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Israel and Palestine



Israeli police assault Palestinians during journalist Shireen Abu Aqla's funeral procession in occupied East Jerusalem on May 13, 2022.

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Under a coalition government made up of a broad range of political parties and with Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid as prime ministers, Israeli authorities doubled down on their severe repression of Palestinians. Israeli authorities' practices, undertaken as part of a policy to maintain the domination of Jewish Israelis over Palestinians, amount to the crimes against humanity of [apartheid and persecution](#).

During three days of hostilities in August, Israeli forces launched scores of airstrikes, dropping explosive weapons with wide area effects in the densely populated Gaza, while the armed group Palestinian Islamic Jihad indiscriminately fired hundreds of rockets toward Israeli population centers. According to the [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#), 49 Palestinians, including 17 children, were killed. Three hundred and sixty Palestinians and seventy Israelis were also [injured](#) during the escalation.

The August hostilities took place amid Israel's 15-year-long sweeping restrictions on the movement of people and goods in Gaza. Israel's closure policy, exacerbated by Egyptian restrictions on its border with Gaza, has deprived the more than 2 million Palestinians of Gaza, with rare exceptions, of their right to freedom of movement and [opportunities to better their lives](#), severely limited their access to electricity, health care, and water, and devastated the economy. [About 80 percent](#) of Gaza's 2.1 million residents rely on humanitarian aid, according to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East ([UNRWA](#)).

In the West Bank, Israeli forces, following several attacks by Palestinians inside Israel in March, intensified their operations, killing 147 Palestinians as of December 21, according to OCHA, more than in any year since the UN began systematically recording fatalities in 2005. In May, renowned Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Aqla was shot to death during an Israeli raid in the northern West Bank. Multiple [independent investigations](#) point to Israeli forces having killed her.

As of December 31, Israeli authorities also held, according to Israeli Prison Services figures, 866 Palestinians in [administrative detention](#) without charge or trial based on secret evidence. This figure represents a nearly two-decade-high, according to the Israeli rights group [B'Tselem](#).

Israeli authorities also continued to facilitate the transfer of Israeli citizens into settlements in the occupied West Bank; a war crime. According to the Israeli group [Peace Now](#), the Bennett-Lapid government advanced plans for 7,292 housing units in settlements in the year between taking office and late June 2022, a 26 percent increase as compared to the annual average when Benjamin Netanyahu served as prime minister between 2012 and 2020.

According to [OCHA](#), Israeli authorities also demolished 851 Palestinian homes and other structures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, during the first eleven months of 2022, displacing 966 people. Most buildings were demolished for lacking building permits, which authorities make nearly impossible for Palestinians in these areas to obtain.

In May, Israel's High Court of Justice [greenlighted](#) the demolitions of the homes of [more than 1,000 Palestinians in Masafer Yatta](#), in the southern West Bank, for being located in a firing zone for the Israeli army. The court said the military's power to declare closed military zones superseded international law.

In August, Israeli authorities [raided the offices](#) of, and issued closure orders against, seven prominent Palestinian civil society organizations, following their decision in 2021 to [outlaw six of the groups](#) by designating them "terrorist" organizations under Israeli law, and as "unlawful associations" under military law, which is applicable in the occupied West Bank.

Palestinian civil society also faced restrictions from the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority (PA) in the parts of the West Bank where it manages affairs and Hamas authorities in Gaza. The Palestinian statutory watchdog, the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), received 120 complaints of arbitrary arrests against the PA and 87 against Hamas; 106 complaints of torture and ill-treatment against the PA and 113 against Hamas; and 28 complaints against the PA for detention without trial or charge pursuant to orders from a regional governor between January and September 2022.

Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party and its allies won the majority of Knesset seats during November 1 elections, Israel's fifth election since 2019. Netanyahu formed a government that includes Itamar Ben-Gvir, who has been convicted by an Israeli court for incitement to racism and support of a terrorist organization, and was sworn in as prime minister on December 29.

Gaza Strip

On August 5, Israeli authorities struck the home of an Islamic Jihad leader in Gaza without clear provocation, triggering three days of hostilities. Islamic Jihad indiscriminately fired over [1,100 rockets](#) toward Israel, some of which misfired and landed inside Gaza. Israeli authorities pounded the densely populated Gaza with explosive weapons with wide area effects, carrying out [170 strikes](#), according to the Israel-based Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center. Beyond those killed and injured, the escalation resulted in damage to 2,000 Palestinian housing units, [according to OCHA](#).

