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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION
FACTS AND FIGURES**

October 2008



Introduction

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) monitors the social and economic conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory and, at the request of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, prepares the Secretary-General's "Report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan".

The combination of intensified closures and sanctions imposed by Israel over four decades of occupation and the recent Palestinian internal conflict has led to a measurable deepening of the socio-economic crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory. The takeover by Hamas of the Gaza Strip in June 2007 led to a de-facto political, social and economic severance of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Israel imposed additional restrictions on the movement of goods and people into and out of the Gaza Strip, thereby causing severe shortages of basic commodities, including food, electricity and fuel. Moreover, increased restrictions on the operations of humanitarian agencies hindered the delivery of humanitarian aid in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. All economic, social and public health indicators reveal declining living conditions, social and spatial dismemberment and growing despair.

The growing poverty and humanitarian need in the occupied Palestinian territory can be primarily attributed to the Israeli closure system, which restricts Palestinian access to health and education services, employment and social networks. Additionally, Israeli settlements, the confiscation of land and the construction of the barrier in the West Bank, which contradict the Geneva Conventions and other norms of international law, isolate occupied East Jerusalem, dissect the West Bank into dozens of enclaves and curtail normal economic and social life.

By highlighting the relevant facts and figures, this brochure illustrates the adverse conditions faced by both Palestinians residing in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and the Arab population in the Occupied Syrian Golan.

Sources and acknowledgements

Unless otherwise indicated in the endnotes, the data included in this brochure were obtained from the Secretary-General's reports on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan.*

* These reports cover the four years from 2005 to 2008, and are provided under the following symbols: A/60/65-E2005/13, A/61/67-E/2006/13, A/62/75-E/2007/13 and A/63/74-E/2008/13.

Deaths and injuries

Israeli military operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip result in hundreds of Palestinians deaths and casualties every year.

1,703 Palestinians have been killed in direct, conflict-related incidents with the Israeli forces in the occupied Palestinian territory between January 2005 and July 2008 – **402** of those fatalities were children.¹

7,926 Palestinians have been injured in direct, conflict-related incidents between January 2005 and July 2008 – **1,393** of those casualties were children.²

76 per cent of fatalities in 2007 occurred in Gaza, with more than **40 per cent** of those the result of targeted assassinations.

In July 2008, a **10-year-old** Palestinian boy was shot in the head and killed by the Israeli border police following an anti-barrier demonstration in the West Bank.³

Arbitrary arrests and detentions

Administrative detention

Administrative detention is legal under Israeli law. On the basis of Military Order Number 1229 of 1988, military commanders are empowered to detain an individual for up to six months, which is extendable for unlimited additional six-month periods.

Between June 2005 and June 2007, Israeli forces carried out **16,287** search operations and made **17,379** arrests/detentions. By the end of July 2008, **3,348** searches and **3,498** arrests and detentions had been made.⁴

8,472 Palestinians were being held in Israeli prisons or army facilities as of 30 July 2008. Out of these, **691** were being held without charge or trial. **313** Palestinian children (aged 18 and under) were in Israeli prisons by the end of July 2008 – **33** of whom were under the age of 16.⁵ **700** Palestinian children were arrested in the West Bank in 2007.⁶

Population displacement and home demolitions

In addition to **48 per cent** of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip who are already refugees, the displacement of Palestinians continues within the occupied Palestinian territory as a result of the destruction of property, the confiscation of land and the revocation of residency permits, as well as occasional deportation.

8,269 Palestinians had their residency rights revoked in occupied East Jerusalem between 1967 and 2006. In 2006, **1,363** Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem had their residency rights revoked, compared to **222** in 2005 and **16** in 2004.⁷

Demolition of Palestinian homes and other structures⁸



Palestinian homes are demolished by Israel as collective punishment, either for being built without a permit or for military purposes.

House demolition is an administrative procedure that is carried out without trial or proof of guilt in court. Punitive home demolitions, which harm the extended family, are meant to deter individual members who carry out or are suspected of being involved in attacks against Israel.

Israel severely restricts construction by Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem by making it extremely difficult for them to obtain building permits. As a result, they are compelled to build without a permit in order to provide shelter for their families. Homes that are found to have been constructed without a permit are demolished by the Israeli military.

