



Focus:
Palestine
a WCRC Handbook
part 3



Above: Rally for Gaza, Chicago, IL May 2021. photo: J. Bing

Cover photo: Jerusalem, just inside New Gate, the entrance to the Old City's Christian Quarter.

This handbook was written in response to *Action 55* of the WCRC at the 2017 General Conference.

Focus: Palestine is created in 3 parts for ease of printing in smaller sections. It is designed for A4 paper but can also be printed on 8.5x11 paper when the “fit to scale” box is checked in the print window. Please print 2-sided copies and recycle your paper.

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World Communion
of Reformed Churches

Focus: Palestine

a WCRC Handbook

Part Three: Systems of Sin and the Jerusalem Microcosm

Written and Edited
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THE CRIME OF APARTHEID

The 1998 Rome Statute to the International Criminal Court and 1973 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid define apartheid as a **crime against humanity** consisting of three main elements:

- 1 AN INTENT TO MAINTAIN DOMINATION**
BY ONE RACIAL GROUP OVER ANOTHER
- 2 A CONTEXT OF SYSTEMATIC OPPRESSION**
BY ONE RACIAL GROUP OVER ANOTHER
- 3 INHUMANE ACTS**

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

VISUALIZING PALESTINE

SOURCES: HRW (2021), A Threshold Crossed
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PALESTINE SHRINKING EXPANDING ISRAEL



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07 March 2021. Also all the West Bank, Settlements and The Separation Barrier.

Green: Palestinian Land
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Chapter 7

Systems of Sin

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2. **Borders and Surveillance**
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1. Apartheid

From Occupation to Apartheid

Any discussion or solidarity initiative related to the violations of the human rights of Palestinians by of the State of Israel and its colonisation raises the question of naming the Israeli “matrix of control”¹ as apartheid.

In *Cry for Hope*, Palestinian Christians clearly state that the matrix of control and abuse must be named as such:

“...we have come to the end of the illusion that Israel and the world powers intend to honor and defend the rights of the Palestinian people to dignity, self-determination, and the fundamental human rights guaranteed under international law, including the right of return for Palestinian refugees. It is time for the international community, in light of these events, to recognize Israel as an apartheid state in terms of international law.”

The debate about the application of the UN laws, conventions, and protocols of military occupation [frequently referred to simply as occupation], and their application to the situation of Palestinians has raised the questions of whether it is an “occupation” and how “temporary” the occupation actually is since it has been in place for over 70 years. Looked at through a lens of international law, human rights groups are beginning to connect the dots and use the label of apartheid, which has a very specific legal definition.

Apartheid is a crime against humanity, as defined in the [International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid](#) and the [Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court](#) (see articles 7J and 2H). For a system of government to be considered apartheid under international law, three elements must be present. They are:

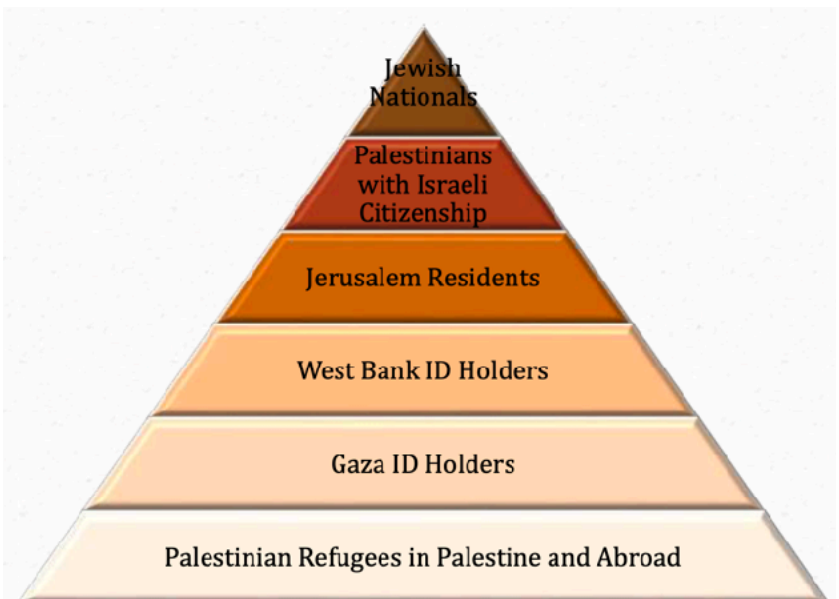
- An intent to maintain the domination by one group over another.
- A context of systematic oppression by one group over another.
- An inhumane act or acts.

The definition of “one group over another” is not limited to one racial group over another, but extends to groups separated by ethnicity, nationality, and religion. Palestinians have been living under such segregation, or “apartheid” which is an Afrikaans word for separation. With their human and civil rights denied, Palestinians are segregated to live under military law and be prosecuted in military courts, while Israelis live under civilian law and are prosecuted in civilian courts.

Experts are beginning to call out what they see in Israel/Palestine: It is apartheid. It is not whether it is the same as the apartheid regime in South Africa; rather, it is about whether it meets the definition under international law. And public opinion around the world is beginning to tip as the veil lifts on Israel’s discriminatory, two-tiered society based on religious and ethnic identity.

The bar for defining the Israeli regime as an *apartheid regime* has been met.

-B’Tselem
Israeli Human Rights
Organization



source: badil.org

¹ Jeff Halper, "[The Key to Peace: Dismantling the Matrix of Control](#)," The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHN.org).

BORN UNEQUAL WEST BANK

ILAN



JEWISH CITIZEN OF ISRAEL
BORN IN AN ISRAELI
SETTLEMENT



MARIAM

PALESTINIAN ID HOLDER
BORN IN A PALESTINIAN
VILLAGE (AREA C)

CAN I HOP IN MY CAR AND DRIVE TO JERUSALEM?

YES

You can do so on roads designed to bypass Palestinian communities and facilitate your commute

NO

You need a rarely issued Israeli permit that's generally time limited. Even with a permit, you'll face checkpoints where you're likely to experience delays and humiliation

IF I'M ARRESTED, WILL I GET A FAIR TRIAL?

YES

You'll be tried in Israeli civil courts with full due process rights

NO

You'll be tried in an Israeli military court with a near 100% conviction rate, or possibly even held in administrative detention without trial or charge, based on secret evidence

DO I HAVE THE RIGHT TO FREE SPEECH AND RIGHT TO PROTEST?

YES

Only speech with "near certainty" to "seriously jeopardize" vital security can be restricted. You can protest without fear of state repression

NO

Military orders restrict your right to free speech and right to protest. If you violate these vaguely worded orders, you could face up to 10 years in prison

CAN I BUILD A HOME?

YES

Israel has allocated large swaths of the West Bank to settlements, where plans have been approved to build thousands of homes

NO

Because you live in the 60% of the West Bank that is under exclusive Israeli control (Area C), it's virtually impossible. You may be more likely to have your home demolished than get a permit to build

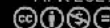
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WATCH

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BORN UNEQUAL ABROAD

HANNAH



JEWISH AMERICAN
BORN IN THE U.S.



LEILA

PALESTINIAN REFUGEE
BORN IN LEBANON

CAN I VISIT ISRAEL & THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY?

YES

You can visit Israel and most of the West Bank, and you'll find programs that may help fund your trip

NO

You are barred from entry to Israel, the West Bank or Gaza

CAN I MOVE THERE?

YES

Because you're Jewish, the 1950 Law of Return guarantees your right to live in Israel. Plus, you'll get a free flight and a bunch of perks if you do so

NO

As a Palestinian refugee, you're barred from returning and denied residency rights, even if you have family living there

CAN I BECOME AN ISRAELI CITIZEN?

YES

The 1952 Citizenship Law entitles you to automatic citizenship, even if you've never set foot in Israel before

NO

You are ineligible if your family became refugees between 1947 and 1949, even if they had lived there for generations before

CAN I PASS ON MY LEGAL STATUS TO MY SPOUSE IN ISRAEL OR THE OPT?

YES

Upon becoming a citizen, you can pass along legal status and even citizenship to your spouse (except if they're Palestinian from the OPT or from several Arab countries)

NO

You have no legal status and cannot gain one, even by marrying a citizen or resident of Israel

HUMAN
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Human Rights Groups Charge Israel with Apartheid

Human Rights Watch Describes Israeli Abuses as Crimes of Persecution and Apartheid

What is Human Rights Watch and what does it do?

[Human Rights Watch](#) (HRW) investigates and reports on abuses happening in all corners of the world. They self-describe as:

450 people of 70-plus nationalities who are country experts, lawyers, journalists, and others who work to protect the most at risk, from vulnerable minorities and civilians in wartime, to refugees and children in need and they direct their advocacy towards governments, armed groups and businesses, pushing them to change or enforce their laws, policies and practices.

In April 2021, HRW issued an extensive study on the violations of international human rights law in Palestine, entitled [A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution](#).

The 213-page report “examines Israel’s treatment of Palestinians. It presents the present-day reality of a single authority, the Israeli government, ruling primarily over the area between the Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea, populated by two groups of roughly equal size [7 million each], and methodologically privileging Jewish Israelis while repressing Palestinians, most severely in the occupied territory.” The report is an exhaustive documentation of the conditions related to Palestinians and their treatment, viewed through the lenses of international law: the Apartheid Convention and the Rome Statute.

[CLICK TO WATCH 3 MIN HRW VIDEO:](#)



A THRESHOLD CROSSED

Among the inhumane acts HRW identifies in their report which appear in the Apartheid Convention or the Rome Statute are:

- forcible transfer
- expropriation of landed property
- creation of separate reserves and ghettos and denial of
- denial of the right to leave and to return to their country
- denial of the right to a nationality.

[CLICK TO WATCH EXPLAINER VIDEO: IS ISRAEL GUILTY OF APARTHEID AGAINST PALESTINIANS?](#)

“This Is Apartheid”

Says Israeli Human Rights Group B’Tselem

B’Tselem is the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. Since 1989, [B’Tselem](#) has documented in writing, photos, videos, and other reporting mechanisms the continuing patterns of oppression of the Palestinians. Its name comes from Hebrew for “in the image of,” reflecting the founding affirmation of the image of God in all persons and the role of upholding human rights for all. B’Tselem works to “expose the injustice, violence and dispossession inherent to the regime of occupation, to deconstruct the apparatuses that enable it, and challenge its legitimacy in Israel and internationally.”

In January 2021, after years of documentation and analysis, B’Tselem released its findings declaring Israel practices apartheid with regard to Palestinians. The report, [“This Is Apartheid”](#) states:

The Israeli regime enacts in all the territory it controls (Israeli sovereign territory, East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip) an apartheid regime. One organizing principle lies at the base of a wide array of Israeli policies: advancing and perpetuating the supremacy of one group — Jews — over another — Palestinians.

The report covers four critical areas: land, citizenship, freedom of movement, and political participation, addressing how Israel implements their “Matrix of Control.” B’Tselem identifies the principal methodology used in its apartheid policies as [engineering and controlling space](#):

The key tool Israel uses to implement the principle of Jewish supremacy is engineering space geographically, demographically and politically.... B’Tselem rejects the perception of Israel as a democracy (inside the Green Line) that simultaneously upholds a temporary military occupation (beyond it). B’Tselem reached the conclusion that the bar for defining the Israeli regime as an apartheid regime has been met after considering the accumulation of policies and laws that Israel devised to entrench its control over Palestinians.

[B’Tselem’s Executive Director](#), Hagai El-Ad explains

The fundamental tenets of Israel’s regime, although already implemented for many years, have recently grown more explicit. This happened both with the discussion of *de jure* annexation after decades of *de facto* annexation, and with the enactment of the Nation State Basic Law, which took the existing discrimination against Palestinians and turned it into an open constitutional principle. Israel is not a democracy that has a temporary occupation attached to it: it is one regime between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, and we must look at the full picture and see it for what it is: apartheid. This sobering look at reality need not lead to despair, but quite the opposite. It is a call for change. After all, people created this regime, and people can change it.



Perspectives from a Visit by South African Christians to Palestine and Israel

Yes, It Is Apartheid

During his tenure as the President of the WCRC, Rev. Dr. Jerry Pillay published a paper on apartheid in the Holy Land as seen through his South African lens and experience, entitled [“Apartheid in the Holy Land: Theological Reflections on the Israel and/or Palestine Situation from a South African Perspective.”](#) Dr. Pillay begins his analysis by comparing the apartheid examples, saying the Israel-Palestine situation “shows great resemblances to the experience of apartheid in South Africa which can be seen in the colonisation, the war and the forced displacement of people in Palestine.” He says his article “attempts, firstly, to show this apartheid comparison and then proceeds to discuss the theological implications of the issues of justice and reconciliation in Israel-Palestine by referring to the same in the South African context.” (See Appendix D for full text).

Dr. Pillay has an extended examination of international law (cited in this chapter) and shows how the violations of those laws resemble the experience of South Africa under an apartheid regime. Pillay asserts that the [1973 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid](#) applies to the experience of Palestinians as apartheid racial discrimination. He goes on to say:

The consequent colonisation, racialisation and stereotyping of the Arab “other” that has marked the Palestinian population demands an analysis of patterns of racialisation (Bakan 2009: 332). The application of the term apartheid, meaning state-sponsored “separateness of races,” is consistent with the racial contract framework and draws attention to the exclusionary and violent character of the Israeli Zionist project regarding the indigenous Palestinian population.

Dr. Pillay describes a trip he took to the Holy Land in terms of both justice and pastoral concern for the people of that region:

In December 2012, I was amongst a group of leaders of various churches and church organisations (including women and youth) in South Africa that visited the Holy Land to gain first-hand experience of the Israel-Palestine situation. We were invited to listen to the stories and perspectives of what is happening in Palestine. As we listened to the different sides of the stories shared by church leaders, Muslims, Jews, political representatives, NGOs, soldiers and ordinary local people concerning the situation in Palestine, we were starkly reminded of the apartheid days in South Africa and bemoaned the fact that there seemed to be nothing really holy about the Holy Land. Yet we were encouraged by the initiatives undertaken by Christians, Muslims, Jews and others to find peaceful solutions to the problems of Palestine and Israel.

The South Africans observed and discussed along the way the impact of what they saw. The group witnessed the humiliation of checkpoints and blockades and the patterns of identity cards and surveillance that reminded them of their own experiences under apartheid. They noted the building of what Pillay called “an apartheid system” of separate roads

We believe...that the Church must therefore stand by people who in any way suffer or are in need, which among other things means that the Church will witness and take up the fight against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream; ...that as God’s possession the Church must stand where God stands, namely against injustice and with those who suffer injustice; and that the Church as made up of those who follow Christ must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and rule over others to their disadvantage.

Therefore we reject any ideology that legitimates forms of injustice and any doctrine that is unwilling to oppose such an ideology on the basis of the gospel.

~ Belhar Confession

Part 4, English translation

and, most notably, the continuing construction of the separation wall which is ultimately a land grab. Pillay notes the apartheid water distribution system of roof tanks, notably absent in the Jewish-only settlements.

From a deep personal knowledge and experience, Dr. Pillay lays out a theological analysis of justice, which is at the heart of the gospel of Christ, and a process of reconciliation and social transformation related to the establishment of justice. He calls the church to dismantle apartheid through structures and discernment, analogous to the journey in South Africa, and calls the global Christian Church to play its crucial role in the establishment of justice. [Dr. Pillay’s paper](#) is commended to the WCRC for further reflection in the fulfillment of Action 55’s mandates. Dr. Pillay concludes:

I offered a theological critique of the situation in Israel-Palestine by focusing on the need for justice and reconciliation as in the experience of South Africa. I pointed out that the (ecumenical) Church in South Africa contributed immensely to the dismantling of apartheid by taking sides with the majority of poor and oppressed people, refuting apartheid as a heresy and biblically untenable, prophetically speaking out and acting against injustice, mustering the support of the international world.

Dr. Jerry Pillay attending the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 2014 in Detroit, Michigan, where he spoke to the assembly about his trip to Palestine and the apartheid system he witnessed there.

Photo: Franke



2. Borders, Security and Surveillance

The Matrix of Control

Jesus said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand." ~Matthew 12:25

The Latin maxim *divide et impera* comes from the time when Rome ruled its vast empire through a strategy of "divide and rule." Though there have been exceptions in history, this military tactic has been used through the ages by the powerful over the powerless as an effective way of using division to the benefit of the ruling powers. Palestine, being no stranger to occupation from even before the Roman era and all the way to the present, is once again being divided and ruled by the current power in place.

The Separation Barrier, approved by the Israeli government in 2002 and strategically called the "security fence" by Israel, is in reality a wall (or fence in rural areas) that mostly separates Palestinians from each other, and not from Israelis; it has little to do with security and much to do with taking land. The route of the wall was determined by the many illegal Israeli settlements already built in the West Bank on Palestinian lands. The concrete sections of the wall are up to 8 metres (25 feet) high and when completed, it will be 750 km (440 miles) long, snaking through the cities, towns, villages and

rural landscape of Palestine. Only 15% of it is on the 1949 Armistice "Green Line" which is considered the border of "Israel proper" or 1948 Israel. 85% of the Separation Barrier is well into Palestinian territory, by 18 km in parts (11 miles) and thus has the effect of separating Palestinians from each other, their families and relatives, and from their farm lands, olive groves, and orchards, which are crucial to their livelihoods.

In placing this separation barrier so far beyond the "Israeli border" (though Israel has yet to declare its official borders), Israel has created yet another land grab. And to complicate matters further, those Palestinians who find themselves separated from their farm lands or orchards have been losing access to and eventually rights to those properties, since any "unattended" land can be confiscated by the state of Israel.

The Separation Barrier is only one part of what the Israeli Anthropologist Jeff Halper has called [Israel's "matrix of control."](#) Through a complicated maze of byzantine rules and controls, Israel keeps the Palestinian population living under its military law. Through a Byzantine maze of rules and controls, Israel "divides and rules" the Palestinian population.