Between August 2 and 8, Israeli authorities [sealed the crossings](#) into Gaza, blocking residents in need of urgent medical care from getting treatment outside Gaza. The move also prevented the entry of fuel necessary to run Gaza's only power plant, causing it to shut down. Such measures that target Gaza's general civilian population amount to [unlawful collective punishment](#).

Israeli Closure

For a 15th consecutive year, Israeli authorities blocked most of Gaza's population from traveling through the Erez Crossing, the only passenger crossing from Gaza into Israel through which Palestinians can travel to the West Bank and abroad. Israeli authorities often justify the closure, which came after Hamas seized political control over Gaza from the Fatah-led Palestinian

Authority in June 2007, on security grounds. The closure policy, though, is not based on an individualized assessment of security risk; a generalized travel ban applies to all, except those whom Israeli authorities deem as presenting “exceptional humanitarian circumstances,” mostly people needing vital medical treatment and their companions, as well as prominent businesspeople.

More than one-third of those seeking to travel for urgent medical care outside of Gaza were not approved in a timely manner during the first half of 2022, [according to OCHA](#). The World Health Organization [reported](#) that 839 Palestinians in Gaza died between 2008 and 2021 while waiting for a response to their permit requests.

During the first eleven months of 2022, about 1,120 Palestinians in Gaza exited via Erez daily, according to the Israeli rights group Gisha. The monthly average marks an increase as compared to recent years, largely driven by [permits issued](#) for Palestinians in Gaza to work in construction and agriculture, but remains less than 5 percent of the daily average of more than 24,000 before the beginning of the Second Intifada or Palestinian uprising in September 2000.

Gaza’s exports during this period, mostly produce destined for the West Bank and Israel, averaged 617 truckloads per month, less than the monthly average of 1,064 truckloads prior to the June 2007 tightening of the closure, according to Gisha. Authorities continue to severely restrict the entry of construction materials and other items they deem “dual-use” materials that could also be used for military purposes. The list of such items also includes X-ray and communications equipment, spare parts and batteries for assistive devices used by people with disabilities, and other vital civilian items.

The closure limits access to basic services. During 2022, families in Gaza on average had to make do without centrally provided electricity for about [12 hours a day](#), according to OCHA. Chronic prolonged power outages encumber many aspects of everyday life, from heating and cooling and sewage treatment to health care and business, in particular for people with disabilities who rely on light to communicate using sign language or equipment powered by electricity, such as elevators or electric wheelchairs, to move. More than 97 percent of groundwater in Gaza, its only natural water source, is “unfit for human consumption,” according to [OCHA](#).

Egypt also restricts the movement of people and goods via its Rafah crossing with Gaza, at times fully sealing the crossing. In the first eleven months of 2022, an average of 23,060 Palestinians crossed monthly in both directions, less than the monthly average of over 40,000 before the 2013 military coup in Egypt, according to Gisha.

According to a Save the Children [report from June](#), four out of five of the children they interviewed in Gaza reported living with depression, grief, and fear after 15 years of closure.

Hamas authorities have blocked some women from traveling pursuant to regulations issued in February 2021 that allow male guardians to apply to courts to block unmarried women from leaving Gaza when such travel will cause “absolute harm,” a broad term that allows men to restrict women’s travel at will.

Hamas and Palestinian Armed Groups

In June, Hamas authorities [published footage](#) that appears to show Hisham al-Sayed, a Palestinian Bedouin citizen of Israel, held incommunicado for more than seven years after he entered Gaza. They provided no information about another Israeli citizen whom they have apparently held since 2014, Avera Magistu. Hamas’ holding of both men, civilians with psychosocial disabilities, is unlawful.

In September, Hamas authorities executed five Palestinians, including two men accused of “collaboration” with Israel, following trials marred by due process violations. These were the first executions carried out in five years. Hamas authorities have carried out 33 executions in total since

taking control in Gaza in June 2007. Courts in Gaza had, as of October 19, sentenced 24 people to death this year and [188 since June 2007](#), according to the Gaza-based Palestinian Center for Human Rights.

West Bank

In October, Israeli authorities implemented [new guidelines](#) that [severely restrict](#) the ability of foreign nationals to enter the West Bank to visit family, work, study, or teach.

Israeli Use of Force and Detentions

Israeli security forces increased the scale and number of military raids into Palestinian communities in the West Bank in April, following several attacks by Palestinians inside Israel in March. In April, then-Prime Minister Bennett [declared](#) that there would be “no restrictions” on Israeli forces’ actions. As of December 21, Israeli forces killed 147 Palestinians in the West Bank, including at least 34 children, according [to OCHA](#). Those killed include Palestinians alleged to have attacked Israelis, journalists, [workers](#) crossing through openings in the separation barrier (the Israeli army has in recent years [tacitly approved](#) of Palestinians passing through the barrier), and bystanders, including 44-year-old [Ghada Sabatin](#), an unarmed mother of six gunned down at a checkpoint.

