



General Assembly Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
18 July 2024

Original: English

General Assembly Seventy-ninth session

Item 59 of the provisional agenda*

Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

Economic and Social Council 2024 session

27 July 2023–24 July 2024

Agenda item 16

Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan

Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan**

Note by the Secretary-General

Summary

In its resolution [2023/34](#), entitled “Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan”, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session, through the Council, a report on the implementation of that resolution. In addition, the Council, in its resolution [2023/35](#), entitled “Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women”, requested the Secretary-General to include information on the gender-specific impact of the occupation and the progress made in the implementation of that resolution in that report. The Assembly, in its resolution [78/170](#), entitled “Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources”, requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its seventy-ninth session. The present report, prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), has been submitted in response to those resolutions.

* [A/79/150](#).

** The present report was submitted late owing to the complexities of attaining precise information under the current circumstances in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.



The report covers persistent Israeli practices and policies, including those that may amount to violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, that affect the social and economic conditions of the people living under the Israeli military occupation. It also covers the gendered impact of the occupation.

ESCWA would like to express its appreciation for the contributions from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the International Trade Centre, the Mine Action Service, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

I. Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2023/34, expressed concerns about the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan. In its resolution 2023/35, the Council highlighted the gender-specific repercussions in that regard. The General Assembly, in its resolution 78/170, demanded that Israel, the occupying Power, cease the exploitation, damage, cause of loss or depletion and endangerment of natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan.

2. The present report, submitted in response to those resolutions, provides information on relevant developments from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. It was written as the war in Gaza continued and therefore does not capture the full repercussions on the social and economic conditions of the Palestinian people.

II. Occupied Palestinian Territory

3. The year 2023 was already on track to record the highest number of Palestinian fatalities, including children, since the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs began recording casualties in 2005. The number of casualties, already elevated before 7 October 2023, saw a major increase thereafter.¹

4. On the morning of 7 October, during the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups launched large-scale attacks on Israel. The attacks, which included numerous acts of terror, saw an estimated 3,000 Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad militants from Gaza infiltrate some 20 communities and military facilities in southern Israel, in the Gaza periphery, by land, sea and air, while thousands of rockets were launched towards population centres in Israel, including Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Since 7 October, Israeli sources have reported that more than 1,500 Israelis and foreign nationals were killed in that context, including at least 338 women, 38 children and 690 members of the security forces. Around 6,200 Israelis and foreigners were injured, according to official Israeli sources. Also, 33 attacks on Israeli medical facilities and personnel were recorded. In addition, some 250 people, including Israelis and foreign nationals, approximately 65 of whom were women and 34 children, were abducted and taken to Gaza, with some released in November. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict released findings that there are reasonable grounds to believe that conflict-related sexual violence occurred in multiple locations during the attacks, that there was clear and convincing information that sexual violence was committed against hostages and that there were reasonable grounds to believe that such violence may be ongoing against those still in captivity.

5. By the end of the reporting period, the Israeli military response and the war had resulted in a catastrophic situation for the 2.3 million inhabitants of Gaza – who were already living in dire social and economic conditions in view of 57 years of occupation and 17 years of closures of Gaza – and rendered much of Gaza uninhabitable, with tens of thousands losing their lives, the majority of whom reportedly women and children, and 1.7 million Palestinians displaced. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report of March 2024, famine was projected and imminent in the North Gaza and Gaza Governorates from mid-March

¹ United Nations entities input and S/2023/988, para. 59. See also www.pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4676.

to May 2024.² From 9 to 21 October, the Israeli authorities ordered a full closure of Gaza, including shutting off Israeli-supplied water and electricity, as well as restricting the entry of all imports, including food and fuel. The sole power plant in Gaza stopped working on 11 October. Thereafter, the entry of humanitarian supplies resumed but has been wholly inadequate, far below what is required to meet the massive needs of the people in Gaza.³

6. The scale of damage and destruction in Gaza is qualitatively different from any previous escalation. The effects of extensive loss of life and displacement increase exponentially when coupled with the destruction of homes, livelihoods, natural resources, the health system and infrastructure, as well as institutional capacities. This impact is also systemic, as Gaza is left without what could be described as an “economy” and with barely any means of production, self-sustainment, employment or capacity for trade. As such, Gaza will be dependent on international/foreign assistance on a scale not seen since 1948 and on access to goods brought in through Israel.⁴

Israeli practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

7. The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was dire even before 7 October, given the protracted military occupation and closures of Gaza, the high level of violence by the security forces and settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank, settlement expansion and attacks by Palestinians against Israelis, as well as the long-standing discriminatory systems of control over Palestinians.⁵

8. On 29 December 2023, South Africa instituted proceedings against Israel before the International Court of Justice concerning alleged violations in the Gaza Strip of Israeli obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.⁶

Violence and use of force

9. The reporting period was the deadliest for Israelis and Palestinians in the history of the conflict, marked by unprecedented and ongoing war in Gaza between Israel and Hamas and other armed Palestinian groups, alongside a surge in violence in the West Bank.

10. The Israeli security forces continue to employ measures and practices that raise serious concerns about excessive use of force and unlawful killing, in some cases possibly amounting to arbitrary deprivation of life, including extrajudicial executions, and that may have constituted violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

11. Monitoring by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights of incidents during the war in Gaza indicated extensive disregard for international humanitarian law by all parties.⁷

12. Between 7 October 2023 and 31 March 2024, at least 32,782 Palestinians died in the Gaza Strip, the vast majority of whom (around 70 per cent) women and children, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health. Another 75,298 Palestinians were

² See www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/IPC_Famine_Committee_Review_Report_Gaza_Strip_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Feb_July2024_Special_Brief.pdf.

³ A/HRC/55/28, paras. 18 and 19.

⁴ E/ESCWA/31/9, para. 33.

⁵ A/HRC/55/28, para. 86.

⁶ *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)*.

⁷ A/HRC/55/28, para. 10.

injured, again according to the Ministry,⁸ with many injuries that may result in long-term disability.⁹ In other words, approximately 5 per cent of the 2.3 million population of Gaza has been either killed or injured or gone missing since 7 October.¹⁰

13. The Secretary-General, in remarks to the Security Council and referencing his annual reports on children and armed conflict, indicated that, “in a matter of weeks, a far greater number of children have been killed by Israeli military operations in Gaza than the total number of children killed during any year, by any party to a conflict since [his term started]”.¹¹

14. As of the end of March 2024, at least 224 aid workers had died in Gaza since October 2023, nearly three times the toll recorded in any other single conflict in a year. This figure includes 179 United Nations staff members, from UNRWA (176), WHO (1), UNDP (1) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (1). This is the highest toll among the Organization’s staff in any conflict in its history.¹²

15. Across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, amid increasing violence, and throughout the reporting period, but especially after 7 October, Israel escalated the use of lethal force against Palestinians, often in situations where it may have been unnecessary or disproportionate and that may in some cases have possibly amounted to arbitrary deprivation of life, including extrajudicial execution and wilful killing.¹³ Most of the Palestinians died owing to operations by Israeli security forces in the context of Israeli operations in Area A, including during subsequent exchanges of fire with armed Palestinians. After 7 October, Israeli forces intensified the use of air strikes and other heavy weaponry in refugee camps and other densely populated areas during operations in the West Bank, resulting in high numbers of Palestinian fatalities, including children, and extensive infrastructural damage.¹⁴

16. During the reporting period, 553 Palestinians, including at least 134 children and 4 women, died as a result of operations by Israeli military and security forces, or settlers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. A total of 22 Israelis, among them 4 women, 4 children and 5 security and military personnel, died in the occupied West Bank and Israel, while another 183 were injured in Palestinian attacks and other incidents.¹⁵

Detention and ill-treatment

17. According to Physicians for Human Rights, the reporting period had witnessed the deliberate deterioration of incarceration conditions for Palestinians even before the events of 7 October.¹⁶ On 1 February 2023, the Israeli Minister of National

⁸ United Nations entities input.

⁹ See https://reliefweb.int/attachments/d2f3eb84-975e-4fe0-ac70-10c158251716/Needs%20Assessment_February_2024_1.pdf, as well as the flash appeal for the Occupied Palestinian Territory published by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

¹⁰ ESCWA calculations based on data from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

¹¹ See <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/03/1147512> and www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2023-11-29/secretary-generals-remarks-the-security-council-the-middle-east-delivered.

¹² See www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-180 and www.ochaopt.org/content/statement-humanitarian-coordinator-mr-jamie-mcgoldrick.