Halper details the matrix as a system of control designed to:

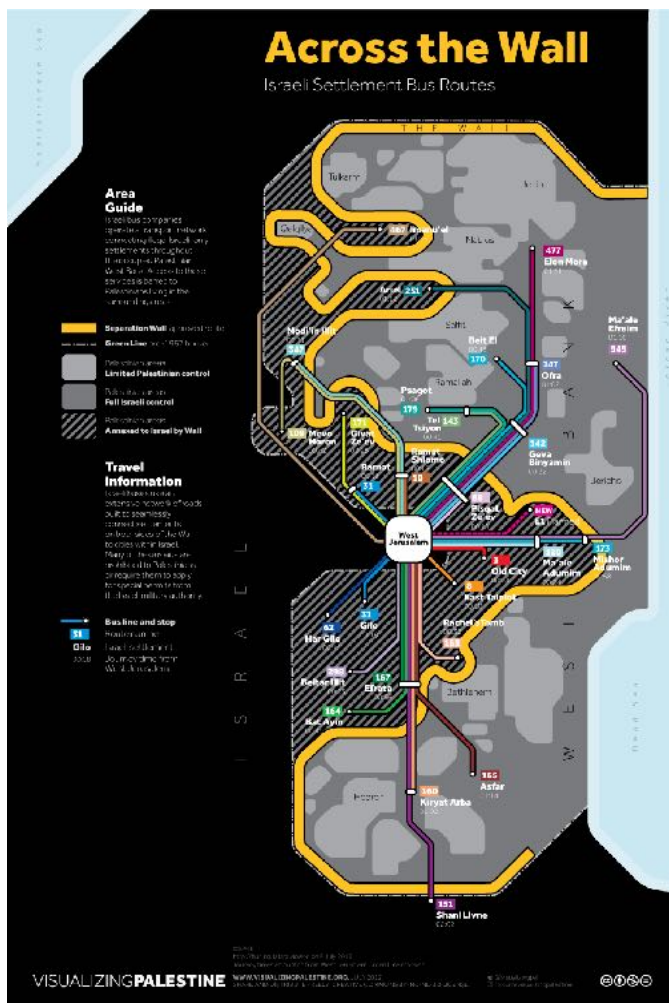
1. allow Israel to control every aspect of Palestinian life in the Occupied Territories, while
2. lower Israel's military profile in order to give the impression to the outside that what Palestinians refer to as "occupation" is merely proper administration, and that Israel has a "duty" to defend itself and the status quo, yet
3. create enough space for a dependent Palestinian mini-state that will relieve Israel of the Palestinian population while
4. deflect, through the use of "administrative" image and bureaucratic mechanisms, international opposition and thus to maintain control indefinitely and, in the final analysis,
5. force the Palestinians to despair of ever achieving a viable and truly sovereign state and to accept any settlement offered by Israeli. ("Time is on our side" is, as Sharon has often said, a cornerstone of Israeli policy.)

Halper continues,

Because it operates under a Kafka-esque guise of "proper administration," "upholding the law," "keeping the public order" and, of course, "security," the Matrix of Control renders the Occupation virtually invisible. In "normal" times (when active Palestinian resistance can be stifled), its outward appearance is legal and bureaucratic, the most effective means of control over a long period of time. The Israeli military government over the Occupied Territories is called, for example, the "Civil Administration," even though it is headed by a colonel under the strict authority of the Ministry of Defense, and is bound by the orders of the general commanding the "Central Front."

The control mechanisms of the Matrix are varied and diverse. There are, first of all, active measures to ensure acquiescence:

Outright military actions, including attacks on civilian population centers and the Palestinian infrastructure;



Extensive use of collaborators and undercover “mustarabi” army units; administrative detention, arrest, trial and torture; and “Orders” issued by the Military Commanders of the West Bank and Gaza (some 2,000 in number since 1967), supplemented by Civil Administration policies, that replace local civil law with policies and procedures that cynically further Israeli political control.

A second set of controls derives from Israel's policy of “creating facts on the ground” - virtually all of them in violation of international law (including the Fourth Geneva Convention signed by Israel itself). These include:

- Massive expropriation of Palestinian land;
- Construction of more than 200 settlements and the transfer of 400,000 Israelis across the 1967 boundaries: about 200,000 in the West Bank, 200,000 in East Jerusalem and 6000 in Gaza (the latter occupying a fourth of the land, including most of the coastline);
- Carving the Occupied Territories into areas – Areas A, B, C, D in the West Bank; H1, H2 in Hebron; Yellow, Green, Blue and White Areas in Gaza; nature reserves; closed military areas, security zones, and “open green spaces” of restricted housing over more than half of Palestinian East Jerusalem – which confine the Palestinians to some 190 islands, all surrounded by Israeli settlements, roads and checkpoints;
- A massive system of highways and bypass roads designed to link settlements, to create barriers between Palestinian areas and to incorporate the West Bank into Israel proper;
- Imposing severe controls on Palestinian movement;
- Construction of seven industrial parks that give new life to isolated settlements, exploit cheap Palestinian labor while denying it access to Israel, rob Palestinian cities of their economic vitality, control key locations and ensure Israel's ability to continue dumping its industrial wastes onto the West Bank;
- Maintaining control over aquifers and other vital natural resources;
- Exploiting holy places (Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem, the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, and others in and around Jerusalem) as pretexts for maintaining a “security presence.”

Yet a third set of control mechanisms, the most subtle of all, are those of a bureaucratic or “legal” nature. They entangle Palestinians in a tight web of restrictions and trigger sanctions whenever Palestinians try to expand their life space. These include:

- A permanent “closure” of the West Bank and Gaza;
- A discriminatory and often arbitrary system of work, entrance, and travel permits system restricting freedom of movement both within the country and abroad;
- The use of diverse methods of active displacement: exile and deportation; the revoking of residency rights; induced emigration through impoverishment; land expropriation, house

demolitions and other means of making life in the Occupied Territories unbearable. Schemes of “transfer” have also been suggested (in fact, two parties in Sharon's government – the National Union Party of the assassinated Tourism Minister Ze'evi and Minister of Infrastructure Lieberman's “Israel Is Our Home” – have “transfer” as their main political program). Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have “departed” since 1967, but a core of three million sumud (“steadfast”) Palestinians still remains.

- Zoning policies that, under the guise of planning and the law, serve to freeze the natural development of Palestinian towns and villages. Part of this system involves the restrictive use building permits, enforced by house demolitions, arrests, fines, and daily harassment, all designed to confine the population to small enclaves;
- Around the settlements, expansive “master plans” being drawn up that allow for massive building while contending that settlement building has been “frozen”;
- Restrictions on the planting of crops and their sale, together with the wholesale uprooting of hundreds of thousands of olive and fruit trees since 1967; and
- Employing licensing and inspection of Palestinian businesses as a means of political control.

To all of this must be added, of course, the debilitating psychological costs of life under occupation: loss of life, imprisonment, torture, harassment, humiliation, anger, and frustration, as well as traumas suffered by tens of thousands of Palestinians (especially children) who witnessed their homes being demolished, saw their loved ones beaten and humiliated, suffered from inadequate housing, and who lost opportunities to actualize their life potentials. These are wounds that will take generations to heal.

For more, see: Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, ICAHD, [The Key to Peace: Dismantling the Matrix of Control](#)



In this video you can see Jeff Halper giving a tour of Jerusalem and introducing the 'Matrix of Control' concept.

Violation of digital rights for Palestinians and Israelis is another dimension of the surveillance culture of the Israeli security sector. The [Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media](#) created an extensively documented report in 2020 on how surveillance uses digital formats to track, attack, and further control the rights of freedom of expression and freedom of movement within Palestine and Israel.

The impact of Israeli surveillance technology on human rights is undeniable. Surveillance of individuals —often journalists, activists, opposition figures and critics— has been shown to lead to arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings. Journalists and media have also been subjected to military censorship, orders banning coverage of specific subjects and private-sector lawsuits designed to gag them. In particular, two significant laws related to internal surveillance on Israeli citizens caused a heated debate in the Israeli media and reached the Court —The Big Brother Law and The Biometric Database Law. The Big Brother Law approved by the Knesset in 2007 allows the police to set up a database of citizens that contains telephone numbers (including unlisted ones), names of mobile telephone subscribers, serial numbers of mobile phones, and maps of antenna locations.

...These laws and surveillance methods established a comprehensive monitoring system, violating Palestinians' right to privacy and further limiting their right to freedom of expression and their ability to demand their human rights be respected. Meanwhile, during the coronavirus pandemic, Israel's security agency; the Shin Bet, is using citizens' cell phone location data to track and monitor the movements of those infected. Controversially, the data had been collected over the past few years without this being previously reported.

Not Accidental: Dehumanization Is the Point

Dehumanization, that is to say seeing people as less than human, is a necessary step towards moral disengagement that allows aggression and violence towards other human beings.² When people are classified in an “us vs. them” equation and people are pushed to extreme limits of “otherness,” the result is the opposite of empathy. Dehumanization makes it impossible to live by the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” After years of operating checkpoints that dehumanize Palestinians at an extreme level, Israel has made it possible for Israelis to no longer see their neighbors as worthy of empathy and human rights.

The checkpoints mentioned by Jeff Halper within the “matrix of control” are a large part of the Israeli “master plan” to restrict access and movement for Palestinians, even to the point of frustrating life to the point that they give up and leave; the Israeli goal is for Palestinians to emigrate out of the area. This plan of pushing out as many Palestinians as possible was devised early in the history of the state; in the [recently declassified \[2021\] diary of Ben Gurion](#), the first Prime Minister of Israel, it is revealed that the plan was to “pester and motivate the refugees to move eastward.” There was a “Transfer Committee” established for “resettling the 1948 Arab refugees far away from the country.”³ Because the Palestinian numbers have grown and not been reduced as originally planned, the dehumanization at the checkpoints now plays a significant role in the original Zionist plan of a Jewish state.

As part of that “master plan” of pushing people to leave, the checkpoints have become a bane of daily life for Palestinians. Babies have been born at checkpoints and others have lost their lives there, waiting for an ambulance. At some checkpoints, people begin to line up at 3 a.m. to be able to pass through and get to where they need to go by morning.



Left: Israeli soldier inspects a Palestinian man's ID in the city of Hebron in the West Bank; it is known as al-Khalil in Arabic. The city is home to the “Cave of the Patriarchs,” aka the Ibrahim Mosque, and is considered a holy site in all three Abrahamic traditions. The Arabic name of the complex reflects the prominence given to Abraham in Islam. In 1994, the Hebron Massacre occurred in which a Jewish settler killed 29 Muslims praying in the mosque.

More:

A trip to Hebron: to anyone who says the situation in Palestine is complex just tell them to spend an afternoon in Hebron.

By Benjamin Moser, June 10, 2021
[Read article](#) on Mondoweiss

Photo: [badil.org](#)

² “Dehumanization is one of eight forms of ‘moral disengagement.’” Albert Bandura, Bill Underwood, Michael Fromson, [“Disinhibition of Aggression through Diffusion of Responsibility and Dehumanization of Victims.”](#) *Journal of Research in Personality*, Vol 9, Issue 4 (December 1975).

³ Arik Ariel, Ha'aretz, Dec. 2013, [“Revealed From Archive: Israel's Secret Plan to Resettle Arab Refugees”](#)

Poet and writer Susan Abulhawa describes what it's like to be waiting in one of these lines in her poem "Wala," which means "boy" in Arabic. It is an Israeli way of referring to a Palestinian man in the same way White people in the US have used "boy" to refer to Black men.

British-Palestinian filmmaker Farah Nabulsi's short film *The Present* won the award for Best Short Film at the 2021 British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) awards. In a fast 24 minutes, Yusef and his young daughter set out in the West Bank to buy his wife a present. Between soldiers, segregated roads and checkpoints, the film shows how daily life is affected by the dehumanizing checkpoints that are now all over the West Bank. They are not only at the "border" for people who want to enter Israel; these checkpoints are set up within Palestinian territory and limit movement for all

Palestinians in daily life. [Watch the one-minute trailer](#) to see one example of a dehumanizing checkpoint.

In a [photo essay](#) in *Electronic Intifada* on a checkpoint in the city of Qalqiliya, a series of pictures taken between 3:45 a.m. and 7 a.m. on 11 May 2013 "underlines both the dehumanizing nature of the occupation and the resolve of the Palestinian people who face these hardships every day." The checkpoints have been described as cattle stalls over the years in which they have become a permanent part of the landscape. Even after renovations and makeovers with new [facial recognition technology](#) to speed up the humiliating process, the checkpoints are still, "intended to sanitize the occupation —to make it a tolerable reality, like a chronic disease," says Palestinian cancer researcher Ahmed Alkhateeb.⁴

Wala

By Susan Abulhawa
From
My Voice Sought the Wind

It's 3 am
In the cattle cage
The line is long
And thick
With bodies
You wait
A jibneh sandwich
With cucumber
In a plastic bag
Clutched in your callused laborer's hand
Your wife prepared your breakfast and lunch
She was up before you
And together you prayed a predawn salat
She kissed your face and said
Allah ma'ak ya habibi
Allah be with you, my love
You kiss the faces of your sleeping babies
You haven't seen them awake in months
And you wonder
Has Walid's voice begun to crack yet?
Have Wijdad's hips begun to flare?
How big was Suraya's smile when she came home
with her report card?
It's 4 am
In the cattle cage
Still, you wait
The line before you is so long
And behind you now, it is longer
Few speak
You're packed so damn tight
That you hold one another upright
You see your own fatigue
Reflected in the weariness etched on
The faces all around you
You look away
Pine for a smoke
But who the hell can afford that?
You stare at the graffiti beyond the
Iron bars holding you in

Written just for you
Written
By zionist settlers sucking the breath
from your lungs
You understand the meaning
Of their English words
"Die Sand Niggers"
Sometimes
You pine for that, too.
It's 5 am
In the cattle cage
The soldiers arrive
The line loosens
You take one step forward
Propelled by the weight of bodies
Behind you
Your jibneh sandwich
With cucumber
In a plastic bag
Is crushed.
It never survives
It's 7 am
In the cattle cage
Now is your turn
You produce your papers
Unfold and refold
Eyes down
Heart down
Your shoes are down on their luck
But
You're out of the line
Fifteen men before you were pulled aside
And you tried not to look
Not to hear the one begging
Don't hit me
It's 7:30 am
On the cattle bus
You ride
The country they stole from you
Seeds outside your window
And you imagine
The man you would have been
The man you should have been
Out there
Riding the family steed
The thoroughbred mares your
grandfather

Raised and nurtured and loved
In a Palestine
Un-raped
Un-stolen
It's 8 am
You get off the cattle bus
Your crushed jibneh sandwich
With cucumber
In a plastic bag
In one hand
Your eyes down
Heart down
You put your toolbox down to knock
On the zionist settler's back door
Where the help goes
But
The zionist settler boss-man yells
Wala
Mish hon el yom!
Not there today
Boy!
And all you can do is thank Allah that
your
Wife and your babies are not
There to hear them call you
Wala



[click to watch 4 min video: The poet reads WALA at a checkpoint.](#)

"This particular video speaks to the thousands of Palestinians, whose lands and livelihoods have been stolen or destroyed by Israel; so they in turn become a source of cheap labor that lines up before the sun, in long demeaning queues to work in Israel, where they are often exploited and mistreated" ~ Susan Abulhawa

⁴ Ahmed Alkhateeb, "The Five-Star Occupation: Israel's 'Renovated' Checkpoints Still Treat Palestinians Like Cattle," *Ha'aretz*, January 1, 2020.

Profiting from Surveillance

The militarization of daily life in Palestine serves as a global model, which Israel has been exporting as a commodity to the rest of the world. Not only are companies like [Microsoft and Amazon investing in Israel's technology sector](#), which has a huge "security" component, but Israel is developing its defense industry by using Palestinians as their experiments and Palestine as their laboratory. According to [Defense News](#), Israel's defense export contracts were worth \$7.2B in 2019:

Today's major markets for Israel are in radars and electronic warfare.... The radar used in the Iron Dome air defense system was sold to the Czech Republic in a government-to-government deal last year worth \$125 million.... Israel has also inserted itself into the missiles market, among other products, in India, where there are several joint ventures. Israel is also a leader in multilayered air defense thanks largely to its Iron Dome and David's Sling systems, which Rafael co-produces with the American firm Raytheon. Elbit and other Israeli companies are also major suppliers of electro-optical technology.

However, many Israeli defense deals are not made public, and the destination country for products is often not released. Israel says radars and electronic warfare suites made up 17 percent of the sales last year; missiles at 15 percent; and optics at 12 percent.... Slightly over 41 percent of sales were in Asia, while Europe and North America each accounted for a quarter of contracts. Africa and Latin America were both at 4 percent each.... Israel's Defense Ministry says that Israel is among the top defense exporters in the world. Certainly per capita, the country is a global leader in defense exports. Up to 80 percent of its defense production is exported, according to the ministry.

Not only is Israel profiting from the perpetual occupation, now seen as colonisation, but so are businesses from other countries. The [UN identified a list of companies as complicit](#)⁵ with Israel's military occupation of Palestinian territory through the supply of materials and equipment for the construction and expansion of settlements, the supply of surveillance and identification equipment to monitor activity in the settlements, and the use of natural resources, particularly water and land, for business purposes. "[The mission notes](#) that, despite all pertinent United Nations resolutions declaring that the existence of the settlements is illegal and calling for

[Click HERE](#)
for interactive
map-based
timeline
cataloguing
Israel's
annexation
policies since
1967.

Credit:
B'Tselem & Forensic
Architecture



their cessation, the planning and growth of the settlements continues." In other words, contributing to the development, maintenance, consolidation, and growth of the "Jewish-only" settlements in the West Bank raised concerns of human rights violations.

As an example of such concerns is [Motorola Solutions](#), a supplier of surveillance equipment to illegal Israeli settlements and checkpoints. Motorola is a major supplier and player in the mass surveillance of immigration and border patrol through its CommandCentral system, which consists of video surveillance, radar, sensor, cybersecurity, and identification systems that use biometrics and facial recognition. These technologies have long been controversial for their deeply invasive methods of intruding into the lives of ordinary civilians, including children; they are in wide use by Israel in the West Bank. Motorola has also provided communication systems and maintenance to several of the largest settlements, and they have developed customized encrypted communication systems for Israel's security forces. In 2014, Motorola deepened its involvement further when it signed a 15-year, \$100 million contract with the Israeli Defense Ministry to develop an encrypted smartphone system for the Israel military and security forces.

Another example is [Hewlett Packard \(HP\)](#), now broken up into new entities, HPE and DXC Inc. They provide equipment and biometric ID cards to the discriminatory Israeli population registry, which records information about residents' ethnic identity and religion. Israeli and Palestinian residents are legally required to carry an ID card at all times, showing their ethnicity and religion. Israeli authorities regularly use this information to discriminate between Jews and non-Jews in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territories. Like Motorola, HP is involved in providing surveillance technology, including policing, to the US, Brazil, the UK, the United Arab Emirates, and other countries. HP has also been a key player in maintaining the devastating naval blockade of Gaza, which amounts to collective punishment, illegal under international human rights and humanitarian law.

As part of economic stewardship by church bodies, there has been corporate engagement with these companies as well as others in an effort to change their policies in Israel/Palestine and to end the complicity in and profits from human rights abuses. In 2014 the [Presbyterian Church \(USA\) voted to divest its funds](#) from Motorola, HP, and Caterpillar Inc. after a long, ten-year engagement that did not bear fruit in changing their policies. At that General Assembly when divestment was approved, Andries Coetzee, a voting minister member originally from South Africa, referenced his denomination's divestment from companies supporting apartheid in South Africa. Identifying himself "as a member of the oppressive white minority in South Africa," Coetzee thanked his fellow Presbyterians for divesting there in the 1970s and encouraged the Assembly to do the same for Israelis and Palestinians. "You put me on the road to gaining back my humanity," Coetzee said.⁶

Indeed, Palestinians have the same human rights as do South Africans. As [Jewish Voice for Peace advocates](#), "Palestinians should have the right to live in dignity without being surveilled, controlled, and criminalized."⁷

⁵ Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General, [Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories](#), Feb/Mar 2020

⁶Bethany Daily, "[By slim margin, Assembly approves divestment from three companies doing business in Israel/Palestine.](#)" *Presbyterian News Service*, June 21, 2014.

