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Freedom in the World 2019 - West Bank

Not Free

25 /100

Overview:

The West Bank is under Israeli military occupation, which entails onerous physical barriers and constraints on movement, demolition of homes and other physical infrastructure, restrictions on political and civil liberties, and expanding Jewish settlements. Jewish settlers in the West Bank are Israeli citizens and enjoy the same rights and liberties as other Israelis. The West Bank's Palestinian residents, excluding those living in East Jerusalem, fall under the partial jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority (PA), which is operating with an expired presidential mandate and has no functioning legislature. The PA governs in an authoritarian manner, engaging in acts of repression against journalists and human rights activists who present critical views on its rule. While a small number of East Jerusalem Palestinians have Israeli citizenship, most have a special residency status that provides them with a restricted set of rights compared with those of Israeli citizens.

Key Developments:

Key Developments in 2018:

- The Israeli Knesset (parliament) passed a law in July that limited Palestinians' direct access to the Supreme Court regarding administrative petitions against settlement construction, among other matters. Separately, an Israeli District Court ruling in August retroactively gave authorization to a previously unrecognized settlement outpost, establishing a possible precedent for Israeli grants of legal status to additional outposts, though all of the West Bank settlements are generally considered to be in violation of international law.
- New details on the PA's detention and harassment of individuals based on their political expression and social media posts emerged during the year, demonstrating that practices involving surveillance and retribution were not limited to prominent activists.
- In March, the Knesset passed a law allowing the interior minister to revoke the residency status of any Jerusalem residents deemed to be a threat to public safety or security or to the state of Israel, and to subsequently deport them.
- Jerusalem municipal elections were held in October, but turnout among East Jerusalem Palestinians was low. One Palestinian list dropped out in advance of

the vote due to pressure from Israeli authorities and segments of the Palestinian public.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

POLITICAL RIGHTS: 4 / 40 (-1)

A. ELECTORAL PROCESS: 1 / 12 (-1)

A1. Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

The PA has not held a presidential election since 2005. The four-year term of Mahmoud Abbas, who won that year with 62 percent of the vote, expired in 2009, but he has continued to rule with the support of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), led by his party, Fatah. The primary obstacle to new Palestinian elections is the ongoing rift between the West Bank-based PA government and the de facto Hamas government in the Gaza Strip. Hamas, an Islamist political movement and militant group, seized control of Gaza in 2007. It had won 2006 legislative elections and formed a short-lived unity government with Fatah, but a brief armed struggle between the two left each in control of a separate territory.

Under PA laws, the prime minister is nominated by the president and requires the support of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). However, the PLC elected in 2006 was unable to function due to the break with Hamas and Israel's detention of many lawmakers. Abbas has since appointed prime ministers and cabinets without legislative approval. The prime minister as of 2018, Rami Hamdallah, was first appointed in 2014.

A 2014 agreement between Hamas and Fatah representatives to form a unity government did not result in power sharing in practice. In 2017, the two sides recommitted to a reconciliation deal brokered by Egypt, but there was little progress on implementation. Talks foundered again in 2018 over the PA's demands for full political and security control in Gaza.

A2. Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 4

Palestinians in the West Bank do not have a functioning legislative body. Elections for the 132-seat PLC have not been held since 2006, when Hamas won 74 seats and Fatah took 45. The 2007 schism between Fatah and Hamas left the postelection government and the PLC itself unable to function. The legislature's electoral mandate expired in 2010. Moreover, Israeli forces have repeatedly detained elected PLC members since 2006. In December 2018, President Abbas ordered the formal dissolution of the PLC, backed by a Supreme Constitutional Court ruling that also called for legislative elections within six months. Hamas rejected the decision.

Local council elections were held in the West Bank in 2017, after being postponed in 2016; however, they did not feature meaningful political competition, as key opposition groups declined to participate. Just 145 municipalities—fewer than half of the West

Bank's total—had competitive races. Some two-thirds of those council seats went to independents, while Fatah captured nearly 28 percent and smaller groups divided the remainder. In 181 municipalities, a single candidate list ran unopposed and won automatically; Fatah won 75 percent of the seats in those locations.