¹³ A/HRC/55/28, paras. 57 and 62–65.

¹⁴ Database on casualties maintained by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

¹⁵ See www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-149-mapbox. See also www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-97-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-Jerusalem.

¹⁶ See www.phr.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/5845_Imprisoned_Paper_Eng.pdf and www.timesofisrael.com/ben-gvir-moves-to-overcrowd-prison-living-conditions-in-response-to-gaza-war/.

Security had announced measures to worsen detention conditions for Palestinians, including women and girls. According to Physicians for Human Rights, protests against those measures led to harsh reprisals.¹⁷

18. After 7 October, Israel further restricted detainees' access to food, water, sanitation, electricity, medical treatment, media and information, family visits and the right to consult legal representatives. Many detainees, including children, older persons and women, were subjected to violence that in some cases may have amounted to torture or other acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.¹⁸ In that context, 40 Palestinian prisoners reportedly died during the reporting period while in Israeli custody,¹⁹ including, reportedly, at least 27 from Gaza detained by the army and 13 arrested from the West Bank and detained by the Israeli Prison Service.²⁰

19. The number of Palestinians in detention increased significantly. As of March 2024, a record number of 9,077 people were being held in Israeli security prisons – of those, 39 per cent (3,558) are administrative detainees, 29 per cent (2,656) are being held as remand detainees in pretrial incarceration and 23 per cent (2,070) are actually serving sentences after conviction, as well as 793 prisoners from Gaza considered “unlawful combatants”,²¹ who continue to be protected under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.²²

20. Concerns have been raised that Palestinian detainees, women and men alike, have been subjected to beatings, abuse and sexual and gender-based violence in detention, including reportedly unnecessary and humiliating strip searches, forced nudity, beating on their genitals and threats of rape in retaliation for the attacks of 7 October.²³ Reports of rape and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in detention continue to emerge.²⁴

Destruction and confiscation of property and infrastructure

21. Gaza witnessed an unprecedented scale and number of attacks affecting residential buildings, hospitals, religious and cultural sites, schools and government buildings. Israel repeatedly accused Hamas and other armed groups of using civilian infrastructure, such as hospitals and shelters, or tunnels underneath them, to conduct military operations.

¹⁷ A/78/502, para. 39, cited from www.phr.org.il/en/prisoners-rights/.

¹⁸ A/HRC/55/28, para. 78, sourced from www.phr.org.il/en/prisoners-rights/; see also www.israelnationalnews.com/news/367420; www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-02-02/ty-article/.premium/trolling-palestinian-prisoners-ben-gvir-could-drag-israel-into-another-gaza-war/00000186-0eb5-df4f-a787-1fb5e5090000; and www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-731670.

¹⁹ See <https://cda.gov.ps/index.php/ar/ar-prisoner-movement-2/2017-06-01-06-53-33/16388-31-3-2027>.

²⁰ See www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-03-07/ty-article/.premium/27-gaza-detainees-died-in-custody-at-israeli-army-facilities-since-the-start-of-the-war/0000018e-1322-d950-a18e-f3bbaa370000.

²¹ See <https://hamoked.org/prisoners-charts.php>.

²² See www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/irrc_849_dorman.pdf; <https://hamoked.org/prisoners-charts.php>; and [https://hrdf.org.il/october-2023-newsletter-copy/#::~:~:text=According%20to%20statistics%20from%20Israeli,only%2023%25%20\(2%2C070\)%20are](https://hrdf.org.il/october-2023-newsletter-copy/#::~:~:text=According%20to%20statistics%20from%20Israeli,only%2023%25%20(2%2C070)%20are).

²³ See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/palestine/2023-12-27-Flash-Report.pdf and www.addameer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Full%20Report%20on%20the%20situation%20after%20October%207th.pdf.

²⁴ See www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/israelopt-un-experts-appalled-reported-human-rights-violations-against; <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/02/1146667>; and www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/report/mission-report-official-visit-of-the-office-of-the-srsg-svc-to-israel-and-the-occupied-west-bank-29-january-14-february-2024/20240304-Israel-oWB-CRSV-report.pdf.

22. As of March 2024, according to satellite imagery analysis, the United Nations Satellite Centre had identified 34,115 destroyed structures, 17,055 severely damaged structures, 42,659 moderately damaged structures and 29,877 possibly damaged structures, for a total of 123,706 structures, corresponding to around 50 per cent of the total structures in the Gaza Strip, and a total of 128,904 estimated damaged housing units.²⁵

23. Military operations and prolonged restrictions on the movement of people and goods by Israeli forces had left 26 out of 36 hospitals out of service by the end of March 2024. The second raid on the Shifa' medical complex in Gaza City from 18 March to 1 April left the largest hospital in complete ruins.²⁶

24. About 63 per cent of all sites with significant heritage value sustained damage, of which 31 per cent were destroyed, with the cost estimated at \$319 million as an initial assessment at the end of January 2024.²⁷

25. Given that the average pace of reconstruction after the escalations of 2014 and 2021 was 992 housing units per year, it would take approximately 80 years to reconstruct only those housing units that were fully destroyed. Even with an optimistic scenario of a five-fold increase in construction material, it would take until 2040 to reconstruct the units.²⁸

26. In the West Bank, the Israeli authorities continued to implement eviction and demolition orders against Palestinians based on discriminatory planning policies, laws and practices, including on the basis that properties lacked building permits.²⁹

27. Furthermore, the demolition and seizure of Palestinian structures in the West Bank, including internationally funded humanitarian projects, may have entailed numerous human rights violations and raise concerns about the risk of forcible transfer.³⁰

28. Demolition incidents were scaled up by more than 37 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2023 compared with the same period in 2022.³¹ The incidents included punitive demolitions of 21 family homes of alleged Palestinian attackers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

29. Between December 2023 and January 2024, more than 2,500 shelters in the Jenin camp were reportedly affected by Israeli operations. Severe damage was also recorded in the Nur Shams and Tulkarm camps, where over 2,100 shelters were damaged, with a reported 60 per cent gap in the damage repair response.³² Furthermore, during its operations in Palestinian cities in the West Bank, including in densely populated refugee camps, Israeli forces destroyed civilian infrastructure such as roads, major water pipes, sewage and the electricity network, as well as hospitals.³³

²⁵ See <https://unosat.org/products/3824>.

²⁶ United Nations entities input.

²⁷ See <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/14e309cd34e04e40b90eb19afa7b5d15-0280012024/original/Gaza-Interim-Damage-Assessment-032924-Final.pdf>.

²⁸ See www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/gaza-war-socioeconomic-impacts-palestine-english.pdf.

²⁹ A/HRC/55/72, para. 34.

³⁰ See https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/security_council_briefing_-_26_march_2334_scr_2334.pdf.

³¹ See <https://sheltercluster.org/palestine/documents/shelter-cluster-west-bank-snapshot-12-mar-2024> and www.ochaopt.org/data/demolition.

³² A/HRC/55/28, paras. 54 and 55; see also <https://sheltercluster.org/palestine/documents/shelter-cluster-west-bank-snapshot-12-mar-2024> and www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-activities-implemented-following-israeli-forces-operation-jenin.

³³ A/78/502, para. 26; and A/HRC/55/28, paras. 54 and 55. See also www.ochaopt.org/content/israeli-forces-operation-jenin-situation-report-1.

30. Persons with disabilities are facing significantly disproportionate impacts from the war in Gaza. The absence of advance warning and information in accessible formats about relocation and the destruction of communication networks have rendered evacuation almost impossible. The scale of destruction of housing and civil infrastructure, and the resulting rubble, limits possibilities for movement and accessibility essential for persons with disabilities to escape, evacuate and seek protection. Physical barriers to distribution points prevent access to humanitarian assistance.

Coercive environment and population displacement

31. Displacement in Gaza and the West Bank continued. In Gaza, as at 30 March, up to 1.7 million Palestinians (over 75 per cent of the population) had been displaced, most on multiple occasions as families sought safety. UN-Women estimates that nearly 1 million women and girls have been displaced.³⁴ Most of the displaced have sought shelter in emergency UNRWA and public shelters, informal sites or in the vicinity of UNRWA shelters and distribution sites and within host communities.

32. Displacement also continued in the West Bank, in particular in Area C, with demolitions and threats of demolition of homes, destruction of livelihoods and restriction of access to farming and grazing land. Overall, during 2023, around 4,000 Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, were displaced by such actions.³⁵ Since October 2023, a monthly average of some 280 Palestinians have been displaced compared with 128 in the first nine months of 2023.