⁷ [DropAnyVision.org](#) - A petition of Jewish Voice for Peace.



15 meter watchtower in separation wall, Bethlehem - Photo: Framke

Qalandia Checkpoint, West Bank

For tens of thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank, the daily voyage into Israel for work, family visits, and other business begins at this checkpoint near Jerusalem, reminiscent of a passage through a prison portal. Concrete walls surround the gray building at the Qalandia crossing that looks part transit terminal, part military bunker. Inside, families squeeze large suitcases through a labyrinthine hallway to reach a set of high-tech turnstiles armed with something as controversial as the checkpoint itself: facial recognition scanners.... The facial recognition scanners serve as a reminder of the ever-present Israeli occupation of the area, Habyeab said through a translator: "There is no freedom."

Israel's adoption of biometric scanning serves as a global model—as well as cautionary tale—for tech solutions to privacy and safety concerns, as well as border security. Privacy advocates and human rights attorneys worry that the price of such high-stakes innovation comes at the risk of further eroding the already fraught relationship between Palestinians and Israelis. Israeli cyberlaw attorney Jonathan Klinger believes the nation's surveillance network is "based on having two classes of people here"—Israeli citizens with privacy protections, and West Bank Palestinians across the fence without rights.

Melissa Hellman, A tale of two AI cities: The Seattle connection to Israel's surveillance network, The Seattle Times, April 2020

photo: tweet by Presbyterian Mission Network: theIPMN.org

Police Militarization

Besides exporting military hardware, Israel also exports its dehumanizing tactics. The militarization of police forces around the world are deeply connected to Israel and its dehumanization of Palestinians. [Amnesty International has detailed reporting](#) on "Israel and the Palestinian Territories" including US police forces going to Israel for training, in spite of the country being identified as a "[chronic human rights violator.](#)" Amnesty International [reports](#) that "Many of these trips are taxpayer funded while others are privately funded. Since 2002, the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee's Project Interchange and the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs have paid for police chiefs, assistant chiefs and captains to train in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT)."

In the summer of 2020 when George Floyd, an African American in Minneapolis, was held on the ground with his neck under the knee of a white police officer for over 9 minutes, resulting in his death, a worldwide movement rose up in protest of police brutality. In Palestine where such brutality has been tolerated for years, questions were raised about why their treatment [under the knees of Israeli forces](#) was not reported and did not count? Pictures began to appear of such tactics on social media, as seen here in a Twitter post using a Reuters news image. This was only the latest in a long-running series of black men being killed by the police whose impunity was a given. Indeed, as far back as the early 2000s, US police forces have been taking lessons from Israel's techniques: see archived [list of articles](#). And as reported in *Electronic Intifada*, [Israel exports its police tactics all over the world](#), including India, China, Canada, the US, Greece, and France.



#kneeneck must stop! It happens every day here in the US and in #Palestine. What's the common thread? #israel trains US police and has been a big part of militarizing US #police forces for years. "Security" is a major Israeli export sector. #NotOK

#ICantBreathe
#PalestinianLivesMatter







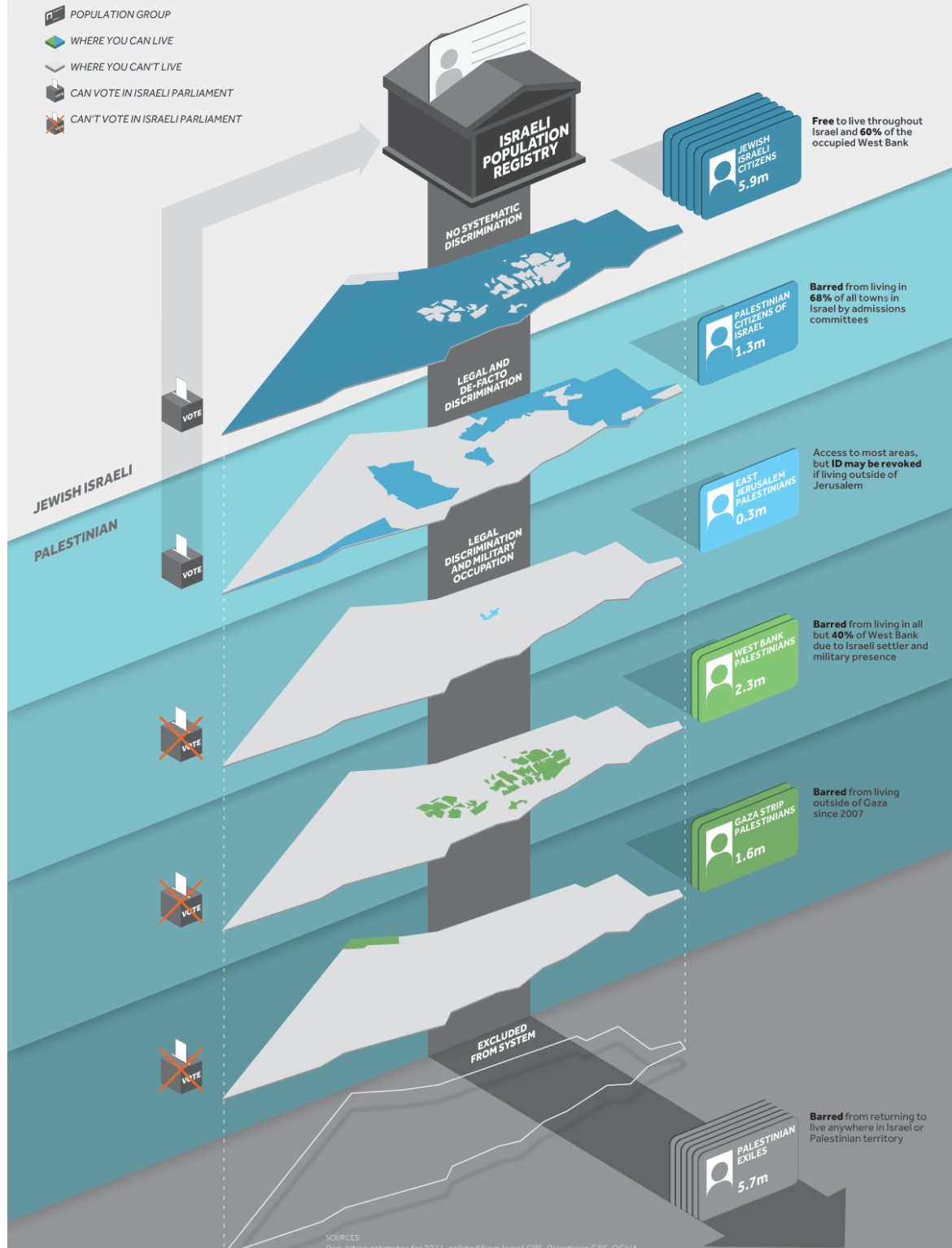
IDENTITY CRISIS

THE ISRAELI ID SYSTEM

SINCE 1967, THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN THE DE-FACTO SOVEREIGN POWER IN CONTROL OF THE WHOLE OF HISTORIC PALESTINE, INCLUDING GAZA, THE WEST BANK AND ISRAEL.

ISRAELI AUTHORITIES CONTROL THE POPULATION REGISTRY AND ID SYSTEM, RESTRICTING WHERE PALESTINIANS CAN LIVE, THEIR ACCESS TO SERVICES AND THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM.

-  POPULATION GROUP
-  WHERE YOU CAN LIVE
-  WHERE YOU CAN'T LIVE
-  CAN VOTE IN ISRAELI PARLIAMENT
-  CAN'T VOTE IN ISRAELI PARLIAMENT



SOURCES
 Population estimates for 2011, collated from Israeli CBS, Palestinian CBS, OCHA and Badi. Maps are illustrative, based on data collated from Israeli CBS and OCHA. ID matrix adapted from Helga Tawil-Souri. Additional facts from B'Tselem and Adalah.
 Population data <http://bit.ly/icbs-pop> <http://bit.ly/pCBS-pop> <http://bit.ly/badi-pop>
 Map data <http://bit.ly/icbs-map> <http://bit.ly/ocha-maps> | Matrix <http://bit.ly/tawil-id>
 WB areas <http://bit.ly/btselem-areas> | Israel admissions <http://bit.ly/adalah-areas>

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Refugees

Palestinian Refugees Today:

An Ever-Present Painful Reminder of Western Colonialism

Adapted from “Palestinian Refugees Today: An Ever-Present Painful Reminder of Western Colonialism,” a chapter by Dr. Pauline Coffman, *Why Palestine Matters, The Struggle To End Colonialism*, 2018, published by The Israel/Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

Between 1947 and 1949 when Israel became a state, approximately 750,000 Palestinians became refugees, expelled from their homes by the Haganah, forerunner of the Israeli regular military, and underground militias including the Irgun and the Lehi (Stern Gang). The majority of these Palestinian refugees, identified as “48 Refugees” to distinguish them from subsequent waves of refugees, sought refuge in the surrounding Arab states. Others remained within the new Israeli state as permanently displaced persons; approximately 355,000 internally displaced Palestinians reside in present-day Israel.

With few exceptions, internally and externally displaced Palestinian refugees were prevented from returning to their homes by the Israeli army; some 530 villages were destroyed to render them uninhabitable.⁸

Spurred by Zionist militia atrocities, the refugees fled to the nearest neighboring countries. Palestinians fleeing the conflict left their homeland by land and sea, assuming their departure was temporary. Approximately 206,000 Palestinian refugees went to Lebanon, 119,500 to Syria, and almost 300,000 to Jordan. These are the official numbers registered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA; an approximately equal number of refugees were “unregistered.” In contravention of International Law, the Declaration of Human Rights, and the Fourth Geneva Convention, they have never been allowed to return.

Oral histories of survivors (both Jewish paramilitaries and Palestinian exiles), as well as declassified official documents, have allowed recent historians to piece together an understanding of what happened in 1948-49 under cover of the fog of war. Ilan Pappé, an Israeli scholar who has researched the period using archival documents, examined documents declassified fifty years after the state of Israel was established. Zionist leaders, Pappé found, had prepared a series of formal action plans in anticipation of the day when British Mandate troops would exit Palestine, leaving the Zionist colonists with a strong military advantage over the indigenous Palestinians. Within a few months, Zionist forces implemented Plan D or Plan Dalet (the letter D in Hebrew), which was designed to force the “systematic and total expulsion [of Palestinians] from their homeland.” Zionist plans to promote large-scale Jewish immigration and creation of a Jewish state depended on the departure of the British Mandate authorities, a condition that explains why pre-state Zionist terrorism was directed at both Arab and British targets.

Nineteen years after the 1948 war that depopulated Palestine of many of its indigenous people, a second wave of external and internally-displaced refugees, known as the “’67 Refugees,” was created during the June 1967 Six-Day War as the Israeli military advanced into and occupied East Jerusalem, including the Old City, and the West Bank. A deeper understanding of the history of Palestinian expulsion and dispossession may be found in Sami Hadawi’s *Bitter Harvest*, Benny Morris’s *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, and Ilan Pappé’s *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, as well as the research and documentation of historian Salman Abu Sitta in *Atlas of Palestine 1917-1966*, posted by The Palestinian Land Society at plands.org.

By 2014, the numbers had grown from 750,000 displaced to almost 8 million first, second, and third generation registered refugees and IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons). According to BADIL, the Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, at the end of 2014, at least eight million (66 percent) of 12 million Palestinians worldwide were forcibly displaced persons. Among them were six million 1948 refugees and their descendants. This figure includes five million refugees registered with and assisted by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) and a further one million unregistered refugees. Also included are more than one million 1967 refugees and 720,000 internally displaced persons on both sides of the Green Line (1949 armistice line). It should be noted that at least 280,000 Palestinian refugees are internally displaced within Syria due to the ongoing conflict in that country. Despite the changes in the pattern of distribution of Palestinian refugees over the last 67 years, the majority of refugees still live within 100 kilometers of the borders of Israel and the 1967 occupied territories, where their places of origin are located. See [Surveys of Refugees](#).

Refugee:
a person who
has been forced
to leave his/her country
in order to escape war,
persecution,
or natural disaster.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) warns that displacement worldwide is at its highest in decades. UNHCR’s annual Global Trends reports that an unprecedented 65.6 million people were uprooted from their homes by conflict and persecution at the end of 2016. War, violence, and persecution in the contemporary moment have uprooted more men, women, and children around the world than at any time in the seven-decade history of UNHCR.

⁸ For more on refugees, see *Palestinian Land Society* at PLands.org and *Survey of Refugees* at badil.org.

West Bank and Gaza

Thirty percent of the population of the Israeli-occupied West Bank are from other parts of Palestine and live in refugee camps. These refugees depend on UNRWA for housing, food, and education through the tenth grade. In the Gaza Strip the refugee population stands at 78 percent. Gaza has one of the highest population densities on earth, with almost 3,000 residents per square kilometer (UNRWA Figures). Gaza is now virtually a prison with checkpoints at all entrances. Even the Mediterranean Sea is blockaded, and Gazan fishermen are prevented from plying their income-generating trade beyond six miles from shore. Gazans are currently suffering from a severe water crisis; salt water from the sea has seeped into its ground water and the 1- to 2-hour per day electricity supply prevents the sewage treatment plants from working. The situation for Gazans is beyond critical.

The Palestinian Right of Return

The Context

Why haven't these refugees become citizens of the countries in which they live? After all, there have been four generations of descendants from the original refugees. To answer this question, it is necessary to know the context. First, several resolutions governing the treatment of refugees have been passed by the United Nations.

Article 13 and Resolution 194

The United Nations was formed three years before Israel became a state in 1948; one of the UN's first acts was to adopt the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (December 1948). Article 13 states that "everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and return to his country." Human rights are those that are innate and cannot be taken or given away. The Declaration of Human Rights was specifically applied to Palestinian refugees through UN Resolution 194, which demands that "the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss or for damage to property..." This Resolution has been reaffirmed every year at

the United Nations with near unanimity, but the United States voted in favor of Resolution 194 every year until 1993.

UNRWA Established

After the creation of the state of Israel, knowing the impact that the creation of the state had had upon the indigenous people already living there, the United Nations General Assembly established by Resolution 302 (IV) in December 1949 the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) to carry out direct relief and works programs solely for Palestine refugees. Operations began on May 1, 1950. Still operating today, UNRWA is charged with the full support of Palestinian refugees: housing, food, education, and health care. In the absence of a solution to the Palestine refugee problem, the General Assembly has repeatedly renewed UNRWA's mandate. For Palestinian refugees desiring resolution and repatriation, UNRWA's existence has been a blessing and a curse on many levels, allowing the international community to postpone indefinitely a permanent solution for Palestine refugees and, for internal refugees, allowing Israel to renege on the duties incumbent upon an occupying power.

See: [UNRWA Mandate](#).

UNHCR Established

Convention on Status of Refugees

The United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1951, two years after UNRWA. UNHCR is charged with protecting "the most vulnerable people in the world." In the Middle East, UNHCR serves refugees in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and also Greece. The situation for Palestinian refugees is more complicated than that of other refugees hence UNRWA is designated as the sole aid agency responsible for Palestinians. For this reason, in 2011 and following, when Syrian-Palestinian refugees fled to Lebanon or elsewhere, UNHCR could not serve them as it would for other refugees around the world. See: [UN Refugee Agency](#)

**[CLICK TO WATCH UNRWA VIDEO:
PALESTINE REFUGEES NEED MORE THAN JUST AID;
THEY NEED A JUST SOLUTION](#)**

[CLICK TO WATCH: OVERVIEW OF UNRWA](#)

Refugee home kitchen in Deheisheh Refugee Camp, which was begun in tents in Bethlehem in 1948. It is into a 4th generation now.

Photo: Framke



The Right of Return for Palestinians and Jews

Palestinians continue to hold that the right of return must be addressed justly if the conflict is to be resolved. In an interview, Chris Gunness, UNRWA spokesperson, said:

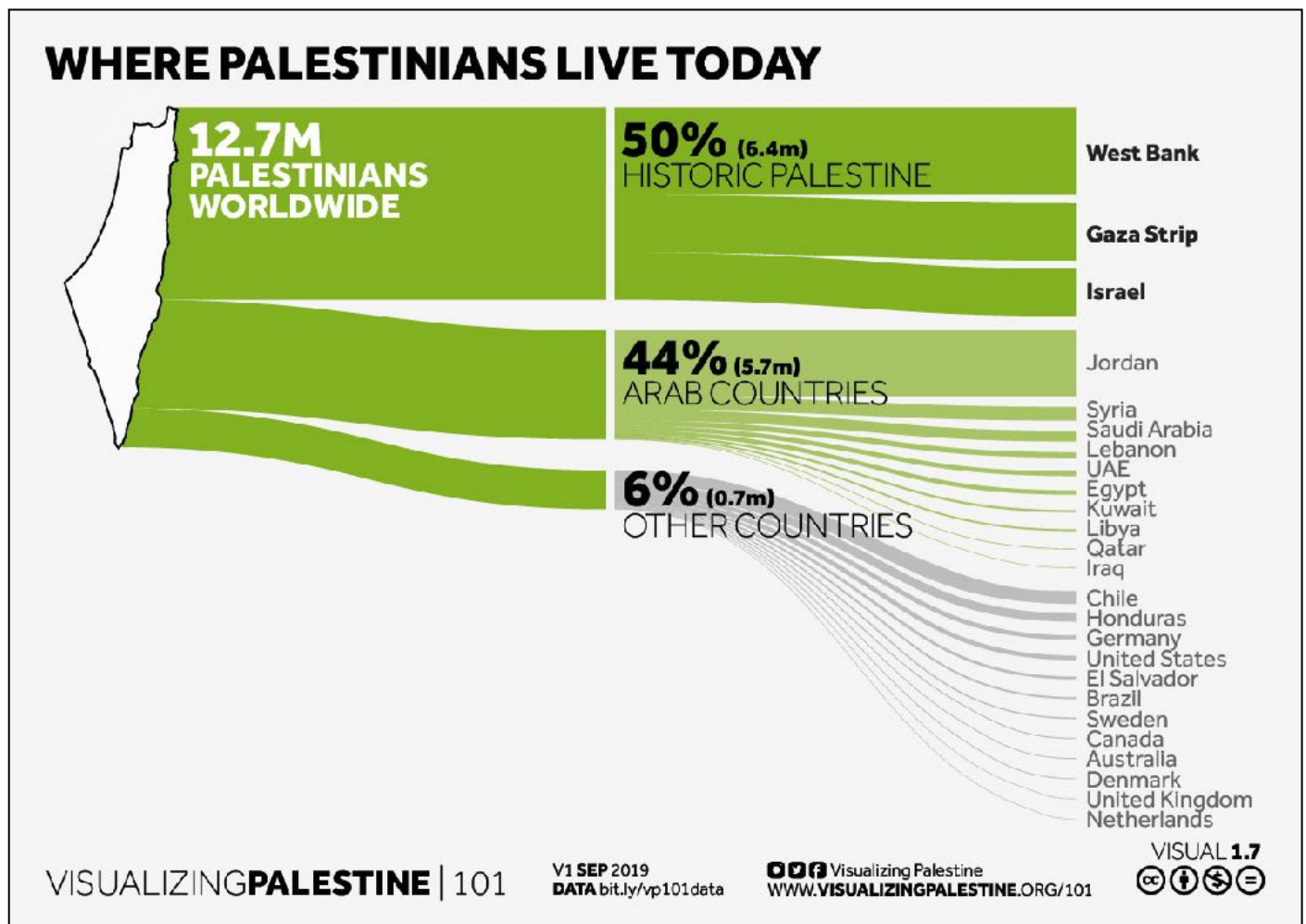
Over decades of international practice, refugee situations have been resolved in three principal ways: local integration, resettlement in third countries, and voluntary repatriation. Of these, the voluntary return of refugees to their country of origin has come to be recognized by refugees, states, and international agencies as the optimal solution to the plight of refugees. It is equally recognized that for refugees everywhere, a precondition for solutions to refugee situations is the resolution by political actors of the underlying causes of dispute and conflict.