Israeli municipal elections were held in Jerusalem in October 2018. It was reported that a disproportionately small number of polling locations were available in East Jerusalem, where Palestinian residents without Israeli citizenship are permitted to participate but most have traditionally boycotted. Palestinian mayoral candidate Aziz Abu Sarah and his list Al-Quds Lana dropped out in late September after he was told by Israeli authorities that his residency status was under review and after facing pressure from Palestinians opposed to his campaign. Another Palestinian list, Al-Quds Baladi, remained in the elections but did not win any council seats.

A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 1 / 4 (-1)

The PA's laws provide a credible framework for elections, but presidential and legislative elections have not been held since 2005 and 2006, respectively. The Palestinian Central Elections Commission oversees elections in the West Bank and Gaza. The body's nine commissioners are appointed by the president, although the law requires them to be experienced and politically impartial judges, academics, or lawyers. Local elections that were set to be held in 2016 were postponed until 2017 while the judiciary heard a set of complaints, but the delay was seen by many as politically motivated.

Israel's Central Elections Committee oversees Knesset elections, in which Israeli citizens in the West Bank may participate, and its Interior Ministry manages municipal elections, including in Jerusalem. Such elections are generally conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner, with results accepted by all parties, though Palestinian residents of the West Bank are formally or effectively excluded.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because Palestinian presidential and legislative elections have been delayed for over a decade, precluding the application of electoral laws by the appropriate authorities.

B. POLITICAL PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION: 4 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

In addition to Fatah, a number of small Palestinian parties operate relatively freely in the West Bank. However, the PA deals harshly with supporters of a breakaway Fatah faction led by exiled politician Mohammed Dahlan, and Abbas and his government have repeatedly taken administrative and bureaucratic actions to marginalize potential political rivals within Fatah. Israel detains and arrests political activists if they are perceived as threatening Israeli security.

The PA and Israeli forces in the West Bank have sought to suppress Hamas, periodically engaging in mass arrests and closures of affiliated institutions. Following a March 2018 bomb attack on Prime Minister Hamdallah's convoy as he visited Gaza, PA forces summoned and arrested a number of Hamas supporters in the West Bank. Another wave of arrests targeting Hamas supporters was reported in September.

East Jerusalem Palestinians can form party lists to run in municipal elections, as they did in 2018, but doing so may lead to increased scrutiny by Israeli authorities and pressure from Palestinians opposed to participation in Israeli elections.

B2. Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 0 / 4

The prolonged and indefinite postponement of presidential and PLC elections has prevented any rotation of power in the West Bank, and the PA leadership has been accused of avoiding any contest that could lead to a Hamas victory. Moreover, the boycott of the 2017 local elections by Hamas and other major opposition groups left them largely unrepresented in West Bank local councils.

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group that is not democratically accountable? 1 / 4

In addition to its detentions and harassment of political figures from Hamas and some other factions, Israel's restrictions on freedom of movement—including checkpoints, roadblocks, and permit restrictions, as well as the continuous barrier it has constructed along the West Bank side of the pre-1967 border—can impede Palestinian political organizing and activity.

Foreign government donors sometimes exert influence over the PA to promote or marginalize certain politicians or political factions.

B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 2 / 4

Women and religious or ethnic minorities enjoy formal political equality under PA laws, and both women and Christians have held PLC seats and cabinet positions. However, they tend to be underrepresented in such posts, and their particular interests are not necessarily addressed by the political system. About a fifth of the council seats in the 2017 municipal elections went to women.

Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem have the option to apply for Israeli citizenship, though most decline for political reasons. Similarly, while noncitizen residents can vote in Israeli municipal elections in Jerusalem, most have traditionally boycotted; noncitizens cannot vote in Knesset elections. A Palestinian Jerusalem resident who is not a citizen cannot become mayor under current Israeli law. Israeli law strips noncitizens of their Jerusalem residency if they are away for extended periods of time,

and a new law adopted in March 2018 empowers the Israeli interior minister to revoke such residency for those deemed to be involved in terrorism or treason-related offenses. East Jerusalem Palestinians are entitled to vote in PA elections, but Israel has refused to allow PA elections in the city.

There are roughly 400,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank excluding East Jerusalem, and approximately 200,000 Jewish settlers in East Jerusalem, all of whom are Israeli citizens with full political rights in Israel.

C. FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT: 2 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 0 / 4

The PA lacks an elected executive and legislature. Because the legislature has not functioned since 2007, new laws are introduced via presidential decree. The ability of the PA president and ministries to implement policy decisions is limited in practice by direct Israeli military control over much of the West Bank, including the movement and travel of PA officials, staff, and related personnel. The PA has virtually no ability to extend services to the relatively small share of Palestinians living in so-called Area C, the more than 60 percent of West Bank territory that is under exclusive Israeli control. Israel periodically withholds the transfer of tax revenues to the PA, which affects salary payments and policy implementation.

C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Official corruption remains a major problem. In a set of representative polls conducted in March and June–July 2018 by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, 78 to 80 percent of West Bank residents described PA institutions as corrupt. The PA's Anti-Corruption Commission is responsible for implementing an anticorruption strategy it developed for 2015–2018. In a report released in March 2018, the Coalition for Accountability and Integrity (AMAN) found some improvements in public-sector management, despite persistent challenges such as ensuring the rule of law, combating nepotism and favoritism, promoting information transparency, and safeguarding a strong and fair judiciary.

Israeli movement and access restrictions foster opportunities for bribery and corruption in the West Bank.

C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

In 2017, Prime Minister Hamdallah released a five-year National Policy Agenda that emphasized improved efficiency, transparency, and accountability in government and promised a number of economic and social development initiatives. However, absent regular elections, incentives to improve transparency and accountability remain low. The PA is generally not tolerant of journalists, activists, and others who attempt to scrutinize its policies or internal operations.

The operations of Israeli military authorities in the West Bank are relatively opaque, and the Israeli military and civil administrations are not accountable to Palestinians.

ADDITIONAL DISCRETIONARY POLITICAL RIGHTS QUESTION

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group? -3 / 0

The growth of Jewish settlements, seizures of Palestinian land, and the demolition of Palestinian homes in the West Bank continued in 2018. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that Israeli authorities seized or demolished 461 Palestinian homes or structures in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 2018, citing the lack of building permits, which are very difficult for Palestinians to obtain. Implementation of a military order issued in April that would have facilitated accelerated demolitions of "new" structures in Area C was postponed in June pending a ruling by Israel's Supreme Court.

Construction starts in Jewish settlements increased in 2018 compared with the previous year, according to the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Americans for Peace Now and data from the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics.

In July, the Knesset passed a law limiting Palestinians' direct access to the Supreme Court for administrative petitions, effectively increasing the hurdles faced by petitioners against West Bank settlement construction. In August, the Jerusalem District Court ruled in favor of the legalization of a previously unauthorized settler outpost, raising the possibility that the same legal mechanism could be used to retroactively grant legal status to more such outposts. A 2017 Israeli law authorized the retroactive, formal seizure of private Palestinian land, with compensation, where settlements had been built illegally, though its implementation remained suspended in 2018 pending a review by the Supreme Court. In July, it was revealed that over 99 percent of state lands in the West Bank are allocated to Israelis and Israeli settlements.

CIVIL LIBERTIES: 21 / 60 (-2)

D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 7 / 16 (-1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

The news media are generally not free in the West Bank. Under a 1995 PA press law, journalists may be fined and jailed, and newspapers closed, for publishing "secret information" on PA security forces or news that might harm national unity or incite violence. In 2017, President Abbas issued the Electronic Crimes Law, prescribing heavy fines and lengthy prison terms for a range of vaguely defined offenses, including the publication or dissemination of material that is critical of the state, disturbs public order or national unity, or harms family and religious values. Leaks of information by whistle-blowers or journalists can also draw fines or imprisonment under the law, as can use of online circumvention tools to access blocked websites.

