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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Palestinian Authority (PA), according to PA Basic Law, has an elected president and legislative council. The PA exercised varying degrees of authority in restricted areas of the West Bank due to the Israel Defense Forces' (IDF) continuing presence, and none over Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem due to Israel's extension of Israeli law and authority to East Jerusalem in 1967 and an Israeli prohibition on any PA activity anywhere in Jerusalem. Although PA laws apply in the Gaza Strip, the PA had little authority in the Gaza Strip, despite the formation of an interim government under the auspices of a Fatah-Hamas reconciliation agreement signed in May that only nominally gave the PA some control over that territory. It has no authority over Israeli residents of the West Bank or Palestinian residents in Area C of the West Bank, over which Israel has security and civil control. The PA has only civil control of area B in the West Bank and joint security control with Israel. PA Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah governed the West Bank. President Mahmoud Abbas, in office since elected to a four-year term in 2005, is also chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and general commander of the Fatah party. In the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections, candidates backed by Hamas won 74 of 132 seats in elections that generally met democratic standards; however, the PLC has not functioned since 2007. In 2007 Hamas staged a violent takeover of PA government installations in the Gaza Strip and has since run a de facto government in the territory. Both PA and Israeli security forces reported to civilian authorities. Hamas maintained control of security forces in the Gaza Strip.

In June, Palestinian extremists kidnapped and killed three Israeli teenage citizens – Naftali Fraenkel, Gilad Shaar, and Eyal Yifrach, two of them minors – in the West Bank. Following their kidnapping Israeli authorities increased incursions into Palestinian-controlled areas of the West Bank and detained more than six hundred Palestinians in a West Bank arrest campaign termed Operations Brother's Keeper. On July 2, three Israeli extremists kidnapped and killed 16-year-old Jerusalem resident Muhammad Abu Khdeir. From July 8 to August 26, Israel conducted the military operation, Operation Protective Edge, which, according to Israeli officials, responded to a sharp increase in rockets deliberately fired from Gaza at Israeli civilian areas as well as militants' attempts to infiltrate Israel through tunnels from Gaza for the purpose of committing terrorist acts.

Hamas and other militant groups fired 4,465 rockets and mortar shells into Israel. In response the Israeli government conducted 5,242 air strikes and a ground operation in Gaza.

According to the United Nations, the operation killed 2,205 Palestinians; according to the IDF, 74 persons in Israel were killed, among them 67 combatants, six Israeli civilians, and one Thai civilian.

The most significant human rights abuses across the occupied territories were excessive use of force against civilians, including killings; arbitrary arrest and associated torture and abuse, often with impunity, by multiple actors in the region; and restrictions on civil liberties, particularly in Gaza, where residents remained unable to hold their government accountable for such abuses.

Human rights problems under the PA in the West Bank included abuse and mistreatment of detainees, poor and overcrowded detention facilities, prolonged detention, and infringements on privacy rights. Restrictions on freedom of speech, press, and assembly continued. There were limits on freedom of association and movement. Corruption, violence against women, and societal discrimination were serious problems. At times the PA failed to condemn incidents of anti-Semitic expression. Abuse of children and discrimination against persons with disabilities also were serious problems. Discrimination based on sexual orientation and HIV/AIDS status persisted. There were some limits on worker rights, and there was forced labor. Child labor, including forced labor, also remained a serious problem.

Human rights abuses under Hamas included security forces killing, torturing, arbitrarily detaining, and harassing opponents, including Fatah members, and other Palestinians with impunity. Terrorist organizations and militant factions in the Gaza Strip launched rocket and mortar attacks against civilian targets in Israel, and they did so at or near civilian locations in Gaza. Gaza-based civil rights organizations reported prisoners were held in poor conditions in detention facilities in the Gaza Strip, and Hamas publicly executed a number of persons without trial. Hamas also infringed on privacy rights. Hamas restricted the freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and movement of Gaza Strip residents. Discrimination against women and domestic violence were serious problems. Abuse of children and discrimination against persons with disabilities were problems. Hamas frequently promoted anti-Semitism. Discrimination based on sexual orientation and HIV/AIDS status persisted. Restrictions on worker rights continued. Forced labor, including by children, occurred.

Human rights problems related to actions by Israeli authorities inside the West Bank and Gaza included reports of excessive use of force against civilians, including killings; abuse of Palestinian detainees, particularly during arrest and interrogation; austere and overcrowded detention facilities; improper use of security detention procedures; demolition and confiscation of Palestinian property; limitations on freedom of expression, assembly, and association; and severe restrictions on Palestinians' internal and external freedom of movement. Violence by settlers against the Palestinian population continued to be a problem, as did inconsistent punishment of these acts by Israeli authorities. The IDF maintained restrictions on movement into and out of the Gaza Strip and largely limited the travel of Palestinians out of Gaza to humanitarian cases and some business travelers.

The PA and Israeli authorities took steps to address impunity or reduce abuses, but there were criticisms they did not adequately pursue investigations and disciplinary actions related to violations. Impunity was a major problem under Hamas.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

In contrast with previous years, there were no reports that PA security services committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

Palestinian terrorist groups and other unaffiliated individuals committed unlawful killings of Israeli civilians and security forces in Israel, as well as of Israeli civilians and security forces living and operating in the West Bank. In June members of Hamas kidnapped and killed three Israeli teenagers, and on September 23, the IDF killed two Palestinians suspected of carrying out the attack.

In August 2013 during an operation by the PA Preventive Security Organization at Askar refugee camp in Nablus, Amjad Odeh died after being shot in unclear circumstances while camp residents protested the security forces' raid. His death provoked further protests by hundreds of persons, some of whom damaged public and private property. Lieutenant Adnan Dmeiri, spokesperson for the PA's security forces, announced on the day of the killing that authorities would open an official investigation, but at year's end there was no further information regarding the status of the investigation.

Hamas and other terrorist organizations launched at least 4,465 rockets and mortar rounds at Israel that indiscriminately targeted population centers during the July-August hostilities in Gaza.

News outlets alleged Hamas positioned its rocket launch sites in the Gaza Strip adjacent to schools, playgrounds, and hospitals, leading Israel to target those launch sites and putting civilians at risk. On July 24, Israeli artillery shells hit Palestinians sheltering at a UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) school in Beit Hanoun when heavy fighting between Israeli forces and militants occurred nearby, resulting in the deaths of 13 individuals and injury to more than 200 others. In other cases UNRWA found rockets stored inside a school.

There were multiple attacks on civilians and security forces in Jerusalem. On July 2, three Israelis allegedly abducted and killed Palestinian teenager Muhammad Abu Khdeir. On August 4, an unknown assailant shot and injured an IDF soldier on Mount Scopus near Hebrew University and then escaped on a motorcycle.

There were numerous acts of violence to include killings involving Israeli settlers and Palestinians in the West Bank (see section 6.). On July 25, in three separate incidents IDF soldiers and an Israeli settler reportedly killed six Palestinians. Three were killed in Beit Ummar. Two were killed in Huwwara near Nablus, with one reportedly killed by an Israeli settler and the other by the IDF. Israeli police questioned and later released the settler who shot and killed a Palestinian in Beit Ummar on July 25. Another Palestinian died in al-Aroub refugee camp north of Hebron when, according to the IDF, he reached for a soldier's weapon. During that period observers reported skirmishes during the night in towns and villages across the West Bank.

On November 10, a Palestinian man stabbed three Israelis at the entrance of the Alon Shvut settlement in the West Bank, killing an Israeli woman. A security guard subsequently shot and killed the attacker.

According to local media, Hamas unlawfully executed at least 55 persons in the Gaza Strip during Operation Protective Edge for allegedly collaborating with Israel. For example, in July Hamas executed at least 30 alleged collaborators with Israel, according to the Palestine Press Agency. According to the international nongovernmental organization (NGO) Human Rights Watch (HRW), Hamas executed 25 persons, including two women as reported by the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, between August 21 and August 23 for allegedly collaborating with Israel. According to the Independent Council on Human Rights, 11 of the persons executed on August 22 were inmates held in the Correction and Rehabilitation Center of Gaza: eight were not convicted, one was sentenced to death, one was sentenced to life in prison, and one was sentenced to 15 years

in prison. By law the PA president must ratify each death penalty sentence, but Hamas did not contact the PA regarding these executions due to Hamas de facto control over the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli government killed Palestinian civilians as well as militants. During the year Israeli forces killed 50 Palestinians in the West Bank and Jerusalem, compared with 27 Palestinians in the West Bank in 2013. According to the NGO Defense for Children International-Palestine (DCI-Palestine), 13 of those killed in the West Bank were minors.

On March 10, Israeli soldiers shot and killed Raed Alaa a-Din Nafea Zeiter, a Palestinian and Jordanian citizen and a judge, after he argued with a soldier and shoved him. Eyewitness accounts differed regarding the circumstances surrounding the incident. Authorities announced an investigation but reported no progress by year's end.

On March 19, an IDF soldier shot and killed 14-year-old Yusef Sami Yusef al-Shwamrah after he went through a gap in the security barrier near Hebron, reportedly to harvest plants. The subsequent investigation concluded with no charges filed against the involved soldiers.

On March 22, an IDF soldier shot and killed Muhammad Omar Saleh Abu Zeinah as he reportedly carried the body of Hamzah Abu al-Heija, whom IDF soldiers reportedly killed when they attempted to apprehend him.

On October 24, the IDF killed a 14-year-old Palestinian in the West Bank village of Silwad, claiming he was in the act of throwing a Molotov cocktail at the soldiers.

Israeli security forces killed four Palestinians during operations associated with Operation Brother's Keeper in June. For example, on June 22, Israeli forces that entered Nablus as part of Operation Brother's Keeper killed Ahmad Khaled when he reportedly did not respond to their requests to stop moving toward them. Khaled reportedly suffered from mental illness.

There were numerous reports that Israeli security forces killed Palestinians during demonstrations. On May 15, IDF soldiers shot and killed 17-year-old Nadim Siyam Ahmad Nawarah and 16-year-old Muhammad Mahmoud Odeh Salameh during a demonstration at Bitunya checkpoint, the "Nakba Day killings." Salameh was shot in the back. Neither minor was throwing stones at the time of their shooting, but other demonstrators were throwing stones. Video showed neither person presented a direct and immediate threat to life when shot, since Israeli police were more than 100 yards away from the victims, according to the NGO DCI-Palestine. Authorities suspended an Israeli border police officer immediately following the incident and subsequently arrested and indicted him on November 11. His commander was also arrested for allegedly covering up the incident. On December 10, Ziyad Abu Ein, a former PA deputy minister, died after reportedly being beaten by Israeli security forces and inhaling tear gas at a demonstration. Israeli authorities announced an investigation but reported no progress as of year's end.

Despite the increase in Palestinian deaths, the IDF stated there was no change in IDF rules of engagement and reaffirmed that it permitted live fire only to protect against immediate mortal danger, not for crowd control. There were numerous reports security forces killed demonstrators, even when live fire was not used. On August 31, Israeli National Police (INP) killed a 16-year-old Palestinian boy in East Jerusalem. Police claimed the boy was shot in the leg with a sponge-tipped bullet, fell, hurt his head, and eventually succumbed to his injuries. An autopsy revealed he was shot in the head at close range with a rubber-coated bullet.

In July, the Israeli NGO B'Tselem accused the IDF of overusing live fire as a crowd-control measure during Palestinian demonstrations in the West Bank against Operation Protective Edge, resulting in the deaths of 13 Palestinians. For example, on July 22, an IDF soldier shot and killed Mahmoud Hamamreh in the West Bank village of Husan during clashes between the IDF and

local residents, although the Palestinian press reported he was not participating in the demonstrations.

During the year there were a significantly higher number of Palestinian deaths at the hands of Israeli security forces than in past years as a result of Israeli military operations between July 8 and August 26. Israeli security forces killed at least 2,222 Palestinians in Gaza, including 2,205 during military operations associated with Operation Protective Edge and 17 during the rest of the year, according to B'Tselem, compared with nine Palestinians in 2013. Based on its analysis, the Israeli government estimated half of those killed were civilians and half were combatants, while the United Nations reported that 69 percent of those killed were civilians. According to the United Nations, more than 500 minors and nearly 300 women were killed.

NGOs accused Israel of using disproportionate force and indiscriminate fire to counter the threat posed by rockets launched from the Gaza Strip, resulting in unnecessary and excessive civilian casualties. On July 18, Israeli artillery reportedly misidentified as militants four children on a Gaza beach; subsequent shelling killed them.

NGOs singled out Israel's artillery bombardments targeting densely populated areas as a significant cause of civilian casualties. During Operation Protective Edge, Israeli armed forces reportedly fired 30,000 shells into Gaza. On August 1, Israeli forces fired more than 1,000 artillery shells during a three-hour period into Rafah, an area of Gaza that had not been evacuated. Additionally, according to press reports, 40 air strikes and some ground fighting resulted in an estimated 130 to 150 civilian deaths. NGOs, including B'Tselem, were investigating each death to determine the circumstances, such as whether there was a legitimate military target nearby, whether the shelling was indiscriminate, and whether every family received a warning before their home was bombed or shelled.

NGOs, including Amnesty International (AI), HRW, and B'Tselem, identified several attacks that lacked a clear military target or used disproportionate force, resulting in civilian casualties. On November 5, AI released a report entitled *Families under the Rubble: Israeli Attacks on Inhabited Homes* that documented eight cases in which Israeli forces allegedly attacked residential family homes in Gaza without warning during Operation Protective Edge in July and August. These attacks killed at least 104 civilians, including 62 children. In the deadliest incident documented in the report, an Israeli Air Force attack killed 36 members of four families, including 18 children, when a three-story building reportedly was struck without warning on July 29. While AI identified possible military targets within the building, it alleged that devastation caused to civilian lives and property was clearly disproportionate to the military advantages gained by launching the attack.

In September the Israeli Military Advocate General (MAG) announced a new fact-finding mechanism to investigate claims of violations of the laws of armed conflict. As of December 9, the MAG reported that it had referred approximately 100 incidents for examination by the fact-finding mechanism and that approximately 50 of these cases had subsequently been sent back to the MAG for decision. The MAG subsequently referred five of these cases for criminal investigation. The MAG decided to close an additional nine cases without opening a criminal investigation after determining the forces' actions did not give rise to reasonable grounds for suspicion of criminal behavior. In a few of the cases, the MAG reportedly found no involvement of IDF forces in the incident under investigation. The state comptroller also opened an investigation into Israeli military operations in Gaza in parallel with the intra-IDF fact-finding mission.

B'Tselem stated it rejected a request made by the MAG to provide information on "irregular" incidents that occurred during Operation Protective Edge on the grounds MAG-led investigations did not lead to meaningful investigations and prosecutions.

Apart from the July-August conflict, the Israeli government periodically launched strikes into the Gaza Strip against specific targets and in response to militant groups' rockets fired into Israel. According to B'Tselem, these attacks killed six Palestinians participating in hostilities, seven Palestinians not participating in hostilities, and four who were the object of targeted killing. IDF ground forces, tanks, ships, aircraft, and remote-controlled weapons fired on Palestinians inside the Gaza Strip. IDF personnel maintained secure stations every several hundred yards along the border fence; each station contained weapons with potential firing ranges of nearly one mile.

There were also continued reports of Israeli forces killing Palestinians in restricted areas in the Gaza Strip. Israel repeatedly warned Palestinians they were at risk of being shot if they came within 328 yards of the "buffer zone" separating Gaza from Israeli territory; however, Israel reportedly regularly enforced the buffer zone by firing toward Palestinians approaching at distances beyond 328 yards. Israel reduced the buffer zone following Operation Protective Edge but continued to fire toward Palestinians approaching the border fence between Israel and Gaza. On November 24, Israeli soldiers stationed along the border shot and killed Fadel Halawa as he reportedly searched for songbirds that nest close to the boundary with Israel. This was the first killing of a Palestinian in the Gaza Strip after the August 26 cease-fire ended Operation Protective Edge.

b. Disappearance

In the West Bank, there were no reports of politically motivated disappearances. In the Gaza Strip, Hamas security operatives carried out extrajudicial detentions based on political affiliation. Information concerning the whereabouts and welfare of those detained was not consistently or reliably available, and Hamas denied many of those detained due process or access to family and legal counsel.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The PA Basic Law, the collection of laws governing the area under PA control, prohibits torture or use of force against detainees; however, international human rights groups reported that torture and abuse remained a problem. Despite the commitment by President Abbas to investigate reports of torture in the 2012 Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) report, the PA Ministry of Interior took no action during the year.