The full interview can be found in: [“Exploding the Myths: UNRWA, UNHCR, and the Palestinian Refugees,”](#) UNRWA News, June 2011. Israel honors the “right of return” for all Jewish people, wherever they live and whoever they are. This is referred to as the “exchange of populations.” At the same time, Israel will not allow non-Jewish people the “right of return,” even those who have left for only a few years.

The right of return is a human right; it cannot be “taken away” and is key to resolving the refugee crisis. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), American Friends Quakers, worked hard on behalf of Jewish refugees among others after World War II, receiving a [Nobel Peace Prize for their work](#) in 1947. They have been crucial in helping Palestinian refugees too, and they describe the situation on [right of return for Palestine’s refugees](#):

- Israel’s position on Palestinian refugees has not changed since 1948. The Israeli government does not recognize Palestinian refugees’ right to return and continues to say that Palestinian refugees and their descendants cannot be allowed to return to the homes and communities from which they were displaced because their return would be a threat to the maintenance of a continued Jewish demographic majority in Israel.
- The United States government has not officially come out in support of the Israeli position and against the right of return. However, throughout the negotiations process US officials have pushed Palestinians to give up and/or make the right of return symbolic.
- Palestinians continue to hold that the right of return must be addressed justly if the conflict is to be resolved.
- AFSC holds that Palestinian refugees’ right of return must be recognized and justly addressed if the conflict is to be resolved. Ending the occupation is not enough. If the international community is serious about resolving the conflict it must also recognize the central importance of justly addressing the issue of Palestinians’ right of return. Anything less is a denial of justice and will not resolve the conflict.

~The American Friends Service Committee, [AFSC.org](#)



The Balfour Declaration, 1917

“His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”

Lord Balfour, On the Implications of the Declaration:

“... in Palestine, we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country.... The four great powers are committed to Zionism, and Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long tradition, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder impact than the desires and prejudices [not the rights] of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit this ancient land.”

Christopher Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel, 1917-1948*

The Girl from Jaffa

Old Askar refugee camp, northern West Bank... Maleka’s hands chop, slice, and stir, and as she works, she tells me about the house in Jaffa and her grandmother who, as she fed her children with rijla (parslane), which grew in the rocky crevices of the long road to exile, dreamed of crabs stuffed with red chilli, stingray soup doused with lemon, squid with golden rice, sea bass, sardines, and everything that swam in the clear waters that bathe Jaffa, the bride of the sea! She dishes up the rice and chicken and says, “I wish that I could offer you such a banquet, but I have never seen the sea. So I offer what I have.” The rituals of hospitality are accomplished with elegance and generosity. As I take my leave Maleka says, “I am a simple woman, but my daughters will study and grow wise. We’ll go back to our land, inshallah. And if not us, then our children.”

Mercedes Kemp, “The Girl from Jaffa,” *This Is Not A Border: Reportage & Reflection from the Palestine Festival of Literature*

Permission to Enter..

Like the refugees trying to get back from Jordan, the poet Mourid Barghouti became homeless in 1967. Unlike most of them, he was already out of the country, enrolled as a student in Cairo University and then, suddenly, unable to go home to Ramallah. In 1996 he was allowed to return. He was overwhelmed by the extent of the change and the scars of occupation, at a loss to find points of continuity between the Palestine he remembered and the one before his eyes. Occupation, he wrote, “interferes in every aspect of life and of death; it interferes with longing and anger and desire and walking in the street. It interferes with going anywhere and coming back, with going to market, the emergency hospital, the beach, the bedroom, or a distant capital.... The scene is of rock. Chalk. Military. Desert. Painful as a toothache.” That’s about how it feels today, if you add the buses backed up at Israeli barriers and the lines of people shuffling slowly through layers of Israeli security.

Jeremy Harding, “Permission to Enter,” *This Is Not A Border: Reportage & Reflection from the Palestine Festival of Literature*

Step by step we shall develop representative institutions leading to full self government but our children’s children will have passed away before that is accomplished.
~ **Winston Churchill** to a Palestinian delegation in **Jerusalem in 1921** when they demanded democratic representation

David Hirst, *The Gun and Olive Branch*



Deheisheh Refugee Camp, Bethlehem Photo: Framke

4. Normalization

Who's Afraid of Dialogue? Normalizing Oppression

By Kathleen Christison
republished from
Why Palestine Matters, The Struggle To End Colonialism
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the Presbyterian Church (USA), 2018



*They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying
“Peace, peace,” when there is no peace.*

~Jeremiah 6:14

Mediating and attempting to reconcile differences often seem to be a natural American inclination. In the Palestinian-Israeli arena, ad hoc reconciliatory efforts in the United States proliferate, more or less in inverse relation to the success or lack of success of the long-running, official US “peace process” that has striven off and on since the Oslo peace agreement of 1993 to achieve a final peace settlement. These non-official ad hoc efforts range from small living room dialogue groups that meet regularly to bring Jewish Americans together with Palestinian and other Arab Americans, to summer camps that gather American youth of Jewish and Muslim faith for a few weeks of dialogue, to larger scale, well-funded camps that bring youth from Israel and the Palestinian communities inside Israel and in the Occupied Territories to the US for several weeks of interaction.

The usually well-meaning purpose of these reconciliation efforts is to forge greater understanding between Israelis and Palestinians as people: to facilitate a frank and open exchange of narratives from each side’s perspective and discussion of the emotional pain each people feels because of past or present suffering. It is hard to criticize an effort that attempts to bring peoples together when their governments and leaderships are in conflict; in each of these efforts, those who initiate the dialogue groups or the summer camps undoubtedly genuinely hope to take some step to achieve peace between Israelis and Palestinians, and it is true that some level of real understanding is almost always forged on an individual level. But in fact the real-time effect of efforts like these—and specifically in the Israeli-Palestinian instance, when there is virtually no expectation that Israel intends to relinquish territory to the Palestinians or accord them any measure of justice—is simply to normalize Israel’s domination over the Palestinians.

These efforts tend to be feel-good projects that lull supporters and donors into an ineffective complacency, thinking they are helping resolve the political conflict by acting out of a balanced approach toward both sides. But this is actually only myopic self-congratulation. South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who oversaw the arduous Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in the early 1990s after apartheid had officially ended, has noted that efforts like these that attempt to achieve “balance” or “neutrality” between the two sides are in fact seriously unbalanced. “If you are neutral in situations of injustice,” he has said, “you

have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse, and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.”

Neutrality normalizes the dominant side’s actions and policies. Normalization is not balanced; on the contrary, normalization concretizes the status quo, standardizes the dominance of the strong party over the weak party, the occupier over the occupied, the state over any person and group that it oppresses.

From the perspective of the Palestinians, normalization comes across completely differently from the viewpoint of the dominant party and its adherents. Consider, for instance, this analogy with an (imaginary) initiative that would have brought slave youth and the teenage children of slaveholders together for a few weeks of camaraderie at a summer camp. These young people on both sides would probably all enjoy their weeks together and come away with a better attitude, able now to see that they’re all young human beings. But then they would return to their own regular lives of being slaves and slaveholders, one over the other, and the institution of slavery would not have been altered. Nothing in the real world would have changed.

One would have to conclude the same thing about any grassroots dialogue or “reconciliation” attempt that does not involve the officials in a position actually to bring about or facilitate a change of government policy.

Palestinian rap poet Remi Kanazi has spoken out specifically about normalization in a dramatic way:

NOTHING is normal about occupation.
Nothing is normal about apartheid, ethnic cleansing,
siege, blockade, settler-only roads, and bombing water
wells, schools, and mosques....

No, I don’t want to normalize with you.

I don’t want to hug, have coffee, talk it out,
break bread, sit around the campfire, eat s’mores, and
gush about how we’re all the same,...
talk about how art instead of justice can forge a better
path....
You’re either with oppression or you’re against it.*

**CLICK TO WATCH VIDEO:
“NORMALIZE THIS!”
BY RAP ARTIST REMI KANAZI**

*This Remi Kanazi poem is performed by the author
in its entirety in the above video.

5. Problematic Pilgrimage and Israeli Tourism Practices

In order to understand our reality, we say to the Churches: Come and see. We will fulfill our role to make known to you the truth of our reality, receiving you as pilgrims coming to us to pray, carrying a message of peace, love and reconciliation. You will know the facts and the people of this land, Palestinians and Israelis alike.

~ [Kairos Document](#), section 6.2

Lay of the Land

Pilgrimage Is More Than Visiting the Holy Land

For many people, a trip to visit the Holy Land and its religious sites fulfills a deep spiritual longing. It is sacred land for Christians, Jews, and Muslims, along with Baha'is. The Holy Land is also a destination for others who seek to place their feet upon the paths and places that have shaped so much of human culture and history. For some travelers, it is a journey to try to understand more of what makes this region of the world so critical in geo-politics, in theological importance, and in global peace-building.

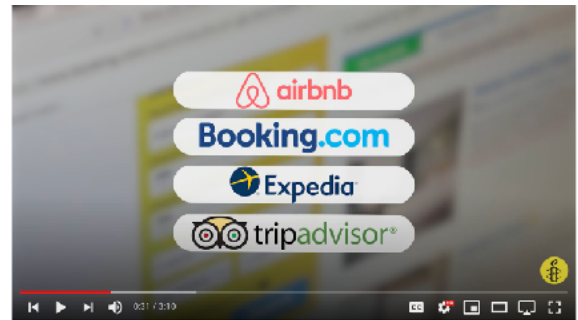
Palestinians ask that pilgrims come not only to see the "ancient stones" of such sacred and historical places, but to make space and time to meet the "Living Stones" —the Palestinians themselves in both Israel and Palestine— and to listen to their stories, too, along with those of the citizens of the State of Israel.

"Come and See" is the invitation that Palestinian Christians have been issuing to the global community, most especially to churches. Kairos Palestine, the Open Letter and *Cry for Hope* each ask that such pilgrimage be done with open hearts and eyes.⁹

Christians in Palestine and Israel have their histories and stories "faithwashed," meaning that pilgrims are conveyed a narrative that distorts the experiences of the local Christians in the Holy Land and censors disturbing truths. The rich tapestry of Christian faith and the uncomfortable truths of what has happened to Christians there is distorted by guides and museum plaques that eradicate Palestinian culture. What is substituted is an experience and stories that fit the political and social aims of the State of Israel and its tourism industry: "This land is ours."

The interactive website [Forbidden Pilgrimage](#) provides close-ups of how pilgrimage and tours manipulate the traveler and distort how the landscape, the sites, the history, and the stories of the residents of all of the Holy Land are presented. Particularly important is this story of Fadi Qattan, a Palestinian resident of Bethlehem who speaks what it is like for him as a Christian not to be able make pilgrimage himself: "I can't visit the [Christian] holy sites... under the current [Israeli] separatist regime in Palestine with its checkpoints and separation wall."

Venir a ver la realidad de Tierra Santa con ojos compasivos hacia el sufrimiento del pueblo palestino, y solidarizarse con las iniciativas de base de todas las religiones y grupos seculares que luchan contra la ocupación y trabajan por una paz justa.
[Un Clamor De Esperanza: Llamamiento A La Acción Decisiva No Podemos Servir A Dios Ya La Opresión Del Pueblo Palestino](#)
Come and see the reality in the Holy Land with compassionate eyes for the suffering of Palestinians, and stand in solidarity with grassroots initiatives on the part of all faiths and secular groups who challenge the occupation and who work for a just peace.
 See: [Cry for Hope](#)



CLICK TO WATCH 3 MIN VIDEO BY HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH: DESTINATION: OCCUPATION - TOURISM IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Tourist or Pilgrim?

The Tourist...	The Pilgrim...
Focuses preparation on what will be needed to maximize monetary investment and comfort	Focuses preparation on understanding the context about to be entered, and by reflecting on how the trip will result in personal transformation as well as positive impacts for local people
Seeks historical "tourist sites" and interesting facts	Seeks to interpret historical sites to reveal present-day truths about him/herself and interaction with the world
Observes	Immerses
Travels, tours, and returns home	Sees the trip as a continuing journey that includes home
Interacts mainly with fellow tourists and designated locals	interacts as much as possible with people in the communities being visited
Plays it as safe as possible	Is willing to take some risks and challenges to enter deeper into the local context
Seeks famous places and sites	Seeks places that reveal stories, often off the beaten track
Seeks comfort and familiarity	Recognizes hardship and discomfort are part of the learning and transformation process
Generally avoids local people unless they are part of services needed to accommodate the tourist	Emphasizes the importance of encountering and engaging with local people
Returns home to show pictures of places visited	Returns home to tell the stories of the people and culture encountered on the journey, and stories of personal change
Uses own culture as a reference point for behavior and interactions	Discovers as much as possible about the local culture and uses it as a reference point for behavior and interactions
Returns home more or less the same person, with new geographical knowledge	Returns home a person changed by the reflections and interactions on the journey

⁹ See. Chapter 2

What Is “Come and See”?

A true Christian pilgrimage to Palestine is an invitation to “come and see”: a journey to find new and deeper truths about ourselves and the meaning of our Christian faith and be transformed so that we “may test and approve what is the will of God — what is good and well-pleasing and perfect.” (Romans 12: 2)

This is what is meant by a transformative experience in pilgrimage, one that changes hearts and minds and results in the pilgrim returning home to tell the truth of what has been seen and known and felt, including taking action to keep what they saw alive by becoming involved in advocating for justice and for ending oppression for all who call the Holy Land their home.

[Come and See: A Call from Palestinian Christians](#) is a handbook with theology and guidelines for Christians who are planning a pilgrimage. It describes its purpose as helping to frame “A Journey for Peace with Justice”:

Written by a group of theologians, Palestinian Christian activists and professionals in the tourism industry, these guidelines are a call to Christian pilgrims to live their faith as they visit the Holy Land. A pilgrimage, they suggest, should go beyond an homage to ancient sites. Visitors should seek authentic, face-to-face human encounters with the people living in the Holy Land, especially the Palestinian Christians — the “Living Stones” who share their faith. The guidelines contain tools including Biblical reflection and a Code of Conduct for Tourists in the Holy Land to help plan and prepare — practically and spiritually — a “pilgrimage of transformation.”

See: [World Council of Churches’ pilgrimage recommendations](#) and advice about choosing travel companies and itineraries.

Maps, Narratives, and Locations

Pilgrims to the Holy Land will be traveling in Israel and Palestine, visiting the revered sites of faith and the history of many ancient cultures. Because many of the maps or guides given to pilgrims are examples of narratives determined by tourist authorities that want pilgrims to digest a particular perspective, it’s critical that pilgrims do some research and learning before arriving in the Holy Land. It’s part of staying oriented to where one is, not only in terms of biblical narratives, but political ones, too.

Tourism is big business globally, including in Israel. There are numerous ways that Israeli laws and practices related to travel and travel companies shape the entire experience of pilgrimage or touring the region. These include:

- Providing tourist maps which are misleading, not showing where East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza actually are and clearly indicating these areas are Palestine. Neither do these maps show the Separation Wall as it snakes through the West Bank and around the illegal settlements.
- Going through checkpoints and roadblocks easily as internationals, without experiencing the realities that Palestinians do not have such privileges and are required to go through extensive identification surveillance. Israeli tour guides do not orient travelers to what they are seeing, but only told that such checkpoints are for security purposes, not part of the military occupation of Palestine.

- Visiting holy and historic sites in the West Bank and East Jerusalem without telling travelers that they are in Palestinian areas. The most common one is a quick trip to Bethlehem that leads pilgrims to believe they are still in Israel.
- Staying in hotels in Bethlehem but never telling the pilgrims they are in Palestine, nor making any effort to have cultural or religious opportunities to meet or interact with Palestinians, especially meeting with and enjoying sharing the stories and faith of Palestinian Christians for Christian pilgrimage groups.
- Not recognizing that Palestinians do not enjoy the same freedoms of movement and visiting the holy sites that pilgrims from other countries can, most especially in Jerusalem and other parts of Israel.
- Using the comfort facilities in Bethlehem or other parts of the West Bank, but not contributing to the local economy, nor realizing that the water the pilgrim uses in that facility means Palestinians have less for their own families’ use because of Israeli water restrictions. They are not told about black water tanks on Palestinian homes as part of those restrictions
- Failing to be given the full truth about which building clusters are illegal settlements on stolen Palestinian land or about the land grabs that have made those settlements and agricultural fields possible as the guides talk about the “greening” of the desert. The pilgrim is also told names of locations only in Hebrew, and not along with the original Arab names.
- Being asked at the airport to name the Palestinian guides they may have had while touring.

All of these, and more, are part of the systems of sin in pilgrimage. Such tourism policies by Israel can make the pilgrim complicit in the injustices already suffered by the Palestinians in their homeland. Rifat Odeh Kassir, a signatory of *Kairos Palestine*, explains:

Tourism, in addition to being a cultural enterprise, is obviously an economic one. Since Israel monopolizes the tourist industry, as well as its corresponding narratives and resources, they also monopolize the profits that result. For Palestinians, this adds insult to injury: not only does Israel prevent Palestinian access to their own lands, holy sites, and stories, it also prevents their access to the income generated by tourism. Given that the Palestinian economy has already been strangled by occupation -- rendered dependent on the Israeli economy even from the other side of the wall — this is yet another act of injustice.

from [“Marketing Strategy for the Guidelines and the Code of Conduct for Pilgrimages for Transformation \(PIFT\) to Palestine-Israel”](#)

A Trip to Hebron

to anyone who says the situation in Palestine is complex just tell them to spend an afternoon in Hebron.