Journalists and bloggers who criticize the PA have faced arbitrary arrests, threats, and physical abuse. Reporters are also subject to administrative detention and assault by Israeli forces. An October 2018 report by Human Rights Watch documented regular detention and occasional abuse of journalists and activists in the West Bank. The Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA) reported 88 violations of media freedom by Palestinian authorities in the West Bank in 2018, a decline from the previous year. Most involved interrogations, arrests and detentions, and physical assaults of journalists. Israeli authorities were responsible for 455 violations in the Palestinian territories (including Gaza), according to the group, up from 376 in 2017. The majority of incidents involved physical attacks on or injuries of journalists, often as they covered Israeli military actions or clashes with Palestinian protesters.

D2. Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 2 / 4

The PA Basic Law declares Islam to be the official religion of Palestine and states that "respect and sanctity of all other heavenly religions (Judaism and Christianity) shall be maintained." Blasphemy is a criminal offense. The 2017 Electronic Crimes Law criminalizes expression aimed at harming moral and religious values without defining those values, allowing for arbitrary enforcement.

Security-related restrictions on movement, and vandalism or physical assaults against worshippers or places of worship, affect Jewish, Muslim, and Christian residents of the West Bank to varying degrees. The Israeli authorities regularly prevent Palestinian Muslims in the West Bank from reaching Jerusalem to pray, and generally restrict access for young adult males to the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif compound on Fridays.

D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

The PA has administrative authority over Palestinian education. Some academic self-censorship has been reported. Israeli movement restrictions limit access to schools and academic institutions; schools have sometimes been damaged during military incursions, and student travel has been curtailed. According to the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, East Jerusalem's schools are underfunded compared with schools in West Jerusalem.

Political activism is common on university campuses, and student council elections generally proceed freely—an Islamist bloc sympathetic to Hamas has performed strongly in several of the past Birzeit University student council elections, for example. However, students affiliated with the bloc have been detained.

D4. Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4 (-1)

Residents have some freedom to engage in open private discussion, though Israeli and PA security forces are known to monitor online activity and arrest individuals for alleged incitement or criticism of Palestinian authorities, respectively. The adoption and enforcement of the Electronic Crimes Law in 2017 increased concerns about the freedom of personal expression online.

Human rights organizations have accused the PA of monitoring social media posts and detaining individuals for harsh questioning related to their comments. New details on the PA's detention and harassment of individuals based on their online activity were reported in 2018, and evidence emerged that the PA has engaged in extensive electronic surveillance of lawyers, activists, political figures, and others, which could have a deterrent effect on expression more broadly.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to further reports that the PA has engaged in electronic surveillance, social media monitoring, and retribution for expressions of dissent.

E. ASSOCIATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RIGHTS: 5 / 12

E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

The PA requires permits for demonstrations, and those held to protest against PA policies are generally dispersed. In June 2018, PA police forcibly broke up a protest in Ramallah that was organized in opposition to PA policies in Gaza, beating participants, using tear gas and stun grenades, and breaking journalists' cameras.

Israel's Military Order 101 requires a permit for all "political" demonstrations of more than 10 people. Israeli authorities frequently restrict and disperse demonstrations, some of which become violent, and certain protest areas are designated as closed military zones. Protesters are at risk of injury by tear-gas canisters, rubber-coated bullets, or live ammunition, and clashes between demonstrators and Israeli troops periodically result in fatalities.

E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

A broad range of NGOs operate in the West Bank. However, Israeli restrictions on movement can impede civil society activity, human rights NGOs reportedly face harassment and threats from settlers and right-wing Israeli groups, Hamas-affiliated groups have been periodically shut down by Israeli or PA officials, and activists who criticize the PA leadership can face harassment and abuse by security services. In 2017, the Knesset approved a law that bars entry for any foreign groups that publicly support a boycott of Israel or its West Bank settlements. Because Israel controls all entry points into the West Bank, this could affect Palestinian organizations' access to Israel and foreign organizations' access to both Israel and the West Bank.