Israeli settlement activity and settler violence

33. The expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, impedes access by Palestinians to their land and resources and threatens the viability of a future independent Palestinian State. The competent principal organs of the United Nations have stated that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law.³⁶

34. Israeli settlement expansion increased throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, where settlement activity rose to 7,920 settlement housing units advanced or approved, compared with 5,000 in the previous reporting period. In Area C, 13,150 settlement housing units were advanced or approved, compared with 12,860 in the previous reporting period. On 18 June, the Government of Israel removed the requirement for ministerial approval at interim stages of settlement planning and delegated that authority to the additional minister in the Ministry of Defence.

35. During the reporting period, the number of Israeli settler outposts increased to 191, with 26 established during 2023 and 9 during the first quarter of 2024.

36. The Israeli authorities continued to expand roads and infrastructure connecting suburban settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The Custodian of the State's property in the Israeli Civil Administration declared approximately 8,000 dunums in the occupied West Bank as State land, the largest State land declaration in decades.

³⁴ See www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/01/gender-alert-the-gendered-impact-of-the-crisis-in-gaza. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 49.3 per cent of the population in Gaza is female. With a reported displacement of 1.9 million as at 15 January 2024, according to UNRWA, the approximate number of female individuals in the population would be close to 1 million.

³⁵ See www.ochaopt.org/content/about-4000-palestinians-displaced-west-bank-2023.

³⁶ Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). See also General Assembly resolution 78/78 and *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion, I.C.J. Reports 2004*, p. 136. See also [A/HRC/55/72](#), paras. 9–22.

Settler violence

37. During the reporting period, the intensity, severity and frequency and scope of Israeli settler violence against Palestinians dramatically increased. The first nine months of 2023 saw a daily average of three settler attacks, the highest on record, compared with an average of two per day in 2022.³⁷ During the last three months of 2023, the rate of settler attacks almost doubled.

38. Between 7 October 2023 and 31 March 2024, 704 Israeli settler attacks against Palestinians and their property were recorded. They resulted in the deaths of 17 Palestinians and injuries to around 400 others, in addition to the vandalization of nearly 40 houses and at least 9,900 trees.³⁸

39. Since 7 October, settlers have taken over an additional 4,000 dunums and fenced off the areas that they took over before 7 October. In some instances, they also set up roadblocks to deny Palestinians access to agricultural roads that they had used in the past and installed fences around some of their farms.³⁹

Movement and access restrictions

40. Allegations of violations of Palestinians' rights to freedom of movement and access to services and livelihoods have persisted, including in the context of possibly discriminatory restrictions on access to key roads for which the Israeli authorities cite security reasons. Furthermore, closures and movement restrictions across the Occupied Palestinian Territory have had an impact on access to protection, justice, basic services and employment opportunities and disrupted the Palestinian court system.⁴⁰

Gaza closures

41. Between 8 and 21 October 2023, Israel completely closed all crossings into Gaza and prevented the entry of humanitarian aid, commercial goods, food, fuel and electricity, allowing only a small supply of water to enter. Thereafter, overall, the level of essential goods, including humanitarian assistance, allowed into Gaza has been wholly inadequate. That severe deprivation of the rights of Palestinians in Gaza to water, food, health and other basic necessities, compounded by attacks striking essential civilian infrastructure, such as hospitals, bakeries and water wells, resulted in a preventable, human-caused and unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Gaza. These developments came on top of the closures by Israel of Gaza since the 2007 takeover by Hamas of the Gaza Strip, in one of the most densely populated areas in the world, which may amount to collective punishment, prohibited under international law.⁴¹

42. The Erez crossing remained closed up to 31 March 2024, while the Kerem Shalom/Karem Abu Salim crossing was partially opened in mid-December 2023 for the screening and entry of aid. This situation led to severe constraints on humanitarian access and was compounded by severe restrictions on movement within the Gaza Strip, in particular to the north of Wadi Gaza.⁴² Vital materials, including life-saving medical equipment and parts critical for the repair of water facilities and

³⁷ A/HRC/55/72, paras. 16 and 17.

³⁸ United Nations entities input; see also www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-149.

³⁹ See www.btselem.org/press_releases/20240318_since_october_7_israel_has_ramped_up_efforts_to_drive_palestinian_shepherding_communities_out_of_the_jordan_valley.

⁴⁰ United Nations entities input.

⁴¹ A/78/502, para. 33; A/76/333, para. 36; and A/HRC/55/28, para. 18.

⁴² United Nations entities input.

infrastructure, were often denied access with little or no explanation, disrupting the flow of critical supplies and the resumption of basic services.⁴³

43. Damage to the transport sector in Gaza amounts to around \$358 million, affecting 62 per cent of roads, including 92 per cent of primary roads, and a significant proportion of vehicles. This situation has a profound effect, not only on the mobility of the population, but also on the ability of relief aid and necessary social services to reach vulnerable populations.⁴⁴

Movement restrictions in the West Bank

44. The movement of Palestinians within the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is restricted through a complex system of checkpoints, permits, military roadblocks, settlements, a bypass road system, parallel legal regimes and the West Bank wall, effectively fragmenting the territory into an archipelago of isolated islands.

45. In early 2023, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs documented 565 movement obstacles in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in addition to 80 obstacles, including 28 constantly staffed checkpoints, that segregated part of the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron (H2) from the remainder of the city.

46. Those measures separate communities from main roads and places of work,⁴⁵ further disconnect cities, villages and vulnerable communities from one another and disrupt access to basic services and the delivery of humanitarian aid.⁴⁶

47. After 7 October, Israel increased restrictions on the movement of Palestinians across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem⁴⁷. The access of Palestinians from the West Bank to East Jerusalem, including hospitals and the Aqsa Mosque compound, has been restricted. The access of national humanitarian workers to East Jerusalem has been restricted. Some 7,000 Palestinians residing in the enclosed H2/Hebron area have been subject to a stringent curfew, limiting access through main checkpoints every other day.⁴⁸

48. Initial results of a new closure survey by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs show that some 114 new closures have been erected throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since 7 October. The closures, which include checkpoints, earth mounds, roadblocks and road gates, have further disrupted Palestinians' access to basic services, workplaces and markets, as well as movement by aid workers to carry out assessments or deliver assistance. Intensified checks and more stringent access measures have also been reported since 7 October.⁴⁹

Deprivation of access to natural resources

49. Even before 7 October, Palestinians living in Gaza faced major challenges relating to the environment and natural resources, with the closures of Gaza and cycles of escalation.⁵⁰

⁴³ See www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2024-01-15/secretary-generals-statement-the-press-the-middle-east; see also www.humanitarianoutcomes.org/sites/default/files/publications/score_gaza_2024.pdf.

⁴⁴ See <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/14e309cd34e04e40b90eb19afa7b5d15-0280012024/original/Gaza-Interim-Damage-Assessment-032924-Final.pdf>.

⁴⁵ United Nations entities input.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ A/HRC/55/28, para. 56.

⁴⁸ See www.ochaopt.org/content/west-bank-snapshot-december-2023.

⁴⁹ See www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-152.

⁵⁰ See www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/war-gaza-weaponizing-access-water-energy-food-land-english.pdf.

50. The primary source of domestic and agricultural water is the coastal aquifer, which provided 81 per cent of water consumed in Gaza. Overextraction, pollution, combined with sea level rise, and restrictions on the entry of materials needed to protect and use the water supply had rendered 96 per cent of the water unsafe for drinking or irrigation purposes.⁵¹

51. By January 2024, the environmental damage in Gaza resulting from the war was estimated at \$411 million, including effects on physical assets such as coastal areas, water, soil, agricultural fields and the Wadi Gaza nature reserve, along with vital ecosystem services.⁵²

52. Munitions and chemicals severely pollute the soil, air and water, with implications for human health, agriculture and food safety. They also further contaminate the scarce water resources. The bombardments generated an estimated 26 million tons of debris. Some destroyed facilities leaked petrol and other hazardous materials, adding to the high levels of air, water and land pollution to which people in Gaza are now exposed.⁵³

53. The agriculture sector in Gaza has been devastated, with physical damage amounting to more than three-and-a-half-fold the total value added generated by the entire sector in 2023.⁵⁴ The lack of access to land and the destruction of crops are compounded by the limited access to essential agriculture inputs. Most livestock have been abandoned, with the remaining animals slaughtered or sold owing to the lack of fodder and water. Fishing activities have largely stopped in the light of the damage to port infrastructure and boats, lack of fuel and restricted access to fishing areas.⁵⁵ Agricultural infrastructure has been heavily damaged, including more than 20 per cent of greenhouses, animal shelters and agricultural wells and about 15 per cent of agricultural warehouses.⁵⁶

54. As at 31 December 2023, 27.5 per cent of all cropland in the Gaza Strip had been damaged.⁵⁷ This includes the degradation of the top productive layer. The destruction of vegetation cover will make the land vulnerable to desertification and accelerate soil erosion during rainfall.⁵⁸

55. In the West Bank, settler farms now control a vast area that Palestinian pastoral communities have used as pastureland for decades, both before and after the occupation of the West Bank in 1967. Parts of this sprawling area were declared firing zones or nature reserves by Israel at some time between the late 1960s and 1980s. The proliferation of settler farms has effectively completely closed off valuable land to Palestinian shepherds and cowherders, whose livelihoods have been jeopardized as a result.⁵⁹

56. In the aftermath of 7 October, the Israeli authorities decided to keep all gates on the wall closed, cutting off access to agricultural lands in the seam zone along the West Bank. In addition, Palestinian farmers report that Israeli forces prevented them

⁵¹ United Nations entities input and www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/war-gaza-weaponizing-access-water-energy-food-land-english.pdf.