Israel also employs a policy of house demolition, uprooting of orchards and destruction of farmland for military purposes in a practice that is euphemistically referred to as “clearing”. In the Gaza Strip, in particular, many hundreds of acres of agricultural land have been destroyed owing to their proximity to former Israeli settlements, army posts or based on the claim that Palestinians had fired from the land.

Home demolitions in the occupied Palestinian territory⁹

Reason given for the demolition	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	By July 2008	Total
Punishment	10	252	225	177					664
No permit	227	321	405	243	94	94	104	41	1 529
Military	No data	No data	No data	1 404	17	318	43	37	1 819
Total	237	573	630	1 824	111	412	147	78	4 012

While there is a lack of comprehensive data on home demolitions for military purposes before 2004, it is estimated that, in addition to the above figures, more than **12,000** homes were demolished in the West Bank between 2000 and September 2004, and more than **24,000** Palestinians were made homeless by Israeli house demolitions in the Gaza Strip over the same period.¹⁰

The barrier in the West Bank

By July 2008, **57 per cent** of the barrier in the West Bank had been constructed.¹¹ When complete, the barrier will measure **723 km** – more than twice the length of the 320-km Green Line, the internationally recognized boundary between the West Bank and Israel. The barrier dissects Palestinian land in the West Bank, thereby fragmenting families, social and economic structures and restricting freedom of access and movement.

West Bank

Israel has delineated a “closed zone” between the barrier and the Green Line in Palestinian residential and agricultural areas in the western part of the West Bank.

10,000 Palestinians living in the closed zone between the barrier and the Green Line now require permanent resident permits in order to continue to live in their own homes.

80 per cent of non-resident Palestinians who formerly worked the land in the closed area are without permits to gain access to their land on the other side of the barrier.

87 per cent of the completed barrier will lie within the occupied Palestinian territory. Almost **10 per cent** of the West Bank is isolated in the closed zone between the barrier and the Green Line.¹²

East Jerusalem

Israel has largely completed the construction of a 168-km section of the barrier through East Jerusalem, thereby separating Palestinian Jerusalem residents from the city.



60,000 Palestinians living within Jerusalem municipal boundaries are now separated from the city by the barrier, and must cross a checkpoint to access essential services to which they are entitled as residents.¹³

84,000 Palestinians living in neighbouring West Bank villages that were once closely connected to occupied East Jerusalem are also excluded by the barrier.

Hospitals in occupied East Jerusalem experienced a drop of **50 per cent** in patient caseloads as a result of patients being denied access by the barrier.

Barrier restrictions also hamper the ability of **6,000** pupils and **650** teachers from reaching their schools.

Map of the barrier

Mobility restrictions and closure policies

The imposition by Israel of a comprehensive closure regime is the main cause of deteriorating humanitarian and economic conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

External closure consists of the control of crossings into and out of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, thereby sealing off these territories from Israel and the rest of the world.

Internal closure consists of the use of such physical obstacles as earth mounds, trenches, roadblocks, concrete blocks, barbed wire, gates, restricted roads and manned checkpoints.

West Bank



607 fixed physical obstacles were in place in the West Bank in April 2008, augmented by an average of **66** flying checkpoints.¹⁴

1,661 km of by-pass roads crisscross the West Bank on which Palestinian access is prohibited or restricted by a closure regime consisting of approximately **85** checkpoints and **460** roadblocks.¹⁵

The “back-to-back” system

The majority of goods going into and out of Nablus, the main commercial centre in the West Bank, must pass through the Awarta crossing. This is currently the only “back-to-back” crossing inside the West Bank and involves a laborious procedure whereby goods are unloaded from one truck, searched, ferried through a barrier of concrete blocks, and loaded onto another truck on the other side. In 2007, Israel announced that it intends to introduce a compulsory back-to-back system for goods throughout the West Bank.

Thousands of incidents of delayed or denied access of United Nations staff have been reported, which significantly hindered the delivery of food aid and medicines and the work of mobile health-care and food distribution teams.