E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Workers may establish unions without government authorization, but labor protections in general are poorly enforced. Palestinian workers seeking to strike must submit to arbitration by the PA Labor Ministry, and various other rules make it difficult to mount a legal strike. Palestinian workers in Jerusalem are subject to Israeli labor law.

F. RULE OF LAW: 4 / 16 (-1)

F1. Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

Palestinians in the West Bank are subject to the jurisdiction of both the Palestinian judiciary and the Israeli military court system, neither of which is fully independent. The PA courts are administered by the High Judicial Council, which consists of Supreme Court judges, the heads of appellate courts, the attorney general, and the deputy justice minister. Enforcement of judicial decisions is impeded by PA noncompliance as well as lack of Palestinian jurisdiction in Area C, where the Israeli military exerts exclusive control.

The Israeli civilian courts, which have jurisdiction over Israeli settlers in the West Bank, are independent.

F2. Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4 (-1)

The opaque distinction between criminal and security-related offenses, the regular use of detention without trial by Palestinian and Israeli security forces, and the use of martial law and a military court system that applies exclusively to Palestinians in the West Bank all violate the due process rights of Palestinians. Jewish settlers are tried in Israeli civilian courts, which generally provide due process protections.

Human rights groups regularly document allegations of arbitrary detention by PA security forces. Palestinians are also regularly detained without charges for extended periods by Israeli authorities. The Israeli military frequently conducts home raids without a warrant. Conviction rates in Israeli military courts are high, and most convictions are based on confessions. The widespread use of pretrial detention encourages defendants to enter plea deals rather than remain in custody. According to the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, there were 5,072 Palestinian security detainees and prisoners from the West Bank being held in Israeli prisons at the end of December 2018.

A reported 203 Palestinian children (aged 12–17) from the occupied territories were being held in Israeli prisons as security detainees and prisoners at the end of December 2018. Although Israeli law prohibits the detention of children younger than 12, some are occasionally held. Minors are often detained for throwing stones or other projectiles at Israeli troops. They are usually interrogated without a lawyer or parental guardian present and tried by a special military court for minors. Acquittals are very rare, and the courts have been criticized for a lack of due process protections. Ahed Tamimi, a Palestinian girl who was arrested in December 2017 at age 16 for slapping an Israeli soldier, was sentenced to eight months in prison in March and released in July after

completing the term with time served. Her high-profile case drew attention to the treatment of minors in the Israeli military court system. East Jerusalem Palestinian minors are tried in Israeli civilian juvenile courts.

The Israeli law passed in July 2018 that limits Palestinians' direct access to the Supreme Court for administrative petitions, including those related to settlement planning and construction, requires such petitions to be heard first by the Jerusalem District Court. This is expected to slow down hearings that challenge unauthorized settlements in the West Bank and potentially introduce new costs for Palestinian complainants.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to the prevalence of arbitrary detentions by the PA, general due process concerns in the Israeli military court system, and Israel's adoption of a new law that impedes West Bank Palestinians' ability to bring land rights cases before the Israeli Supreme Court.

F3. Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Penal codes applicable in the West Bank permit capital punishment, but no executions have been carried out since 2005. In June 2018, the State of Palestine became a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which severely restricts the use of capital punishment.

Physical abuse of detainees by PA authorities in the West Bank has been documented by human rights organizations. Individual testimonies also attest to the use of excessive violence by the Israeli military. In one example in 2018, Israeli forces' physical assaults and use of a stun grenade at close range resulted in the hospitalization of multiple members of a single family in Hebron in September.

Israeli soldiers accused of excessive force or abuse of Palestinian civilians are subject to Israeli military law, though convictions, which are rare, typically result in light sentences. Jewish settlers who attack Palestinian individuals, property, and agricultural resources generally enjoy impunity.