⁵² See <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/14e309cd34e04e40b90eb19afa7b5d15-0280012024/original/Gaza-Interim-Damage-Assessment-032924-Final.pdf>.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ See www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Gaza_Strip_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Feb_July2024_Special_Brief.pdf.

⁵⁶ See <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc9556en>.

⁵⁷ United Nations entities input.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ See www.btselem.org/press_releases/20240318_since_october_7_israel_has_ramped_up_efforts_to_drive_palestinian_shepherding_communities_out_of_the_jordan_valley.

from gaining access to olive-cultivated lands that are not isolated by the wall but are within about 150 metres of the West Bank side. Monitoring by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the northern West Bank shows that the 2023 olive yield in the area isolated by the wall was 93 per cent lower than the yield in accessible areas. The Office estimates that, overall in 2023, more than 10,000 Palestinian-owned olive trees were vandalized, presumably by settlers, across the West Bank.⁶⁰

Social and economic conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

57. Before 7 October, the occupation, the closure and repeated military escalations had hollowed the Gazan economy. The 2.3 million inhabitants had been suffering from inadequate access to clean water, living without consistent electricity or a proper sewage system. On 6 October, two thirds of the population lived in poverty, with 80 per cent dependent on international aid.⁶¹

58. The ability to ensure access to high-quality basic services, including health services, was already significantly constrained before 7 October. The unprecedented destruction of public service infrastructure, accounting for 19 per cent of all damaged buildings,⁶² coupled with severe constraints on the access of humanitarian aid, has led to severe disruptions – if not total collapse – across all essential services.⁶³

59. ESCWA and UNDP estimated that the six months of war in Gaza since 7 October and the linked deterioration of the situation in the West Bank have set human development for the Occupied Palestinian Territory back to pre-2007 levels, with the potential to slip below 2004 levels – the earliest available human development index data – if the war persisted for nine months.⁶⁴

60. Economic and social instability, including high rates of poverty and unemployment, has left many more vulnerable to trafficking in persons, including forced prostitution, forced marriage, forced labour and forced begging.⁶⁵

Economic conditions

61. Nearly three decades since its signing, and a quarter of a century after its presumptive ending in 1999, the Paris Protocol remains the framework that shapes the Palestinian economic reality. The customs union, de facto monetary union and fiscal arrangements in the Protocol tie the Palestinian economy to that of Israel, cultivating conditions of significant dependency and vulnerability.⁶⁶

62. Events since 7 October have exacerbated the unfavourable situation of the Palestinian economy, which is already heavily dependent on non-tradable and low-productive sectors and international aid, as well as on the Israeli economy. The latest data show that the contribution of productive sectors (manufacturing and agriculture) to the gross domestic product (GDP) dropped from 34 per cent in 2021 to 16.3 per cent in 2022 and to 15.8 per cent in 2023.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ See www.ochaopt.org/content/olive-harvest-2023-hindered-access-afflicts-palestinian-farmers-west-bank.

⁶¹ United Nations entities input.

⁶² See <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/14e309cd34e04e40b90eb19afa7b5d15-0280012024/original/Gaza-Interim-Damage-Assessment-032924-Final.pdf>.

⁶³ United Nations entities input. See also www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/war-gaza-weaponizing-access-water-energy-food-land-english.pdf.

⁶⁴ See www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/gaza-war-socioeconomic-impacts-palestine-english.pdf.

⁶⁵ United Nations entities input.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics values, ESCWA calculations.

63. GDP decreased by about 5.5 per cent in 2023 compared with 2022. Comparing the fourth quarter of 2023 to that of 2022, GDP saw an even sharper decrease, of 29.5 per cent. The contribution of Gaza to the Palestinian economy fell in 2023 to 14.2 per cent of real GDP, compared with 36 per cent in 1994,⁶⁸ mainly owing to the dramatic impact of the war since 7 October, the closures of Gaza and previous military escalations.⁶⁹

64. GDP per capita for the State of Palestine was \$554 during the fourth quarter of 2023, marking a decrease of 31 per cent compared with that of 2022. As to that of the West Bank, it showed a decrease of 21 per cent compared with the fourth quarter of 2022, while that of the Gaza Strip showed a decrease of 82 per cent. Some economic growth in 2021 (1 per cent) and 2022 (4.4 per cent) notwithstanding, not only did GDP per capita fail to recover to its 2019 level, but also it remained below the levels of the 2010s.⁷⁰ If the same trend observed in the last quarter of 2023 continues for the following three quarters of 2024, Gaza will record less than 50 per cent of the values recorded in 2000.⁷¹

65. In January 2024, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development estimated that, had the Israeli military operation ended then, with reconstruction starting immediately, and if the 2007–2022 growth trends were to persist at an average growth rate of 0.4 per cent, it would take Gaza until 2092 just to restore the GDP levels of 2022, with GDP per capita and socioeconomic conditions continuously declining. However, even with the most optimistic scenario, namely that GDP could grow at 10 per cent annually, it would still take until 2035 for GDP per capita in Gaza to return to its 2006 level.⁷²

66. All economic activities recorded a sharp decline in value added, with large losses in the West Bank in manufacturing and construction and in Gaza in all sectors, with losses of more than 90 per cent compared with the previous quarters.⁷³

67. While the Palestinian economy remains reliant on trade with Israel, the trade deficit slightly increased, by 5.75 per cent, from 2022 to 2023. The last quarter of 2023 witnessed a sharp decrease in trade, both import and export, compared with the previous quarter (30 per cent and 24 per cent) and with the last quarter of 2022 (34 per cent and 25 per cent).⁷⁴

68. After 7 October, Israel suspended the transfer of clearance revenues (customs tax, value added tax, including petroleum excise, and income tax) collected by Israel to the Palestinian Authority. Such revenues represent around 75 per cent of the Authority's revenues.⁷⁵ On 2 November, the Israeli Security Cabinet announced that it would deduct all funds designated for the Gaza Strip, some \$73 million or approximately 32.5 per cent, from the clearance revenues that Israel transfers on a monthly basis to the Palestinian Authority. This deduction is in addition to others, including those based on Israeli legislation. The resumption of partial transfers during

⁶⁸ Ibid. The earliest available data on GDP date back to 1994, the year that the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics began compiling and publishing economic statistics. This coincided with the signing of the Oslo Accords in September 1993 and the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority.

⁶⁹ See www.pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4725.

⁷⁰ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics values, ESCWA calculations.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² United Nations entities input; see also https://unctad.org/publication/preliminary-assessment-economic-impact-destruction-gaza-and-prospects-economic-recovery?fbclid=IwAR1QG-hQiCVq46-gaer0iTu-FUnHcUBtzj6SkIvGKpQvC_XFpWH_mQ_fs0Q.