As of December, Palestinian detainees held by PA security forces registered more than 168 complaints of abuse and torture with the ICHR, a significant increase from the previous year (145). Reported abuses by PA authorities in the West Bank included forcing prisoners, including persons accused of affiliation with Hamas, to sit in a painful position for long periods; beating; punching; flogging; intimidation; and psychological pressure. Independent observers noted that abuse was not systematic or routinely practiced in PA prisons, although some prisoners experienced abuse during arrest or interrogation. The PA Corrections and Rehabilitation Centers Department, under the authority of the Ministry of Interior, continued to maintain a mechanism for reviewing complaints of prisoner abuse in civil prisons but reported no cases of inmate abuse by its staff.

As of December detainees held by Hamas filed at least 442 claims of torture and abuse with the ICHR, compared with 263 complaints during 2013. HRW reported that the Hamas internal security, the drugs unit of the "civil police force," and "police" detectives tortured detainees. In the Gaza Strip, security elements under the Hamas "Ministry of Interior" tortured and abused security detainees, persons associated with the PA or the Fatah political party, those held on suspicion of collaboration with Israel, civil society activists, journalists, and those who reportedly engaged in "immoral" activity. Hamas also reportedly deployed undercover officers to assault such persons. HRW reported that complaints of abuse included being forced to stand in uncomfortable stress

positions; flogging; hand binding; suspension; blindfolding; punching; and beatings with clubs, electric cables, or hoses.

PA security forces also reportedly used these tactics against Palestinian minors. In June DCI-Palestine reported on documented instances of abuse against children in PA custody from Areas A and B, including threats, beatings, and neglect by forces during arrest and detention.

Hamas reportedly took little or no action to investigate reports of torture, and reports and documentation of abuses were limited, due to victims' fear of retribution and lack of access to Gaza Strip prisoners' rights NGOs or PA officials.

Human rights organizations such as the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI) reported that "physical interrogation methods" permitted by Israeli law and used by Israeli security personnel could amount to torture. The methods included beatings, forcing an individual to hold a stress position for long periods, and painful pressure from shackles or restraints applied to the forearms. Israeli officials stated they did not use techniques that could amount to torture. Israeli and Palestinian NGOs continued to criticize these and other Israeli detention practices they termed abusive, including isolation, sleep deprivation, and psychological abuse, such as threats to interrogate spouses, siblings, or elderly parents or to demolish family homes.

Israeli authorities reportedly used similar tactics on Palestinian minors. DCI-Palestine, Breaking the Silence, and other human rights NGOs claimed Israeli security services continued to abuse, and in some cases torture, to coerce confessions from minors who they frequently arrested on suspicion of stone throwing. Tactics included beatings, long-term handcuffing, threats, intimidation, and solitary confinement. For example, one detainee affidavit taken by DCI-Palestine alleged that in February authorities bound and blindfolded a minor, interrogated him without a lawyer, and kicked and punched him in the stomach and head. In May, DCI-Palestine released its annual report on abuses for 2013, which reported that 76.5 percent of Palestinian children detained by the Israeli military in the occupied West Bank endured some form of physical violence during arrest, transfer, or interrogation – a slight increase from 2012. During 2013 DCI-Palestine filed 15 complaints with Israeli authorities alleging mistreatment and torture of 10 children while in Israeli military detention, but there were no indictments by year's end.

In August 17-year-old Ahmad Abu Raida alleged the IDF captured him on July 23 in the Gaza Strip and used him as a "human shield" – forcing him at gunpoint to search for tunnels for five days, during which time the IDF interrogated him (including verbal and physical abuse) and deprived him of food and sleep.

In July and August, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) accused the INP of using excessive force and harsh tactics against civilians and demonstrators in Jerusalem, both while dispersing demonstrations and riots and while conducting arrests. Responding to ACRI's allegations, the Israel National Police chief wrote that police used tactics proportional and appropriate to the unusual level of violence.

In July, Israeli border police were allegedly identified on video beating 14-year-old Tariq Abu Khdeir while he was handcuffed and possibly unconscious. As of August the Israeli government reportedly indicted one officer in the case.

Additionally, ACRI accused the INP of arbitrarily using "skunk water" (a foul-smelling substance sprayed from high-pressure hoses attached to police vehicles), including, in the absence of any public disturbance, on houses, restaurants filled with patrons, and in crowded streets, causing harm to innocent residents.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

The PA Ministry of Health reported prisoners in PA facilities, including in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, suffered from extremely bad conditions.

Prison conditions in the Gaza Strip were reportedly poor, although little information was available.

IDF detention centers for security detainees were less likely than Israeli civilian prisons to meet international standards.

Physical Conditions: Most PA prisons continued to be crowded and lacked ventilation, heating, cooling, and lighting systems conforming to international standards. Most prisons lacked sufficient space for programming, recreation, and medical-care services. Inmates had access to potable water. Food and sanitation services in PA prisons were adequate. No deaths were reported in PA prisons from adverse conditions. Authorities at times housed male juveniles with adult male prisoners. Security services used separate detention facilities. Conditions for women were virtually identical to those for men; however, some detention centers for women had limited outdoor recreation space.

Detention facilities in the Gaza Strip were reportedly below international standards. HRW reported that prisoners in Gaza lacked potable water, food, and other basic necessities.

Some Israeli government facilities, such as the Ofer detention center, provided living space as small as 15 square feet per detainee. In August 2013 B'Tselem reported that since 2009, 64 Palestinian minors had reported "extreme violence," including sexual assault, by authorities in the Israeli police station in the settlement of Gush Etzion. B'Tselem called for an end to violent interrogations and a thorough investigation of what it described as a "systemic" problem. NGOs stated that poor conditions appeared to be used as an interrogation or intimidation method. Prisoners also continued to claim inadequate medical care. Detainees under Israeli control had access to potable water, adequate food, and acceptable sanitation, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

According to NGO sources, Israeli government authorities held 6,303 Palestinians in Israeli prisons at the end of November, 5,527 of whom were Palestinian security prisoners or detainees, and the remainder were Palestinians who entered Israel illegally. B'Tselem reported that at the end of November, Israel held 156 minors in Israeli prisons as security prisoners or detainees and 51 others who had entered Israel illegally. Seventeen of the minors were between the ages of 12 and 15.

PCATI, DCI-Palestine, and Breaking the Silence noted that most reports of abuse or poor conditions occurred during arrest and interrogation, generally within the first 48 hours following arrest.

Administration: Recordkeeping by PA authorities in the West Bank was adequate, with the Corrections and Rehabilitation Centers Department storing information on computers, but records were not publicly available. By law any person sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not more than three months may petition the PA public prosecutor to put him to work outside the prison instead of carrying out the sentence of imprisonment, unless the judgment deprives him of that option. Although the law allows for this option, the legal system did not have the capacity to implement such a process. All PA civil police prisons allowed visitors on a weekly basis, permitted religious observance, provided a procedure for submitting complaints through a prison officer or directly to the warden, and had an investigation process for complaints. The PA investigated allegations of mistreatment. Although ombudsmen cannot serve on behalf of prisoners, the ICHR played an ombudsman role.

Little information was available about prison administration in the Gaza Strip. HRW reported it had documented cases in which hospital officials allegedly refused to provide medical records that could be used as evidence of custodial abuse.

Recordkeeping by Israeli authorities in the West Bank was often only in Hebrew and therefore inaccessible to the Palestinian public. There were no reports of improvements in recordkeeping. There was an ombudsman. Detainees under Israeli control could have visitors. Human rights groups reported families of imprisoned Palestinians, particularly Gazans, had limited ability to visit prisoners. The ICRC and the Israeli government reported a complete cessation of family visits to all prisoners following the June 14 kidnapping and killing of three Israeli teenage citizens in the West Bank and a cessation of visitors to all Palestinian prisoners throughout Operation Protective Edge that continued for some weeks thereafter. Visits to Fatah-associated detainees from the West Bank and East Jerusalem resumed on July 16, before resuming for all prisoners on September 13, but with specific rules. Visits to prisoners from Gaza resumed October 20. After an extended hunger strike initiated by nearly 2,000 Palestinian detainees incarcerated in Israeli prisons, in 2012 Israel eased restrictions instituted in response to the 2006 capture of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. This included an end to solitary confinement of some prisoners, a resumption of family visits for prisoners from Gaza, and a limitation of administrative detention to six months. Authorities allowed detainees religious observance. NGOs claimed there was a systematic failure to investigate abuse claims. In July 2013 PCATI reported that, despite more than 776 complaints it filed since 1999, no torture complaint resulted in a criminal investigation, prosecution, or conviction. This remained a pattern during the year. PCATI reported that the government regularly dismissed complaints of abuse following a primary examination by an Israeli Security Agency (ISA) employee. NGOs reported that investigations into IDF and police abuse were slow and ineffective and rarely led to prosecutions. ISA facilities were exempt from regular independent inspections.

Independent Monitoring: The PA generally permitted the ICRC access to detainees and allowed regular inspections of prison conditions in accordance with the ICRC's standard modalities. Preliminary unpublished accounts by human rights groups, humanitarian organizations, and lawyers indicated that as in previous years, there were some difficulties in gaining access to specific detainees, depending on which security organization managed the facility.

The ICRC conducted monitoring visits to some prisoners in the Gaza Strip, but Hamas authorities denied its representatives permission to visit high-profile detainees and prisoners.

The Israeli government permitted visits by independent human rights observers. The government permitted the ICRC to monitor prison conditions in accordance with its standard modalities. NGOs sent representatives to meet with prisoners and inspect conditions in prisons, detention centers, and IDF facilities, except ISA detention and interrogation facilities, since security prisoners and facilities remained inaccessible to independent monitors. Human rights groups reported delays and difficulties in gaining access to specific detainees and frequent transfers of detainees without notice.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

Palestinian law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and PA prosecutors generally charged suspects promptly as a requirement to detain them. The PA criminal justice system, however, often did not lead to a prompt and speedy trial. Hamas also stated that the PA repeatedly detained individuals during the year based solely on their Hamas affiliation, especially following high-profile security sweeps.

Hamas reportedly practiced widespread arbitrary detention in the Gaza Strip, particularly against Fatah members, civil society activists, and others accused of publicly criticizing Hamas.

Israeli law provides safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention, but key safeguards do not apply to Palestinian security detainees. Palestinian security detainees are subject to the jurisdiction of Israeli military law, which permits eight days' detention before appearing before a military court. There is no requirement that a detainee have access to a lawyer until after interrogation, a process that may last weeks. The maximum period for such a detention order, according to military law, is 90 days; however, detention can be renewed if deemed necessary. Denial of visits by family, outside medical professionals, or others outside the ISA, the IDF, or the prison service occurred. NGOs reported persons undergoing interrogations often were held incommunicado for several weeks. In the past the Israeli government denied such allegations.

In July and August, the INP arrested 36 members of the family of Muhammad Abu Khdeir (see section 1.a.), prompting accusations authorities targeted them unfairly. None were charged or tried for any offenses, and all were eventually released.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

In West Bank Palestinian population centers, mostly "Area A" as defined by the Oslo-era agreements, containing 55 percent of the Palestinian population on approximately 18 percent of West Bank land area, the PA has formal responsibility for security and civil control. Since 2002, however, following the outbreak of the Second Intifada, Israeli security forces have regularly conducted security operations in Area A cities, often without coordinating with PA security forces. In "Area B" territory in the West Bank, which contained 41 percent of the population on approximately 21 percent of the territory, mostly small Palestinian villages and farmland, the PA has civil control, but Israel and the PA maintain joint security control. In "Area C," which contains Israeli settlements, military installations, and 4 percent of the Palestinian population in small villages, farmland, and open countryside on approximately 61 percent of the land area, Israel retains full civil and security control.

Six PA security forces operated in the West Bank. Many of the security forces are under the PA Ministry of Interior operational control and follow the prime minister's guidance. The Palestinian Civil Police have primary responsibility for civil and community policing. The National Security Force conducts gendarmerie-style security operations in circumstances that exceed the capabilities of the civil police. The Military Intelligence agency handles intelligence and criminal matters involving PA security force personnel, including accusations of abuse. The Military Intelligence agency is responsible for investigations into allegations of abuse and corruption involving PA security forces and can refer cases to court. The General Intelligence service is responsible for external intelligence gathering and operations; the Preventive Security Organization is responsible for both internal intelligence gathering and investigations related to internal security cases (for example, antiterrorism, weapons violations, and money laundering). The Presidential Guard protects facilities and provides dignitary protection. Generally, Palestinian security forces continued to demonstrate improved performance levels, especially while maintaining order during demonstrations on days of national significance to Palestinians, such as the "Nakba" and "Naksa" days. The ICHR continued to report accusations of abuse and torture at the hands of the security forces to the PA.

The PA took significant steps to bring women into police forces in the West Bank to allow police work to cross societal gender barriers. For example, the women on the PA police force can search under women's clothing for contraband. In March the PA Presidential Guard established the Female Special Security Detachment, the first operational element for women in the PA security forces.

The PA made improvements in ensuring civilians are not tried by security sector courts. There were some NGO reports, however, of unverified incidents of civilians being tried in military

courts, which they noted made it unclear whether security agencies, rather than the civil police, continued to detain civilians, including journalists.

In the Gaza Strip, forces under Hamas control maintained security. Press and NGO reports suggested Hamas enforced strict control across all sectors of society. Hamas "police" reportedly facilitated and benefited from illegal activity, such as the operation of smuggling tunnels. Impunity remained a problem in the Gaza Strip. The ICHR noted that the internal security services in the Gaza Strip prohibited field researchers from visiting detention centers and that authorities failed to respond to ICHR letters. There were numerous instances in which Hamas failed to deter violence, such as rocket attacks into Israel during the year prior to the outbreak of hostilities in July.

Israeli authorities maintained their West Bank security presence through the IDF, ISA, INP, and border police. Israeli authorities took some steps to investigate and punish abuse and corruption, but there were reports of failure to take disciplinary action in cases of abuse, although one border police officer was arrested and indicted for murder in the deaths of two Palestinians in Bitunya in May; his commander was indicted for allegedly covering up the incident (see section 1.a.). The IDF continued to open investigations automatically of claims of abuse in military police custody. NGOs stated that automatic investigations applied only to military activity in the West Bank, not to individuals reporting abuse in custody. NGOs reported that impunity among Israeli security forces remained a problem, in part because mechanisms for investigating allegations were not effective. Reports of abuse go to the Attorney General's Office; PCATI in June 2013 reported that authorities systematically disregarded abuse allegations.

According to B'Tselem, in 2011 Israel began investigating every case in which the IDF killed civilians in the West Bank not taking part in hostilities. According to B'Tselem, during the year the IDF opened investigations into 31 incidents and closed one case. Israeli law restricts the ability of Palestinians harmed by the acts of Israeli security forces to seek compensation in Israeli courts.

NGOs criticized Israeli accountability processes and efforts to investigate reports of killing of civilians. On February 27, AI released a report entitled "Trigger Happy" that documented incidents of use of excessive force by Israeli soldiers against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank and claimed that existing mechanisms for investigating reports of human rights violations lacked transparency and impartiality. On September 4, Israeli NGOs B'Tselem and Yesh Din released a statement stating that existing accountability mechanisms precluded serious investigations and were marred by severe structural flaws that rendered them incapable of conducting professional investigations.

According to Israeli and Palestinian NGO and press reports, the IDF and INP did not respond sufficiently to violence perpetrated against Palestinians by Israeli settlers in the West Bank. Levels of settler violence decreased compared with 2013, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). OCHA counted 329 incidents of settler violence as of December 29 (compared with 399 incidents in 2013) that resulted in Palestinian injuries or property damage. Israeli forces injured approximately 96 Palestinians during settler-related incidents. OCHA reported that 90 percent of Palestinian complaints of settler violence in recent years were closed without indictment.

As of December 29, Israeli security forces in the West Bank injured 5,865 persons; many injuries occurred during clashes in July and August during protests against the combat in Gaza.