Siege on the Gaza Strip

Israel's disengagement from the Gaza Strip in September 2005 had raised hopes for socio-economic recovery. However, Israeli mobility restrictions and closure policies continued and were increased following the Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2006. After the takeover by Hamas of the Gaza Strip in mid-June 2007, Israel further intensified border closures and restrictions on access of goods and people to and from the Gaza Strip, thereby imposing almost total closure and isolation of the territory. This isolation resulted in shortages of food, medical and relief items, spare parts for critical health and water sanitation installations and raw materials for Gaza's commerce and industry.

Israeli control of border crossings into and out of the Gaza Strip¹⁶

Rafah	Border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt for the movement of people	Closed for more than one year since June 2007
Erez	Border crossing from the Gaza Strip to Israel for the movement of people	Closed for more than two years for workers and more than one year, since June 2007, for other Palestinians
Karni	Principle crossing for goods	Closed for more than one year since June 2007, with the exception of a single-lane conveyor belt that operates a few days every week for supplying wheat and animal feed
Sufa	Principle crossing for aggregates, now used for commercial and humanitarian supplies	Closed in October 2007, re-opened sporadically since December 2007
Kerem Shalom	Crossing for humanitarian supplies	Opened sporadically, but closed since April 2008
Nahal Oz	Crossing point for fuel	Open sporadically

On average, **75** daily truckloads of goods were permitted to enter the Gaza Strip in June 2008, compared to **450** daily truckloads in January 2007.¹⁷

The average daily supply of fuel to the Gaza Strip in June 2008 was approximately **250,000** litres, compared to **700,000** litres in January 2007.

95 per cent of all industrial establishments in the Gaza Strip had closed down by June 2007, and business productivity fell to **11 per cent** of capacity.



Map of Gaza

Israeli settlements

International law: The Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits an occupying power from transferring its own citizens to an occupied territory. The Hague Regulations prohibit an occupying power from making permanent changes in an occupied area except for pressing and strictly military reasons, or unless they are undertaken for the benefit of the local population.

38 per cent of the West Bank consists of settlements and closed military areas that are off-limits or restricted to Palestinians.

The settlements are linked to each other and to Israel by an extensive road network. Palestinians for the most part are either prevented from using these roads or have only restricted access to them. The roads have also fragmented the West Bank into a series of isolated enclaves that Palestinians must access via alternative roads, checkpoints, bridges and tunnels that circumvent the roads reserved primarily for settlers.

473,000 settlers currently live in the West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem in **132** settlements.

An additional **3,000** Israeli settlers occupy West Bank land in **100** “outposts”, which are settlements that have not been authorized by the Government of Israel.

4,000 settler dwelling units were under construction in the West Bank as of December 2007.

Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley alone consume an equivalent of **75 per cent** of the water that the entire West Bank population of approximately 2 million people consumes.

Natural resources, water and environment

Owing to the lack of electrical power in the Gaza Strip, cuts in fuel supply and a ban on the importation of spare parts since October 2007, water wells and pumping stations throughout the territory have fallen into disrepair or remain idle.



35 per cent of households in the West Bank and **36 per cent** of households in the Gaza Strip had piped water in 2007. **47.6 per cent** of households in the occupied Palestinian territory dispose of their wastewater through porous cesspits, which leak into the water supply.¹⁸

95 per cent of water resources (630 million m³ out of 670 million m³ annually) have been closed off by the barrier to Palestinians living in the West Bank.

Every month in 2007, **3,201** trees were uprooted, burned or cut down by Israeli authorities or settlers. **1,749** dunums (1 dunum is equivalent to 4 acres) of arable Palestinian land per month were leveled in 2007. From September 2000 to April 2006, **\$339 million** was lost as a result of bulldozing of cultivated land and uprooting of trees.¹⁹

Turning the sea from blue to black²⁰

In July 2008, **84 million** litres of raw and partially-treated sewage per day were being released into the sea along the coast of the Gaza Strip.

Irregular fuel supplies and the lack of spare parts and materials have made it very difficult to treat sewage adequately before releasing it into the sea. In June 2008, the Coastal Municipal Water Utility (CMWU) received some supplies for the first time in more than a year, which enabled it to complete some delayed repairs. However, these supplies constituted only 10-20 per cent of what is required, and during July 2008, CMWU received 50,000 litres of diesel, which represents only 40 per cent of its monthly fuel requirements.