⁷³ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics values, ESCWA calculations.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ See www.elibrary.imf.org/downloadpdf/view/journals/002/2023/326/article-A001-en.pdf.

the reporting period notwithstanding, the fiscal situation of the Palestinian Authority is expected to worsen during 2024.^{76,77}

69. For most imports, the Palestinian Authority is required under the existing trade regime of the Paris Protocol to conform to Israeli customs regulations, which are designed to benefit the Israeli economy.⁷⁸ Israeli restrictions on Palestinian economic activity, movement and trade inflate costs and serve as significant non-tariff barriers, with the average trade cost per transaction for a Palestinian firm nearly three times as high as for an Israeli firm and the import process taking on average four times as long. This has undermined external trade and created an uneven dependency on Israel as the dominant trading partner.⁷⁹

70. Before 7 October, the fragility of the labour market was marked by an unemployment rate of 24.1 per cent in the third quarter of 2023.⁸⁰ During the fourth quarter, unemployment reached 33 per cent (74 per cent in the Gaza Strip and 29 per cent in the West Bank).⁸¹

71. The International Labour Organization estimated that, as at 31 January 2024, 507,000 jobs had been lost across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including 201,000 in the Gaza Strip, with an estimated loss of \$21.7 million in daily labour income. This loss increases to \$25.5 million per day when combined with income losses stemming from the partial payment of wages to civil servants and the reduced incomes of workers in the private sector.⁸²

72. ESCWA and UNDP estimated that the unemployment rate across the Occupied Palestinian Territory had risen to 46.1 per cent six months after the events of 7 October and would increase by one point for each additional month.⁸³

73. An overall \$18.5 billion is the estimate at the end of the reporting period of the war's physical damage since 7 October.⁸⁴ This amounts to 97 per cent of Palestinian GDP and more than five and a half times Gaza Strip GDP in 2022.⁸⁵

74. The hostilities in Gaza have led to a severe cash shortage, intensifying the hardships faced by residents in what is a cash-based economy. The situation has been exacerbated by destruction and damage to bank infrastructure, coupled with limited Internet access and unequal access to mobile phones hindering cashless banking. This situation has hampered humanitarian operations and complicated the delivery of aid.⁸⁶ At the end of the reporting period, fewer than 10 per cent of bank branches and automated teller machines were operational – mainly in Rafah – compared with the period before October 2023.⁸⁷ External inflows of cash – transfers and remittances – are estimated to be not sufficient or regular enough to cover the current gap in

⁷⁶ In March 2024, the Palestinian Authority received through Norway between 40 and 50 per cent of Palestinian Authority clearance revenues for the West Bank share.

⁷⁷ See <https://palestine.fes.de/e/israeli-cuts-to-palestinian-tax-revenues-may-put-the-pa-on-the-brink-of-collapse.html>.

⁷⁸ See <https://documents1.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099638209132320721>.

⁷⁹ United Nations entities input.

⁸⁰ See www.pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4622.

⁸¹ See www.pcbs.gov.ps/default.aspx.

⁸² See www.ilo.org/media/520196/download.

⁸³ See www.undp.org/arab-states/publications/gaza-war-expected-socio-economic-impacts-state-palestine-0.

⁸⁴ See <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/14e309cd34e04e40b90eb19afa7b5d15-0280012024/original/Gaza-Interim-Damage-Assessment-032924-Final.pdf>.

⁸⁵ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and World Bank values, ESCWA calculations.

⁸⁶ See www.nrc.no/resources/briefing-notes/gazas-cash-liquidity-crisis/.

⁸⁷ See <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/cash-working-group-gaza-strip-cash-work-gaza-may-2024>.

household incomes.⁸⁸ The situation has led to an increased use of bartering to exchange goods and services without cash, for example for access to food.⁸⁹

Food security

75. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report of March 2024, famine was projected and imminent in the North Gaza and Gaza Governorates and expected to become manifest during the projection period from mid-March to May 2024.⁹⁰ The situation of hunger, starvation and famine is a result of the extensive Israeli restrictions on the entry and distribution of humanitarian aid and commercial goods, the displacement of most of the population and the destruction of crucial civilian infrastructure.⁹¹

76. Between 2012 and 2022, the growth of per capita net food imports in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had markedly exceeded that of comparable groups, indicating a growing reliance on imports to ensure food availability.⁹²

77. In contrast, the imports of agricultural goods in the West Bank have remained consistently around 6 per cent of total imports from 2000 to 2018. This comparison underscores the heightened reliance of Gaza on imported food supplies compared with the West Bank.⁹³

78. As at 16 January 2024, people in the Gaza Strip accounted for more than 80 per cent of all people facing catastrophic hunger worldwide, marking an unparalleled humanitarian crisis amid continued bombardment and severe restrictions on humanitarian aid: every single person in Gaza was hungry, with a quarter of the population starving and struggling to find food and drinkable water.⁹⁴

79. Data indicate that an estimated 2.13 million people across the Gaza Strip faced high levels of acute food insecurity. This figure includes 1.11 million people suffering from “catastrophic” food insecurity (phase 5), the highest number of people facing catastrophic hunger ever recorded by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification system anywhere, at any time.⁹⁵ The intensity of the violence and severity of the humanitarian conditions in Gaza stand out amid other recent hard-to-access aid contexts for the disparity between the scale of needs and the size of the response.⁹⁶ According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “the extent of Israel’s continued restrictions on the entry of aid into Gaza, together with the manner in which it continues to conduct hostilities, may amount to the use of starvation as a method of war, which is a war crime”.⁹⁷

⁸⁸ See www.un.org/unispal/document/ipc-famine-third-review-report-25jun24/#:~:text=The%20first%20analysis%2C%20conducted%20in,humanitarian%20access%20persisted%20or%20worsened.

⁸⁹ See <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/wfp-palestine-gaza-market-monitoring-flash-update-6-2-february-2024>.

⁹⁰ See https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/IPC_Famine_Committee_Review_Report_Gaza_Strip_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Feb_July2024_Special_Brief.pdf.

⁹¹ See www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/war-gaza-weaponizing-access-water-energy-food-land-english.pdf; see also www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/03/comment-un-high-commissioner-human-rights-volker-turk-risk-famine#:~:text=The%20projected%20imminent%20famine%20in,made%20and%20was%20entirely%20preventable.

⁹² Disaggregated data have been made available from 2000 to 2018 only. More recent analysis relies on data from the International Trade Centre Trade Map.

⁹³ United Nations entities input.

⁹⁴ See www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/01/over-one-hundred-days-war-israel-destroying-gazas-food-system-and.

⁹⁵ See <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/03/1147656>.

⁹⁶ See www.humanitarianoutcomes.org/sites/default/files/publications/score_gaza_2024.pdf.

⁹⁷ See www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/03/comment-un-high-commissioner-human-rights-volker-turk-risk-famine#:~:text=The%20projected%20imminent%20famine%20in,made%20and%20was%20entirely%20preventable.

80. Children in Gaza face the triple threat of conflict, disease and malnutrition. Nearly 10 per cent of the children under 5 years of age are acutely malnourished, and all 335,000 of them are at high risk of severe malnutrition and preventable death. Increasing cases of diarrhoea and rising food poverty among children increase the risk of death. Up to 90 per cent of children under 2 years of age are subject to severe food poverty,⁹⁸ namely consuming two or fewer food groups. Dietary diversity for pregnant and breastfeeding women is also severely compromised: 25 per cent of those surveyed consumed one food type the day before, and almost 65 per cent only two.⁹⁹ The lack of adequate nutrition and health care puts the lives of pregnant women at risk.¹⁰⁰

81. According to the Gaza Ministry of Health, at least 727 children in northern Gaza had died from malnutrition and dehydration by March 2024, adding to the mounting toll of children who have died in the Strip during the war since 7 October. Nutrition screenings conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund and partners in the north in February 2024 found that 4.5 per cent of the children in shelters and health centres were suffering from severe wasting, the most life-threatening form of malnutrition. They also showed a near-doubling of acute malnutrition among children compared with January: from 16 to 31 per cent among children under 2 years of age in northern Gaza; from 13 to 25 per cent among children under 5 years of age in northern Gaza; and from 5 to 10 per cent among children under 2 years of age in Rafah.

82. As of February 2024, 81 per cent of households lacked safe and clean water, with average household access at less than 1 litre per person per day. This number is far below the absolute minimum standard of 15 litres per person per day and of particular concern for babies being fed infant formula.¹⁰¹ Almost 80 per cent of households are resorting to burning firewood and wood residue, and 10 per cent employ solid waste.¹⁰²

83. Food from domestic production, as well as individual, organizational or shop stocks, can be considered nearly exhausted. Field reports have been received of people scavenging in building rubble in search of food or consuming animal feed, but these sources of food are also being exhausted. Air-drop attempts have proved ineffective in delivering the quantities required and involved a high risk to beneficiaries. Deliveries are taking place in a context of desperation. The residual food sources coming from looting and scavenging are finite resources, and it is unknown at what point even this strategy will be exhausted. In total, from 5 February to 5 March 2024, from 10 to 15 food trucks were allowed into the Gaza Governorate to feed about 300,000 people.