ACRI stated Israeli security and justice officials operating in predominantly Palestinian East Jerusalem displayed bias against Palestinian residents in investigating incidents involving Palestinian and Israeli actors. In several cases Palestinian residents in the West Bank sought to

press charges against Israeli settlers or their security guards, but many complaints went uninvestigated despite the availability of evidence.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

PA law generally requires a warrant for arrest and provides for prompt judicial determination of the legality of detention, and these provisions were largely – but not uniformly – observed; however, there are exceptions that allow for arrest without a warrant. PA law allows police to hold detainees for 24 hours if there is sufficient evidence to charge a suspect, and for up to 45 days with court approval. It requires that a trial start within six months or the detainee must be released. While some PA security forces reportedly detained persons outside of appropriate legal procedures, including without warrants and without bringing them before judicial authorities within the required time, there were no known detentions extending beyond the time limit without trial. Bail and conditional release were available at the discretion of judicial authorities. Authorities generally informed detainees of the charges against them, albeit sometimes not until interrogation. Authorities granted detainees access to a lawyer. Palestinian courts consistently afforded the right to counsel to indigents charged with felony offenses. Indigent defendants charged with misdemeanors, however, often did not receive counsel, although NGO efforts to represent indigent juveniles and adults in misdemeanor cases were at times successful.

In a number of cases, PA Military Intelligence reportedly exceeded its legal authority to investigate other security services' officers and detained civilians suspected of "security offenses," such as terrorist activities. Hamas continued to charge that the PA detained individuals during the year solely on the basis of their Hamas affiliation, but the PA presented evidence it charged many of these individuals with criminal offenses under civil or military codes.

In the Gaza Strip, Hamas reportedly detained a large but unverifiable number of persons during the year, largely without recourse to legal counsel, judicial review, or bail. HRW reported Hamas internal security arrested individuals without presenting warrants, delayed their transfer to the prosecutor's office (using incommunicado detention), did not inform families of detainees' whereabouts promptly, and denied detainees' access to a lawyer. There also were instances in which authorities retroactively issued arrest warrants and used military warrants to arrest civilians. In some cases authorities presented detainees to the military judiciary for civil cases.

Israeli authorities operated under military and civilian legal codes in the occupied territories. Israeli military law applied to Palestinians in the West Bank, while Israeli settlers were under the jurisdiction of Israeli civil law. Under Israeli military law, detainees can be held for up to 90 days without access to a lawyer, and authorities frequently transferred detainees from the West Bank to Israel for detention or interrogation. The Israeli military courts had a conviction rate of more than 99 percent for Palestinians. Authorities informed detainees of the charges against them during detention, but DCI-Palestine reported authorities did not inform minors and their families at the time of arrest. Israeli authorities stated their policy was to post notification of arrests within 48 hours, but senior officers may delay notification for up to 12 days, effectively holding detainees incommunicado during the interrogation process. A military commander may request that a judge extend this period indefinitely. In accordance with the law, Israeli authorities generally provided Palestinians held in Israeli military custody inside Israel access to a lawyer of their choice (and provided lawyers for the indigent), but impediments to movement on West Bank roads or at crossings often made consultation difficult and delayed trials and hearings. According to DCI-Palestine, most detained minors saw their lawyer for the first time when they appeared before a military court.

NGOs claimed that, despite changes to the law in 2011 that categorized Palestinians between the ages of 16 and 18 as minors, Israeli authorities frequently failed to inform parents why children

were detained or where they took Palestinian minors when arrested. Additionally, this amendment does not apply to detention periods and other provisions of military orders. For example, minors who are 16 and 17 years old have the same detention periods as adults under the law. In April 2013 a military order reduced the time that Palestinian children between the ages of 12 and 15 can be detained before appearing before a military court judge, although there was no change for minors ages 16 and 17. The NGO Military Court Watch reported subsequently these detention times were still at least twice as long as those applied to Israeli minors living in the West Bank. According to Military Court Watch, of the 1,004 minors detained in 2013, 343 had at least part of their interrogations audio-visually recorded. Nonetheless, the NGO was unaware of a single case in which an audiovisual tape of an interrogation involving a minor was made available to defense counsel prior to the first hearing. There is no legal duty to audio-visually record interrogations involving minors. The IDF also entered Palestinian homes at night either to arrest or to take pictures of minors. DCI-Palestine claimed authorities abused minors to coerce confessions (see section 1.c.), and according to human rights organizations, this treatment could amount to torture in some cases. In the past Israeli officials denied such allegations. Military authorities began providing translations into Arabic of some of the recent changes to the military laws affecting minors. NGOs reported a significant increase in detentions of minors in the Jerusalem area, particularly detentions authorities never registered in the Israeli prison system.

In March 2013 the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) released its report *Children in Israeli Military Detention Observations and Recommendations*, which stated that "mistreatment of Palestinian children in the Israeli military detention system appears to be widespread, systematic, and institutionalized." Subsequently, the Military Prosecutor for Judea and Samaria (West Bank) established a dialogue with UNICEF on children's rights while in military detention and on specific actions that can be undertaken to improve the protection of these children. In October 2013 the IDF Central Command for the West Bank implemented a pilot test in the West Bank that replaced the practice of night arrests of children suspected of security offenses with a summons procedure. UNICEF documented 24 instances of summoning of children since the beginning of the pilot in Jenin and Hebron, Nablus, and Ramallah governorates. Despite the new procedures, some children reportedly received summonses at night, and there were continued reports of mistreatment during the subsequent interrogation process at the military detention center or police station.

Israeli authorities continued to "administratively detain" (hold suspected criminals indefinitely without presenting charges or going to trial) some persons on security grounds. Many NGOs called for the immediate end to administrative detention. In October, B'Tselem reported a steep rise in administrative detentions, in particular during Operation Brother's Keeper.

The ISA continued its practice of incommunicado detention, including isolation from monitors, legal counsel, and family throughout the duration of interrogation. NGOs reported isolation was used to punish detainees or silence politically prominent Palestinian detainees; however, according to the Israeli government, the Israeli Prison Service does not hold detainees in separate detention punitively or to induce confessions. The Israeli government stated it does so only when a detainee threatens himself or others and other options have been exhausted, or in some cases during interrogation to prevent disclosure of information. In such cases the Israeli government maintained the detainee had the right to meet with ICRC representatives, Israeli Prison Service personnel, and medical personnel if necessary.

Arbitrary Arrest: The ICHR reported that arbitrary arrest by the PA in the West Bank was a common practice, particularly arrests based on political affiliation with Hamas. The organization received 341 complaints of arbitrary arrests based on political affiliation in the West Bank as of November, a decline from the previous year. There were numerous reports PA security forces

improperly detained Palestinian journalists. Security officials also arrested and abused Palestinians who posted criticism of the PA online, including on their Facebook pages.

The ICHR received 648 complaints of arbitrary arrests by Hamas in the Gaza Strip as of November. Many of these arrests and detentions appeared to be politically motivated, targeting political opponents and those suspected of ties to Israel. HRW reported Hamas security forces assaulted and arbitrarily detained civil society activists and peaceful protesters who had called for an end to the Fatah-Hamas split.

Throughout the year there were reports Israeli security forces in Jerusalem and in the West Bank arbitrarily arrested and detained numerous Palestinian protesters and activists, particularly those participating in demonstrations against the separation barrier or against killings of Palestinians, although no statistics were available regarding the total number of complaints of arbitrary arrest.

Pretrial Detention: The ICHR reported on complaints of Palestinians detained by PA security services and not immediately released, even when courts ordered their release after determining their detentions were illegal.

It was unclear how long detainees in Hamas custody stayed in pretrial detention or what legal means, if any, Hamas used to detain individuals.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The PA Basic Law provides for an independent judiciary. The PA generally respected judicial independence and the autonomy of the High Judicial Council and maintained authority over most court operations in the West Bank. PA-affiliated prosecutors and judges stated that IDF prohibitions on movement in the West Bank, including restrictions on the ability to transport detainees and collect witnesses, hampered their ability to dispense justice. Women served as judges in both the criminal and military court systems.

Until 2011 the PA's military court system had jurisdiction over crimes by civilians against state security or against the security forces. After Palestinian NGOs criticized this practice, the PA mandated that civilians appear before civilian courts. PA military justice court personnel stated they did not process any cases or bring charges against any civilians in 2013 or during the year, and the PA civilian court system handled all criminal cases against civilians.

The PA civil, magistrate, and religious courts handled civil suits and provided an independent and impartial judiciary in most matters, but there were unconfirmed reports of various political factions trying to influence judicial decisions. Citizens have the right to file suits against the government but rarely did so. Seldom-used administrative remedies are available in addition to judicial remedies. Court orders were not always executed.

Hamas-appointed prosecutors and judges operated courts in the Gaza Strip, although the PA considered them illegal. In 2012 HRW reported that "lawyers who are critical of Hamas, or who support Fatah, continue to practice before the courts but have themselves been the victims of threats and violations of due process and even torture." No women served as criminal prosecutors in the Gaza Strip.

Gaza Strip residents may file civil suits. Unofficial anecdotal reports claimed Gaza Strip courts operated independently of the Hamas government and were at times impartial. There were reports that enforcement of court orders improved. HRW reported Hamas internal security regularly tried civil cases in military courts.

Israeli law provides for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected civil court independence. The IDF tried Palestinians accused of security offenses (ranging from rock throwing to membership in a terrorist organization to incitement) in military courts, which some NGOs claimed were inadequate and unfair. Israeli law defines security offenses to include any offense committed under circumstances that might raise a suspicion of harm to Israel's security and which the IDF believes may be linked to terrorist activity.

Trial Procedures

PA law provides for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right. Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence. Juries are not used. Trials are public, except when the court determines privacy is required by PA security, foreign relations, a party's or witness' right to privacy, or protection of a victim of a sexual offense or an "honor" crime. Defendants have the right to be present and to consult with an attorney in a timely manner during the trial, although during the investigation phase, the defendant only has the right to observe. The law provides for legal representation, at public expense if necessary, in felony cases, but only during the trial phase. Defendants can confront or question witnesses against them or present witnesses and evidence during the trial but not during the investigation phase; defendants also may review government-held evidence and have the right to appeal. Suspects and defendants in the PA justice system have a right to remain silent when they are interrogated by the prosecutor according to the Palestinian penal procedure law. Defendants also have a legal right to counsel during interrogation and trial. Authorities generally observed these rights.

Hamas authorities in the Gaza Strip followed the same criminal procedure law as the PA in the West Bank but implemented the procedures unevenly.

Israeli authorities tried Israelis living in settlements in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem under Israeli civil law in the nearest Israeli district court. Israeli civil law applied to Palestinian residents of Jerusalem. Israeli military courts subjected West Bank Palestinians held by Israeli authorities to trial in Israeli military courts.

Military court trials of Palestinians and others in the occupied territories provide some, but not all, of the procedural rights granted in criminal courts. The same evidentiary rules used in Israeli criminal cases apply; for example, convictions cannot be based solely on confessions. In military trials, however, prosecutors often present secret evidence that is not available to the defendant or counsel. Indigent detainees do not automatically receive free legal counsel for military trials, but almost all detainees had counsel, in part because NGOs represented them. The military courts use Hebrew, but the defendant has the right to simultaneous interpretation at every hearing. Various human rights organizations claimed the availability and quality of Arabic interpretation was insufficient, especially since most interpreters were not professionals but were instead bilingual Israelis performing mandatory military service. Defendants can appeal through the Military Court of Appeals and petition the High Court of Justice. Israeli military courts rarely acquitted Palestinians charged with security offenses, although they occasionally reduced sentences on appeal. NGOs reported that military court records indicated more than 99 percent of cases heard resulted in a guilty verdict.

Several NGOs claimed Israeli military courts, which processed thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank during the year, were not equipped to adjudicate each case properly. NGOs and lawyers reported it was better to plead guilty and receive a reduced sentence than to maintain innocence and go through a trial that could last months, if not more than a year. Human rights lawyers also reported the structure of military trials – in military facilities with military officers as judges, prosecutors, and court officials, and with tight security restrictions – limited defendants' rights to public trial and access to counsel.

Signed confessions by Palestinian minors, written in Hebrew, a language most could not read, continued to be used as evidence against them in Israeli military courts. NGOs reported these confessions often were coerced during interrogations.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

NGOs reported that arrests on political grounds occurred in the West Bank and Gaza. There was no reliable estimate of the number of political prisoners the PA held during the year.

Hamas detained several hundred persons, allegedly because of their political affiliation, public criticism of Hamas, or collaboration with Israel, and held them for varying periods of time. Numerous allegations of denial of due process and some executions were associated with these detentions. The ICRC had limited access to these prisoners.

The Palestinian NGO Addameer reported that Israel continued to detain 28 PLC members as of October.

Israeli authorities did not accord administrative detainees an opportunity to refute allegations or access the evidentiary material presented against them in court. Israeli authorities permitted the ICRC access to administrative detainees. There were 461 administrative detainees as of December, an increase of 309 from the end of 2013.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

A citizen can file a suit against the PA, including on matters related to alleged abuses of human rights, but this was uncommon.

Gaza Strip residents may file civil suits, including those related to human rights violations.

Israeli law grants Palestinians the possibility of obtaining compensation in some cases of human rights violations, even when the acts were considered legal according to the law.

Property Restitution

In certain cases the IDF offered opportunities for compensation for demolished or seized homes (see section 1.f.), subject to an appraisal, verification, and appeals process; Palestinians generally refused such offers, citing a desire not to legitimize the confiscation. The Israeli government sometimes charged demolition fees to demolish a home; this policy at times prompted Palestinians to destroy their own homes to avoid the higher costs associated with Israeli demolitions. Palestinians had difficulty verifying land ownership in Israeli courts according to Israeli definitions of land ownership.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The PA required the attorney general to issue warrants for entry and searches of private property; however, Palestinian security services often ignored these requirements and entered homes without judicial authorization.

There were no specific reports the PA harassed family members for alleged offenses by an individual, although NGOs reported this tactic was common.

Hamas authorities in the Gaza Strip frequently interfered arbitrarily with personal privacy, family, and home, according to reporting from local media and NGO sources. NGOs reported numerous cases of home searches and property seizure without warrants targeting journalists, Fatah loyalists, civil society members, youth activists, and those whom Hamas security forces accused of criminal

activity. Hamas forces monitored private communications systems, including telephones, e-mail traffic, and social media sites, by demanding passwords, access to personal information, and seizure of personal electronic equipment of detainees. While Hamas membership did not appear to be a prerequisite for obtaining housing, education, or government services, authorities commonly reserved employment in some government positions in Gaza, such as the security services, for Hamas members only. In several instances Hamas detained individuals for interrogation and harassment based on the purported actions of their family members, particularly prodemocracy youth activists. HRW reported Hamas also arrested family members to put pressure on the perpetrator to surrender to authorities.

The IDF frequently raided Palestinian homes, including in Area A, most often at night, which it stated was due to operational necessity. Under occupation orders only IDF officers of lieutenant colonel rank and above could authorize entry into Palestinian private homes and institutions in the West Bank without a warrant, based upon military necessity. There were no reported cases of IDF soldiers punished for acting contrary to this requirement.

In the West Bank and Jerusalem, the Israeli Civil Administration (part of Israel's Ministry of Defense), the Jerusalem municipality, and the Ministry of Interior continued to demolish homes, cisterns, and other buildings and property constructed by Palestinians in areas under Israeli civil control on the basis that these buildings lacked Israeli planning licenses. Authorities generally did not offer compensation in these cases. Properties close to the separation barrier, IDF military installations, or firing ranges also remained subject to a heightened threat of demolition or confiscation. NGOs expressed great concern over demolitions in Area C of the West Bank. For example, on August 20, Israeli authorities demolished 11 residential structures, displacing 53 persons (including 33 children). Three of the demolished homes were 100-year-old historic structures built in Nablus. The other targeted structures were located in two Bedouin communities and the village of al-Aqaba.

As of December 29, Israel demolished 581 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C and East Jerusalem, displacing approximately 1,180 persons, compared with 660 structures and 1,100 persons in 2013.