Poverty, unemployment and the economy

The occupied Palestinian territory was the poorest performing economy in the region owing primarily to the boycott of the Hamas Government in 2006 and the subsequent siege of the Gaza Strip. Real GDP in the occupied Palestinian territory in 2006 \$4.5 billion, compared to Yemen at \$19 billion, Egypt at \$124 billion and Saudi Arabia at \$348 billion.²¹

Gross domestic product (GDP) growth is estimated to be **zero** in 2007, following a drop of **5 per cent** in real GDP in 2006, which was caused by Israel's withholding of revenues owed to the Palestinian Authority (PA), the freezing of donor assistance to the PA, strikes by the public sector in 2006, and a private sector that continued to be strangled by the closure regime.²² Per capita GDP in 2007 was estimated to be **40 per cent** below its level in 1999.²³

28 per cent of Palestinians were unemployed in 2007 (including discouraged workers). In the Gaza Strip, after factoring in absentee unpaid and discouraged workers, the unemployment rate reached approximately **42 per cent**, one of the highest unemployment rates in the world.²⁴

Post-assistance poverty based on consumption levels was **19 per cent** in the West Bank and **52 per cent** in the Gaza Strip in 2007. Income-based poverty was **57 per cent** in 2007 – **45 per cent** in the West Bank and **79 per cent** in the Gaza Strip.²⁵

80 per cent of the residents of the Gaza Strip were dependent on humanitarian aid in 2007, compared to **63 per cent** in 2006. In 2007, **28,000** families received emergency cash assistance from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).



East Jerusalem in numbers

Number of residents:	256,820 (34 per cent of the population of Jerusalem)
Families under the poverty line:	67 per cent (compared to 21 per cent of non-Arab families)
Children under the poverty line:	77 per cent (compared to 39 per cent of non-Arab children)
Sewage line shortage:	70 kilometres of main sewage lines are lacking
Lack of water connections:	160,000 Palestinian residents have no connection to the municipal water network

Source: The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, June 2008.

Public health and food insecurity

The consumer price index for food rose by **23 per cent** in the Gaza Strip and **19 per cent** in the West Bank from January 2007 to April 2008.²⁶ **38 per cent** of the population in the occupied Palestinian territory is food insecure in 2008 – **56 per cent** in the Gaza Strip and **25 per cent** in West Bank.²⁷ **60 per cent** of the refugee population received emergency food aid in 2007.

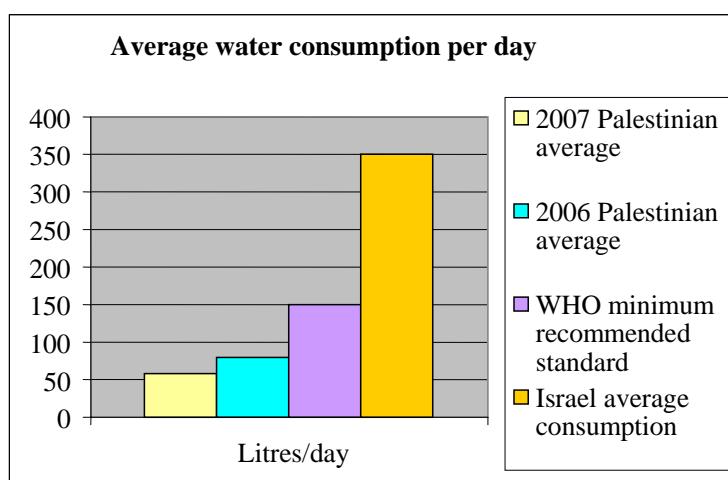
During 2007, the price of wheat flour increased by **73 per cent** in the West Bank and **68 per cent** in the Gaza Strip.²⁸ The price of baby milk increased by **30 per cent**. The drastic increase in food that is occurring in many regions of the world is especially onerous in the occupied Palestinian territory where per capita GDP has declined by nearly **40 per cent** since 1999.

Following the imposition of embargoes on the import of fuel and electricity, hospitals reported shortages of some **60-70 per cent** in the diesel supplies required for generating electricity.