84. Humanitarian operations are subjected to crippling restrictions owing to ongoing hostilities and insecurity and deteriorating law and order, in part as a result of Israeli attacks on law enforcement. Should these trends continue, a complete breakdown of public order is imminent. The ensuing security vacuum will impose additional restrictions on an already severely constrained humanitarian operation, ultimately condemning an increasing number of people to famine. The impact on these affected populations could be irreversible in terms of health and future socioeconomic prospects. They will be in poverty traps that could stretch for decades.

⁹⁸ See <https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Child-Food-Poverty-Report-2022.pdf>.

⁹⁹ United Nations entities input.

¹⁰⁰ See https://reliefweb.int/attachments/d2f3eb84-975e-4fe0-ae70-10c158251716/Needs%20Assessment_February_2024_1.pdf.

¹⁰¹ See <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/nutrition-vulnerability-and-situation-analysis-gaza-february-2024>.

¹⁰² See www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/IPC_Famine_Committee_Review_Report_Gaza_Strip_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Feb_July2024_Special_Brief.pdf.

Water, sanitation and hygiene

85. Even before 7 October, the average per capita water consumption in Gaza was approximately 84.6 litres per day, less than the 100 litres per capita per day recommended by WHO.¹⁰³

86. Since 7 October, this figure has dropped dramatically to between 3 and 15 litres per capita per day.¹⁰⁴ In some UNRWA-run shelters, potable water had to be rationed to only 1 litre of water per person per day, whereas the minimum international daily standard for extreme emergencies is 15 litres.¹⁰⁵

87. Israeli military operations have had a disastrous effect on water infrastructure, water networks and water supply sources in general, with about 40 per cent of the water networks in Gaza destroyed and the main pumps broken owing to bombardments or having run out of fuel.¹⁰⁶ On 22 January, WHO reported no access to clean water in the northern governorates of Gaza and that heavy rainfall had led to flooding in various locations, raising concerns about potential sewage contamination in the floodwaters.¹⁰⁷

88. Fighting since 7 October has also had a major impact on systems for the disposal of wastewater and solid waste, given the mass displacement of people, power outages and damage to or destruction of critical infrastructure. About 270,000 tons of solid waste have accumulated across the Gaza Strip, creating an environmental and public health catastrophe, according to the Union of Gaza Strip Municipalities.¹⁰⁸

89. Public shelters and informal sites are extremely overcrowded and unsanitary. On average, 340 people share a toilet and 1,290 share a shower.¹⁰⁹ The overcrowded conditions and lack of adequate sanitation and access to clean water have resulted in outbreaks of infectious diseases, without even limited health services to manage outbreaks and treat cases.¹¹⁰ This is particularly alarming for pregnant and lactating women and girls.¹¹¹

90. In the West Bank, some 70 Palestinian communities, numbering more than 100,000 people in total, have no running water. Their water consumption is similar to that in disaster zones: about 26 litres per capita per day.¹¹²

91. Only 36 per cent of Palestinians in the West Bank have daily access to running water all year long. Another 47 per cent receive running water for less than 10 days every month.¹¹³

Health

92. The health system in Gaza, already overstretched from 17 years of closures, is now overwhelmed by the injuries and deaths from the fighting since 7 October, the shortage of personnel and fuel and the increased demand for medicines and supplies and mental health and psychosocial support services. More than 500,000 children

¹⁰³ See www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_WorldWaterDay2024E.pdf.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ United Nations entities input.

¹⁰⁶ See www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_WorldWaterDay2024E.pdf.

¹⁰⁷ United Nations entities input.

¹⁰⁸ See www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-155.

¹⁰⁹ See www.unicef.org/sop/reports/unicef-state-palestine-escalation-humanitarian-situation-report-no19.

¹¹⁰ United Nations entities input.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² See www.btselem.org/publications/202305_parched.

¹¹³ Ibid.

were already considered in need of mental health and psychosocial support services in the Gaza Strip before 7 October, whereas by March 2024 it was estimated that all of the more than 1 million children needed such support.¹¹⁴

93. Since 7 October, Israeli attacks on health facilities, destruction of infrastructure, obstruction of the importation and distribution of medical supplies and restrictions on the movement of patients and staff have persisted.¹¹⁵

94. The destruction of health facilities and a lack of medical supplies, food, water and fuel have virtually depleted the already underresourced health-care system. Hospitals have been operating far beyond capacity owing to the rising number of patients and displaced civilians seeking shelter.¹¹⁶ As at 14 March 2024, nearly 84 per cent of health facility buildings had been destroyed or damaged and those remaining lacked access to medicines, ambulances, basic life-saving treatments, electricity and water.¹¹⁷ The destruction of hospitals has cut off access to essential services, including medical care and medication required by persons with disabilities. Many have lost their assistive devices or have no access to them or support.

95. As at 1 April 2024 and since November 2023, 20 security incidents had had an impact on emergency medical teams, resulting in nine fatalities and 18 injuries, redeployments and suspension of operations in Gaza. In addition, emergency medical teams are not provided with the protection, space and materials to deliver services and save lives.¹¹⁸

96. Conditions to implement basic public health measures to prevent and control disease outbreaks are minimal.¹¹⁹ Gaza thus faces a public health catastrophe, in the wake of large-scale displacement, overcrowding and inadequate shelter, food, water and sanitation. By February 2024, most internally displaced persons were living in tents, of which at least 40 per cent were inadequate to protect against adverse weather.¹²⁰

97. Capacities – including laboratory capacities – for surveillance of infectious diseases have been insufficient since 7 October, amid outbreaks of acute respiratory infections, diarrheal illnesses, chickenpox, acute jaundice and hepatitis A, skin infestations and rashes, as well as epidemic signals of meningitis. Water, sanitation and hygiene and shelter infrastructure are insufficient to implement basic public health measures, while a lack of food and inadequate nutrition are detrimentally affecting immunity and the ability of the population to fight diseases. Malnutrition will have lasting impacts on the general health of affected populations throughout their lives. Children are not being vaccinated, with infants having missed one or more doses of essential vaccines, which poses a further risk for outbreaks as well as preventable morbidity and mortality.¹²¹

98. Since 7 October, Israel has prevented any exit of persons, including patients and their companions, from the Gaza Strip to the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Up to 10 March 2024, of 9,303 patients who applied for medical evacuation

¹¹⁴ United Nations entities input.

¹¹⁵ See www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/IPC_Famine_Committee_Review_Report_Gaza_Strip_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Feb_July2024_Special_Brief.pdf.

¹¹⁶ United Nations entities input.

¹¹⁷ See <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/14e309cd34e04e40b90eb19afa7b5d15-0280012024/original/Gaza-Interim-Damage-Assessment-032924-Final.pdf>.

¹¹⁸ United Nations entities input.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ See <https://sheltercluster.org/palestine/documents/gaza-shelter-cluster-snapshot-7-february-2024>.

¹²¹ United Nations entities input.

through the Rafah crossing to Egypt, 4,093 (44 per cent) were approved by Egypt and Israel to travel and 3,541 (38 per cent) were eventually able to exit.¹²²

99. The situation is compounded by the communications blackouts that have affected the coordination of supplies and staff movements and the arranging of ambulances for patients. UNRWA and other humanitarian partners have lost critical cold-chain facilities, which complicates the safe storage and administration of vaccines and other life-saving medications.¹²³

100. In the West Bank, the fragmentation of territory and discriminatory zoning and planning policies and procedures implemented by Israel affect the delivery of health care, particularly for more vulnerable communities in Area C, H2 of Hebron and the seam zone.¹²⁴ There are 172 communities in Area C that depend on receiving primary health-care services through mobile clinics, of which 120 are currently covered and receiving such services. At the end of April, mobile clinic funding for 67 communities was expected to end, leaving them without access to basic health services.¹²⁵

101. WHO documented 422 attacks on health care in the West Bank from 7 October 2023 to 6 April 2024. Attacks after 7 October have left 11 people dead and 87 injured and affected 86 health facilities, including 250 medical transports.¹²⁶

Education

102. A reported 342 school buildings have sustained damage in the Gaza Strip, and about 80 per cent of all school buildings are damaged, destroyed or being used as shelters for internally displaced persons. As of March 2024, all of the 625,000 school-aged children were out of school.¹²⁷

103. For students in Gaza, this year marks the third year out of the last four that their education has been severely disrupted and/or completely interrupted, leaving school-age children to miss critical instructional hours and foundational skills essential to achieve better livelihoods in the future. The education system will take years to operate even at pre-7 October levels. Surviving students and teachers are experiencing psychosocial trauma with varying levels of severity.¹²⁸

104. In the first half of 2023, the education cluster recorded 423 education-related incidents in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, affecting 179 schools (54,608 students, including 26,000 females, in addition to 2,624 teachers) and 21 kindergartens (2,466 students, including 1,259 females, in addition to 152 teachers). The number of incidents was higher than in previous years owing to an increase in Israeli military operations, including into Palestinian villages in Areas A and B, and the extensive movement restrictions on Palestinians imposed by the Israeli authorities, limiting access to basic services, including education. The period also saw an increase in the severity and frequency of settler violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, affecting education.¹²⁹

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ See <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/14e309cd34e04e40b90eb19afa7b5d15-0280012024/original/Gaza-Interim-Damage-Assessment-032924-Final.pdf>; see also www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/war-gaza-unprecedented-devastating-impact-english_2.pdf.