“...the first thing we can do is break through the rhetorical fog. Recognize that there is an occupier and an occupied, and that the moral duty is to the poor, the powerless, the underdog. What we can do is withhold our consent. What we can do is say no.” [Read full article.](#)

Benjamin Moser, June 10, 2021, *Mondoweiss*

The Madaba Declaration (2017)

Following the presentation of the Open Letter to the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 2017 and on the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, a group of Palestinian and international leaders comprising academics, travel experts, pastors from WCC churches, advocacy partners, and members of Kairos Palestine met in Madaba, Jordan, to further consult and create a new “Come and See” document on justice-centered travel to the Holy Land.

[The Madaba Declaration](#), focused on a section of that Open Letter and its implications for Palestinian dispossession of land and suppression of Palestinian rights:

We are still suffering from 100 years of injustice and oppression that were inflicted on the Palestinian people beginning with the unjust and unlawful Balfour Declaration, intensified through the Nakba and the influx of refugees, followed by the Israeli occupation of the West Bank including East Jerusalem and Gaza and the fragmentation of our people and our land through policies of isolation and confiscation of land, and the building of Jewish-only settlements and the Apartheid Wall.

Among the outcomes of the Madaba Declaration were the following justice travel frameworks as an expression of An Invitation to Solidarity —Join the Pilgrimages for Transformation, “Come & See”:

- Addressing the complicity of Christian communities and Christianity in this situation and the resultant deepening crisis for the integrity and credibility of the Gospel as well as own witnessing thereof.
- Theoretical and practical insights on tourism and pilgrimage in the Holy Land that highlighted obstacles and restrictions on visiting Palestine that hurt the tourist economy of Palestine.
- A case study into the experiences towards transformational change of participants during a pilgrimage to Palestine and Israel.
- An overview of Palestine heritage and history suggesting new and different opportunities and itineraries that include broader and deeper exposure and, in turn, offer different options for advocacy.

The Holy Land: What Can You Give? What Can You Gain?

What we always ask is, please come to us, get to know more about us, be our ambassadors, come and pray with us, have a spiritual experience. Come and be with your sisters and brothers, be happy with their happiness, share their sadness. Show your solidarity, as we are in the same path, in the same faith. Regardless of your denomination; in the end, we are all Christians.

~ Laila Asfoura
Executive Manager
Laila Tours, Bethlehem



Engaging in pilgrimage goes much deeper than just coming as tourists. Sometimes I see tourists or Christians treat the Holy Land like Disneyland. It's not just about visiting the holy sites, or visiting groups engaging in peace work, or meeting with the local Christian community; it is also about what services you can bring. What talents you can bring and provide to the local communities that live in this land. We need an awakening. We need a movement where locally and globally we begin to bring back the spirituality of this land. The new meaning of pilgrimage is peace pilgrimage: working for peace.

~Sami Awad
Executive Director
Holy Land Trust

We believe that if Jesus was here today, he wouldn't be going to the Church of the Nativity and then leaving; he would be among the people, helping people, teaching people, talking with people and joining the community to work with them.

~Rana Salman
Programme Manager
Holy Land Trust



[CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO:
WALKING THE TIGHTROPE
CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE TO
THE HOLY LAND
IN THE 21ST CENTURY](#)
by the United Reformed Church, UK

A Final Word on Problematic Pilgrimage and Justice for Palestinians



Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, former Head of the Department of Culture and Information in Palestine, civil society activist, and prominent Christian leader, on pilgrimage and travel to the area:

Tourism, including religious pilgrimages to Palestine, is not only essential for the economy, but it has been part of our social fabric for centuries.... Our families who live in ancient cities such as Jerusalem and Bethlehem have been dedicated to welcoming international visitors to Palestine for centuries. Palestine, as a whole, is a human heritage that should be experienced freely by all people.

We invite all international travelers to visit our touristic, historic and holy sites situated in Palestinian cities, towns and villages. enjoy Palestinian culture by visiting museums, cultural centers and theaters, and participate in interactive tourism, which includes nature tours and trips to the apartheid wall, to witness first-hand Israel's annexation of Palestinian land. By traveling to Palestine, you will contribute to developing the multi-faceted Palestinian tourism industry and promoting Palestine's long and rich cultural heritage that should be made available to all humanity.

from: [The Annexation Tourism: Israel's Policies and Their Devastating Impact on Palestinian Tourism](#), State of Palestine: Negotiations Affairs Department



Crosses at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem. Photo: Framke

Two International Perspectives: Experiences of pilgrimage to the Holy Land

NIGERIA

Commercialization of Pilgrimage

The national Nigerian government budget has a dedicated fund for underwriting Christian and Muslim pilgrimages as part of a national effort to strengthen spirituality in the country. Following an annually government-sponsored Christian pilgrimage from Nigeria to the Holy Land, Pastor Matthew Obaze, emphasizing the attitude of Israeli tour leaders, said in [a newspaper interview](#):

“While we are here for spiritual assignment, they (Israelis) are seeing it from a tourist perspective; so they are commercialising the whole activities,” he said. The Pastor said even the tour guards in Israel are mindful of the commercialisation of the pilgrimage. “And the tour guards, as they are leading the people, their activities are directed toward commercial activities which is affecting the spiritual benefit the people would have had,” he said.

[Israel has turned Christian Pilgrimage to tourism, money making venture](#), December 22, 2012, *Premium Times*

INDONESIA

Using Visa Denials for Pilgrimage for Political Ends

Indonesia has the second-largest Christian population in Southeast Asia after the Philippines, the largest Protestant population in Southeast Asia, and the fourth-largest Christian population in Asia. Saving for and making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land is a deep longing for many Indonesian Christians. Procuring visas to enter Israel for travel or pilgrimage is politicized. Some travelers from Southeast Asia have reported that the only way a visa to enter and visit in Israel and Palestine can be obtained is by joining a pilgrimage tour led by an officially licensed Israeli tour company that makes all the reservations and determines the itinerary and guide narratives. This is particularly important for countries that do not have formal diplomatic relationships with the State of Israel.

In an article in [Union of Catholic Asian News](#), Indonesian Christians experienced a 2018 ban on visas for those making Holy Land pilgrimages because of positions that Indonesia took toward Israel related to violence at the Israeli border with Gaza. This indicates that pilgrimage visas become a political leverage in the tensions between countries, in this case the treatment of Palestinians:

The ban was seemingly in response to Indonesia refusing visas for Israelis following weeks of deadly violence on the Gaza-Israel border that led to Indonesians protesting what they say is Israel's harsh treatment of the Palestinians.

Last year 905 groups from Indonesia consisting of 30,099 pilgrims visited the Holy Land, according to data from the Franciscan Pilgrims Office. Only the United States and Italy sent more pilgrims.

Ryan Dagur, [Indonesian Pilgrims Want Progress on Israel Travel Ban](#), June 4, 2018, *UCA News*.

6. Violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law

Human rights covenants, policies, and interpretations are closely interrelated. This is a listing of many human rights policies from the United Nations that can be used in supporting humanitarian law and non-violent protest actions (including boycott, divestment and sanctions) as part of international law. For a further listing of areas related to a variety of legal issues related to Palestine, please visit the “Legal” section at BDStoolkit.org.

Violations of international law and human rights cover numerous areas of Palestinian social, economic, health, and political arenas. The Fourth Geneva Convention and related United Nations resolutions are the basis for the cases that are being brought to the International Criminal Court of the UN about the status and treatment of Palestinians under the Israeli military occupation.

LAND CONFISCATIONS

UN Security Council Resolution 242 (22 November 1967) calls upon Israel to withdraw its forces from land that it claimed during the 1967 war (the West Bank including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula), and the inadmissibility of acquisition of land by force. According to Article 46, Hague Convention II, an occupying power cannot confiscate private property.

“Grave breaches... shall be... extensive destruction and appropriation of property which are not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly.”

~Geneva Convention IV, Article 147

SETTLEMENTS

“The occupying power shall not deport or transfer members of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.”

~Geneva Convention IV, Article 49

This means that colonization of occupied territory is prohibited. The occupying power cannot confiscate land in the occupied territory for the sole purpose of establishing settlements for its nationals.

In several resolutions — most recently in UN SC 2334 in December 2016— the UN Security Council has reminded Israel of this and described its settlement enterprise as a “flagrant violation of international law.”

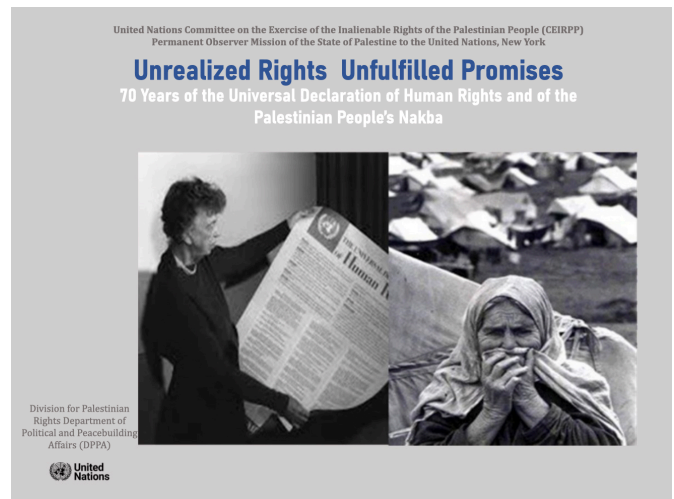
HOME DEMOLITIONS

Geneva Convention IV, Article 53, prohibits an occupying power from destroying any property unless it is absolutely necessary for military operations.

Grave breaches... shall be... extensive destruction and appropriation of property which are not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly.

~Geneva Convention IV, Article 147

Objects that are essential for the survival of the population (e.g., water cisterns and sewage systems) should not be attacked, destroyed, removed, or be rendered useless. Additional Protocol I to Geneva Convention IV, Article 54



[Click here](#) to flip through this United Nations picture e-book: *Unrealized Rights Unfulfilled Promises - 70 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the Palestinian People's Nakba*

FORCED DISPLACEMENTS and REFUGEES

Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive. Geneva Convention IV, Article 49

UN Resolution 194, Article 11 (11 December 1948) resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live in peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.

Geneva Convention IV, Article 49, prohibits individual or mass forcible transfers from an occupied territory to any other territory, occupied or not. Deportations outside the occupied territory and transfers within the occupied territory are identified as grave breaches.

Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.

Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country, leave any country including his own and to return to his country.

~Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13

No protected person may be punished for an offense he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited.

[Geneva Convention IV, Article 33](#)

[click to see on page 180](#)

WATER AND SANITATION

Access to safe water is a fundamental human need and therefore a basic human right.
 ~Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary General

In 2010, the UN Human Rights Council recognized the right to water and sanitation as human rights, as they are indispensable for the full enjoyment of the right to life, the right to health and the right to dignity. Under international humanitarian law, an occupying power is responsible for the welfare of the civilian population and must ensure that civilians are provided with or allowed to secure the basic needs and objects indispensable for their survival including food, water, medical supplies and shelter. Under the fourth Geneva Convention, Israel must ensure Palestinians' access to drinking water, water for personal hygiene and sanitation (Articles 55 and 56, Geneva Convention IV).

Under international human rights and humanitarian law (HL), the occupied people have the right to their own natural resources. Under HL, water, as a natural resource, is protected and should be preserved. Although the occupying power may use natural resources and enjoy its fruits (Article 55, Hague Convention II), the use and the extraction of water resource in an occupied territory may not be excessive, abusive, wasteful or neglectful.

The occupying power should never damage or diminish the property itself. It may use natural resources as long as it is not detrimental to their capital and must not over exploit the resources.

Furthermore, any use of water by the occupying power must be to cover the expenses of the occupation and/or for the benefit of the local population (which does not include settlers). It is prohibited to use the natural resources from an occupied territory for the enrichment of the occupying power and/or citizens and companies. Discrimination in the allocation of water resources is prohibited.

FOOD, MEDICAL CARE, HUMANITARIAN AID

To the fullest extent of the means available to it, the Occupying Power has the duty of ensuring the food and medical supplies of the population; it should, in particular, bring in the necessary foodstuffs, medical stores and other articles if the resources of the occupied territory are inadequate.

~Geneva Convention IV, Article 55

If the whole or part of the population of an occupied territory is inadequately supplied, the Occupying Power shall agree to relief schemes on behalf of said population, and shall facilitate them by all the means at its disposal.... All Contracting Parties shall permit the free passage of these consignments and guarantee their protection.

~Geneva Convention IV, Article 59

WHAT FULL EQUAL RIGHTS SHOULD LOOK LIKE

In response to the State of Israel's institutionalized discrimination against its non-Jewish citizens, the NGO Adalah proposed an alternative "democratic, bilingual, multicultural" constitution.



JERUSALEM

UN Security Council Resolution 252 “declares invalid” Israel’s acts to unify Jerusalem as a Jewish capital, and UN Resolution 476 reiterates that Israel’s claims to East Jerusalem are “null and void.”

The 2004 International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on the Separation Wall reaffirms that legislative and administrative measures taken by Israel as the occupying power that have changed the status of Jerusalem are not valid since they violate international law.

[The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial arm of the United Nations. The ICJ settles disputes between states and gives advisory opinions on international legal issues referred to it by the UN.] According to international law, East Jerusalem is occupied territory. Land cannot be acquired by means of annexation, as the annexation by use of force is contrary to international law: Article 2(4), UN Charter.

See chapter 8 for more on Jerusalem.

FAMILY REUNIFICATION

The family unit is protected in Article 46, Hague Convention II and Article 27, Geneva Convention IV. Civilians are at all times entitled to respect for their persons, honour, family rights, religious convictions, and manners and customs.

The widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family, which is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, particularly for its establishment and while it is responsible for the care and education of dependent children.

~International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 10 (ratified by Israel in 1991)

Impediments of family reunification also violate the prohibition against forced transfer in Article 49, Geneva Convention IV, as it forces protected people outside the occupied territory.

THE SEPARATION WALL

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) on 9 July 2004 issued an Advisory Opinion stating that the wall built on West Bank land including East Jerusalem is illegal. The Advisory opinion called for construction of it to be stopped immediately, due to its route, which runs deep into the West Bank and East-Jerusalem. The Court related to the construction of the barrier as a policy that contributes to displacement, impeded the Palestinian right to self-determination, and is “tantamount to annexation,” which is forbidden under international law.

Adding that the West Bank wall violates Palestinians’ right to freedom of movement as well as other human rights (rights to health, education, work, etc.), the court concluded:

Israel is under an obligation to immediately terminate its breaches of international law; to cease the works of construction of the wall being built in the occupied Palestinian territories, including in and around East Jerusalem; to dismantle the structure placed; and to make reparation for all damages caused by the wall.

FREEDOM OF WORSHIP, MOVEMENT, AND ACCESS

Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

*~International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 18
Ratified by Israel.*

Movement restrictions that impede access to religious institutions—and are not necessary for the maintenance of public order— infringe on the rights of the Palestinian population to freedom of religion and worship. (Article 46, Hague Convention II; Article 58, Geneva Convention IV, and Article 75, Additional Protocol I to Geneva Convention IV.)

The right to freedom of movement provides that people are entitled to move freely within the borders of the state, to leave any country and to return to their country.

*~Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13 and
~International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 12*

Movement is a prerequisite for accessing basic needs such as healthcare, education and government institutions; work places; maintaining social, cultural and family connections etc. Restrictions imposed by the Israeli government impact most aspects of Palestinian life and violate many of their basic rights and benefits under international law. Examples are:

- Right to access medical services (Article 16 and 56 Geneva Convention IV),
- Religious institutions (Article 27, Geneva Convention IV; Article 46 Hague Convention II)
- Family members (Article 26 and 27, Geneva Convention IV; Article 46 Hague Convention II)
- Educational institutions (Article 50, Geneva Convention IV).

STANDARD OF LIVING, EMPLOYMENT, HUMANE TREATMENT

Protected persons who, as a result of the war, have lost their gainful employment, shall be granted the opportunity to find paid employment.... Where a Party to the conflict applies to a protected person methods of control which result in his being unable to support himself, and especially if such a person is prevented for reasons of security from finding paid employment on reasonable conditions, the said Party shall ensure his support and that of his dependents.

~Geneva Convention IV, Article 39

Protected persons are entitled, in all circumstances, to respect for their persons, their honour, their family rights, their religious convictions and practices, and their manners and customs. They shall at all times be humanely treated, and shall be protected especially against all acts of violence or threats thereof and against insults and public curiosity.

~Geneva Convention IV, Article 27

7. Children

Palestinian Children Matter!

Letter from Palestine

In general, when we speak about the violations of children's rights in Palestine—or anywhere else, for that matter—we are fundamentally speaking about the violation of [their right to be safe, to be protected and nourished, to be taught what they need to learn in order to grow up healthy and curious and hopeful](#). For the Palestinian children of today, the travesty, tragedy, and the shame is that those rights are essentially nonexistent. They are denied a right to a childhood.

[Palestine is full of young people who have been unlawfully:](#)

- detained, ill-treated, tortured, and made to sign papers in a language they can't read
- lost a limb in an airstrike or by a sniper
- been pelted with garbage by settlers as they walk to school
- been turned away at a military checkpoint and therefore prevented from accessing necessary medical care
- seen their parents or siblings or neighbors humiliated or threatened or shot or blown up before their very eyes

This situation in itself is an unacceptable status quo, and it is getting worse: not only are [Israel's violations of children's rights](#) increasing and growing more severe, and not only are there no signs on the horizon to indicate that the international community will hold Israel responsible and work to end its impunity, but Israel constantly changes its own rules and sentencing procedures to enable such violations. The Israeli security cabinet and the Knesset regularly pass measures intended to punish and imprison Palestinian minors and to give Israeli forces a blank check to abuse, detain, and even murder Palestinian minors, providing legal cover for the appalling repression it already exercises.

