalization of Syrian Arab workers with permanent or partial injuries sustained during work, given that they were not covered by the compensation law, and have undertaken measures to force them to join Israeli syndicates.<sup>158</sup>

## IV. Conclusions and observations

139. The protracted Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory and the occupied 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. These effects have had a different and disproportionate impact on women and girls. The negative impact of the occupation and the Israeli policies and practices is multilayered, and their cumulative repercussions affect the future of the populations living under occupation.

140. Israeli-imposed restrictions, the expansion of the illegal settlements and other practices not only prevent development in the occupied territories and hamper efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, but also cause humanitarian crises that necessitate the diversion of scarce national and international resources from development to immediate relief. The Palestinian financial crisis and the fragmentation of the Palestinian Territory have also resulted in a fragmented economy that is dependent on Israel and foreign aid.

141. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout have compounded the social and economic situation and have resulted in more adverse living conditions

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<sup>154</sup> Al-Marsad, "Report on Israel's violations of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights", pp. 11–12.

<sup>155</sup> Al-Marsad, "Nature reserves in the Occupied Golan", p. 7.

<sup>156</sup> ILO, document ILC.109/DG/APP/2021, para. 146.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 136.

<sup>158</sup> [A/HRC/49/84](#), para. 38.

for Palestinians. Its effects on the Palestinian people are multiplied as a result of long-standing Israeli policies and practices. The Palestinian health system had already been on the brink of collapse, particularly in Gaza, before the pandemic.

142. The May 2021 escalation in hostilities between Israel and armed groups in Gaza compounded the severe situation in Gaza, 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.

143. Prospects for the Palestinian economy are negative, should the current status quo 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.

144. 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, which would be a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and is prohibited under international law.

145. 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. 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.

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