

Note of the Secretary-General on the
**Economic and Social Repercussions of the Israeli Occupation on the Living Conditions of the
Palestinian People in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem, and of the
Arab Population in the Occupied Syrian Golan**

Introductory Statement by ESCWA
(Mr. Tarik Alami)

Economic and Social Council - Management Segment – Agenda Item 16
21 July 2020

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

I have the honor of presenting, for consideration by the Assembly, the Note of the Secretary-General on the Economic and Social Repercussions of the Israeli Occupation on the Living Conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab Population in the Occupied Syrian Golan.

The Note is mandated by resolutions from the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

I would like to thank all UN agencies that provided input and support.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

Israel continues to implement **policies and measures that consolidate its control** over the occupied Palestinian territory, resulting in territorial fragmentation and systematic limitation to development.

It also **implements discriminatory policies and practices**, especially in the application of law, service provision and planning and zoning policies that prevent Palestinian construction in Area C and East Jerusalem.

Israeli military and security continue to use **excessive force** and, in some cases, unwarranted force amounting to arbitrary deprivation of life causing thousands of casualties, with persistent lack of accountability in this regard.

Settler violence against Palestinians continued to increase in 2019 compared to the preceding years. Israel has failed to stop such attacks or to hold perpetrators accountable. Instead, Israeli security forces sometimes accompany settlers as they wage attacks against Palestinians.

Israel continues to **arrest and detain thousands of Palestinians**, including children, holding hundreds in administrative detention, without charge or trial for an indefinite period of time, in what may amount to arbitrary detention. Cases of torture and ill-treatment of detainees, including children, continue to be reported and documented.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

The combination of Israeli policies and practices in Area C and East Jerusalem have created a coercive environment that compels Palestinians to leave their homes in what could amount to forcible transfer.

In 2019, demolitions and the resulting displacement were at their highest levels since the peak year of 2016. In East Jerusalem, April 2019 saw the highest number of demolitions recorded by OCHA in a single month since 2009.

In Gaza, thousands of additional shelters were totally or partially destroyed during the reporting period due to Israeli military operations.

Israel's policy of punitive home demolitions and confiscation of property against the families and neighbors of Palestinians suspected of carrying out attacks, may amount to collective punishment.

During the reporting period, Israeli settlement expansion more than doubled in Area C. Israel's policy to encourage settlement growth amount to the transfer by its population into the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which violates international humanitarian law.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

Israel's blockade of 2 million Palestinians in Gaza amounts to collective punishment and undermines their living conditions. Restrictions on the entry of goods have impeded reconstruction, development and efforts to combat the COVID-19 epidemic.

Palestinians seeking to exit Gaza must apply for a special permit. WHO has found that patients, whose exit permits were denied or delayed between 2015 and 2017, were 1.45 times less likely to survive.

Israel also enforces "access-restricted areas" along the Gaza border fence with Israel and at sea, undermining the livelihoods of Palestinian fishermen and farmers.

Israeli restrictions and obstacles to Palestinian movement in the West Bank, include the Wall in the West Bank and 40 km of roads for Israelis only. This has fragmented the West Bank into more than 100 cantons.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

While all Israeli settlements receive high-quality water for all purposes, Israeli restrictions and policies resulted in an inadequate infrastructure and access to water for Palestinians.

In Gaza, 96% of water resources are unfit for human consumption. Only 1% of the population have access to improved drinking water sources and 179 million litres of raw or poorly treated wastewater is discharged into the Mediterranean every day.

Israeli restrictions prevent Palestinians from using more than half of West Bank agricultural area and 35% of Gaza's farmland. The latter has also been damaged by Israel's aerial spraying with herbicides.

The aforementioned Israeli policies and practices persisted despite the COVID-19 crisis, exacerbating its impact and hindering efforts to combat it.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

More than half of the Palestinians needed humanitarian assistance and protection in January 2020 with recession being looming since 2019. This will be exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and decline in external funding.

Conditions in Gaza remain the most worrisome. GDP per capita remains below its 1994 levels. During the fourth quarter of 2019, the unemployment in the occupied Palestinian territory was 24% - a staggering 45% in Gaza.

Despite assistance, one third of the population is food insecure, including an estimated 62% of households in Gaza, as malnutrition plagues pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children.

The capacity of the Palestinian health care system to cope with the COVID-19 remains severely impaired. Gaza's health infrastructure has been on the verge of collapse, owing to the blockade and recurrent military operations.

Palestinian schoolchildren as well as teachers suffer from shortages of classrooms and schools, and from Israeli violence and harassment and intimidation sometimes inside schools.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

Israel's annexation of the occupied Syrian Golan, and its active support of settlement activity therein, violate international law.

Syrians in the Golan suffer from discriminatory policies designed to benefit Israeli settlers at their expense, particularly in land and water allocation, planning and zoning, and demining efforts.

These policies result in harsh economic and social conditions. New Israeli projects and plans are expected to exacerbate these conditions.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

In conclusion, the protracted Israeli occupation is detrimental to the living conditions of Palestinians and Syrians. Current trends and persistent Israeli policies render attaining the SDGs almost impossible.

The COVID-19 crisis heightens the vulnerability of Palestinians, particularly the population of Gaza.

Israel continues to employ policies contrary to international law, including those that are discriminatory, and others that may amount to forcible transfer and collective punishment.

The Note reiterates that adherence to international law is an absolute imperative, ensuring that no party enjoys impunity and securing justice and peace for all those living in the region.

Thank you