In July the Israeli Ministry of Defense's Civil Administration revived a policy of "punitive demolitions," demolishing the home of a suspect in the April killing of an off-duty Israeli police officer in Hebron. With the exception of one such demolition in East Jerusalem in 2009, Israeli authorities had halted punitive demolitions since 2005 following recommendations of a military commission that found the practice did not act as a deterrent. In August authorities demolished the homes of two individuals suspected (although not captured, tried, or convicted) of the kidnapping and killing of three Israeli teenagers. Authorities sealed with concrete the home of a third suspect in this crime. According to NGOs, these demolitions displaced 23 individuals not charged with any criminal activity. Authorities carried out another punitive home demolition on the home of the family of an individual suspected of killing an Israeli police officer.

HRW documented five instances of punitive demolitions as of November 22 and reported that Israeli authorities stated they would demolish seven more family homes of Palestinians suspected of killing Israelis, including five homes in East Jerusalem. NGOs claimed these demolitions punished innocent family members and might amount to collective punishment.

Palestinians and human rights NGOs reported the IDF was largely unresponsive to Israeli settlers' actions against Palestinians in the West Bank, including demolition of property (see section 6, National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities).

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The PA Basic Law provides every person the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and expression, orally, in writing, or through any other form. PA laws do not specifically provide for freedom of press; however, PA institutions applied aspects of a proposed 1995 press law as actual law. Nonetheless, PA security forces in the West Bank and members of the Hamas security apparatus in the Gaza Strip continued to restrict freedom of speech and press. In contrast with 2013, there were no slander cases reported during the year.

Israeli authorities also placed limits on certain forms of expression in the occupied territories.

Freedom of Speech: Although no PA law prohibits criticism of the government, there were media reports PA authorities arrested some journalists and bloggers who either criticized or covered events that criticized the PA and PA officials. For example, in March members of Palestinian security forces in civilian clothes attacked a Wattan TV crew, including reporter Ahmad Melhem and cameraman Ahmed Zaki, as they covered anti-PA activities in Ramallah. Undercover security agents reportedly attempted to confiscate their cameras by force. Security agents detained the Wattan TV crew and later released them only after they promised to stop their coverage and leave the area. In addition to sometimes restricting reporters who criticized the PA government, there were several complaints during the year that the PA prevented journalists from covering events in the West Bank that were sympathetic to Hamas.

In the Gaza Strip, individuals publicly criticizing authorities risked reprisal by Hamas, including arrest, interrogation, seizure of property, and harassment. Civil society and youth activists, social media advocates, and individuals associated with political factions accused of criticizing Hamas in public fora, such as on the internet, faced punitive measures, including raids on their facilities and residences, arbitrary detention, and denial of permission to travel outside Gaza. The ICHR reported the detention of numerous protesters in the Gaza Strip. In March journalist Oruba Othman received threats of punitive actions after she published a report in the Lebanese newspaper *al-Akhbar* on March 4 regarding how Hamas security force officers gave Friday's religious sermons in military uniform. Othman reported to a local NGO that Iyad Albazam, the spokesperson for the Hamas "Ministry of Interior," claimed "the report is full of lies," and her Facebook page received threatening messages. There were reports authorities harassed activists working to raise awareness on sensitive social matters, such as the role of women and domestic violence. In March the Hamas General Intelligence services in the Gaza Strip prevented the Press House Foundation from holding a celebration to honor journalists in Gaza City, despite the Press House Foundation having obtained permission for the event from Hamas's "Ministry of Interior."

During the hostilities between Israel and Hamas in July and August, local media reported that 17 journalists – 16 Palestinian and one Italian – were killed in the Gaza Strip during Israel's military offensive. Many other journalists were injured. Additionally, there were reports of a number of Israeli attacks against Palestinian media outlets in Gaza. Israeli rockets targeted al-Aqsa TV channel on two separate occasions, July 29 and 31. The offices of al-Jazeera TV in Gaza were targeted on July 22, when bullets were fired at the station's offices. No injuries were reported in that incident, but the Foreign Press Association (FPA) strongly condemned the attack. On July 19, two Israeli missiles hit and destroyed the offices of the National Media Agency. Also, on July 16, the Sawt al-Wattan radio station, housed in the Dawood tower in Gaza, was shelled and three employees injured.

In Jerusalem displays of Palestinian political symbols were punishable by fines or imprisonment, as were public expressions of anti-Israeli sentiment, but authorities did not always enforce this restriction. Israeli security officials regularly prohibited or interrupted meetings or conferences held in Jerusalem affiliated with the PLO or PA, or with PA officials in attendance. For example,

on October 2, Israeli authorities banned an event in Jerusalem sponsored by the PLO entitled "Altering the Character of Jerusalem: The Forced Closure of Palestinian Institutions in Palestine's Capital." Many Palestinian journalists in Jerusalem contended that Israeli forces coordinated with right-wing Israelis to prevent Palestinian reports from being broadcast. In May, Israeli security forces detained Momen Shabanah, a cameraman, and Zaina Sandoka, a correspondent from Roya TV, as they covered Israeli extremist attacks on residents of Jerusalem's Old City. Israeli police told the crew they needed official permission to film, took their camera, deleted their images, and temporarily detained them.

In a series of raids conducted throughout the West Bank during the summer, Israeli security forces raided companies that facilitated media and confiscated equipment. In June security forces raided the offices of Turbo Design and seized several computers. The firm, located in Ramallah, did work for the periodical *This Week in Palestine*, UNRWA, the British Council, and a foreign diplomatic mission in Jerusalem.

Press Freedoms: Across the occupied territories, independent media operated with restrictions. The PA Ministry of Information requested Israeli reporters covering events in the West Bank register with the ministry. According to the PA deputy minister of information, the ministry will give permission to any Israeli journalists provided they do not live in an illegal settlement. While officially the PA was open to Israeli reporters covering events in the West Bank, Israeli reporters faced pressures from Palestinian journalists not to attend PA press events. In September, *Haaretz* journalist Amira Hass was evicted from a conference at Beir Zeit University in the West Bank, reportedly because of her Israeli nationality.

In the West Bank, the PA placed some restrictions on independent media as well as official media. In May the PA lifted its distribution ban in the West Bank on the twice-weekly, pro-Hamas *al-Risala* and the *Filistin* daily newspapers, but Israeli authorities forced the Ramallah-based printing house to stop printing and distributing them in the West Bank. Al-Aqsa TV reportedly enjoyed some access to work in the West Bank without harassment.

In the Gaza Strip, Hamas restricted independent media, especially non-Hamas-affiliated press and media outlets. In May, Hamas lifted its ban on three West Bank-based newspapers – *al-Quds*, *al-Ayyam*, and *al-Hayat al-Jadida*. Hostilities in the Gaza Strip prevented their distribution from July 10 to August 27. Hamas authorities permitted the broadcast of reporting and interviews featuring officials from the PA locally. Hamas allowed, with some restrictions, the operation of non-Hamas-affiliated broadcast media in the Gaza Strip. The PA-supported Palestine TV reportedly operated in the Gaza Strip.

During the July-August conflict in the Gaza Strip, Hamas allegedly harassed some journalists, including several from Western outlets, to prevent them from reporting on aspects of the hostilities that would reflect unfavorably on Hamas or possibly divulge sensitive information. These include photographs of Hamas fighters and locations from which Hamas fighters fired rockets into Israel. On August 11, the FPA condemned what it called Hamas' "deliberate official and unofficial incitement against journalists" and attempts to prevent journalists from covering the conflict. The FPA also alleged Hamas attempted to institute a vetting procedure for journalists and charged that Hamas harassed, threatened, or questioned foreign reporters working in Gaza. Some journalists, including the *New York Times* Jerusalem bureau chief, disputed some of FPA's claims.

Israeli authorities reportedly censored some security-related information on the Gaza conflict.

In July 2013 Hamas closed *Ma'an* and *al-Arabiya* bureaus in Gaza and questioned the *Ma'an* bureau chief over a report on the *Ma'an* website. Authorities subsequently allowed *Ma'an* and *al-Arabiya* to reopen their bureaus, but only *Ma'an* chose to do so. While the PA agreed to allow Gaza-based newspapers to be distributed in the West Bank beginning in April, Israeli authorities

intervened to stop their publication. In May the IDF raided the office of *al-Ayyam*, which had agreed to print the three Gaza-based papers, and informed the managers it would not allow the printing of the newspapers. Israeli reports characterized the raid as an attempt to shut down anti-Semitic publications in the West Bank. Following the raid the three Gaza-based papers were not published or circulated in the West Bank.

In areas of the West Bank where Israel controls access, Palestinian journalists complained they were repeatedly prevented from covering stories because the IDF does not recognize any Palestinian press credentials or credentials provided by the International Federation of Journalists. Few Palestinians held Israeli press credentials following Israeli revocation of the vast majority of their credentials during the Second Intifada, which began in 2000. They reportedly also faced discrimination, harassment, and violence in Jerusalem. Palestinian media companies operating in Jerusalem also faced difficulties. In June, Israeli police raided the offices of Palestinian television production company Palmedia as it was broadcasting a live morning program *Sabah al-Khair Ya Quds* (Good Morning Jerusalem) for the Palestinian television. Police forced the staff to stop the broadcast and arrested program director Nadir Beibers; cameraman Ashraf Al-Shweeki; and one of the guests. Police claimed that authorities had not licensed the program and that it incited against Israel. Authorities later released the journalists and guest.

Violence and Harassment: There were numerous reports PA security forces harassed, detained (occasionally with violence), prosecuted, and fined journalists during the year. Moreover, PA security forces also reportedly demanded at times the deletion of footage showing security personnel. In February, Palestinian police and security reportedly tried to prevent journalists from covering a protest in front of the PA headquarters in Ramallah against the PA president's decision to meet with an Israeli delegation. In July, Palestinian security forces stopped Filistin al-Yom TV's staff and other journalists from covering clashes in Jenin between youths and Israeli forces. Authorities reportedly also coerced the journalists to go to the police station, where one journalist claimed police beat and threatened him.

Some Palestinian journalists claimed the PA attempted to prevent reporting from affiliates perceived to be Hamas-friendly or that it actively tried to prevent journalists from reporting on events sympathetic to Hamas. In June, Palestinian security forces reportedly assaulted a group of journalists covering a sit-in organized by pro-Hamas protesters in Ramallah, who were demonstrating against political detentions of Hamas members by PA security forces.

Palestinian protesters also attacked journalists in the West Bank who they perceived to be Israeli. In May, Palestinian protesters reportedly attacked two Israeli journalists. PA security forces intervened to protect the journalists and removed them from the area after they suffered minor injuries.

In June the FPA condemned PA security forces' behavior when undercover PA security officials attacked a CNN crew in Hebron; the attackers also damaged a video camera and accused the crew of "incitement."

In the Gaza Strip, journalists faced arrest, harassment, and other pressure from Hamas due to their reporting. There were reports Hamas also summoned journalists for questioning in an effort to intimidate them. Hamas also constrained journalists' freedom of movement during the year, attempting to ban access to some official buildings as well as several prodemocracy protests. On May 15, Hamas security agents attacked with blackjacks and batons a group of journalists covering commemorations of Nakba Day in the Gaza Strip. In June Hamas-affiliated police officers tried to prevent a Sawt al-Sha'b radio station correspondent from interviewing government employees in the al-Nuseirat area of the Gaza Strip. Also in June, Gaza police officers assaulted

an al-Wattan radio correspondent while he interviewed Gaza residents expressing resentment at Hamas's inability to pay their salaries; the correspondent suffered a concussion.

During the year the FPA reported several Hamas practices aimed at pressuring journalists working in Gaza. These included efforts to establish "vetting procedures" that would effectively blacklist certain reporters, sending a series of intimidating text messages to journalists, and other harassment.

Throughout the year there were dozens of reported allegations that Israeli security forces actively worked to prevent Palestinian journalists from covering news stories in the West Bank. These actions included preventing reporters from traveling through checkpoints within the West Bank, harassment from Israeli soldiers, and acts of violence against journalists. In January, IDF soldiers reportedly fired tear gas canisters directly at a Wafa News Agency photographer as he covered weekly demonstrations in Kafir Kadoum village west of Nablus.

In January, Israeli military forces detained a correspondent from *al-Hayat al-Jadida* newspaper who covered Israeli home demolitions in the Jordan Valley. Security forces reportedly also injured several Palestinian reporters in the West Bank with the use of rubber bullets. In April security forces reportedly repeatedly shot Ma'ath Mish'al, a photographer from the Turkish Anadol News Agency, in his legs while he covered a weekly demonstration northwest of Ramallah. Mish'al reported to a local NGO that an Israeli soldier shot him at close range with unspecified munitions; twelve projectiles reportedly hit his legs.

In July reporters accused the IDF of using live ammunition against reporters. Israeli forces reportedly injured Thaer Abu Baker, a photographer and correspondent with Wafa News Agency, by using live ammunition at a march from Jenin to the al-Jalameh checkpoint in the West Bank.

Palestinian journalists also claimed that Israeli security forces detained Palestinian journalists and forced them to delete images and video under threat of violence or threats they would be arrested and placed under administrative detention if they did not comply. In January, Mohamed Suboh, photographer for *Palnet News* website, was detained while covering an Israeli raid in the town of al-Khader west of Bethlehem. Suboh told a local NGO that Israeli security forces informed him they would arrest him if he did not delete footage of the raid from his equipment. On October 30, Israeli police reportedly assaulted and severely beat a volunteer correspondent for Huna al-Quds network Hazem Sandouqa who was covering clashes in Jerusalem. Police detained him, forced him to delete the photographs in his camera, and threatened to assault him again if he took additional photographs.

Additionally, there were several claims in the West Bank and Jerusalem that Israeli forces failed to intervene when settlers attacked Palestinian journalists. In March a group of armed Israeli settlers reportedly attacked three photojournalists near Beit Eil, north of Ramallah. Israeli soldiers in the area reportedly intervened only after there was major damage to the reporters' vehicle. In the same incident, two other Palestinian photographers were allegedly attacked by settlers, one of whom brandished a firearm, while attempting to photograph the attack on Momani. The Israeli authorities later asked for footage of the incident to identify the settlers; however, the footage did not lead to any prosecutions during the year.

In March, Israeli soldiers detained Fida Nasser, a correspondent with Palestine Today TV, after Israeli settlers allegedly beat her and sprayed her with red wine. The FPA condemned several military incursions undertaken by Israeli forces in the West Bank to include shooting near the Aida Refugee Camp on March 13 where Israeli border police allegedly fired on a marked Associated Press vehicle as it obeyed instructions to leave.

Israeli authorities prevented Palestinian journalists resident in the West Bank from covering stories that occur in Jerusalem because they required an Israeli travel permit, and such a permit category for journalists does not exist. Palestinian journalists who obtained permits for other reasons, as well as Jerusalem-resident journalists who identified themselves as Palestinian, reported incidents of harassment, racism, and occasional violence when seeking to cover news in Jerusalem, especially in and around the Old City.

In March a rubber bullet struck Reuters photographer Sinan Abu Mezr in his chest while he covered a demonstration that originated at the Damascus Gate in East Jerusalem to protest the killings of Palestinians in the West Bank. Abu Mezr reported to a local press freedom NGO that soldiers fired a rubber bullet at him from an estimated distance of five to six yards while he covered Israeli soldiers arresting a protester.

Also in March, Israeli soldiers reportedly attacked a group of journalists covering an Earth Day commemoration in Jerusalem. Agence France-Presse photographer Ahmed Algarbali reported to a local NGO that Israeli forces threw sound and gas grenades, and fired rubber bullets at the gathering estimated at 25 participants to disperse them. Algarbali stated to the NGO, "I ran away from the grenades and bullets, but I was injured in my head from a rubber bullet that caused a deep wound of almost half an inch, and I was transferred to a hospital for treatment." The journalists submitted a formal complaint to the Foreign Journalists' Syndicate claiming the injury resulted from deliberate targeting of journalists. The soldiers reportedly denied the accusation against them; however, Algarbali claimed that the journalists provided video evidence to prove their charges. Three other journalists were reportedly hit by rubber bullets in the same incident.

The FPA strongly condemned what it called "thuggish behavior and deliberate intimidation" demonstrated by Israeli border police against journalists and cameramen covering events at Damascus Gate on May 25 (Jerusalem Day). Israeli police reportedly aggressively forced journalists to move far from the scene despite being in an area designated for the press; police reportedly pushed, kicked, and blocked other journalists from working. Police also reportedly failed to protect journalists from aggression by pro-Israeli demonstrators against them. Police prevented accredited journalists – Israelis, Palestinians, and foreigners alike – from covering the event.