¹²⁹ See <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/education-related-incidents-opt-semi-annual-report-january-june-2023>.

105. The heightened security situation and movement restrictions also affected the delivery of education services, resulting in school closures. Israeli security and military operations and armed confrontations with Palestinians, resulting in the widespread destruction of road, sewage and water infrastructure, have an impact on children socially and psychologically and affect academic performance.¹³⁰

106. In the West Bank, children enrolled in 55 schools are attending online classes as they cannot reach their schools owing to security issues.¹³¹

Gendered impact of the occupation on women and girls

107. The war in Gaza since 7 October has increased the insecurity and vulnerability of all Palestinians in gender-specific ways, with levels of destruction that have marred any development gains, however minor, and that will impede recovery in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in Gaza, in a sustainable and timely manner.

108. The impact of the fighting on women and girls in Gaza has been multifaceted.¹³² Some 84 per cent of women report that their family eats half or less of the food that they used to before 7 October, with mothers and other adult women tasked with sourcing food, including scavenging for food under rubble or in dumpsters, and eating last, least and less than everyone else.¹³³ Female heads of household, older women and women with disabilities also face security and protection obstacles when attempting to access food distribution sites.¹³⁴

109. An estimated 52,000 pregnant women have been caught in the fighting that has taken place in Gaza since 7 October, with approximately 180 deliveries every day.¹³⁵ For women who have given birth in Gaza, accessing adequate health care has become an unimaginable challenge. By March 2024, only two maternity hospitals remained, but were overwhelmed with patients with life-threatening conditions.¹³⁶ As such, women have had to go through labour and delivery without medical assistance in shelters, tents, their homes and the streets, amid rubble, without toilets and with the help of untrained women, or have had to give birth in overwhelmed health-care facilities, with some being subjected to caesarean sections without anaesthesia.¹³⁷ It is estimated that 37 mothers die every day.¹³⁸

110. With food insecurity levels at acute and unprecedented levels, women and girls are expected to be hit the hardest, as women tend to vastly deprioritize their food intake when access to food is restricted.¹³⁹

¹³⁰ United Nations entities input.

¹³¹ See [www.unicef.org/media/151126/file/State-of-Palestine-Humanitarian-Situation-Report-No.15-\(Escalation\)-17-January-2024.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/151126/file/State-of-Palestine-Humanitarian-Situation-Report-No.15-(Escalation)-17-January-2024.pdf).

¹³² See www.emro.who.int/opt/news/famine-in-gaza-is-imminent-with-immediate-and-long-term-health-consequences.html.

¹³³ UN-Women primary data collection, done as a rapid assessment with 120 women from 8 to 11 February in Gaza.

¹³⁴ See www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/Gender%20Alert%20The%20Gendered%20Impact%20of%20the%20Crisis%20in%20Gaza.pdf.

¹³⁵ See www.un.org/unispal/document/gaza-is-at-breaking-point-unfpa-14mar24/.

¹³⁶ United Nations entities input; see also www.unfpa.org/news/%E2%80%9Cgaza-breaking-point%E2%80%9D-health-workers-and-patients-describe-unfolding-catastrophe-rafah.

¹³⁷ See www.ippf.org/media-center/forced-closure-hospitals-midwives-are-lifeline-pregnant-women-gaza.

¹³⁸ See www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2024/03/press-release-9000-women-have-been-killed-in-gaza-since-early-october#_ftnref2.

¹³⁹ See www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/Gender%20Alert%20The%20Gendered%20Impact%20of%20the%20Crisis%20in%20Gaza.pdf.

111. In the light of the scarcity of food and water, pregnant and lactating women have been at risk of severe malnutrition, increasing their susceptibility to contracting maternal nutrition-related illnesses such as anaemia, preeclampsia and haemorrhage, increasing the risk of maternal and child mortality.¹⁴⁰ Poor maternal diets can also lead to stillbirth, low birthweight, wasting and developmental delays for children, while the trauma of war can directly affect newborns.¹⁴¹ Nearly 10 per cent of Gazan children under 5 years of age are acutely malnourished.¹⁴²

112. Some 690,000 women and girls of reproductive age in severely overcrowded shelters and host communities are left with limited access to menstrual hygiene products in addition to inadequate water, hygiene and access to toilets and privacy,¹⁴³ including separate showers.¹⁴⁴ Some women have resorted to cutting up baby diapers to use as makeshift pads during their menstrual periods, while others are using pieces of cloth. In other cases, women have opted to use period-delaying pills or share contraceptives.¹⁴⁵

113. In February 2024, the United Nations Children's Fund estimated that about 17,000 children – 1 per cent of the displaced population – in Gaza were unaccompanied or separated from their families.¹⁴⁶ Medical professionals are utilizing the term “wounded child, no surviving family” to describe unaccompanied children at hospitals.

114. Movement restrictions continue to impede access to health and social services, the transfer of ambulances and the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and women and girls, particularly those with disabilities, are further disadvantaged by inequality in access to supplies, services and resources.¹⁴⁷ Internally displaced women voice profound fears for their safety and that of their families, citing a loss of protective spaces and separation from support networks amid the Israeli military presence. Notably, at least 3,000 women may have become widows or heads of household.¹⁴⁸

115. Overcrowded shelters, inadequate facilities and critical shortages of necessities exacerbate negative coping mechanisms and heighten risks of gender-based violence, including child protection concerns and sexual exploitation.¹⁴⁹ In terms of essential emergency response services, 10 out of 12 women's organizations surveyed by UN-Women in Gaza reported being only partly operational in January 2024. Furthermore, the only two women's shelters in Gaza have been closed, and telecommunications and electricity blackouts are severely restricting remote gender-based violence service provision.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁰ United Nations entities input.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.; see also www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/gaza-strip-everyone-left-behind-english_1.pdf.

¹⁴² See www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Gaza_Strip_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Feb_July2024_Special_Brief.pdf.

¹⁴³ United Nations entities input; see also www.unfpa.org/resources/unfpa-palestine-situation-report-7-6-april-2024.

¹⁴⁴ See www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Gaza_Strip_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Feb_July2024_Special_Brief.pdf.

¹⁴⁵ See www.ippf.org/media-center/dire-lack-sexual-and-reproductive-health-supplies-disease-outbreak-gaza-shelters and www.ippf.org/stories/their-own-words-people-providing-sexual-and-reproductive-health-care-under-bombardment-gaza.

¹⁴⁶ See www.unicef.org/press-releases/stories-loss-and-grief-least-17000-children-are-estimated-be-unaccompanied-or#:~:text=GENEVA%2C%202%20February%202024%20%E2%80%93%2022,displaced%20population%20%2D%201.7%20million%20people.

¹⁴⁷ See www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/01/gender-alert-the-gendered-impact-of-the-crisis-in-gaza.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ See <https://palestine.unfpa.org/en/GBV-Update-March24>.

¹⁵⁰ United Nations entities input.

116. The deterioration of the situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, worsened a pre-existing protection crisis and increased protection needs for single women, female heads of household, adolescent girls, women with disabilities and older women. The continued destruction of public infrastructure, schools, hospitals and housing, movement and access restrictions and the revocation of Israeli work permits have had a significant impact on the livelihoods of Palestinians in the West Bank and increased the vulnerabilities of female-headed households and single mothers.

117. Movement restrictions, which have been increased since 7 October, notably impede the continuity of sexual and reproductive health services for the more than 73,000 pregnant women in the West Bank, of whom 8,100 are expected to give birth within any 30-day period.¹⁵¹

118. Work permits for all Palestinian workers in Israeli territory have been suspended since 7 October. This primarily affects men, as the percentage of women from the West Bank working in Israel or settlements is very low, at 1.4 per cent.¹⁵² Initial estimates indicate that around 24 per cent of employment has been lost, equivalent to 208,000 jobs.¹⁵³ Given women's low economic participation, and the single income earner model, these job losses are expected to have significant implications for families' income and stress levels, with an associated risk of tension and violence in the home.