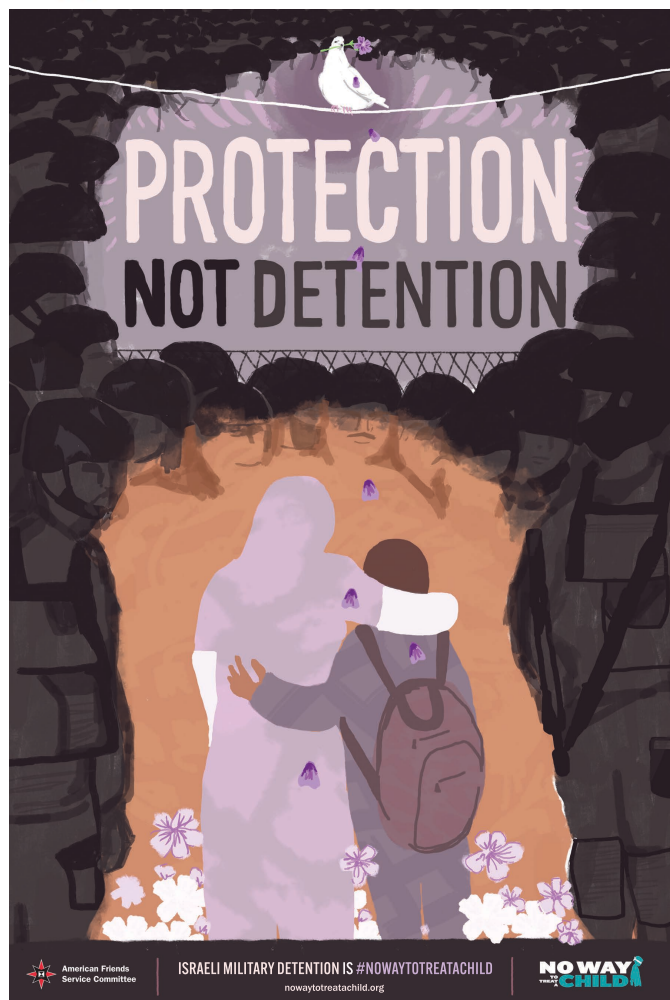
The Israeli authorities have consistently failed to take steps both to prevent such abuses, and to conduct independent investigations when cases of serious violations arise; this failure only serves to bolster the culture of impunity. When investigations are conducted, indictments are few and punishments—when they are issued at all—are absurdly light,

often resulting in minor demotions within military ranks. Many children, according to the UN and other organizations working with children, are [traumatized and need psychosocial support](#) following their imprisonment or deaths of family members, injuries, or homelessness. Unless the international community and all ethical voices like churches intervene to [stop these illegal and brutal acts](#) and hold Israel accountable for all the violations committed against Palestinian children, their psychological damage will continue indefinitely and will require lifelong medical and mental health care. The future of Palestine and the entire region is very much linked with the future of the Palestinian children.

We people loving peace with justice cannot and should not accept such injustices, nor can we accept an endorsement of the impunity they represent; we all should demand nothing less than the implementation of international law and justice for the victims.

The Israeli occupation and colonization oppresses all Palestinians, but its crimes against Palestinian children are particularly egregious. It is for their rights—for their lives, health, safety, hope, happiness, and future—that we must advocate together.

Rifat Odeh Kassis
Ecumenical leader within WCRC,
Moderator of Kairos Palestine,
past director of DCI-P



The United Church
of Canada

A Call to Action: Church Urges Canada to Protect Palestinian Children's Rights

What communities of faith and individuals can do:

- Pray
- Write
- Join

[continue reading](#)

Many churches within the WCRC networks, including denominations in Canada, the UK, and the US, have endorsed and supported the work of Defense for Children International-Palestine (DCI-P) and have adopted the DCI-P [No Way to Treat a Child](#) advocacy campaign. DCI-P remains the only Palestinian human rights organization specifically focused on the rights of the child.

[Defense for Children International - Palestine \(DCIP\)](#) is an independent, local Palestinian children's rights organization dedicated to defending and promoting the rights of children living in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip).

Since 1991, they have investigated, documented, and exposed grave human rights violations against children, provided legal services to children in urgent need, held Israeli and Palestinian authorities accountable to universal human rights principles, and advocated at the international and national levels to advance access to justice and protection for children.

Children in Deheisheh Refugee Camp, Bethlehem
Photo: Framke



[CLICK TO WATCH DCI-P VIDEO: OSAMA'S STORY](#)
2.5 MINS

Click for more [resources](#)

PALESTINIAN CHILDREN IN ISRAELI MILITARY DETENTION

STAGES OF DETENTION



Arrest

Israeli forces arrest children from their homes in the middle of the night, at demonstrations, or near military infrastructures such as checkpoints and the separation barrier.

From the moment of arrest, 3 out of 4 Palestinian children experience some form of physical violence.

This typically consists of being slapped, punched, kicked, or struck with a soldier's helmet or rifle.



Transfer

Once a child has been arrested, they are typically bound, blindfolded, and forced into a military vehicle.

In the vehicle, children are often subject to physical violence and verbal abuse.

The transfer period can last anywhere from several minutes to several hours.

The child is not told where they are being taken.



Interrogation

Children are most often interrogated at a police station or an interrogation center. They arrive bound, blindfolded, frightened, and sleep deprived.

Interrogation techniques are mentally and physically coercive, with a clear purpose of obtaining a confession.

In the vast majority of cases, children are denied access to legal counsel prior to and during interrogation.



Hearing

Children appear before an Israeli military court within 24 to 72 hours of their arrest, depending on their age.

This hearing is the first time children will see their attorney and parents since their arrest.

The overwhelming majority of Palestinian children are held in custodial pretrial detention.

Hearings are conducted in Hebrew with Arabic translation.



Sentence

There are three parts to a military court sentence: imprisonment, a fine, and a suspended sentence.

About half of child detainees will receive a custodial sentence of 3 to 12 months. Depending on the circumstances, some receive longer sentences of 1 to 3 years.

No person under age 12 can be prosecuted in the military courts.



EACH YEAR THE ISRAELI MILITARY ARRESTS AND PROSECUTES AROUND **700 PALESTINIAN CHILDREN**.

FROM ARREST, PALESTINIAN CHILDREN ENCOUNTER **ILL-TREATMENT & TORTURE** AT THE HANDS OF ISRAELI FORCES.

THREE OUT OF FOUR EXPERIENCE SOME FORM OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE FOLLOWING ARREST.

The *No Way to Treat a Child* campaign seeks to challenge Israel's prolonged military occupation of Palestinians by exposing widespread and systematic ill-treatment of Palestinian children in the Israeli military detention system. It is a project of Defense for Children International - Palestine and American Friends Service Committee.

SOURCES DCIP, *No Way to Treat a Child: Palestinian Children in the Israeli Military Detention System* (2016), http://www.dci-palestine.org/palestinian_children_in_the_israeli_military_detention_system
UNICEF, *Children in Israeli Military Detention: Observations and Recommendations* (2013), http://nwtac.dci-palestine.org/report_children_in_israeli_military_detention

8. Destruction and Violence in Gaza

There is no place in the region of Palestine and Israel which has experienced the levels of destruction of homes, fields, water, and electrical systems, along with armed violence and military bombing and incursions, that Gaza has. The realities of the suffering there — often referred to as an open air prison — impact every aspect of Gazan life and livelihood, and produce multi-generational trauma and poverty. To just exist on a daily basis is a valiant exercise in *sumud*, steadfastness in the midst of hopelessness in Gaza.

Within faith communities and political alliances, blame for the suffering is passed among many factions. For some, it is the result of the tactics and aggression of Hamas and its forms of protest or rocket attacks across the border into Israel. For others, the accountability falls squarely on the state of Israel for its punishing blockade of Gaza, producing poverty, destroying economic development, denying the residents of Gaza their human rights, and failing to take responsibility for basic needs, including food, fuel, electricity, and safe water.

The World's Largest Open Air Prison

The [Norwegian Refugee Council \(nrc.no\)](http://nrc.no) published a report in 2018 that explains why the Palestinians have been protesting during the resistance movement of the Great March of Return. The report detailed the crisis situation in Gaza at that time, which has only further deteriorated. Here are some of the statistics in the report:

◆ Confinement

Gaza is described by many Palestinians and humanitarian actors as the world's largest open-air prison, where 1.94 million Palestinians live behind a blockade and are refused access to the other occupied Palestinian areas and the rest of the world.

◆ Refugees

7 out of 10 Palestinians in Gaza are registered as refugees, and many of these come from families who were forced to leave their villages in 1948. Many have also been forced to leave their homes due to war and violence. Four years after the Israeli attack on Gaza in 2014, 23,500 Palestinians in Gaza are still unable to return to their homes.

◆ Children Killed

The oldest children in Gaza have lived through three wars that have killed more than 3,800 Palestinians, more than 700 of whom were children. Many children have seen family members, relatives, friends or others be killed or seriously injured

◆ Traumatized by war

Half of all children have been psychologically traumatized by war, occupation, and blockade. Close to 300,000 children need psychosocial help.

◆ Electricity

The Gazan population cannot count on more than 2-4 hours of continuous electrical power a day. Every day, Gaza experiences up to 22 hours of power outage.

◆ Schools

Close to 70% of all schools run double or triple shifts due to a lack of schools. In addition, lack of electricity reduces the students' chance to learn or do homework. The blockage also stops young people from studying on the West Bank or abroad.

According to the UNRWA, the UN's organisation for Palestinian refugees, the large cuts in donations from the US may lead to the organisation being unable to deliver diesel to 275 schools. These schools may be forced to close down if other countries do not contribute.

◆ Unemployment

The people in Gaza face the world's largest unemployment rate: 42% of the capable, adult population stand without compensated work. For those between 15 and 29 years old, the unemployment rate has risen to 62%. Today, the people in Gaza are 25% poorer than they were when the first part of the Oslo agreement was signed in 1993.

◆ Need for Humanitarian Aid

1.6 million or 84% of the population in Gaza need humanitarian aid. The number is increasing, and the UN calculates that more than two million people will need humanitarian aid by 2020.

◆ Hunger

Four out of 10 families or 41% struggle to acquire enough food. In Gaza, more than 830,000 Palestinians need assistance in the form of food or nutritional supplements. According to UNRWA, the UN's organization for Palestinian refugees, the large cuts in funding from the US will cause the UN to have to reduce food support. Most of those who will be affected are already living below the poverty line.

◆ Water

98% of the water in Gaza is contaminated and undrinkable. Gaza has beautiful beaches, but every day, 90 million liters of unfiltered sewage is pumped out along the shoreline every day.

◆ Arable Land

35% of the arable land eligible for farming is unavailable and fishermen are blocked from 85% of the waters on the coast of Gaza due to Israeli security zones.

◆ Stunted Growth in Children

Poverty and lack of food has led to 7% of the children suffering from stunted growth due to long-term malnutrition. 60% of the children are anaemic.

◆ Medical Treatment

Those in need of specialized medical treatment must apply for permission from the Israeli government to leave Gaza. 45% of applications are declined, according to the World Health Organization (2017); others are delayed, and many risk dying while they wait.

Two years later, a [United Nations news report](#) on the military violence directed at Gazans during the 2018 protests provides additional details on the tragic and persistent destructive conditions that are perpetuated in Gaza:

- Human Rights Council-appointed Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk [warned of an impending “humanitarian catastrophe” in Gaza](#) linked to the “stifling restrictions” on the Strip’s residents.
- “Israel has maintained a hermetic air, sea and land blockade around Gaza, controlling who and what enters and leaves the [Gaza] Strip,” Mr. Lynk told the Council. “For nearly five million Palestinians living under occupation, the degradation of their water supply, the exploitation of their natural resources and the defacing of their environment, are symptomatic of the lack of any meaningful control they have over their daily lives.”
- A major concern is the “collapse of natural sources of drinking water in Gaza and the inability of Palestinians to access most of their water sources in the West Bank,” the Special Rapporteur said.



[CLICK TO WATCH VIDEO](#)
GREAT MARCH OF RETURN PROTESTS, 2019

Watch a report on the one year anniversary of Great March of Return, detailing Israel’s “major show of force” against a mostly unarmed, nonviolent mass of protestors who were at the Gaza border in “sheer desperation.”



[CLICK TO WATCH VIDEO](#)
GAZA ARTISTS AMID THE RUBBLE, 2021

May 2021: Palestinians begin the difficult task of rebuilding in Gaza after an 11-day Israeli bombardment which injured almost 2,000 Palestinians and killed 256, 66 of whom were children. Artists took part in the recovery efforts and began painting a picture of life under occupation.

The UN Report on the Violence at the Great March of Return



Describes War Crimes by Israel (2019)

[The UN Independent Commission of Inquiry](#) on 2018 Protests in Gaza issued its report in 2019, outlining the violations of international law and the impact on human rights and humanitarian suffering in Gaza:

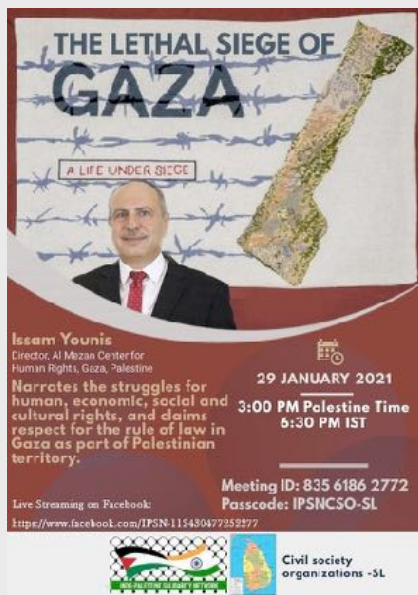
- The Commission found reasonable grounds to believe that **Israeli snipers shot at journalists, health workers, children, and persons with disabilities**, knowing they were clearly recognizable as such.
- More than 6,000 unarmed demonstrators were shot by military snipers week after week at the protest sites by the separation fence.
- **Intentionally shooting a civilian not directly participating in hostilities is a war crime.** The Commission found reasonable grounds to believe that individual members of the Israeli Security Forces, in the course of their response to the demonstrations, killed and injured civilians who were neither directly participating in hostilities, nor posing an imminent threat....
- **...The Commission found that the demonstrations did not constitute combat or military campaigns.**
- **... International human rights law prohibits the use of force based solely on a person’s actual or alleged affiliation to any group**, rather than their conduct.
- The Commission found... Hamas representatives **encouraged or defended demonstrators’ use of indiscriminate incendiary kites and balloons, causing fear among civilians and significant damage** to property in southern Israel.

The UN has been following the impacts of the border violence in Gaza. While that reporting makes clear that there is violence enacted on both sides of the border, the UN makes very clear that the scale and nature of the violence is manifestly not proportional in scale or in the armed methods used. An April 2020 UN report further examined the traumatic effects of the Israeli attacks, even though the Great March of Return (GMR) had been suspended:

- Israeli forces responded with snipers firing rubber bullets, live ammunition, and tear gas canisters, which were also dropped from drones. As a result, 214 Palestinians, including 46 children, were killed, and over 36,100, including nearly 8,800 children, have been injured. One in five of those children injured was hit by live ammunition. During the same period, one Israeli soldier was killed and seven others were injured during the protests.
- The GMR demonstrations have also had widespread mental health and psychosocial consequences. Impacted people include those injured during the protests, particularly those who sustained physical disability, their caregivers, those who were directly exposed to extreme violence, especially children, and people who lost a family member.
- In 2020, an estimated 10,400 people suffered severe mental health problems in connection to the GMR demonstrations, and nearly 42,000 people had mild to moderate problems. These figures include over 22,500 children. Negative ramifications include the loss of income, school dropout among children, and domestic violence in affected households.

The Lethal Siege of Gaza: “Counting Calories”

The ongoing siege of Gaza is a form of “collective punishment,” a fact that must compel the international community to hold Israel accountable for the war crime. Our speaker, Issam Younis, Director of Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, Gaza, Palestine, referred to a [2012 report by the BBC](#) which revealed how Israel, through its siege, has allowed [only minimum calorie intake by Gaza’s](#) million and a half inhabitants. The report is telling for it reinforces what the international community has long been saying, i.e., Israel has been blatantly imposing severe forms of collective punishment in Gaza, in direct violation of Geneva Convention IV. This “counting calories” is oddly reminiscent of the Jewish experience itself when the Jewish communities themselves were subjected to controlled malnutrition.



Webinar by IPSN: The Indo-Palestine Solidarity Network

Gaza War - May 2021

They Were Only Children

By Mona El-Naggar, Adam Rasgon and Mona Boshnaq
New York Times, May 6, 2021

When asked to describe how they felt, many parents answered with a simple “It’s God’s will,” their voice often reduced to a whisper, the words conveying resignation. They said their children had wanted to be doctors, artists and leaders.

“I’m in disbelief,” said Saad Asaliyah, a taxi driver from Jabaliya, who lost his 10-year-old daughter. “I try to calm myself by saying it was God’s will for her to go.”

During 11 days of fighting this month between Israel and Hamas, at least **67 children under age 18 were killed in Gaza and 2 in Israel**, according to initial reports. These are the children who died.

This front-page article goes on to share a picture of all those children. [Read Article.](#)

Families Obliterated, Lives Destroyed

by Tamara Nassar, *The Electronic Intifada*, 12 June 2021

Israel’s 11-day bombardment of Gaza in May left the coastal enclave in ruins... once again.

More than 250 Palestinians were killed, including at least **67 children**.

About half of those killed were civilians, according to UN monitoring group OCHA, and 245 were killed by Israeli fire. Some were killed as a result of rockets fired from Gaza that fell short.

Multiple generations of multiple Palestinian families were in some cases almost completely wiped out. Fourteen families lost three or more members in a single attack, while 19 families lost two or more members.

In some instances, only one member of a nuclear family survived. In one case, 21 members of the same family were killed.

This is [Part II of a series](#) that documents the names, faces, and stories of some of the victims of Israel’s May 2021 attack on Gaza. Read [Part I here](#) and [Part III here](#).

Ahli Arab Hospital: A Witness of Christian Solidarity and Compassion in Gaza



[Ahli Arab Hospital](#) in Gaza City is supported by some members within the World Communion of Reformed Churches and is a ministry of WCRC ecumenical partner, the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem. Travel restrictions and a crippling blockade are a daily reality for Palestinians in Gaza, now refugees for a fourth generation. For thousands of families, Ahli Arab Hospital and its free community clinic offer the only healthcare option. Everyone is welcome. Everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

The political, economic, and social climate in Gaza is one of the most complicated in the world. The challenges that 2.1 million Gazans face are daunting. Ahli Hospital is a safe haven of peace and compassion in the midst of chaos. Its leaders and medical staff work with dedication to help their patients cope with appalling living

conditions including widespread water contamination, food insecurity, psycho-social trauma from political turmoil and conflict, limited medicine and medical supplies, the lack of fuel for heating and cooking, among others.

“Your generous support helps us to continue to be a beacon of light and hope to our devastated community. We are tired, but we cannot give up; there is much work still to do.” ~Suhaila Tarazi, Ahli Hospital Director, left in photo

Chapter 8

Jerusalem: A Microcosm of the Big Picture

After the 1967 War, all of Jerusalem came under Israeli control, including the Old City (part of East Jerusalem), until then under Jordanian control. With Israel wanting to unify Jerusalem under their control, a slow but steady campaign of “Judaization” began that has been amplified as the decades have advanced. The process of Judaization includes enhancing the Jewish character of the city at the expense of the Christian and Muslim characters by developing and financing Jewish control. As far back as 20 years ago, this strategy began to spill out into the open, with the Israeli government not only not standing in the way of extremist settlers moving into Muslim and Christian quarters, but actually supporting them in every way possible, including the courts, to take over formerly non-Jewish homes and neighborhoods. By not providing any building permits to Palestinians, Israel is hoping to stem their demographic growth and advantage the growth of the Jewish population, who they are helping move in from anywhere around the globe.