Israeli air strikes injured or killed several journalists and their family members on the Gaza Strip, and there were allegations the Israeli government targeted journalists and media outlets.

There were numerous reports from journalists that Israeli authorities routinely harassed them when the journalists tried to report in Israeli-controlled areas of the West Bank. There were also reports of Israeli authorities detaining, assaulting, or intimidating journalists. On October 26, while covering confrontations between Palestinian youth and Israeli soldiers in Silwad village near Ramallah, Associated Press photographer Majdi Shtayyeh was hit by a bullet fired by an Israeli soldier. Shtayyeh told local press that while he and a number of other journalists covered the clashes, a military vehicle stopped near them, and a soldier started firing rubber bullets in their direction at close range. While at least one bullet hit his bulletproof vest, another one hit his arm. The FPA condemned the attack and published a YouTube clip of the incident. In December, two Israeli journalists, columnist Gideon Levy and photographer Alex Levac, were reportedly briefly detained by the Israeli army and questioned at a West Bank checkpoint as they attempted to re-enter Israel. The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* described the detention as an attempt to undermine the essential work of journalists. Soldiers at the scene claimed the two journalists verbally abused and spit on security officers, a claim the two journalists denied.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: The PA prohibits calls for violence, displays of arms, and racist slogans in PA-funded and controlled official media. There were no confirmed reports of any

legal action against, or prosecution of, any person publishing items counter to these PA guidelines. Media throughout the occupied territories reported practicing self-censorship.

Civil society organizations reported Hamas censored television programs and written content, such as newspapers and books.

There were no reports the Israeli government monitored the media in the occupied territories. Israeli authorities retain the right to review and approve in advance the printing of all Jerusalem-based Arabic publications for material perceived as a security threat. Anecdotal evidence suggested Israeli authorities did not actively review the Jerusalem-based *al-Quds* newspaper or other Jerusalem-based Arabic publications. Jerusalem-based publications reported that, based on previous experiences with Israeli censorship, over time they learned what was acceptable and self-censored publications accordingly.

There were complaints Israeli authorities pressured broadcasters to close operations. In February threats from Israeli authorities forced Sherah TV in Tulkarem to stop broadcasting temporarily. In April, Israeli authorities sent a letter to Wattan TV in Ramallah demanding it stop broadcasting immediately or face additional actions. In June, Israeli forces raided the offices of Trance Media, a media services company, in Ramallah, Hebron, and Nablus and confiscated its equipment.

Hamas-backed news outlets alleged that Israeli forces intentionally disrupted their broadcasts during the July-August conflict. In July Filistin al-Yom TV, Sawt al-Sha'b radio, Sawt al-Quds radio, and al-Aqsa radio broadcasts were disrupted; some reported that messages against Hamas were broadcast over the airwaves.

Palestinians alleged that Israeli authorities circumvented proper procedures as outlined in the Paris Protocols by going directly to the broadcasters, and it put independent stations in a difficult legal position because they received the proper licenses and frequencies from the Palestinian Ministry of Communications and yet Israeli authorities told them they did not have the right to broadcast. In cases where Palestinian broadcasters ignored Israeli demands to close, Israeli authorities sometimes raided them and seized their equipment.

During the year Palestinian local broadcaster Wattan TV faced additional setbacks in its legal efforts to retrieve its foreign-funded equipment confiscated in 2012 by the IDF from its Ramallah Studio (in Area A of the West Bank). In June the Israeli High Court of Justice rejected Wattan's petition challenging the confiscation of its equipment, following several hearings during which Wattan's lawyers were not allowed, for security reasons, to view the evidence the IDF presented against Wattan. While attorneys for Wattan TV argued they effectively proved the broadcasts posed no threat to communications in Israel (such as airport communications), they complained about an opaque legal process that allowed the government to keep testimony even from the parties to the case based on security concerns.

As of the end of the year, Wattan was pursuing a new broadcasting frequency through the Palestinian-Israeli Joint Technical Committee. Because the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority do not agree on the process for assigning television frequencies to Palestinian media outlets – with the PA assigning frequencies through the International Telecommunication Union, and Israeli authorities insisting on using the joint technical committee, as specified in the Interim Agreement – the case was not decided by year's end.

Libel Laws/National Security: While there were some accusations of slander or libel against journalists in the West Bank, there were no reports of legal action taken during the year by the PA.

There were reports, specifically during Operation Protective Edge, that Hamas used security justifications or slander or libel laws to censor public criticism.

There were reports Israeli authorities used security justifications or slander or libel laws to censor public criticism. In April, Israeli authorities accused al-Quds.com correspondent Muhannad al-Adam of fabricating a story when he posted a photograph of a settlement product being served at a conference held by the Consumer Protection Association to announce the al-Quds Heritage and Creativity Festival. The undersecretary of the ministry of Jerusalem affairs, in a Facebook posting, claimed the story could be considered libel.

Internet Freedom

There were no PA restrictions on access to the internet; however, there were reports that the PA, Hamas, and Israel monitored e-mail and internet chat rooms. There were multiple instances in which the PA arrested or detained Palestinians because of their posts on social media. On September 7, the PA Preventive Security Organization arrested and interrogated blogger Aslan Tawil from Fara'ta village near Qalqilila for his Facebook postings criticizing the Palestinian president. On October 21, the Palestinian Intelligence Services arrested freelance photographer Ghassan Najajra at his home in Nahaleen village near Bethlehem and charged him with inciting violence against the Palestinian security forces. Najajra's lawyer stated that the accusations were based on Facebook postings written by his client. He remained in custody until November 6.

Based on anecdotal reports from Palestinian civil society organizations and social media practitioners, Hamas authorities monitored the internet activities and postings of Gaza Strip residents. Individuals posting negative reports or commentary about Hamas, its policies, or affiliated organizations faced questioning, and at times authorities required them to remove or modify online postings. No information was available regarding punishment for not complying with such demands.

Israeli authorities did not restrict access to the internet; however, they monitored e-mail and internet chat rooms for security purposes. During the year the Israeli government arrested a number of Palestinians for incitement, including for posts on social media. For example, authorities arrested a Palestinian man from Hebron for creating a Facebook page called "The Intifada of Hebron."

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

In the West Bank, the PA did not restrict academic freedom, and there were no known reports of PA censorship of school curricula, plays, films, or exhibits in the West Bank. Palestinian law provides for academic freedom, but individuals or officials from academic institutions reportedly self-censored curricula. There were no reports the PA officially interfered with education during the year. While there was no overt threat to academic freedom, faculty members knew there were security elements' present on university campuses among the student body and faculty, which may have led to self-censorship.

Public and UNRWA schools in Gaza followed the same curriculum as West Bank schools. Palestinians in Gaza reported that generally there was limited interference by Hamas at the primary, secondary or university levels. Nonetheless, Hamas reportedly interfered in teaching methodologies or curriculum deemed to violate Islamic identity, the religion, or "traditions" as defined by the de facto authority. Hamas also interfered if there were reports of classes or activities that mixed genders.

In the Gaza Strip, Hamas authorities sought to disrupt some educational, cultural, and international exchange programs. Palestinians in Gaza are routinely required to obtain exit permits prior to departing Gaza, and students participating in certain cultural and education programs (including programs sponsored by foreign governments and international organizations) can face questioning from de facto authorities, for example, on the purpose and duration of travel and how the visas

were coordinated. The de facto authorities can and did deny exit for travelers, whether through the Rafah crossing or the Erez crossing.

Hamas authorities also interfered in local cultural programs. There were continued reports the de facto government suppressed cultural expression that might offend local religious and cultural values and identity.

The Israeli government at times prevented Palestinians from accessing education. Israeli government forces destroyed at least 90 schools in the Gaza Strip during Operation Protective Edge; because refugees were sheltering in school buildings, the start of the 2014-15 school year was delayed. Israeli restrictions on movement adversely affected academic institutions and access to education in the West Bank, because Israeli checkpoints, although they decreased in number, created difficulties for students and faculty commuting to schools and university campuses. In numerous instances students reported being late or missing days of classes due to significant delays at checkpoints (see section 2.d.).

The Israeli Supreme Court during the year upheld the 2000 Israeli ban on students from the Gaza Strip attending West Bank universities. Generally, students in the Gaza Strip did not apply to West Bank universities because they understood Israel would deny permit requests.

During the year Israeli authorities prevented students at schools on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif several times from reaching their classrooms.

Israeli travel restrictions also prevented students in the West Bank and Gaza from participating in study programs abroad. Israeli officials denied Palestinians travel permits, thus preventing them to transit to Jerusalem for visa interviews or across the Allenby Bridge to Jordan. In some instances students were asked to submit to security interviews prior to receiving permits and were detained after the security interview. The travel challenges were particularly acute for Palestinians from Gaza, since Israeli authorities often denied travel permits through Erez. In these instances Palestinians from Gaza could elect to travel through the Rafah crossing, but frequent border closures and limitations on travel also kept candidates from participating in programs.

Palestinian law permits public meetings, processions, and assemblies within legal limits. It requires permits for rallies, demonstrations, and large cultural events, and the PA rarely denied them. Both the PA and Hamas forces, however, broke up selected protests and demonstrations during the year. Following two Hamas rallies in the West Bank in 2012 that disbanded without incident, the PA and Hamas agreed to ease their respective five-year bans on rallies. Due to Hamas allegedly blowing up a number of houses in Gaza owned by leaders of Fatah, however, the PA decided to cancel its planned November 11 commemoration event honoring the 10th anniversary of former PA president Yasser Arafat's death.

In July 2013 HRW issued a press release calling upon the PA to investigate alleged police beatings and arbitrary arrests of demonstrators in Ramallah earlier that month. According to HRW police injured 10 protesters and arrested five, including three whom police allegedly forcibly removed from a hospital where they received emergency treatment. In September 2013 AI issued a report stating that the PA continued to use unwarranted force against demonstrators.

According to a Hamas decree, any public assembly or celebration in the Gaza Strip requires prior permission, in contradiction of the PA Basic Law. Generally, Hamas did not permit Fatah members to hold rallies. Activists reported Hamas officials harassed women in public and impeded their ability to assemble peacefully.

Hamas officials also attempted to impede potential criticism of Hamas policies by imposing arbitrary demands for the approval of meetings on political or social topics.

The IDF continued to use a 1967 military order that effectively prohibited Palestinian demonstrations and limited freedom of speech in the West Bank. The order stipulates that a "political" gathering of 10 or more persons requires a permit from the regional commander of military forces. The penalty for a breach of the order is 10 years' imprisonment or a heavy fine.

Various NGOs noted the IDF demonstrated a lack of respect for freedom of assembly and often responded to demonstrators aggressively. Israeli security forces used force, including live fire, against Palestinians and others involved in demonstrations in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, killing 13 (see section 1.a.). The IDF used force particularly against weekly protests in or near Areas B and C. The IDF responded to protests with military crowd-control techniques or force, using weapons such as tear gas and stun grenades to push back protesters, which NGOs alleged often amounted to using nonlethal force in a lethal manner.

The IDF Central Command declared new areas of the West Bank to be "closed military zones" and maintained the same designation for areas adjacent to the separation barrier in the villages of Bil'in and Ni'lin every Friday during the hours in which Palestinian, Israeli, and international activists regularly demonstrated. There were frequent skirmishes between the protesters and IDF personnel. IDF and Israeli police personnel stationed on the far side of the barrier during weekly protests in those villages responded to rock throwing with tear gas, stun grenades, skunk water, sound bombs, and rubber-coated bullets. Multiple human rights organizations stated that the IDF's use of crowd control devices, including shooting tear gas canisters directly at protesters, constituted lethal use of force. There were reports the IDF killed at least one person with "nonlethal" crowd control devices, including sponge rounds, which typically include an aluminum base and plastic body.

On January 1, an 85-year-old man in Kafr Qaddum reportedly died after inhaling tear gas when a tear gas canister fired at protesters commemorating the 49th anniversary of the Fatah movement landed inside his home.

ACRI continued to report arbitrary restrictions on the freedom of assembly in Jerusalem, including the use of unlawful arrests to intimidate demonstrators.

b. Freedom of Association

In the West Bank, the PA law allows freedom of association, but authorities sometimes limited it, including for labor organizations (see section 7.a.). In August the media reported that PA security forces raided Future for Palestine, an NGO established by former PA prime minister Salaam Fayyad.

In the Gaza Strip, Hamas attempted to prevent various organizations from operating, including some it accused of being Fatah-affiliated, as well as private businesses and NGOs it deemed to be in violation of its interpretation of Islamic social norms. The Hamas "Ministry of Interior" has supervisory powers over all NGOs, allowing the ministry to request documents, and there were instances where the de facto authorities temporarily shut down NGOs that did not comply.

Activists reported women's rights groups faced significant pressure from Hamas.

Israel maintained prohibitions on some prominent Jerusalem-based Palestinian institutions, such as Orient House, which was the de facto PLO office in Jerusalem and has been closed since 2001, claiming the groups violated the Oslo Accords by operating on behalf of the PA in Jerusalem.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's [International Religious Freedom Report](#).

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

The PA Basic Law provides for freedom of movement, and the PA generally did not restrict freedom of movement. The Basic Law does not specify regulations regarding foreign travel, emigration, or repatriation.

Hamas authorities in the Gaza Strip restricted some foreign travel and required exit permits for Palestinians departing through the Gaza-Israel Erez crossing. Hamas also prevented the exit of some Palestinians from Gaza to protest the purpose of their travel or coerce a behavior change, such as the payment of taxes and fines. There were some reports unmarried women faced restrictions on their travel.

The IDF restricted Palestinians' movement within the occupied territories and for foreign travel, and, citing military necessity, it increased these restrictions at times. In July security officials, citing "security reasons," denied 1,463 Palestinians exit to Jordan, although none was arrested, according to Palestinian police data. This total was more than all denied in 2013 (1,266 persons). Many reportedly lived abroad and endured economic and social hardship by being forced to stay abroad.

Barriers to movement included checkpoints, a separation barrier that divides the majority of the West Bank from Israel and East Jerusalem, internal road closures, and restrictions on the entry of persons and goods into and out of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Restrictions on movement affected virtually all aspects of life, including access to places of worship, employment, agricultural lands, schools, and hospitals, as well as the conduct of journalistic, humanitarian, and NGO activities.

During the year Israel eased the naval blockade off the Gaza Strip coast, extending fishing limits from three to six nautical miles, although from March to May, it temporarily reversed the limit to three miles, citing rocket fire. Authorities towed fishermen who moved beyond the six-mile mark during the rest of the year to Israeli ports and detained them.

The PA, Hamas, and the Israeli government generally cooperated with humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons and refugees; however, both Hamas and Israeli officials constrained UNRWA's ability to operate freely in Gaza. AI and HRW also reported that the Israeli government denied their employees permits to enter Gaza.

In-country Movement: PA authorities did not interfere with movement within the West Bank.

Hamas authorities did not appear to enforce routine restrictions on internal movement within the Gaza Strip, although there were some areas to which Hamas prohibited access. Increasing pressure to conform to Hamas's interpretation of Islamic norms led to significant restrictions on movement by women.

The Israeli government imposed significant restrictions on movement in the West Bank and between the West Bank and Jerusalem. During Operation Brother's Keeper, parts of the West Bank were on "lockdown" with residents unable to leave their cities or villages. Israeli authorities frequently prohibited travel between some or all West Bank towns and deployed "flying" (temporary) checkpoints. Palestinians who lived in affected villages stated that such "internal closures" continued to have negative economic effects. During periods of potential unrest and on some major Israeli, Jewish, and Muslim holidays, Israeli authorities enacted "comprehensive external closures," which precluded Palestinians from leaving the West Bank. Generally, Palestinians could enter Israel and Jerusalem through 11 of 36 checkpoints between the West Bank and Israel. The IDF also imposed temporary curfews confining Palestinians to their

homes during arrest operations. During the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, Israeli authorities increased restrictions on Palestinians entering Jerusalem and Israel, only allowing entry to Palestinian men age 50 and above and women age 40 and above. In 2013 authorities allowed men above age 40, women and girls of all ages, and boys below 12 access without permits. According to Israeli authorities, the number of Palestinians crossing checkpoints into Jerusalem on Fridays during Ramadan dipped significantly. For example, on July 18, an estimated 16,300 persons crossed the checkpoints, as opposed to approximately 114,400 who crossed on the same date in 2013.