III. Occupied Syrian Golan

119. The Secretary-General continues to reaffirm the validity of Security Council resolution 497 (1981), in which the Council decided that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights was null and void and without international legal effect.

120. In 2022, 26,900 Syrian citizens and 24,800 Israeli settlers resided in the occupied Syrian Golan. Over the past 15 years, the number of Israeli settlers has increased by 43.4 per cent, twice the rate of the Syrian population.¹⁵⁴ The number of Syrian citizens, particularly young people, accepting Israeli citizenship has increased in the past year owing to travel convenience and educational opportunities.¹⁵⁵

121. The plan to double the settler population in the Syrian Golan by 2027¹⁵⁶ – in terms of an increase in the number of Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan and in the size of the settler population – is ongoing. Today, Israeli settlers are distributed among 35 settlements.¹⁵⁷

122. The plan by the Government of Israel to develop the occupied area, which included an investment of 1 billion shekels, was contested for not adequately addressing the socioeconomic development of Syrian villages. The Ministry of Agriculture of Israel reported that the budget for those villages was less than 1 per cent of the planned amount.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² See www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2586.pdf.

¹⁵³ See www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@arabstates/@ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_901136.pdf.

¹⁵⁴ ILC.111/DG/APP, para. 158.

¹⁵⁵ United Nations entities input.

¹⁵⁶ A/78/127-E/2023/95, para. 116.

¹⁵⁷ A/HRC/55/72, para. 47.

¹⁵⁸ United Nations entities input.

123. Besides settlement expansion, commercial activity, such as a project for the construction of wind turbines, has been approved. This may further worsen the overall human rights situation and continue to limit the access of the Syrian population to land and water. The turbine project's impact on the right to adequate housing through land grabbing risks the further potential displacement of Syrian communities in the Golan.¹⁵⁹

124. On 20 June 2023, Israel commenced work on a wind turbine project near the towns of Majdal Shams and Mas'adah in the occupied Syrian Golan. Israeli police provided on-site protection for works reportedly carried out by an Israeli company, Energix. As a result, clashes erupted between Syrians protesting against the construction and Israeli police officers, reportedly resulting in minor injuries to three protesters and three officers. Consequently, by July 2023, the Prime Minister of Israel had postponed the project, acknowledging its unfeasibility given the opposition from Arab villagers.¹⁶⁰

125. In 2022, the labour force participation rate of Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan was 43.1 per cent, with a 7.1 per cent unemployment rate. The construction sector is the most common sector among employed Syrians, with education and public administration accounting for 10 per cent, and wholesale and retail trade, transport and storage, and accommodation and food service for 8 per cent.¹⁶¹

126. Discrimination between settlers and residents of Syrian villages in terms of building permits remains a trend. In 2012, the residents of Syrian villages, whose number was around 1.15 times more than that of settlers, received less than one third of the building permits received by settlers. In 2021, the number of residents of Syrian villages became approximately equal to that of Israelis in settlements, yet settlers obtained almost double the number of building permits.¹⁶²

127. Syrian farmers further face discrimination in gaining access to resources such as water and agricultural lands, while competing with the subsidized industrialized agricultural production of settlements, which has led to a decline in the importance of agriculture in occupied Syrian Golan. Furthermore, Syrian farmers' access to land near planned wind turbines will be limited, potentially affecting their ability to harvest produce.¹⁶³

IV. Conclusion

128. I again strongly condemn the horrific attacks by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups in Israel on 7 October and the continued holding of hostages in Gaza. Nothing can justify these acts of terror. I reiterate my call for all hostages to be released immediately and unconditionally. In the interim, they must be treated humanely and allowed to receive visits and assistance from the International Committee of the Red Cross.

129. The scope of death and destruction in Gaza as a result of the war has been catastrophic, unprecedented and horrifying. The Israeli use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in densely populated areas has caused the wholesale destruction of neighbourhoods and the destruction of, or damage to, hospitals and other civilian infrastructure, schools, mosques and United Nations premises.

¹⁵⁹ A/HRC/55/72, para. 48.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., para. 49.

¹⁶¹ United Nations entities input.

¹⁶² See <https://golan-marsad.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Ehnic-Planinng-Research-1.pdf>.

¹⁶³ ILC.111/DG/APP, para. 161.

I unequivocally condemn the widespread killing and maiming of civilians, including women and children, in Gaza.

130. Civilians throughout Gaza face grave danger. A humanitarian ceasefire is needed immediately. The manner in which hostilities are conducted continues to leave me deeply alarmed at what may be violations of international humanitarian law by both parties to the conflict, including possible non-compliance with the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack. International humanitarian law applies to all parties to a conflict at all times, and its application does not depend on reciprocity. The protection of civilians is paramount in any armed conflict.

131. Overall, the level of essential goods, including humanitarian assistance, allowed into Gaza is wholly inadequate to meet the overwhelming needs of the population. I call upon the parties to the conflict to allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need, which is impartial in character and conducted without any adverse distinction, in accordance with international humanitarian law. All parties must protect humanitarian workers at all times.

132. The protracted military occupation of Palestinian territory and the Syrian Golan continues to have a detrimental effect on the living conditions of the Palestinian and Syrian populations, as well as on social and economic development in the occupied territories.

133. The scope and scale of damage and destruction in Gaza are unprecedented. The effects of extensive crowding, coupled with loss of homes, the health-care system, livelihoods, natural resources, infrastructure and institutional capacities, will increase impacts exponentially. This disproportionately affects the most vulnerable populations, including women and girls and persons with disabilities.

134. The disproportionate impact of the war in Gaza on persons with disabilities has heightened their vulnerability to risks of dying or acquiring further impairments. The protection of persons with disabilities, especially women and children, requires ensuring accessibility of information, evacuation, essential services, humanitarian assistance and access to required medication and assistive devices. Peacebuilding, recovery and reconstruction of Gaza must be disability-responsive, ensuring the active involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

135. The prospects for the Palestinian economy are alarmingly negative. Projections indicate that every additional day that the war continues exacts huge and compounding costs for Palestinians in Gaza, with repercussions for coming generations. For recovery efforts to be effective, they will have to address not only the unprecedented repercussions of the fighting that has taken place in Gaza since 7 October and those of decades of conflict, but also the cumulative effects of the Israeli occupation, closures and recurrent military operations.

136. UNRWA serves as the key lifeline for millions of Palestine refugees, including the majority of the population of Gaza, amid a complete humanitarian catastrophe. The Agency also delivers essential services for refugees in the West Bank amid record-breaking violence, and in the wider region amid simmering tensions and socioeconomic problems. This critical role notwithstanding, UNRWA continues to suffer from chronic underfunding. It is essential that it receive strong political and financial support from Member States to find solutions for a sustainable model with predictable and sufficient income.

137. The increasing tensions in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are reaching a boiling point. Israel continues to employ policies and

practices that may be contrary to relevant Security Council resolutions, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Some of these practices may be discriminatory, while others may amount to the forcible transfer or collective punishment of protected persons, which are prohibited under international law. The ever-expanding settlement footprint, including outposts, further entrenches the occupation, while, as the competent organs of the United Nations have said, severely impeding the exercise by the Palestinian people of its right to self-determination.¹⁶⁴

138. Furthermore, the limited implementation of Security Council resolutions pertaining to the question of Palestine undermines the prospects of the implementation of internationally agreed frameworks in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and across the region, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the women and peace and security agenda.

139. Adherence to international law is imperative, ensuring that no party enjoys impunity and securing justice and peace for all those living in the region, including Palestinians and Syrians living under occupation. The United Nations will continue to coordinate and deliver humanitarian and development assistance, throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including for the early recovery and reconstruction of Gaza, while working towards the realization of a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#), [338 \(1973\)](#), [1397 \(2002\)](#), [1515 \(2003\)](#), [1850 \(2008\)](#), [1860 \(2009\)](#) and [2334 \(2016\)](#), to end the occupation that began in 1967, and for the establishment of an independent, sovereign, democratic, viable and contiguous Palestinian State, existing side by side with Israel in peace, within secure and recognized borders and with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

¹⁶⁴ *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion, I.C.J. Reports 2004*, p. 136; see also General Assembly resolution [78/192](#).