Back in 1996, *The New York Times* ran an opinion article “[Judaizing Jerusalem](#)” by A.M. Rosenthal, who called the term “Judaization” an accusation and an epithet, asserting that Israel had every right to allow Jews to live anywhere they wanted. Unfortunately, Judaizing Jerusalem was never about just that, and in the 15 years since, with Israel’s unrelenting push to take over Arab areas, the Judaization campaign has exploded into erasure of the indigenous character of ancient towns and neighborhoods, including replacing Arabic names with Hebrew names and even [demoting Arabic as an official language](#) in 2018 with the Nation State Law.

As the Israelis continue their settlement expansions and land appropriations, for more than a decade, [Israeli human rights](#)

[groups have asserted](#) that “Palestinians face discrimination in regard to budgeting and taxation as well as essential needs like water, sewage, roads, parks, lighting, post offices, schools and other services.” (2008 quote). By 2021, the land grab in Jerusalem has become outright theft, with Palestinians being expelled from their homes in broad daylight to make way for Jewish settlers and settlements, in the larger campaign to change the facts on the ground and the demographics of the area.

And it is not just in Jerusalem, as for example, in the Naqab/Negev in the South and the Galilee in the North, Palestinians have suffered from Judaization policies, too. Israel budgets and spends on improvements for Jewish residents but not for Arabs. As seen in this 2013 editorial in an Israeli-left newspaper, the imbalance has been in place for a long time: [“The Government Must Develop the Negev and the Galilee for All Its Citizens, Jews and Arabs alike.”](#) After years of this kind of spending imbalance, which is in effect a choking of life for Palestinians, the results are coming into focus: the landscape today is one of Jewish control over a besieged population of devoted Palestinians hanging on to their homes, their olive groves, their culture and way of life with whatever they have left at their disposal.

Jerusalem’s neighborhoods of Sheikh Jarrah¹⁰ and Silwan¹¹ are prime examples of settler colonial policies of command and control. They illustrate the advancing policies of expelling Palestinians in favor of Jewish settlers, with even the Israeli High Court giving “its seal of approval to almost any infringement of Palestinians’ rights by the Israeli authorities.”¹²

Holy sites are no exception and are prime targets for Judaization. Doron Bar, President of the Schechter Institute of

Silwan, East Jerusalem: a microcosm in a microcosm

[‘Who listens to the voice of the oppressed?’](#): Palestinian family faces latest setback to save Jerusalem home. The Sumarin family has been ordered by Israeli court to leave their home in latest Jerusalem land expropriation battle.

Aseel Jundi, Middle East Eye, July 2020

right: Amal Sumarin and her granddaughters spend time in courtyard, with Al-Aqsa Mosque seen in background (MEE/Aseel Jundi)



¹⁰ Rami Ayyub, Zainah El-haroum, and Stephen Farrell, [“East Jerusalem’s Sheikh Jarrah Becomes Emblem of Palestinian Struggle.”](#) Reuters (May 10, 2021)

¹¹ [“Israeli High Court of Justice Paves Way for Cleansing of Palestinians from Silwan.”](#) B’Tselem, The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (November 22, 2018)

¹² Ibid.

Jewish Studies in Israel, has written about early policies that have changed the landscape in [Journal of Historical Geography](#): “Between Muslim and Jewish Sanctity: Judaizing Muslim Holy Places in the State of Israel, 1948-1967.” With access to Israeli archives, his work addresses:

the roots of the Judaization of Muslim holy places during the early years of the State of Israel...; [it] examines the legal methods and various means that the Ministry of Religions used, in collaboration with other Israeli authorities, to take possession of Muslim holy places and turn them into Jewish sites.... The Judaization of these holy places is understood as part of a broader process whereby the State of Israel made every effort to develop a new symbolic landscape.

As for Christian Holy Sites and Christian thought on Jerusalem, at right is the outline and conclusion of a paper on Jerusalem by the Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb,¹³ who delves into the Christian statements, resolutions, and speeches regarding Jerusalem. He concludes that despite the “systematic campaign of Judaization that is led by the Israeli right-wing government... Christians in Jerusalem continue to hold on to their hope that this Holy City should be a city for two peoples and three religions who can live in peace in this, their city they call holy.”

[CLICK TO WATCH VIDEO # 12:](#)
**JERUSALEMA:
THE WHOLE WORLD IS DANCING
THE GLOBAL DANCE CHALLENGE
AND PALESTINE**

Jerusalem in Modern Christian Thought

A Paper by Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb

Jerusalem is a city like no other. It is a city that two people view as their national capital while three religions call it holy. In this paper we shall look at Jerusalem in modern Christian thought. There is a vast array of data which demonstrates Christian statements, resolutions, and speeches regarding Jerusalem. To gain a clearer insight on the Christian discourse on Jerusalem, we chose to delve into it from three main axes:

- **Jerusalem in the statements of the World Council of Churches**
- **Jerusalem in the Statements of the Holy See**
- **Jerusalem in the Statements of the Holy Land Heads of Churches**



Raheb Conclusion:

Today, Jerusalem is undergoing a systematic campaign of Judaization that is led by the Israeli right-wing government, backed up by the Zionist lobby, and joined by American complicity and the involvement of Christian Zionists. Meanwhile, a new type of Islamic-Zionism is emerging, led by some Sunni clerics from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region outlining a Sunni-Israeli Axis over and against a Shiite-Iran threat.

It would be erroneous to assume that the conflict in Jerusalem is merely of a political or demographic nature. Besides its military occupation, Israel have been utilizing the academia to depict Jerusalem either as the City of David, or as the long-awaited Third Temple, or Mount Zion. Zionism has been active in monopolizing an exclusive religious narrative with regards to Jerusalem, while intentionally dismissing its significance for Christians and Muslims alike. This article showcases the centrality that Jerusalem has in Christianity; as a holy City that represents the salvation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. In Christian tradition, the Holy City of Jerusalem is the Mother of all Churches. For Christian Palestinians, Jerusalem is their home where their roots are. Their steadfastness thus makes them a community of living stones, and not dead wood. Christians in Jerusalem continue to hold on to their hope that this Holy City should be a city for two peoples and three religions who can live in peace in this their city they call holy.

CCA Calls on the United Nations to Reiterate Jerusalem’s International Status

December 2017 — The United States of America’s move to veto the motion of the UN Security Council Resolution yesterday, as well as a decision of the US President to shift the US Embassy to Jerusalem would jeopardize the prospect of peace for Israelis and Palestinians; the US policy now contradicted international law and ignored UN Security Council resolutions, stated the General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) General Secretary Dr. Mathews George Chunakara.

While responding to the latest action by the US to veto the Resolution initiated by Egypt yesterday at the UN Security Council, the CCA General Secretary added that the US President’s unprecedented move to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel is part of **a strategic move for the consolidation of Israel’s settler colonialism and the practice of apartheid**, which effectively eliminated publicly the two-state solution.

Mathews George Chunakara further stated that Jerusalem now is a microcosm of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. By excluding Palestinian voices from the Jerusalem debate, US support of Israel’s position to close the doors for others and intensify gross human rights violations, which impact the lives of Palestinians.... Jews, Christians, and Muslims revere Jerusalem. Hence, the religions of the Abrahamic faiths must have equal access to this holy city. A fully open city is possible with a form of symbolic, shared, or divided sovereignty replacing the imposed barriers and blockades within the city boundaries.... [Read full statement](#)

 **Christian Conference of Asia**
an organ and fellowship of churches and ecumenical councils in asia for initiating and facilitating dynamic christian witness and action

¹³ See Appendix B for full Mitri Raheb paper

The story of Mohammed El Kurd and the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah is a window into what is happening in Jerusalem and all of Palestine, as Israel ploughs forward with Judaizing the land it took in 1967.

Why Are Palestinians Being Forced to Prove Their Humanity?

By Mohammed El-Kurd¹⁴
December 3, 2020

For years I policed the language that I used to describe my oppressor. But what is happening in Sheikh Jarrah has a clear name: ethnic cleansing.

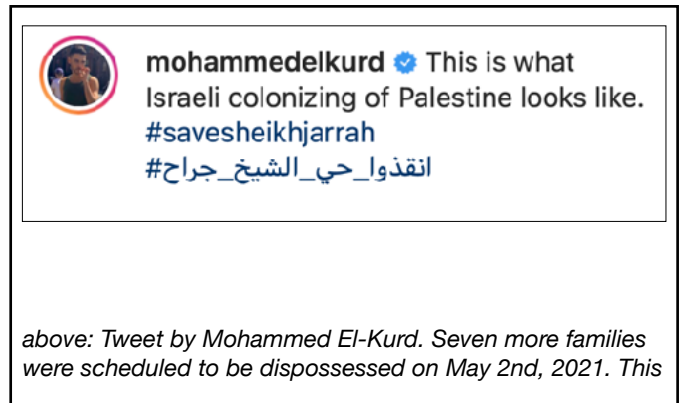
Over the last few months, the Israeli Magistrates' Court of Jerusalem has ruled to displace at least 12 Palestinian families in the neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah—including mine. Our homes, at any minute, might be taken by squatters backed by police. And it wouldn't be the first time they do so.

In 1956, the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and the Jordanian government built Sheikh Jarrah as a housing project for 28 Palestinian refugee families who had been expelled during the Nakba a few years earlier. Following Israel's conquest of Jerusalem in 1967, settler groups have been attempting to seize the housing project by manipulating history and weaponizing racist laws and policies. Some attempts were successful, some postponed. In 2009, for example, settlers took over half of my family's house in broad daylight; the other half awaits the final stroke of an Israeli judge's pen.

Recognizing that there is scant legal recourse for Palestinians in a judicial system that was founded on ethnic supremacism, my twin sister Muna and I mobilized our friends and allies to run two media campaign—one in Arabic and another in English—in an ambitious attempt to halt the forced evictions by spurring international action.

Muna, who recently graduated from Birzeit University with a journalism degree, didn't encounter any problems engaging with Arabic-speaking audiences. To them, her plea for justice was self-evident. I, on the other hand, saw an immense chasm between Western understanding of my reality and the facts on the ground.

What is a historical fact in Arabic is somehow debatable in English. Well-documented events, such as Israel's depopulation and destruction of hundreds of Palestinian villages, are considered "controversial." Advocacy to save Sheikh Jarrah from the imminent threat of dispossession became buried under paragraphs of contextualization. To an American audience, the idea of Israel taking over my home is so unbelievable because they refuse to recognize Israel as a settler colonial state.



above: Tweet by Mohammed El-Kurd. Seven more families were scheduled to be dispossessed on May 2nd, 2021. This

But land grabbing is exactly what colonizers do. That isn't something I should have to negotiate—if anything, it should be implied.

Denying Israel's drawn-out and codified commitment to ethnic displacement not only legitimizes ignorance on Palestine, but enables Israeli subjugation to persist largely unabated. "I get that Israel isn't the kindest to Palestinians," someone commented in response to my Instagram post reporting the news from my neighborhood. "But [your post] is antisemitic and a dismissal of the Holocaust."

My post, however, did not allude to the Holocaust or the Jewish faith: it highlighted that the home takeovers in Sheikh Jarrah are part of a calculated plan to erase Palestinian presence from our city. Systematic efforts to create ethnically homogenous geographies through the mass expulsion of unwanted populations have a name: ethnic cleansing. And that's what I called it in my post. Yet when it comes to the region's history of forced displacement, mass graves, annihilated villages, and the 6.5 million Palestinian refugees worldwide, the fact of ethnic cleansing becomes a claim, and a "contentious" one at that.

If your oppressor is the judge, to whom do you complain?

The perils of such comments lie not just in the intentional derailing of the point at hand—that colonizers have been systematically stealing our homes in Jerusalem for decades. More dangerously, it is the cruel comedy of reducing 72 years of settler colonialism, military occupation, and siege to mere "unkindness."



Jewish settlers taking homes in Palestinian Sheikh Jarrah, 2009. Photo: M. El-Kurd, Instagram, 2021

¹⁴Republished with permission from [+972 Magazine](#). Mr. El-Kurd and his twin sister Muna were named as one of [Time Magazine's 100 most influential people of 2021](#).

Calling a spade a spade is the only clear way to address the systemic, ideologically-driven nature of these crimes. By addressing cases like my family's as isolated, humanitarian, legal crises, the innate injustice of Israel's judicial system is ignored. Legality is not synonymous with morality. We don't need to look far to find unjust laws that were legally upheld and defended for years: the U.S. Constitution's Three-Fifths Clause, Jim Crow laws, Apartheid in South Africa, and more. Putting an atrocity in a uniform—and calling it “unkindness”—doesn't make it less atrocious.

But these fallacies aren't anomalies: in fact, they control the narrative on Palestine. Be it on social media or university campuses, I can't part my lips to speak about my experience of living in Jerusalem without having my integrity questioned; without being accused of complicity in atrocities I had no hand in. For years, I policed my language into palatability, carefully selecting the words with which I describe my oppressor so that they aren't manipulated or misconstrued as antisemitism. I memorized the UN resolutions and international laws broken by Israel, and Israeli bulldozers still destroyed livelihood after livelihood.

To avoid misconceptions, I don't note that the colonizers seeking to take over my home are Jewish—even though they openly acknowledge that this is what gives them the divine decree to do so. I preface my talks by stating the obvious: “this isn't about religion, it's about land theft.” While writing this very article, I initially included a reference to Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, reinforcing the very idea I am seeking to challenge: that holding up the research of an Israeli will legitimize my use of the term “ethnic cleansing.”



Jewish settlers evicting Palestinian from home in Sheikh Jarrah, 2009. Photo: M. El-Kurd, Instagram, 2021

I even wanted to mention Yonatan Yosef, a prominent Israeli rabbi and activist in the Judaization of East Jerusalem, as he gloats over “taking house after house” in my neighborhood “in continuation of the Zionist-Jewish project”—as if my experience can only be believed by his confirmation that “the State [was built] at the Arabs' expense.” Or by the dozens of Israelis from far away settlements whom I witnessed gather in my neighborhood and chant, “In blood, in fire, we will kick out the Arabs!”

This muzzling of vocabulary isn't new. Growing up, I was bewildered that Palestinian children throwing stones at Israeli military tanks generated more outrage than the tanks themselves. I clung to my nonviolent beliefs even harder because I thought my resistance would be deemed “acceptable.” There were always prerequisites to solidarity with my cause.

But frameworks of respectability and legality have offered me nothing except the illusion that I can partake in a game that

was designed to make me lose. In reality, there isn't a bug in the system that one can challenge. The scourge of dispossession in Jerusalem relies on the very vision of the Israeli settler colonial project in Palestine.

Moving beyond the politics of humanization

Beyond racist rhetoric, Israel has demolished tens of thousands of Palestinian homes since its invasive establishment, and will demolish many more. As such, there is nothing complex or ambiguous about this so-called “conflict.” It is clear who the aggressor is—statistically, historically, and materially.

And still, Palestinian suffering is trapped under a culture of disposability. We've been so



First round of evictions: Palestinian family in Sheikh Jarrah, 2009. Photo: M. El-Kurd, Instagram, 2021

demonized and alienated. To combat this vilification, many Palestinians, including myself until recently, chose to take the very problematic route of “proving” our humanity.

For example, Israeli police might flock to my neighborhood at any given moment and render half of its already dented population homeless; our properties will become fraternity houses from which settlers harass the remaining families into leaving. Yet I can’t just break this news and receive the outraged reaction one would expect.

Instead, I have to specify that Sheikh Jarrah includes women and children. I mention my father’s seven decades and the fragility of my sister’s panic; I narrate my ribs bruised between a police officer’s baton and an electricity pole; I detail the accounts of filth and fury that have haunted me for the past decade. The reality of Israeli squatters wielding guns and parading them around our home, which they forcibly removed us from, isn’t enough: we also have to document images of our children sleeping on the streets, our elderly passed out on gurneys after assault, and our beaten teenagers with swollen, purple eyes.

Like every Palestinian, I have carried these stories since childhood, and the burden has only gotten heavier. I have felt it. I have lived through it. I have scars to prove it. It wakes me up at night.

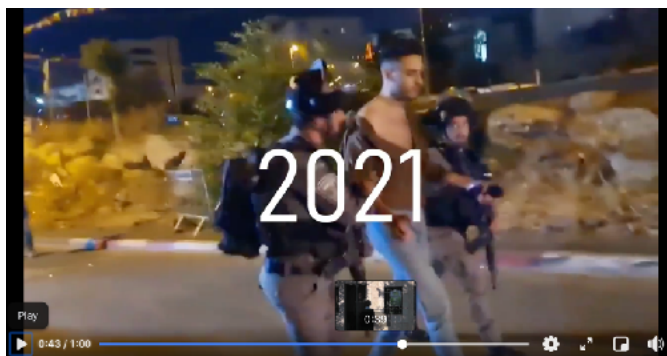
But I don’t want to pimp my pain for sympathy. If someone can look at me, my family, my community, and not see human beings, then that’s on them. The need for humanization stems from decades of dehumanization, of chastising the victims rather than the perpetrators. Unless those systems of dehumanization are abolished, Palestinians will remain stuck in a vicious hamster wheel.

So, from now on, I want to call a spade a spade. What is happening in Sheikh Jarrah, like the rest of Palestine, is calculated ethnic cleansing.

As my family and neighbors ready themselves for the possibility of enduring a harsh winter and pandemic in the streets, we know that our fight will not end. This is bigger than Sheikh Jarrah. It is even bigger than Jerusalem, our native city, our capital. It is about the entirety of our homeland.

One day, I’ll talk to a therapist about this affliction. But at this moment, my focus is to shift the understanding of Palestine’s dispossession and the frameworks that enable it. Our movement won’t endure if it is predicated on pain. We need to create our own political discourse and demands, shattering the glass of spurious legality and escaping the stagnancy of the humanization game. If the world is to stand with us, I don’t want it to be because we’ve proven ourselves to be “worthy victims.” It must support us because ethnic cleansing, colonization, and military occupation should never be tolerated.

If your oppressor is the judge, to whom do you complain?



Author of this article, Mohammed El-Kurd [speaking on CNN](#) May 2021: “My grandmother was dispossessed in 1948, then again in 1967, and again in 2009.” At age 22, he is himself in the second round of evictions in his Jerusalem neighborhood. (screenshots from CNN.com)

CLICK TO WATCH VIDEO:
MOHAMMED EL KURD SPEAKS TO HIS EXPERIENCE FACING DISPOSSESSION FROM HIS HOME IN SHEIKH JARRAH, JERUSALEM FOR A SECOND TIME.