The Israeli government continued construction of the separation barrier, which ran largely inside the West Bank and along parts of the Green Line (the 1949 Armistice line). By use of special permits, Israel continued to restrict movement and development within this area, including access by some international organizations. NGOs reported that Israeli authorities allowed many Palestinians separated from their land access to their property only a few days each year. Private security companies employed by the Israeli government controlled many points of access through the barrier, and international organizations and local human rights groups claimed these companies did not respond to requests to move goods and officials through the barrier. Many Palestinians and NGOs reported there were higher levels of mistreatment at checkpoints run by security contractors than at those staffed by IDF soldiers. The barrier affected the commute of children to school in Jerusalem and some farmers' access to land and water resources. Palestinian farmers continued to report difficulty accessing their lands in Israeli-controlled Area C and in the seam zone, the closed area between the separation barrier and the Green Line. The NGO Machsom Watch reported that more than 24 Palestinian villages had lands trapped in the seam zone, and a complicated Israeli permit regime (consisting of more than 10 different permits) prevented Palestinians from fully using their lands.

Israel eased restrictions on access to farmland in the Gaza Strip near the boundary with Israel and to fishing areas along the coast. Despite this easing, reports indicated Israel continued to enforce "buffer zone" restrictions on nonfarmers. The buffer zone encompassed approximately 24 square miles, representing 17 percent of the Gaza Strip's territory. OCHA estimated nearly 35 percent of the Gaza Strip's cultivable land was located within the restricted area.

Gaza's fishing waters were partially inaccessible to Palestinians due to Israeli restrictions, but in 2012 Israel eased restrictions on fishing along the coast by allowing fishermen to venture out to six nautical miles instead of the previous limit of three nautical miles. Israel reduced the limit to three miles from March until May, due to rocket fire that raised security concerns. The United Nations reported that the timing of the restriction was "of particular concern" and affected the livelihood of approximately 3,500 fishermen. Israeli naval patrol boats strictly enforced this fishing limit, which was a reduction from 20 nautical miles, as designated under the 1994 Agreement on the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area (later incorporated into the 1995 Interim Agreement). Israeli naval forces regularly fired warning shots at Palestinian fishermen entering the restricted sea areas, in some cases directly targeting the fishermen, according to OCHA. The Israeli armed forces often confiscated fishing boats intercepted in these areas and detained the fishermen, while Palestinian fishermen reported confusion over the exact limits of the new fishing boundaries.

During the year Israeli security forces restricted movement around parts of Jerusalem, including the neighborhoods of Beit Hanina, Shufat, Silwan, Ras al-Amud, Wadi al-Joz, Al Tur, Jabal al-Mukabir, and Jerusalem's Old City, where forces established roadblocks and checkpoints. Israeli security forces also blocked entrances to the Jerusalem neighborhood of Issawiya and frequently established checkpoints at other entrances, inspecting each person entering or leaving the neighborhood. NGOs alleged Israeli authorities attempted to limit Palestinians' movement in areas under Israeli control. Military authorities continued to restrict severely Palestinian vehicular and

foot traffic in the commercial center of Hebron, citing a need to protect several hundred Israeli settler residents. They prohibited Palestinians from driving on most roads in downtown Hebron and from walking on Shuhada Street and other roads in the Old City; however, Israeli settlers had free access to these roads. The prohibition, which began in 2000, resulted in the closure of 1,829 businesses and 1,014 Palestinian housing units, according to B'Tselem; the IDF closed most shops on the street and sealed entrances to Palestinian houses. Demolition orders in and around Hebron also threatened single buildings, family homes, and other civilian structures; in some cases authorities subjected entire villages such as Dkaika, southeast of Hebron, to demolition orders. During the year Israeli authorities demolished approximately 600 Bedouin structures, displacing 1,215 persons.

Foreign Travel: PA authorities did not limit residents' foreign travel.

Hamas authorities in the Gaza Strip enforced movement restrictions on Palestinians attempting to exit Gaza to Israel via the Erez Crossing and to Egypt via the Rafah Crossing. They occasionally prevented Fatah members and youth activists from exiting through either crossing. Hamas authorities also restricted some foreign travel and required exit permits for Palestinians wishing to exit through the Gaza-Israel Erez crossing.

Following Operation Protective Edge, Israel partially eased the severe restrictions on movement and access to the Gaza Strip, imposed following Hamas's rise to power in 2007, by allowing cement, steel bars, and a doubling of aggregate materials through the Kerem Shalom crossing under a UN-brokered mechanism. Categories of individuals permitted to enter or exit the Gaza Strip at the Erez Crossing with Israel were largely limited to humanitarian cases; however, the Israeli government also continued to permit a limited number of businesspersons to cross during the year.

Restricted access to Jerusalem had a negative effect on patients and medical staff trying to reach the six Palestinian hospitals there that offered specialized care unavailable in the West Bank. IDF soldiers at checkpoints subjected Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) ambulances from the West Bank to harassment and delays or refused them entry into Jerusalem even in emergency cases. When ambulances lacked access, medics moved patients across checkpoints from an ambulance on one side to a second ambulance (usually one of five East Jerusalem-based ambulances) or a private vehicle on the other side. The PRCS reported hundreds of such actions taken against its teams and humanitarian services during the year. Most incidents included blocking access to those in need, preventing their transport to specialized medical centers, or maintaining delays at checkpoints for periods sometimes lasting up to two hours. Most incidents took place at the Qalandiyah and Az-'Za'ayem checkpoints leading to Jerusalem, while the remainder took place at other checkpoints circling the West Bank.

The IDF restricted students in the Gaza Strip from studying in the West Bank or Israel and limited West Bank Palestinians from university study in Jerusalem and Israel (see section 2.a.). Palestinians possessing Jerusalem identity cards issued by the Israeli government needed special documents to travel abroad. Upon individual requests by Palestinians, the Jordanian government issued passports to them.

According to NGOs, residency restrictions affected family reunification, which did not qualify as a reason to enter the West Bank. For a child in the Gaza Strip, Israeli authorities permitted access to a parent in the West Bank only if no other relative was resident in the Gaza Strip. Israeli authorities did not permit Palestinians who were abroad during the 1967 War, or whose residence permits the Israeli government subsequently withdrew, to reside permanently in the occupied territories. It was difficult for foreign-born spouses and children of Palestinians to obtain

residency. Authorities required Palestinian spouses of Jerusalem residents to obtain a residency permit with reported delays of several years to obtain them.

Exile: Neither the PA nor Hamas imposed forced exile.

Continued Israeli revocations of Jerusalem identity cards amounted to forced exile to the occupied territories or abroad. According to HaMoked, an Israeli human rights organization, the Israeli Ministry of Interior again during the year renewed "temporary" orders authorizing the revocation of Jerusalem residency rights from legal residents. Between 1967 and 2013, Israel revoked the status of 14,309 Palestinians from East Jerusalem. In 2013 Israel revoked the residency permits of 106 Palestinians holding Jerusalem identification cards, including 50 women and 24 minors, and reinstated the residency of 35 Palestinians with Jerusalem identification cards. Reasons for revocation included having acquired residency or citizenship in another country, living "abroad" (including in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip) for more than seven years, or, most commonly, being unable to prove a "center of life," interpreted as full-time residency, in Jerusalem. Some Palestinians born in Jerusalem but who studied abroad reported losing their Jerusalem residency status.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

OCHA estimated that by August 5, hostilities during Operation Protective Edge internally displaced approximately 520,000 persons in Gaza, who sought shelter in UNRWA schools, public buildings, or with host families. By late August UNRWA housed more than 293,000 IDPs in 85 UNRWA schools across Gaza and an additional 45,000 in government schools, resulting in the postponement of the school year due to start on August 24. The United Nations reported that as of late August, UNRWA registered an additional 137,000 IDPs living with host families. The United Nations estimated 96,000 Palestinian refugee dwellings – more than twice as many homes as initially estimated – were damaged or destroyed, according to UNRWA's technical assessment completed on December 15. At year's end UNRWA school buildings continued to serve as shelters for 19,010 IDPs as a result of Operation Protective Edge.

In the West Bank and East Jerusalem, OCHA estimated that house demolitions, as of December 29, displaced 1,177 individuals. According to OCHA a number of policies drove displacement in the West Bank and East Jerusalem; these included displacements linked to settlement activity. In Area C and East Jerusalem, authorities have demolished hundreds of Palestinian homes and other structures each year due to the lack of Israeli-issued building permits. According to OCHA, restrictive planning makes it almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain permits, while providing preferential treatment for Israeli settlements. OCHA noted that in many cases displacement results from a combination of factors, including settler violence, movement restrictions, and restricted access to services and resources. Authorities also displaced Palestinians in East Jerusalem due to forced evictions, facilitating takeover of their property by settler organizations, and making it difficult for Palestinians to secure residency status.

In addition to demolition-related displacements, during the year the Israeli government carried out "punitive demolitions" of the homes of individuals suspected of serious crimes and the homes of their families (see section 1.f.).

UNRWA and humanitarian organizations provided services to aid IDPs in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, with some limitations due to Israeli restrictions on movement and border access.

Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: There were no reports of persons seeking asylum in the occupied territories. According to an UNRWA estimate, as of January 1, there were 754,411 registered Palestinian

refugees in the West Bank and more than 1.24 million in the Gaza Strip, many living in 27 UNRWA-affiliated refugee camps, 19 of which were in the West Bank and eight in Gaza. One-quarter of refugees in the West Bank lived in refugee camps. The refugees included those displaced as a result of the 1948 conflict in Israel and their descendants.

Refugee Abuse: The Israeli government obstructed refugee access to UNRWA-provided humanitarian assistance in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. UNRWA estimated that, prior to Operation Protective Edge, more than 70 percent of the population of the Gaza Strip depended on services provided by UNRWA. Operation Protective Edge affected the entire population of the Gaza Strip, and by mid-August, UNRWA and the World Food Program began food distributions designed to reach the entire 1.8 million population of Gaza.

Israeli security operations in the West Bank and East Jerusalem rose significantly during the year, leading to a sharp increase in both injuries and fatalities to Palestinian refugees. In 2013 UNRWA began reporting a sharp increase in the number of Palestinian refugees killed and injured during law enforcement activities carried out by Israeli security forces in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This trend continued during the year. UNRWA observed increased IDF use of live ammunition during confrontations with Palestinian refugees. According to UNRWA, in 2012 there were no Palestinian refugee fatalities and 38 injuries in confrontations with the IDF, none as a result of live ammunition. In 2013 there were 17 fatalities among refugees, including 15 from the use of live ammunition, and 486 injuries, 49 caused by live ammunition. As of August 26, there were 17 fatalities among refugees, including 16 from live ammunition, and 697 injuries in and around camps, including 142 caused by live ammunition.

Access to Basic Services: All UNRWA projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip required Israeli government permits. Many planned UNRWA construction projects in the Gaza Strip remained pending approval by Israeli authorities. Between March 2013 and August 2014, Israeli authorities approved only one new construction project, valued at more than \$111 million, of 38 proposed projects UNRWA submitted for approval. As of late 2012, UNRWA received Israeli approval for the construction of 2,909 housing units (equal to 29 percent of the 10,000 foreseen under the UNRWA Gaza Recovery and Reconstruction Plan).

During the first 11 months of the year, movement restrictions imposed by Israeli authorities on the West Bank resulted in the loss of 22 UNRWA staff days. During that same period, on 16 occasions at checkpoints entering Jerusalem, Israeli authorities refused to permit UNRWA staff members in UN vehicles to cross without a vehicle search, which UNRWA stated would have violated UN immunity. On one of these occasions, Israeli authorities carried out an unauthorized vehicle search in violation of the immunity of the United Nations.

On the other 15 occasions, the UN vehicle turned back in order to attempt crossing at a different checkpoint. On 11 additional occasions, Israeli authorities carried out unauthorized searches of UNRWA vehicles at other West Bank checkpoints. UNRWA reported that delivery of services was problematic in the area between the West Bank barrier and the 1949 armistice line, in particular in the Bartaa area and in three refugee communities near Qalqilya. Essential infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, including water and sanitation services, continued to be in a state of severe disrepair prior to the outbreak of hostilities in July and August, due in part to an inability to import spare parts and components under Israeli import restrictions. During Operation Protective Edge, Israeli armed forces destroyed electrical, water, and other public infrastructure. Estimates of the cost to repair the damage ranged from 15.6 billion to as high as 31.2 billion Israeli new shekels (\$4-\$8 billion).

The deterioration of socioeconomic conditions during the year severely affected refugees in the Gaza Strip, even before Operation Protective Edge. In 2013 the rate of food insecurity reached 56

percent among refugees, and UNRWA reported that food security continued to deteriorate due to regional developments, tunnel closures, and increases in food prices.

A shortage of school buildings during the year meant that quality of education was a major problem, resulting in a double-shift system, shorter hours, and a high number of students per classroom. Prior to Operation Protective Edge, UNRWA operated 245 schools in 156 school buildings with more than 230,000 refugee students in the Gaza Strip. During the 2013-14 school year, approximately 86 percent of UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip operated on a double-shift system, with an average of 38 pupils per classroom. During Operation Protective Edge, hostilities damaged 83 of these schools.

Stateless Persons

According to NGOs, 40,000 to 50,000 individuals in the Gaza Strip did not have identification cards recognized by Israel. Some of these persons were born in the Gaza Strip, but Israel never recognized them as residents; some fled the Gaza Strip during the 1967 War; and some left Gaza for various reasons after 1967 and later returned. A small number were born in the Gaza Strip and never left, and they had only Hamas-issued identification cards. The Israeli government controlled the Palestinian Population Registry that would allow stateless persons to obtain status.

Section 3. Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The PA Basic Law provides Palestinians with the ability to elect their government through democratic means, but the PA has not held elections in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, or Gaza since 2006. Residents of the Gaza Strip under Hamas since 2007 were unable to choose their own government or hold it accountable. Civil society organizations in the Gaza Strip stated that Hamas authorities and other conservative Islamist groups did not tolerate public dissent, opponents, civic activism, or the promotion of values that ran contrary to their political and religious ideology.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: In 2006 the 132-member PLC was elected in a process under the PA Basic Law that international observers concluded generally met democratic standards in providing citizens the ability to change their government peacefully. Hamas-backed candidates participated in the 2006 PLC elections as the "Change and Reform Movement" and won 74 of 132 seats. Fatah won 45 seats, and independents and candidates from third parties won the remaining seats. The PLC lacked a quorum and did not meet during the year. Although the Israeli government and the PA followed mutually agreed guidelines for Palestinians residing in Jerusalem to vote in 2005 and 2006, Israeli authorities did not allow all Palestinians in Jerusalem to vote, and those who could vote were required to do so via post offices (of which there were few), thereby complicating their ability to vote. No date was set for new national elections by year's end.

Political Parties and Political Participation: The PA allowed a diversity of political parties to exist but limited the ability of Hamas members to campaign and organize rallies, although PA officials slightly eased this policy during the year. In Gaza Hamas allowed other political parties to exist but severely restricted their activities.

Participation of Women and Minorities: Legally women and minorities can vote and participate in political life on the same basis as men and nonminority citizens, although women faced significant social and cultural barriers in the West Bank. There were 17 women in the 132-member PLC, which represented West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem districts, and three women in the 23-member cabinet. There were seven Christians in the PLC and two in the cabinet. Women faced

significant barriers to their political participation in Gaza. Hamas excluded women from leadership positions.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

Palestinian law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, and the government respected the law, making progress in investigations and prosecutions during the year.

Corruption: The PA's anticorruption commission consisted of special prosecutors and an anticorruption court with a panel of three judges. The court closed 13 cases during 2012 and averaged 10 months on each case. The PA attorney general has responsibility for combating official corruption. There were allegations of corrupt practices among Fatah officials, particularly the theft of public funds and international assistance funds.

In the Gaza Strip, local observers and NGOs alleged instances of Hamas complicity in corrupt practices, including preferential purchasing terms for real estate and financial gains from involvement in the illegal tunnel trade by the Hamas security forces, but authorities severely inhibited reporting and access to information.