Israeli settlers [killed six Palestinians](#), wounded 281, and caused property damage in [594 incidents](#), as of December 21, according to OCHA.

Israeli authorities have rarely held accountable security forces who used excessive force or settlers who attacked Palestinians. Less than one percent of complaints of abuses by Israeli forces filed by Palestinians in the West Bank between 2017 and 2021 led to indictments, according to the Israeli rights group Yesh Din. Even in the high-profile killing of Shireen Abu Aqla and the clearly-documented [violent assault](#) of her funeral procession, Israeli authorities, while acknowledging that [an Israeli soldier likely killed her](#), said it was accidental and that there would be no criminal probe into the matter.

As of November 26, Palestinians killed six Israeli settlers and wounded 130 in the West Bank, [according to OCHA](#).

While applying Israeli civil law to settlers, Israeli authorities govern West Bank Palestinians, excluding Jerusalem residents, under harsh military law. In so doing, they deny them basic due process and try them in military courts with a [nearly 100 percent conviction rate](#). The Israeli newspaper Haaretz [reported in August](#) that Israeli courts had not granted a single petition to cancel an administrative detention order in 2022 and the Israeli organization Association for Civil Rights is not aware of any case of it not having done so.

As of December 31, Israel [held 4,658 Palestinians](#) in custody for “security” offenses, according to Israeli Prison Services figures. As of December 12, Israeli authorities detained 150 Palestinian children, according to the [Palestinian prisoner rights group Addameer](#). Israel incarcerates many Palestinians from the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) inside Israel, complicating family visits and violating international humanitarian law’s prohibition against their transfer outside occupied territory.

In March, Israeli authorities arrested Salah Hamouri, a French-Palestinian human rights defender, and [placed him in administrative detention](#). In December, Israeli forces deported Hamouri, expelling him from his native Jerusalem based on “breach[ing] allegiance” to Israel, in violation of international humanitarian law, which prohibits expulsions of protected persons from occupied territory.

In August, Khalil Awawdeh ended a nearly six-month-long hunger strike against his months-long administrative detention after Israeli authorities agreed to release him in October. Israeli authorities, though, did not release him in October and he remained in detention as of November 10.

In August, Israeli authorities sentenced Gaza aid worker Mohammad al-Halabi to 12 years in prison, after [holding him for six years](#) before and during his trial, for allegedly diverting millions of dollars to Palestinian armed groups. His trial was marred by severe due process violations, including keeping secret much of the supposed evidence against him. Audits by donor governments and independent firms hired by World Vision, Halabi's employer, found no wrongdoing.

In August, Israeli authorities [held Nasser Nawaja](#), a field researcher for B'Tselem, incommunicado for more than 12 hours, accusing him of "causing trouble."

More than 1,300 complaints of torture, including of painful shackling, sleep deprivation, and exposure to extreme temperatures, have been filed with Israel's Justice Ministry since 2001, resulting in two criminal investigations and no indictments, according to the Israeli rights group, the Public Committee Against Torture. The group Military Court Watch reported that 74 out of 100 Palestinian children interviewed in 2022 said they were [physically abused](#) in detention by Israeli forces, and 42 percent were subjected to solitary confinement.

As of September 14, Israeli authorities held [the bodies of 106 Palestinians](#) killed since 2015 in what they consider security incidents, as leverage to secure Hamas's release of the bodies of two Israeli soldiers presumed killed in 2014 hostilities, as authorities have acknowledged, according to the Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center.

Settlements and Home Demolitions

Israeli authorities provide security, infrastructure, and services for about 700,000 settlers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

The difficulty in obtaining Israeli building permits in East Jerusalem and the 60 percent of the West Bank under Israel's exclusive control (Area C) has driven Palestinians to build structures that are at constant risk of demolition or confiscation for being unauthorized, including dozens of schools. Entire Palestinian communities in areas like the South Hebron Hills find themselves at high risk of displacement. International law prohibits an occupying power from destroying property unless "absolutely necessary" for "military operations."

In March, the Israeli High Court [ruled](#) that four families in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah could temporarily remain in their homes, as the Justice Ministry evaluates ownership of the land. Israeli settler organizations have sought in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan, another East Jerusalem neighborhood, to take possession of Palestinian homes and evict their long-term residents. They have done so under a discriminatory law, upheld by Israeli courts, that allow these groups to pursue claims for land they claim Jews owned in East Jerusalem before 1948. Palestinians, including Sheikh Jarrah residents facing displacement, are barred under Israeli law from reclaiming property they owned in what became Israel, and from which they fled in 1948.