Watch: *Democracy Now* [short interview clip](#).

READ: [Israel's arrest of El-Kurd twins sparks outrage: Social media users rally to the support](#)

Chapter 9

Conclusion

In a post-colonial era in which systems of control from the last century are being dismantled around the world and white supremacy is recognized as a racist ideology that needs to be called out and replaced, it is important for Christians to examine the deep injustices that have resulted from such twentieth century holdovers, especially in the land that we call holy. As this handbook was being completed, the Continuing Nakba of dispossession, expulsion, and erasure of Palestine and Palestinians kicked into high gear.

In May 2021, Israeli attacks in East Jerusalem escalated when Israel stepped up its dispossession campaign: Families in the Jerusalem neighborhoods of Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan were being forced from their homes in an area in which Palestinians were resettled by the UN following expulsion from their original homes in 1948. Legal attempts by the Palestinians to stop the evictions failed, resulting in the state courts declaring that Jewish settlers now owned these homes in East Jerusalem.

This oppression and suffering is an affront to humanity, to international human rights and to humanitarian laws, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which Israel is a partner at the United Nations, whose actions created the State of Israel. When Palestinians were expelled to make room for the new state of Israel, there were some agreements that created a new home for some of the ethnically cleansed families of Jerusalem. Those exiled families are once again being ethnically cleansed from Jerusalem, this time from the homes they were given in 1948. Journalist Mustafa Abu Sneineh explains,

East Jerusalem was administered by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which governed the West Bank. Jordan had built houses for the 28 Palestinian families in 1956 with the approval of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA. In the 1960s, the families agreed a deal with the Jordanian government that would make them the owners of the land and houses, receiving official land deeds signed in their names after three years. In return, they would renounce their refugee status. However, the deal was cut short as Israel captured and illegally occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem in the 1967 Middle East war and Jordan lost control of the territories.¹⁵

Nothing less than prophetic action is required now by global churches and councils. The integrity of Christian faith and praxis are at stake.

At the same time as the East Jerusalem evictions, Israel restricted access to Christian holy sites on the weekend of Orthodox Easter, and the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Muslim worshippers were attacked by Israeli forces in the last days of Ramadan, injuring hundreds. The annual “Jerusalem Day” parade, which has been a grotesque display of racism and provocation by extremist settlers “celebrating” the 1967 occupation of the Eastern part of Jerusalem by Israel, was first rerouted then canceled by Israel, in an uncharacteristic victory for Palestinians, which came with a heavy price of casualties.

As a result of the Israeli provocation during a holy week for Christians and Muslims, more violence broke out on the border between Gaza and Israel, with an escalation of the usual rockets launched by Hamas and the usual ten-fold response by Israel. The loss of life, as always, has been disproportionately high for Palestinians, with many children among the dead.

When the General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches approved the action to produce this handbook, it perceived that “the need for prophetic action” could be an outcome of this collection of resources for the communion.

Nothing less than prophetic action is required now by global churches and councils. The integrity of Christian faith and praxis are at stake.

When Palestinian Christians wrote *Cry for Hope* in July 2020, at the point of threatened continuing annexation of Palestinian lands by the State of Israel, our siblings in those churches knew that the urgency around their suffering would only escalate. Nearly a year later, it definitely has. Not only in East Jerusalem, but in the West Bank and Gaza, and among Palestinians who reside throughout Israel. Hear their voices:

We call upon all Christians and on churches at congregational, denominational, national, and global ecumenical levels to engage in a process of study, reflection, and confession concerning the historic and systemic deprivation of the rights of the Palestinian people and the use of the Bible by many to justify and support this oppression. We call on churches to reflect on how their own traditions can express the sacred duty to uphold the integrity of the church and the Christian faith concerning this issue. We cannot serve God while remaining silent about the oppression of the Palestinians.

This handbook is, we hope, a contribution to that study and confession called for within the churches and members of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Knowing there will be disagreement and, likely, dissent among some leaders or churches in the communion we ask that the membership of the WCRC listen to the voices and perspectives here, particularly of the Palestinians themselves, who are themselves leaders well-known within the global Christian community. This is what Palestinian Christians have asked of us in the churches. It is the very same request that was written into Action 55 by the WCRC itself.

¹⁵ Mustafa Abu Sneineh, “[Sheikh Jarrah Explained: The Past and Present of East Jerusalem Neighborhood](#),” *Middle East Eye* (May 6, 2021)

Amidst a pandemic, the opportunity to engage in “Come and See” in Palestine and Israel has not been possible on the ground in the Holy Land. However, the videos, text, and photos here in this handbook are a virtual “Come and See.” They tell the stories that need to be heard, stories told by the Palestinians themselves in most cases. This handbook is a word to the world grounded in deep faith, spoken with love, and grounded in the love of Christ for the world. Our hope is readers will listen, with both open minds and open hearts.

We leave you with the call of the Palestinians themselves:

Our word is a cry of hope, with love, prayer and faith in God. We address it first of all to ourselves and then to all the churches and Christians in the world, asking them to stand against injustice and apartheid, urging them to work for a just peace.” We proclaim our word based on our Christian faith and our sense of Palestinian belonging—a word of faith, hope and love. www.kairospalestine.ps

Katherine Cunningham
Noushin Darya Framke
Authors and Editors

What Does God Require of Us?

*Discerning, Confessing & Witnessing
in the Times of Covid-19 and Beyond*
WCRC May 2021

**In our despair,
Palestinians cry out for hope**
by Rifat Kassis

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken us?
Why are you so far from helping us,
from the words of our groaning?
O God, we cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.*
(Based on Psalm 22:1-2, NRSV)

First, thank you. The many denominations of Palestinian Christians joined in the Kairos Palestine movement thank God for you, our sisters and brothers in the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Your solidarity has been a source of comfort, strength and encouragement in our struggle for justice. Thank you, Deacon Peacock, for encouraging me to speak frankly today and for assuring me, as you wrote, that “this is the moment where the communion is open to be challenged!”



When David—as shepherd or king—cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Psalm 22), he was experiencing a crisis of profound hopelessness. Later, in a moment of his own despair, Jesus repeated that call from the cross and in his own language, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?”

Today in our despair, Palestinian Christians echo that cry. For the past seven decades, we have experienced dispossession, dispersion, manipulation, control and death at the hands of a foreign regime; for the last five decades, it has been a direct and brutal military occupation. We have felt abandoned by the world, forsaken even by segments of the church whose heretical theology rewards the occupier and forsakes the occupied for the sake of territorial, political and economic gain.

In Gaza, over two million people live on the brink of utter collapse and its civilians today are under indiscriminate Israeli war planes shelling. The residents of East Jerusalem are being forcibly removed from their homes to meet a racist demographic goal of 60% Jews/40% Arabs in Jerusalem—the “City of Peace” so central to the three monotheistic faiths. In the West Bank, land, water, and other resources are stolen by our occupiers. All of Palestine is suffering now under a medical apartheid, as Israel has neglected its responsibility to provide the COVID vaccination. In short, Palestinians live under an increasingly apartheid, authoritarian, and lethal regime that is a threat to the citizens of both Palestine and Israel.

We condemn the world’s silence as Israel, in spite of international law and human rights conventions, continues with impunity its policies of land annexation, besieging Gaza, house demolitions, and the turning of a blind eye to settler violence. For the past three

weeks, we have been watching in horror as Israeli police brutalize Palestinian protesters, nonviolently resisting forced evictions in East Jerusalem.

We call on the global church, especially the WCRC today:

1. To distribute to its many congregations our [Cry for Hope: A Call to Decisive Action](#), with the expectation that grassroots Christians will consider and embrace the seven actions described there;
2. To “step into the street”—physically and through every form of media—to demand that those in power seek a truly just peace in our land, and to encourage members of civil society to go behind the headlines to learn about Israel’s occupation and to advocate for the restoration of human rights and universal human dignity.

Often, global partners await a closing word of hope from the people with whom they stand in costly solidarity. We know that our resilience and strength nurtures yours. But as we declared in our formative document, “A Moment of Truth,” ours is “a cry of hope in the absence of all hope.” We want you to know that as Palestinians struggle to keep our hope alive, there is a tremendous cost to us, a spiritual, emotional, and physical cost. We pay this cost with others around the world who experience the harsh realities of settler colonialism, racism, corporate greed, environmental devastation, and authoritarian rule.

Still, our hope, like Jesus, is rooted in the God who brings resurrection out of death in this life and the next, the God who promises to establish on earth the holy community of grace, provision, and peace as it is in heaven. Gratefully, we see glimpses and experience moments of this community in our relationship with you.

[CLICK TO WATCH VIDEO #13 :](#)
**GLOBAL SOLIDARITY AND WITNESS
FOR PALESTINE
FROM AROUND THE WORLD**

WCRC Calls for Peace with Justice in Jerusalem

May 11, 2021 — The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) strongly condemns the attacks by the Israeli security forces on those worshipping at the al-Aqsa Mosque.

These actions during the time of Ramadan, at the third most holy site of the Islamic community, are a violation of the basic human rights of the people of Palestine. Further, the WCRC also condemns the planned illegal evictions from the nearby Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood.

In attacks involving rubber bullets and grenades, in the al-Aqsa precinct, around 200 Palestinians were injured. The attacks were in response to the growing anger and protests over the Sheikh Jarrah evictions. This recent threat of evictions is part of the ongoing suppression of human rights of Palestinians and a denial of their right to life and livelihood.

Chris Ferguson, WCRC general secretary, called for peace in the present moment as well as justice for the Palestinian people. He said, “The present actions by security forces in Jerusalem need to immediately cease and peace be restored. The status of Jerusalem as a Holy city and a site for all religious traditions must be maintained while justice is pursued for the Palestinian people.”

District court orders to proceed with a forced eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah have been postponed for 30 days by another court order.

The Sheikh Jarrah district is made up of refugees who were expelled from their towns and villages during the Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe) of 1948. In 1956, the Jordanian government along with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reached an agreement to settle these families in East Jerusalem in return for their UNRWA documents. Approximately twenty-eight families were provided housing by the Jordanian state with the stipulation that after three years they would receive ownership of the property; this was completed in 1959.

Since 1967 and the occupation of Jerusalem, the eastern part of the city has been brought under Israeli control, and Jewish communities have registered ownership of the land. A number of cases for eviction have been brought to the Israeli courts. These cases are considered discriminatory since East Jerusalem is regarded an occupied territory under international law, and an occupying state cannot forcibly evict residents.

While the situation in Jerusalem continues to be tense, international leaders and the United Nations have called for restraint in the present circumstances. European leaders have also voiced alarm at the impending evictions. Further the situation in Jerusalem has escalated the situation between Israel and Palestine in Gaza, resulting in 26 people dead in Gaza, including nine children.



Barbed wire around the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in East Jerusalem. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



The WCRC calls for the cessation of armed conflict on both sides of the border and the immediate return to status quo and the respect of human rights and international law.

The WCRC calls on its member churches and the ecumenical movement's attention to the situation in Jerusalem and calls for its churches to pray and mobilize international attention for this issue.

Thank you!

I'm here today to say thank you to Palestine. Thank you for your olive trees, your rolling hills, your ancient stones, your sunrises and sunsets. Your eskedinya, mish mish, and bateek. Your wara diwalli, makloubeh, & kousa mashsi. And your kanafeh, either Nablusi or Ghazzawei. Thank you for inviting the ajnabiyya to your homes. For treating us to endless cups of coffee, Or tea with nana, A bounty of fruits and sweets. Thank you for sharing your stories, Of Nakba, of imprisonment, of blockade. Of birthday parties, weddings, graduations, and anniversaries. Your sittis and tetas in their thobes, Your sidos tapping their canes to the beat of the tabla drum as the debkah line begins its dance. Thank you, Palestine. For holding onto your keys. For unlocking our hearts. For sharing your pain, But also, your dreams. And thank you, Palestinians of Chicago. For demanding your rights in exile. For bringing your children to demonstrations like this, dressed in flags, keffiyehs, and symbols of home. Thank you, Palestinians of Chicago. For using your voice to speak up for those separated by oceans and borders. For electing leaders to represent you in Congress. For speaking to neighbors who don't know your history. Who have yet to see the beauty of your homeland. Who have yet to understand the injustice. Who have yet to hear your desire for freedom. Thank you, Palestinians of Chicago. Days and Nights following the news of your homeland is heartbreaking. Enraging. Exhausting. But I give thanks. For you and your children. May we meet one day soon, in a free Palestine.

Jennifer Bing, Chicago Rally for Palestine, 5.15.2021



Photo: Framke

WE ARE ALL PALESTINIANS

A grave humanitarian crisis besets the people of Palestine. An international response is imperative to oppose Israeli violation of international laws and conventions; and express solidarity with the Palestinians in their struggle against Israel's apartheid policies.

We demand an end to the occupation of Palestinian land by Israel. We support Palestinian resistance to the occupation through all legitimate means. We affirm the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. The structure of apartheid Israel must be dismantled; it must grant equal rights to all its citizens including the right of return to the Palestinian refugees.

The Israeli state tramples on the academic freedom and cultural life of the Palestinian people. A continued association with the instruments of such a state is unconscionable. When Palestinian students and teachers are not allowed to reach their universities because of permit laws, walls and checkpoints; universities and schools are leveled by bombs and tanks; food, textbooks, and medical supplies prohibited from entering Gaza, and artistic events are closed down by force; none of the principles on which academic and cultural contact are based can ever be fulfilled.

As with South Africa under apartheid, international response to the boycott call given by the Palestinians will force Israel to abandon its oppression of the Palestinian people.

We appeal to all Indian academics, students, writers, and artists, to join us in this cause - a cause more urgent today when Indian foreign policy has abandoned the ideals of self-determination and anti-colonialism.

(InCACBI)
 Indian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel
www.incacbi.in
incacbi@gmail.com
[facebook.com/indianCACBI](https://www.facebook.com/indianCACBI)
twitter.com/inCACBI

(AIPSO)
 All India Peace and Solidarity Organisation

(ISEN-P)
 Indian Solidarity Ecumenical Network - Palestine

Katherine Cunningham has served the wider church in roles of social justice advocacy and institutional innovation, as well as being a pastoral psychotherapist and licensed psychoanalyst. She has been a minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) [PC(USA)]. for over forty years. Katherine has been active in a variety of justice and human rights issues, including defending the rights of children globally under international law, opening ordination to all qualified candidates within the PC(USA), equal rights for women, racial equity issues and legal initiatives, and food justice in local communities.

Katherine has bachelor's and master's degrees in religious studies from Indiana University, with a focus on medieval history and literature, narratives of religious experience and sociology of religion. She attended Yale University Divinity School, graduating with honors. She served two American Presbyterian congregations in New Jersey with a portfolio in Christian education and spiritual formation for adults and children, congregational development of leadership, and women's ministries. Her work included education and support within the congregation of a variety of local and global mission partnerships and participation.

Following training in psychoanalysis, Katherine became a faculty member at her training institute. With another Presbyterian pastor, she founded New Horizons Associates, a nonprofit center for counseling and organizational consultation which was a community mental health outreach organization based in a local Presbyterian congregation. While serving as the center's co-executive director, Katherine also became a stated clerk of her presbytery and, later, a member of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), serving with the Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick during his tenure as Stated Clerk for the PC(USA). In these roles, Katherine built expertise in faith-based advocacy, policy implementation, ecumenical partnerships, and institutional transition. She was also part of advocating for the inclusion of the Belhar Confession in the PC(USA) Book of Confessions.

Katherine joined the Israel-Palestine Mission Network (IPMN) in 2011 and served as its moderator for two years. She remains active in influencing the decisions and policies of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), including overtures (resolutions) related to Palestinian human rights, just peace, non-violent resistance and peace-building. She helped to spearhead the IPMN activism for the divestment from three US companies complicit in the oppression and occupation of Palestinians in 2014 by the PC(USA) General Assembly. She also served on the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum of the WCC for a number of years. In 2019, Katherine was one of the global leaders that founded Global Kairos for Justice, the international solidarity community related to Kairos Palestine. In that role, Katherine and Noushin Framke helped to create the [BDS Toolkit](#) [BDSToolkit.org] of Global Kairos for Justice and Kairos Palestine. She has written essays for Kairos Palestine Alerts and other materials for IPMN, including the curriculum section of *Why Palestine Matters*.

Katherine has retired from active ministry and lives in New Jersey with her husband of 46 years. They have a son who is a high energy physicist and researcher in the UK.

Noushin Darya Framke is a Middle-Eastern Christian whose family is Armenian on one side and Iranian on the other. You could say politics runs in her veins. Noushin's maternal grandmother walked into Iran in 1915 as a ten-year-old refugee survivor of the Armenian Genocide. Her father was a writer who was a political prisoner under the last Shah of Iran, and her mother had a long career as a journalist and was instrumental in women's rights in Iran in the 1970s wave of the movement.

Noushin was educated in Iran at a Presbyterian mission school and in boarding schools in England. She came to the United States in 1978 for college and her freshman year turned out to be the year of the Iranian Revolution. Noushin says she "ran away from" the Middle East, but in 2001, the events on 9/11 reeled her back in, and she has been writing and speaking about the Middle East ever since. She has been working for social justice, advocating within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and writing and creating educational resources primarily for a faith-based audience.

Noushin served eight years as an elected member of REAC, Racial Equity Advocacy Committee, a permanent committee of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). She was the chair of the committee in 2008 when they brought the Belhar Confession to the General Assembly for approval. Noushin also served six years as a member of MRTI, Mission Responsibility Through Investment, which advocates for corporate responsibility and socially responsible investing for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s \$9B+ pension and foundation funds. Noushin has represented the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as a shareholder in corporate engagements with companies such as Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard, ITT, J.P. Morgan Chase, and ConocoPhillips. She was in the sub-committee that engaged with corporations on Israel/Palestine in a ten-year process that led to a vote to divest funds from three American companies that profit from Israeli human rights violations: Caterpillar Inc., Hewlett-Packard and Motorola Solutions.

From 2006, Noushin has been a founding-member of IPMN, the [Israel/Palestine Mission Network](#) (theIPMN.org) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The national network speaks to the church with a General Assembly mandate to educate Presbyterians on the plight of Palestinians. Noushin has been in the writing and editing teams of all the network's publications, *Cradle of Our Faith*, *Steadfast Hope* and *Zionism Unsettled*, and the videographer for all the accompanying video episodes. She is co-editor of the network's study guide, *Why Palestine Matters*, *The Struggle To End Colonialism*, as well as part of the writing and editing team for the digital resource, [BDS Toolkit](#) by Global Kairos.

Noushin is a Presbyterian elder and lives in New Jersey. She and her husband of 39 years have 2 adult daughters.