Financial Disclosure: PA ministers were subject to financial disclosure laws.

Public Access to Information: PA law requires official PA institutions to "facilitate" acquisition of requested documents or information by any Palestinian, but it does not require agencies to provide such information. Reasons for denial generally referred to privacy rights and the necessity of security.

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

Palestinian human rights groups and several international organizations generally operated without PA restriction, and officials cooperated with their efforts to monitor the PA's human rights practices. Several PA security services, including the General Intelligence and Palestinian Civil Police, appointed official liaisons who worked with human rights groups.

In the Gaza Strip, Hamas routinely harassed civil society groups, including by dissolving and closing peaceful organizations. Gaza-based NGOs reported that Hamas representatives appeared at their offices to assure compliance and summoned NGO representatives to police stations for questioning.

Palestinian, Israeli, and international NGOs monitored the Israeli government's practices in the occupied territories and published their findings, although movement and access restrictions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip made it difficult to work. The Israeli government permitted some human rights groups to hold and publish press conferences, and it provided the ICRC with access to most detainees. NGOs reported temporary difficulty in reaching some areas in Gaza during the July-August hostilities.

The United Nations or Other International Bodies: PA and Israeli officials generally cooperated with and permitted visits by UN representatives or other organizations, such as the ICRC, although there were numerous reports the Israeli government blocked the delivery of humanitarian aid. There were numerous reports Hamas harassed members of NGOs and international organizations.

The United Nations and international NGOs reported continued difficulty accessing seam zone communities in the northwestern West Bank due to what they considered Israeli authorities' excessive demands for searches of personnel, including UN employees, based on their nationality.

In July the Human Rights Council established an international commission of inquiry "to investigate all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the 'Occupied Palestinian Territory,' including East Jerusalem, particularly in the occupied Gaza Strip, in the context of the military operations conducted since June 13." The government of Israel announced it would not cooperate with the commission of inquiry stating that it unfairly focused on Israel and not on terrorist attacks by Hamas. In November the UN secretary-general announced a board of inquiry to investigate attacks on UN facilities in Gaza during Operation Protective Edge and incidents in which the IDF found weapons at those facilities. The inquiry continued at year's end.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The ICHR continued serving as the PA's ombudsman and human rights commission. The ICHR issued monthly and annual reports on human rights violations within Palestinian-controlled areas; the ICHR also issued formal recommendations to the PA. The ICHR was generally independent but faced resource shortages that limited its ability to work effectively.

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

PA law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status. PA authorities worked to enforce these laws but often failed to do so. Some laws are discriminatory. For example, it is illegal for a Palestinian to sell land to Israelis, an offense punishable by death.

Hamas, despite remaining under the authority of Palestinian laws prohibiting discrimination, continued to implement discriminatory policies based on race, political affiliation, gender, and sexual orientation.

Many NGOs alleged Israeli actions in the West Bank and Gaza amounted to racial and cultural discrimination, citing legal differences between the treatment of Palestinians and Jewish settlers in the West Bank.

Protection of Refugees

Rape and Domestic Violence: Rape is illegal under PA law, but the legal definition does not address spousal rape. Laws that apply in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip relieve of any criminal responsibility rapists who marry their victim. Authorities generally did not enforce the law effectively in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip. Punishment for rape is five to 15 years in prison. Societal norms led to significant underreporting. There were reports police treated rape as a social and not a criminal matter and that authorities released some accused rapists after they apologized to their victims.

PA law does not explicitly prohibit domestic violence, but assault and battery are crimes. Authorities did not enforce the law effectively in domestic violence cases. NGOs reported women were frequently unwilling to report cases of violence or abuse to police because of fear of retribution, and HRW reported that authorities prosecuted few domestic violence cases successfully in recent years. Many women and girls stated they believed the legal system discriminated against women. According to the PA's Central Bureau of Statistics, violence against wives, especially psychological violence, was common in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Police often treated domestic violence as a social instead of criminal matter and regularly returned victims to assailants.

The mandate of the PA Ministry of Women's Affairs is to promote women's rights. The ministry continued implementing its 2011-13 Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy, which seeks to promote gender equality and empower women. This strategy highlights multiple challenges Palestinian women face that require the attention, cooperation, and coordination of public institutions, NGOs, and the private sector, as well as international and regional organizations supporting women's problems. It serves as a reference for developing appropriate and gender-responsive policies to positively influence the socioeconomic and political conditions of women and men and enable women to enjoy fully their rights in equity within Palestinian society.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): There were reports FGM/C occurred in the past, but none during the year.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: Provisions of Palestinian law discriminate against women. In 2011 President Abbas signed an amendment to the "honor killing" law that removed protection and leniency for perpetrators of crimes in defense of family honor, although some NGOs argued the amendment did not apply to the most relevant articles of the law and thus did not have a noticeable effect. The Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling reported eight "honor killings" in the West Bank and Gaza through March. The center reported the number of "honor killings" increased to 27 in 2013 from 13 in 2012.

Sexual Harassment: No law specifically relates to sexual harassment, and it was a significant and widespread problem. The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces and other NGOs reported that for some women, cultural taboos and fear of stigma compelled them to remain silent about sexual harassment. Some young women claimed they were held responsible for provoking men's harassing behavior. Authorities in Gaza harassed women for "un-Islamic" behavior, including being in public after dark and walking with an unrelated man.

Reproductive Rights: Couples and individuals in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and Jerusalem had access to contraception. They lacked information regarding family planning, although UNRWA continued holding workshops for Palestinian men, underscoring their role in family planning. According to the UN Population Fund, in 2012, 39 percent of women ages 15 to 49 used a modern method of contraception. There were at least 147 family planning centers in the West Bank and at least 20 in the Gaza Strip, according to the PA Ministry of Health. High workload, poor compensation, and resource shortages across the occupied territories continued to affect skilled attendance during labor and postpartum care, much of which midwives provided. Authorities, and community and international NGOs operated HIV/AIDS education, prevention, and screening programs, but there was limited information about the equality of services provided for women.

There were more deaths among mothers and newborns in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. The PA Ministry of Health attributed continued increases in the number of home births to difficulties in reaching hospitals (see section 2.d.).

Discrimination: While the law provides for equality of the sexes, it also discriminates against women, as do traditional practices. Women can inherit, but not as much as men. Men may take more than one wife; although they rarely did in urban areas, the practice was more common in small villages. Women may add conditions to marriage contracts to protect their interests in the event of divorce and child custody disputes but rarely did so. Societal pressure generally discouraged women from including divorce arrangements in a marriage contract. Cultural restrictions associated with marriage occasionally prevented women from completing mandatory schooling or attending college. Families sometimes disowned Muslim and Christian women who married outside their religious group. Local officials sometimes advised such women to leave their communities to prevent harassment.

Hamas maintained control of the Gaza Strip and enforced a conservative interpretation of Islam on the Gaza Strip's Muslim population that particularly discriminated against women. Authorities generally prohibited public mixing of the sexes. Plainclothes officers routinely stopped, separated, and questioned couples to determine if they were married; premarital sex is a crime punishable by imprisonment. Hamas's "morality police" also punished women for riding motorcycles, smoking cigarettes or water pipes, leaving their hair uncovered, and dressing "inappropriately" (that is, in Western-style or close-fitting clothing, such as jeans or T-shirts). Women living in refugee camps in the Gaza Strip stated they felt unsafe using public bathing or latrine facilities and reported a lack of reliable sanitary materials.

Palestinian labor law states work is the right of every capable citizen; however, it regulates the work of women, preventing them from taking employment in dangerous occupations (see section 7.d.). Women endured prejudice and, in some cases, repressive conditions at work. Additionally, some employers reportedly provided preferential treatment to their male counterparts. Women's participation in the workforce was extremely low, although gradually growing, according to PA statistics, with rates particularly low in Gaza.

Female education rates were high, particularly in the West Bank, and women's attendance at universities exceeded men's. Female university students, however, reported discrimination by university administrators, professors, and their male peers, according to the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. In February, Hamas implemented a "modest" dress code at al-Aqsa University in Gaza, drawing criticism from the PA minister of higher education.

According to press and NGO reports, in some instances teachers in Gaza sent home girls not wearing conservative attire in Hamas-run schools, although enforcement was not systemic.

Children

Birth Registration: The PA registers Palestinians born in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and Israel requires the PA to transmit this information to the Israeli Civil Administration. Since the PA does not constitute a state, it does not determine "citizenship" alone. Children of Palestinian parents can receive a Palestinian identity card (issued by the Israeli Ministry of Defense's Civil Administration) if they are born in the occupied territories to a parent who holds a Palestinian identity card. The PA Ministry of Interior and the Israeli Civil Administration both play a role in determining a person's eligibility.

Israel registers the births of Palestinians in Jerusalem, although Palestinian residents of Jerusalem reported delays in the process.

Education: Education in PA-controlled areas is compulsory from age six through the ninth grade (approximately 16 years of age). Education is available to all Palestinians without cost through high school.

In the Gaza Strip, primary education is not universal. UNRWA and authorities in Gaza provided instruction. In addition to the PA-provided curriculum, UNRWA provided specialized classes on human rights, conflict resolution, and tolerance. There were reports Hamas instituted new courses on military training in its schools.

As of September, UNICEF reported 162 attacks on schools in the West Bank, amounting in some instances to periodic denial of access to education. Israeli authorities and Israeli settlers were responsible for the attacks. Instances included Israeli military operations inside or near schools, cases of military use of schools by Israeli security forces, and situations in which children lost school time as a result of the detention by Israeli security forces of teachers and schoolchildren.

while on their way to and from school, or as a result of Israeli security forces causing delays at checkpoints or due to the military convoys.

In Jerusalem, Palestinian children did not have access to the same educational resources as Israeli children, and NGOs reported that East Jerusalem needed an additional 2,200 classrooms to provide adequate space for Palestinian children to attend official schools (see section 6, National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities).

Child Abuse: Child abuse was reportedly a widespread problem. The law prohibits violence against children; however, PA authorities rarely punished perpetrators of family violence.

Israeli security forces also were responsible for violence against children in custody and during arrest (see section 1.c.) in the West Bank or near the Gaza Strip buffer zone, according to NGO and UN reports.

Doctors Without Borders reported the number of children with posttraumatic stress disorder and other anxiety disorders, including depression, increased in recent years. The organization attributed a majority of the cases to trauma experienced during Israeli military incursions or as a result of settler violence. UNICEF and other NGOs reported that children in the Gaza Strip experienced a range of physical and mental distress as a result of Operation Protective Edge, with at least 373,000 children requiring direct and specialized psychosocial support. The UNICEF-led Child Protection Working Group finalized and disseminated the Child Protection Rapid Assessment and the Child Protection Response Strategy during the year. Among the main findings of the rapid assessment, 100 percent of respondents confirmed there had been changes in children's behavior as a result of the psychological distress due to Operation Protective Edge, and 54 percent of respondents reported increased aggression toward children, noting that caregivers' attitudes towards children changed following the conflict. The results of the Child Protection Rapid Assessment were used to improve targeted response to children in Gaza.

Early and Forced Marriage: Palestinian law defines the minimum age for marriage as 18; however, religious law allows for marriage as young as 15 years old. Child marriage did not appear to be widespread, according to NGOs, including the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling, although there were reports of child marriage, particularly in the Gaza Strip. In September a 15-year-old boy reportedly married a 14-year-old girl in Gaza.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): There were reports FGM/C involving children occurred, although no cases were documented during the year.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The PA considers statutory rape a felony based on the Jordanian penal code of 1960, which also outlaws all forms of pornography. The minimum age for consensual sex is 18 years old. Punishment for rape of a victim less than age 15 includes a minimum sentence of seven years.

Child Soldiers: There were reports Hamas trained children as combatants.

Displaced Children: Conflict and demolition orders (see section 2.d.) displaced children in the occupied territories. B'Tselem reported 463 children were displaced due to home demolitions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem during the year. UNRWA reported that as of December 18, 10,050 children remain displaced in the Gaza Strip as a result of Operation Protective Edge.

Anti-Semitism

Approximately 370,000 Jewish settlers lived in the West Bank. The Jewish population in Gaza, aside from foreign nationals, was nonexistent. There were an estimated 250,000 Jewish residents of East Jerusalem.

Rhetoric by some Palestinians and Muslim religious leaders included expressions of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial. Anti-Israel sentiment was widespread and sometimes crossed the line into anti-Semitism in public discourse, including media commentary longing for a world without Israel and glorifying terror attacks on Israelis. Following a string of vehicle assaults by Palestinians on Israelis in Jerusalem, the Palestinian press and social media widely circulated cartoons encouraging such attacks. During the July-August hostilities in the Gaza Strip, some commentators attempted to draw parallels between Israeli military action and Nazi Germany or Israeli bombardment and the 9/11 attacks in the United States. Israeli forces were at times dehumanized in Palestinian media; for example, in August an Israeli fighter pilot was depicted as a snake, and in July a columnist characterized the hostilities as a "battle of humanity against the dogs." In July an imam in Jerusalem reportedly called for annihilating the Jews.

There were also instances in which Palestinian media outlets published content that was anti-Semitic. In July an opinion piece published by the PA's *al-Hayat al-Jadida* mentioned "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and blood libel as if it were factual. At times the PA failed to condemn incidents of anti-Semitic expression in official PA traditional and social media outlets.

In the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, there were instances in which media outlets, particularly outlets controlled by Hamas, published and broadcast material that included anti-Semitic content, sometimes amounting to incitement to violence. In July a televised Hamas sermon promised that Muslims would exterminate the Jews for taking Palestinian land.

Trafficking in Persons

No PA law specifically prohibits trafficking in persons, and reportedly small numbers of children and adults experienced forced labor conditions in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. There were reports some children worked in forced labor conditions in the West Bank, including in settlements. These children reportedly faced exploitation and harassment.

NGOs reported employers subjected Palestinian men to forced labor in Israeli settlements in industry, agriculture, construction, and other sectors. The PA was unable to monitor and investigate abuses in these areas and elsewhere because it does not control its borders and has limitations on its authority to work in Areas B and C.

Persons with Disabilities

The Palestinian Disability Law was ratified in 1999, but NGOs complained of very slow implementation. It does not mandate access to buildings, information, or communications, although UNRWA's policy was to provide accessibility in all new structures. Disability rights NGO Bizchut reported a lack of accessible transportation services in East Jerusalem.

Palestinians with disabilities continued to receive uneven and poor quality services and care. The PA depended on UN agencies and NGOs to care for persons with physical disabilities and offered substandard care for persons with mental disabilities. There were reports Israeli authorities placed in isolation detainees deemed mentally disabled or a threat to themselves or others without a full medical evaluation. According to Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, isolation of prisoners with mental disabilities was common.

Familial and societal discrimination against persons with disabilities existed in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

According to OCHA an estimated 27,500 Bedouin live in Area C in the West Bank. UNRWA registered many Bedouin as refugees, and Bedouins frequently inhabited areas designated by Israel as closed military zones or as areas planned for settlement expansion. Forced displacement continued of Bedouin and herding communities in Area C, and many of these communities suffered from limited access to water, health care, education, and other basic services.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Palestinian law, based on the 1960 Jordanian penal code, prohibits consensual same-sex sexual activity, although the PA did not prosecute individuals suspected of such activity. Societal discrimination based on cultural and religious traditions was commonplace, making the West Bank and Gaza challenging environments for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons. Some Palestinians claimed PA security officers and neighbors harassed, abused, and sometimes arrested LGBT individuals because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. NGOs reported Hamas also harassed and detained persons due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

HIV and AIDS Social Stigma

While the PA Ministry of Health provided treatment and privacy protections for patients with HIV/AIDS, societal discrimination against affected individuals was common. Anecdotal evidence suggested societal discrimination against HIV/AIDS patients was also very common in Gaza.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

OCHA, the Jerusalem Legal Aid Society and Human Rights Center, and other NGOs reported attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinians and their property in the West Bank. The attacks included direct violence against Palestinian residents. Some Israeli settlers reportedly used violence against Palestinians as harassment and to keep them away from land settlers sought to acquire.