Israeli security personnel and civilians face small-scale terrorist attacks in the West Bank. B'Tselem reported that seven Israeli civilians and five security personnel were killed in the West Bank by Palestinians during 2018. Meanwhile, 34 Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces, and four others were killed by settlers.

F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

The legal arrangements operative in the West Bank are fundamentally discriminatory in that Israelis and Palestinians who reside or commit crimes in the same location are subject to different courts and laws.

Palestinian women are underrepresented in most professions and encounter discrimination in employment, though they have equal access to universities. Women are legally excluded from what are deemed dangerous occupations.

Although LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people in the West Bank do not face prosecution for same-sex sexual activity, they have been subject to harassment and abuse by PA authorities and members of society.

G. PERSONAL AUTONOMY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS: 5 / 16

G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Israeli checkpoints, travel permits, and other restrictions continue to seriously constrain freedom of movement, stunt trade, and limit Palestinian access to jobs, hospitals, and schools.

The Israeli separation barrier, 85 percent of which lies in West Bank territory and which was declared illegal in 2004 by the International Court of Justice, divides Palestinian communities and causes general hardship and disruption of services.

East Jerusalem Palestinians are vulnerable to revocation of their residency status if they leave the city for extended periods of time, affecting their freedom to travel. The Israeli law adopted in March 2018, which allows the interior minister to revoke the residency status of any Jerusalem residents deemed to be a threat to public safety, security, or the state of Israel, further exposes East Jerusalem Palestinians to displacement.

G2. Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

While Palestinians are able to own property and engage in business activity, their rights are seriously undermined by Israel's movement and access restrictions and the expansion of Israeli settlements, which is encouraged by the Israeli government and private groups. Israeli authorities employ a variety of methods to prevent Palestinians from developing their privately owned land, particularly in Area C, for example by declaring nature reserves or denying permit requests. Palestinian property is also illegally damaged by Israeli settlers.

G3. Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Palestinian laws and societal norms, derived in part from Sharia (Islamic law), put women at a disadvantage in matters such as marriage and divorce. For Christians, personal status issues are governed by ecclesiastical courts. Rape and domestic abuse remain underreported and frequently go unpunished, as authorities are allegedly reluctant to pursue such cases. So-called honor killings continue to be reported; a

March 2018 law amended a provision in the penal code that had been used to grant leniency to the perpetrators of honor killings, prohibiting its use in cases of serious crimes against women and children.

G4. Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

In 2017, the PA signed international protocols dealing with human trafficking, child trafficking, and child prostitution. However, child labor is still prevalent in the occupied territories.

Many West Bank Palestinians, mostly male, work in Israel and the settlements, where the PA has no jurisdiction. While these workers are covered by Israeli labor laws, the International Labour Organization (ILO) reported in May 2018 that consistent application of these laws remains a concern. The Palestinians' work permits usually tie them to a single employer, creating a relationship of dependency, according to the ILO. Nonetheless, some laborers have achieved collective bargaining agreements with their Israeli employers. Tens of thousands of Palestinians work without permits, making them vulnerable to greater exploitation. Many Palestinians lose considerable income to "brokers" who are needed to connect Palestinian workers to jobs. Israel has revoked permits for those who share last names with individuals whom Israel considers to be security threats, even if they are not related.

Unemployment rates in the Palestinian territories are high compared with the rest of the Middle East and global averages. The excess supply of workers creates conditions in which labor exploitation is more likely.

Explanatory Note:

**** Indicates a territory as opposed to an independent country.***

The numerical ratings and status listed above do not reflect conditions in Israel or the Gaza Strip, which are examined in separate reports. This report includes conditions in East Jerusalem, which the international community generally considers to be part of the occupied West Bank. Prior to its 2011 edition, Freedom in the World featured one report for Israeli-occupied portions of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and another for Palestinian-administered portions.

ecoi.net summary:

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