Freedom of Movement

Israeli authorities continued to require Palestinian ID holders with rare exceptions to hold difficult-to-obtain, time-limited permits to enter Israel and large parts of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. B'Tselem [describes this](#) as "an arbitrary, entirely non-transparent bureaucratic system" where "many applications are denied without explanation, with no real avenue for appeal."

Israeli authorities, as of June 2020, maintained [nearly 600 checkpoints](#) and other permanent obstacles within the West Bank, in addition to nearly 1,500 ad-hoc “flying” checkpoints erected between April 2019 and March 2020, according to OCHA. Israeli forces routinely turn away or delay and humiliate Palestinians at checkpoints without explanation, while permitting largely unfettered movement to Israeli settlers.

Israel continued construction of the separation barrier. Authorities began building the barrier more than two decades ago, ostensibly for security reasons, but 85 percent of it falls within the West Bank rather than along the Green Line separating Israeli from Palestinian territory. In so doing, the barrier cuts off thousands of Palestinians from their agricultural lands, isolates 11,000 Palestinians who live on the western side of the barrier but are not allowed to travel to Israel and whose ability to cross the barrier to access their property and basic services are highly restricted, and, when complete, will [carve off 9 percent](#) of the West Bank.

Palestinian Authority

More than a year after PA security forces beat to death prominent activist and critic Nizar Banat in June 2021 while he was in custody and rounded up scores demanding justice for his death, [no one has been held to account](#). Prosecutors brought charges against 14 security officers, but critics say the authorities are moving too slowly and are biased.

PA personal status laws discriminated against women, including in relation to marriage, divorce, custody of children, and inheritance. Palestine has no comprehensive domestic violence law. The PA has long been considering a draft family protection law, but women’s rights groups have raised concerns that it does not go far enough to prevent abuse and protect survivors.

In the summer, several social and cultural events in the West Bank were canceled following threats against organizers. The Palestinian rights group al-Haq [called on](#) the PA to better protect these spaces and investigate threats against such activities.

Israel

In March, a series of attacks by Palestinians, including a shooting in Hadera and B’nei Barak and a stabbing and car-ramming in Beersheva, killed 9 Israeli civilians and 2 police officers. In November, twin bombings by a Palestinian in Jerusalem killed a 15-year-old Israeli and one other Israeli civilian.

The Knesset reinstated in March a temporary order that bars, with few exceptions, the granting of long-term legal status inside Israel to Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza who marry Israeli citizens or residents. Such a restriction, which has been in place since 2003, does not exist for spouses of virtually any other nationality.

In July, the Israeli High Court [upheld a 2008 law](#) allowing Israeli authorities to revoke a person’s citizenship based on “breach of loyalty.”

Israeli authorities continued to systematically deny asylum claims of the roughly 28,000 African, largely Eritrean and Sudanese, asylum seekers in the country, while allowing in thousands of Ukrainian refugees. Over the years, the government has imposed restrictions on their movement, work permits, and access to health care and to education to pressure asylum seekers to leave.

Key International Actors

US President Biden visited Israel and Palestine in July. The administration has largely failed to speak out about human rights abuses, including Israel’s outlawing of prominent Palestinian civil

society groups. The administration, though, did condemn and launch an investigation into Shireen Abu Aqla's killing. In March, the US Congress authorized \$1 billion in funding for Israel's Iron Dome air defense system, supplementing the annual \$3.7 billion in security assistance the US provides the country.

Nine European Union states in July [said](#) they received "no substantial information" that justified Israel's designations of Palestinian civil society groups as "terrorist organizations" and "unlawful associations," and would continue their financial support to them.

The EU continued to condemn Israel's settlement policy. The EU's [main focus remained](#) to attempt to revamp the "peace process;" while acknowledging some human rights abuses, it has not imposed meaningful consequences for those abuses. In October, the [EU-Israel Association Council](#) convened for the first time in a decade, despite escalating Israeli repression.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor's Palestine investigation remained ongoing. In December, the prosecutor stated his objective to travel to Palestine in 2023.

In September, a human rights [due diligence exercise commissioned by Meta](#), the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, of its Israel and Palestine content moderation in May 2021 found that the company censored social media posts by Palestinians and their supporters, including on human rights abuses.

In December, the UN General Assembly requested an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legal status of Israel's prolonged occupation and legal consequences stemming from its abuses against Palestinians.