Various human rights groups continued to claim settler violence was insufficiently investigated and rarely prosecuted. Some groups attributed this circumstance in part to the Israeli Civil Administration's neglect of Palestinian complaints, as well as to Palestinian residents' reluctance to report incidents due to fears of settler retaliation or because they were discouraged by the lack of accountability in most cases. The Israeli NGO Yesh Din reported that authorities closed more than 90 percent of Israeli investigations into offenses against Palestinians in the West Bank without indictments.

On January 6, IDF soldiers allowed masked Israeli settlers to enter the West Bank village of Urif, where they smashed the electric meter of the water reservoir under construction and threw stones at a nearby Palestinian home and the village school. A video recording provided to B'Tselem by a resident of Urif documented the incident.

On January 15, arsonists burned a mosque in the West Bank Palestinian village of Deir Istya. The arsonists also spray-painted slogans in Hebrew on an exterior wall and door: "Arabs out," "Hi from Qusra," and "Revenge for spilled blood in Qusra." (Qusra is the West Bank village where on January 6 Palestinian residents captured and detained a group of Israeli settlers who they claimed were about to engage in violent acts.)

In May an IDF soldier in Hebron was filmed threatening to shoot a Palestinian and told the Palestinian that his job was "to protect Jews, not you."

On July 26, an Israeli settler shot and killed a Palestinian near the northern West Bank town of Huwara. No action was taken against the Israeli settler by year's end.

In August, B'Tselem published a video that appeared to show IDF soldiers standing passively while Israeli settlers threw stones at Palestinians in Hebron. The soldiers intervened only when Palestinians threw stones in response; the soldiers then used crowd-control measures on the Palestinians.

During the year B'Tselem followed 12 cases in which Palestinians filed complaints with the Israeli police about incidents of settler violence. According to B'Tselem none of these cases resulted in an indictment.

"Price tag" attacks (property crimes and violent acts by extremist Jewish individuals and groups in retaliation for activity they deemed antisettlement) continued. For example, in February IDF soldiers allegedly sprayed anti-Arab graffiti in Beit Ummar in the West Bank. In June vandals wrote "Death to Arabs" and "Price Tag" on a wall and allegedly attempted to attack a Palestinian man in Maale Adumim. The Jerusalem district attorney indicted three Israelis in connection with the incident, and the case was pending at year's end. On October 1, a group of settlers burned a mosque in Aqraba village near the West Bank city of Nablus. Graffiti on the walls of the mosque read "Death to Arabs," "Revenge and Paying the Price," and "Muhammed is a pig."

In July groups of Israelis, some of whom chanted "Death to Arabs," attacked Palestinians in Jerusalem on at least two occasions, resulting in the hospitalization of victims. The INP arrested 10 suspects; as of August they awaited trial.

Access to social and commercial services in Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including housing, education, and health care, was available only to Israelis. Israeli officials discriminated against Palestinians in the West Bank and Jerusalem regarding access to employment and legal housing by denying Palestinians access to registration paperwork. In both the West Bank and Jerusalem, Israeli authorities placed often insurmountable obstacles in the way of Palestinian applicants for construction permits, including the requirement they document land ownership in the absence of a uniform post-1967 land registration process, high application fees, and requirements that new housing be connected to often unavailable municipal works.

According to B'Tselem, in 2000 Israel began curtailing the Palestinian population registry by denying paperwork to Palestinians and effectively declaring Palestinians illegal residents. Some Palestinians defined as illegal residents faced harassment, arrest, or deportation to the Gaza Strip.

The World Bank reported that Palestinians suffered water shortages, noting approximately half of the domestic water supply for Palestinians was purchased from Israel. Oslo-era agreements limited Palestinians in the amount of water they can draw from West Bank aquifers. According to AI, Palestinians received an average of 18.5 gallons of water per person per day, falling short of the World Health Organization's standard of 26.5 gallons per person per day, the minimum daily amount required to maintain basic hygiene standards and food security. Political constraints limited the PA's ability to improve water network management and efficiency, including the requirement for Israeli approval to implement water-related projects and the PA's lack of authority in Area C to prevent theft from the network, as well as the PA's own management problems.

During Operation Protective Edge, the IDF destroyed water and electricity infrastructure in Gaza, resulting in severe water shortages and closing Gaza's only power plant. The Israeli military continued to destroy water cisterns, some of which donor countries had funded for humanitarian purposes. The Israeli military also destroyed unlicensed Palestinian agricultural wells, particularly in the Jordan Valley area of the West Bank, claiming they depleted aquifer resources.

Palestinians living within the borders of the Jerusalem Municipality, but cut off from it by the separation barrier, reported that the municipality failed to provide basic services, including water, police, and infrastructure. NGOs estimated that from March to June thousands of residents of Shufat refugee camp and Ras Khamis neighborhood suffered from limited access to water.

NGOs alleged that Jerusalem municipal and Israeli national policies aimed at decreasing the number of Palestinian residents of Jerusalem. Government-sponsored construction of new Israeli housing units continued, while building permits were difficult to obtain for Palestinian residents of Jerusalem, and homes built by Palestinian residents without legal permits were subjected to demolition. The Israeli NGOs Bimkom and Ir Amim stated that Palestinians in East Jerusalem continued to face barriers to purchasing property or obtaining building permits. Land owned or populated by Palestinians (including Israeli-Palestinians) was generally zoned for low residential growth. Approximately 30 percent of East Jerusalem was designated for Israeli residents. Palestinians were able in some cases to rent Israeli-owned property but were generally unable to purchase property in an Israeli neighborhood. Israeli NGOs stated that only 13 percent of all land in East Jerusalem was available for construction and that, in the Israeli neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, land was not available for Palestinian construction.

The Israeli government and Jewish organizations in Jerusalem made efforts to increase Israeli property ownership or underscore Jewish history in predominantly Palestinian neighborhoods of Jerusalem.

Although Israeli law entitles Palestinian residents of Jerusalem to full and equal services provided by the municipality and other Israeli authorities, the Jerusalem Municipality failed to provide sufficient social services, infrastructure, emergency planning, and postal service for Palestinian neighborhoods in Jerusalem. Palestinian residents constituted approximately 35 percent of Jerusalem's population but received only 10 to 15 percent of municipal spending. According to ACRI, 75 percent of Jerusalem Palestinians lived in poverty, and 82 percent of East Jerusalem children lived below the poverty line. Only 53 percent of students attended official municipal schools. There was a chronic shortage of more than 2,000 classrooms in East Jerusalem's official school system, and despite commitments made by Israeli authorities and a high court ruling that the municipality must fill the gap of missing classrooms in East Jerusalem by 2016, authorities built only 150 classrooms in the last five years. The municipality reported that 400 classrooms were in various stages of planning or construction. Bus services in Jerusalem were largely segregated between Israelis and Palestinians. Light rail service completed in 2010 served both Palestinian and Israeli populations and crossed into East Jerusalem; NGOs reported, however, that of the 24 stops on the light rail, only five were in Palestinian neighborhoods.

Section 7. Worker Rights

Fatah and Hamas signed a reconciliation agreement in April and PA President Abbas subsequently formed an interim government of independent technocrats, but the PA exerted only limited influence in Gaza. Hamas continued to maintain de facto control of the government and worker rights in Gaza.

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

PA law provides for the rights of workers to form and join independent unions and conduct legal strikes. The law requires collective bargaining to be conducted without any pressure or influence but does not explicitly provide for the right to collective bargaining. Antiunion discrimination and employer interference in union functions are illegal, but the law does not specifically prohibit termination due to union activity.

The PA labor code does not apply to civil servants or domestic workers, although the law allows civil servants the right to form unions. The requirements for legal strikes are cumbersome, and strikers had little protection from retribution. Prospective strikers must provide written warning two weeks in advance of a strike (four weeks in the case of public utilities). The PA Ministry of Labor can impose arbitration; workers or their trade unions face disciplinary action if they reject the result. If the ministry cannot resolve a dispute, it can be referred to a committee chaired by a delegate from the ministry and composed of an equal number of members designated by the workers and the employer, and finally to a specialized labor court.

The government did not effectively enforce labor laws, and procedures were subjected to lengthy delays and appeals. The PA's labor law had not been fully implemented at year's end, and labor unions claimed the current system benefitted employers. Authorities had not established a specialized labor court as required by labor legislation. Some judges received training in labor regulations, which reportedly improved the time to process a labor case to approximately one year. The PA enforced the prohibitions on antiunion discrimination and employer interference in union functions; however, it inconsistently enforced laws regarding freedom of association. The PA did not seek to enforce collective bargaining rights for unions, with the exception of those representing PA employees.

Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining were respected, with some significant exceptions. On November 9, PA security forces arrested Bassam Zakarneh, head of the PA Public Employees Union, along with his deputy, following the completion of a long-term partial strike as well as a one-day full strike to protest the lack of a cost-of-living allowance. The PA's Ministry of Labor released a statement justifying the arrests under a 2012 presidential declaration that the union "operated without union status" and was therefore in violation of PA laws. Authorities subsequently released both men pending trial. Public sector workers engaged in frequent protests and some strikes over the delayed payment of wages at the beginning of the year. In September and November, the public employee union organized strikes aimed at securing a cost of living increase, among other demands. The union canceled the strikes when the PA agreed to review and address the union's demands.

Labor unions were not independent of authorities and political parties. In 2007 Hamas replaced Fatah-affiliated union leaders with Hamas members or sympathizers in the Gaza Strip, and during the year it maintained restrictions on union membership.

Two main labor unions in the West Bank (the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions and the Federation of Independent and Democratic Trade Unions and Workers) competed for membership and political recognition. There were no reports of politically motivated terminations of union leaders.

Israeli law applies to Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem, but it was not enforced uniformly. Despite a 2008 high court ruling requiring Israeli law to be applied to workers in settlements, most settlements applied Jordanian labor law to Palestinian workers, which was the applicable law prior to 1967 and provides for lower wages and fewer protections than Israeli law. Palestinian workers in Jerusalem often joined West Bank unions or the Israeli General Federation of Labor (Histadrut); however, they could not vote in Histadrut elections.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

Forced labor occurred in the occupied territories. PA law does not expressly forbid forced or compulsory labor. A western government's labor research found no evidence of laws against trafficking children. Women working as domestic workers were vulnerable to forced labor conditions in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, since the PA does not regulate domestic labor within households. Forced child labor also occurred (see section 7.c.).

Also see the Department of State's [*Trafficking in Persons Report*](#) (Israel).

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The Palestinian Authority has no unified or comprehensive set of child labor laws. The Unified Labor Law of 2000 and the Palestinian Child Law of 2004 prohibit the employment of any person less than age 15. The law classifies children as those under age 18 years, and it restricts employment for those between 15 and 18. The law permits hiring children between 15 and 18 for certain types of employment under set conditions. The law allows children younger than age 15 to work for immediate family members under close supervision.

The law prohibits children from working more than 40 hours per week, operating certain types of machines and equipment, performing work that might be unsafe or damage their health or education, and working at night, in hard labor, or in remote locations far from urban centers. The law was amended in 2012 by presidential decree to include provisions on child labor accompanied by explicit penalties for violations. For example, the penalty for child labor in dangerous working conditions is a fine ranging from 1,000 to 2,000 Jordanian dinars (\$1,410 to \$2,820) per child. Repeat offenders can be penalized by having the fines doubled and/or full or partial closure of their facility.

Due to inadequate resources and logistical difficulties, PA authorities did not effectively enforce the law. The Ministry of Social Affairs is charged with coordinating efforts to protect children's rights, while the Ministry of Labor's Inspection and Protection Administration is responsible for enforcing the law. The Ministry of Labor reported that 29 percent of its labor inspectors had training and experience in dealing with child labor, a proportion it recognized as insufficient, although an increase from prior years. Many cases of child labor violations reportedly occurred in home environments, for example, on family farms, which were not open to labor ministry inspection. Child protection officers with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Labor reported that only employers who hired children less than age 15 to work in dangerous conditions or hazardous jobs were referred to the attorney general for prosecution; the ministry referred only a few cases during the year. The Ministry of Labor requires that employers keep lists of employees, including children, although some employers reportedly did not keep accurate records of children they employed, hiding them from inspection. PA officials reported fining "numerous" persons after successful investigations conducted by the PA Ministry of Labor in recent years. The ministry inspected only businesses operating in the formal economy and was unable to conduct investigations in the Gaza Strip. It did not have access to Israeli-controlled Area C of the West Bank (nearly 60 percent of the West Bank), where child economic exploitation and labor were most likely to occur, according to PA officials.

The PA estimated 3.5 percent of children between the ages of 10 and 17 worked in the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinian child laborers generally worked on family farms, in shops, as roadside and checkpoint street vendors, in car washes, in factories, or in small manufacturing enterprises. They were vulnerable to forced labor. Conditions were especially poor for Palestinian children working as street vendors, many of whom worked all day without food or water and were subjected to abuse.

During the year many smuggling tunnels, which had previously employed some children, closed. Hamas reportedly did not enforce child labor laws in Gaza; in some cases Hamas reportedly encouraged children to work gathering gravel and scrap metal from bomb sites to sell to recycling merchants. There were reports Hamas trained children as combatants.

The Israeli government stated it did not issue permits for Palestinian West Bank residents younger than age 18 to work in Israeli settlements, except in the Jordan Valley, where the law allows work permits for persons age 16 and older; however, according to the PA, children entered the

settlements or crossed into Israel to seek work. The PA reported that Palestinian children working in Israeli settlements in the West Bank without legal protection or labor inspectors faced security problems, exploitation, and harassment.

Also see the Department of Labor's [*Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor*](#).

d. Discrimination with respect to Employment or Occupation

The law and regulations do not prohibit discrimination regarding race, language, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases, or social status. Laws prohibit discrimination on the bases of gender and disabilities; however, the government did not effectively enforce those laws and regulations.

There was discrimination based on the above categories with respect to employment and occupation. For further discussion of discrimination on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, HIV status, and disability, see section 6.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The PA cabinet approved a minimum wage of 1,450 new Israel new shekels (\$370) per month, which went into effect at the beginning of the year. Palestinians working in Israeli settlements reported they continued to receive wages lower than the Israeli minimum wage, despite a 2008 high court ruling that Israeli labor laws apply to relations between Palestinian workers and Israeli employers in settlements in the occupied territories. In 2011, the date of the most recent official estimate, the PA estimated 25.8 percent of the residents in the occupied territories lived below the poverty line.

According to PA law, the maximum official Sunday to Thursday workweek was 48 hours. The law also allows for paid official and religious holidays, which may not be deducted from annual leave. Workers must be paid time and a half for each hour worked beyond 45 hours per week and may not perform more than 12 hours of overtime work per week.

The PA Ministry of Labor was responsible for setting occupational health and safety standards, but its enforcement ability was limited, in part due to lack of staff. The ministry employed 42 labor inspectors during the year; ministry officials estimated they would need at least 300 inspectors to enforce the labor laws adequately. The PA did not effectively monitor smaller worksites, which were at times below legal safety standards. In 2013 the Ministry of Labor reported 752 workplace injuries, including 20 fatalities. By law workers do not have the legal protection to remove themselves from situations that endangered their health or safety without jeopardy to their employment.

The PA was unable to monitor labor conditions in the Gaza Strip and had no authority to monitor labor safety in the 60 percent of the West Bank designated as Area C under the terms of Oslo-era agreements with Israel. The ministry cannot enforce Palestinian labor law in seam zones, the area east of the Green Line and west of Israel's barrier wall, in Israel (where Palestinians were employed on permits or illegally), or in Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Israeli authorities did not conduct labor inspections in Israeli settlements, where Palestinian workers constituted a significant part of the workforce. The lack of a competent labor authority in the settlements increased workers' vulnerability to exploitation. NGOs such as Kav LaOved stated that exploitative practices in Israeli settlements were widespread. Israeli NGOs brought some cases in Israeli labor courts on behalf of Palestinian workers employed by enterprises in the settlements. The PA Ministry of Labor reported the number of Palestinians who raised cases against settlers during the year remained very low.

Working conditions with respect to minimum wage and occupational safety and health were poor. Reportedly, 59.9 percent of laborers (378,868 persons) worked in the large informal sector. Some of the activity included work in illegal smuggling tunnels between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, but the majority of the dangerous work conditions occurred across multiple jobs, including rubble and garbage collection, working as street vendors, manufacturing, construction, as car mechanics, in metal workshops, on poultry farms, in solid waste collection, collecting gravel, and in building demolition.

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