40 per cent of the items on the list of essential drugs were at critical levels for most of the year 2007 – **100** out of the **416** items on the list of essential drugs and **203** medical supply items were at level zero in the Gaza Strip in December 2007.

In 2006, **10 per cent** of children showed signs of stunted growth in the occupied Palestinian territory.²⁹

In 2007, the per capita daily consumption of water was **59 litres**, down from **80.5 litres** in 2006. This is far below the minimum standard recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) of **150 litres** per day and the **350 litres** per person per day consumed in Israel.



Youth and education



14,730 teaching days were lost in UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip in 2007 owing to violence.

2,000 children in the Gaza Strip were estimated to have dropped out of school in 2007.

66-90 per cent of children in the Gaza Strip failed their mathematics examinations in the 2006-2007 school year.

55 per cent of 8th graders in the West Bank failed their mathematics examinations, and **44 per cent** failed their science examinations.

40 per cent of children in the Gaza Strip are suffering from insomnia and **34 per cent** are suffering from anxiety.

Youth aged 15-24 account for only **28 per cent** of the labour force, and yet accounted for **44 per cent** of the unemployed in 2007 (including discouraged workers).³⁰

Status of women

The participation rate for women in the labour force was a very modest **16.6 per cent** in the second quarter of 2007, compared to **67.8 per cent** for men.

Worsening socio-economic conditions in the Gaza Strip seem to be causing increased levels of violence against women. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), **2 in 5** women reported being victims of violence in the Gaza Strip in 2007, up from **1 in 5** in 2006.

12 so-called honour killings were recorded in the Gaza Strip in 2007, up from **4** in 2004.

Occupied Syrian Golan

The Syrian Golan has been under Israeli occupation since 1967. The Israeli Government's decision to annex the occupied Syrian Golan was deemed illegal by Security Council Resolution 497. Israel prevents the return of the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan expelled in 1967. The border crossing between the occupied Syrian Golan and the Syrian Arab Republic is normally closed, and travel by the Arab residents of the occupied Golan to the Syrian Arab Republic to visit family members is severely restricted by the Israeli authorities, at great hardship to both Syrian and Golan Arabs.

The population of Syrian Arabs living on the occupied Syrian Golan dropped from an estimated **130,000** living in some **200** villages in 1967 to approximately **21,000** in **5** main towns in March 2007. Some **20,000** Israelis have settled in approximately **45** settlements in the area.

The sharp decline in the number of Syrian Arab residents has serious long-term implications that need to be addressed urgently.

The total area of the Syrian Golan is some **1,250** square kilometres, of which **1,150** square kilometres are under Israeli occupation, **100** square kilometres are declared as natural reservations and **400** square kilometres are closed military areas.

Israel uses approximately **500** square kilometres for cattle. Out of the **100** square kilometres of cultivated land, Syrian Arabs have access to only **20** square kilometres, while Israeli settlers have access to the remaining **80** square kilometres.

Israeli settlements are reported to use a disproportionate quantity of water resources for domestic and agricultural purposes. Syrian citizens have restricted access to water, receiving only **20 per cent** of their needs, which negatively affects the agricultural output of their land.

ENDNOTES

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⁹ B’Tselem only has statistics on house demolitions for alleged military purposes starting from 2004.

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¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), “The humanitarian impact on Palestinians of Israeli settlements and other infrastructure in the West Bank” (July 2007).

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¹⁹ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), press release on the occasion of Land Day (30 March 2008).

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²⁴ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), “Prolonged crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory: Socio-economic developments in 2007” (July 2008).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ World Food Programme (WFP), FAO and UNRWA, “Joint rapid food security survey in the occupied Palestinian territory” (May 2008).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), “Palestine in Figures, 2007 (May 2008).

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[back cover]

Only a permanent political settlement, which ends the occupation and gives Palestinians their independence, can fundamentally alter the economic and humanitarian problems of the Palestinian people and bring lasting security for Israel. While I am well aware of the challenges, I believe that with the right mixture of wisdom, realism and political courage – including a major intensification of efforts in the months ahead – we can make historic progress towards the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

Message of the Secretary-General
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