

Key Topics

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Water Resources

Access to adequate water as part of an adequate standard of living is an internationally guaranteed right for all people. But, Palestinians are deprived of this right regularly because Israel controls the Mountain Aquifer – the only source of water for Palestinians in the West Bank, according to Amnesty International. Israel redirects this water to the colonizing settlers, who use up to four times more water than Palestinians are allowed. At least 20,000 Palestinians in rural areas have no access to water.

The World Health Organization has said that people need at least 26 gallons of water a day to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The occupation restricts Palestinians to about 18.5 gallons per day, while settlers use 79 gallons per day per person. In Gaza it is even worse where, because of the siege and Operation Cast Lead, 90 percent of the water supply is contaminated and unfit for human consumption.

Apartheid

There are differences and similarities between Apartheid South Africa and Israeli-occupied Palestine. Israeli officials point to the differences to refute claims the occupation policies constitute apartheid. However, apartheid means separate as well as applying policies of segregation and social and economic discrimination. Palestinians are subjected to a military court system, while Israelis are under the jurisdiction of a civil court system; a segregated school system within historic Palestine; loss of freedom of movement because of the Apartheid Wall, which has forced Palestinians in the West Bank into isolated cantons. Palestinians in Gaza are segregated and locked inside the world's largest open-air prison. Former South African Prime Minister Hendrick Verwoerd himself called Israel an "Apartheid state." (Rand Daily Mail, Nov. 23, 1961).

Arrests and Detentions

Israeli Occupation Authorities use random arrests and detentions as a way to try to break the Palestinian spirit and to keep the population fragmented. Each year, about 700 Palestinian children are arrested and prosecuted through the Israeli military court system, according to Swiss-based Defence for Children International – Palestine Section.

Israeli prison authorities routinely resort to the use of administrative detention, against international law. Administrative detention allows authorities to hold Palestinians without charge or trial for up to six months, terms that can be extended indefinitely. Even children as young as 12 years have been held in administrative detention.

Each year, thousands of Palestinians are imprisoned and hundreds are held in administrative detention. Israel also violates international law by holding Palestinians inside Israeli prisons; disproportionate use of solitary confinement; prohibition of family visits; denial of access to education, fresh air and exercise.

Checkpoints and Closures

International law guarantees the right to freedom of movement, but Israeli occupation authorities have denied Palestinians this right for decades. Israel has implemented a policy of movement restrictions, including checkpoints, man-made earth mounds, trenches, roadblocks, the Apartheid Wall, and an intricate and difficult system of traveling permits. Such restrictions on movements have crippled the Palestinian economy. Palestinians often times can't get to work, particularly if the Apartheid Wall separates them from their place of employment or if their job requires them to travel beyond the 1948 Green Line. Palestinians also do not have access to quality medical care, and there have been many documented cases of deaths occurring at checkpoints because Israeli soldiers refuse to allow

Palestinians through the checkpoint so they can get to a hospital.

Education

Palestinians have among the highest literacy rate in the Arab World despite living under the harsh conditions of the occupation. But getting educated comes at a cost for students and their teachers whom must contend with more than 1,100 Israeli Military Orders that regulate everything from curfews to what can and cannot be studied in school. They face random school closures, harassment by Israeli residents of illegal colonial settlements and by IDF soldiers at checkpoints on the roadways and at the Apartheid Wall. Teachers report massive vandalism at the hands of IDF troops, and increasingly, children come under attack on their way to and from school by illegal Jewish settlers.

Home Demolitions

Israeli Occupation Forces have destroyed nearly 25,000 homes in the West Bank and Gaza since 1967 and 2,000 in East Jerusalem. Currently, there are 20,000 demolitions orders outstanding in East Jerusalem, according to the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions. Israeli occupation authorities say they demolish homes because they are built without proper permits, but the truth is Israel rarely grants building permits to Palestinians. Home demolitions are used to cultivate an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty that ultimately forces some Palestinians to leave their homeland. This is another element of the goal to ethnically cleanse Palestinians from Palestine.

Jerusalem

There is no city in the world today more hotly contested than Jerusalem. For thousands of years this blessed city has stood at the crossroads of trade route and religious traditions. But for decades, Zionist Jews have made no qualms about their intent to take over Jerusalem and make it the “undivided capital” of Israel.

Since it illegally occupied Jerusalem in the 1967 war, Israel has gone to great lengths to destroy any vestiges of other faiths in attempts to rewrite history and “Judaize” the holy city of Jerusalem. In addition to changing street names and other signage to Hebrew and English – erasing the Arabic language – demolishing mosques and churches, Israeli authorities are intent on transferring the indigenous Palestinian population out of Jerusalem.

Maps

This page contains several maps, mostly from the United Nations, that depict several issues pertaining to Palestine, such as the Apartheid Wall, location of settlements and boundaries of Jerusalem.

Refugees

Palestinian refugees are the largest and longest lasting refugee group in the world. Palestinians were first made refugees in 1948 when Zionist Jews drove 750,000 from their homes in what is called the Nakba, or catastrophe. When Israel waged the 1967 war and occupied the West Bank and Gaza, another 350,000 were forced into exile. From these two groups of people stem today’s Palestinian refugee population, which now has swelled to more than 7 million people. In fact, Palestinians make up the world’s largest and longest-lasting refugee population. A full 40 percent of the world’s refugees are Palestinians; 74 percent of the total Palestinian population is refugees as well. The United Nations Works and Relief Agency was created to deal with the Palestinians who were made refugees after the UN Partition of Palestine and the 1948 Nakba.

Settlements

It is against international law for an occupying power to transfer its own population into the land it is occupying, but that’s what Israel’s been doing for decades. Today, more than 40 percent of the West Bank has been eaten up by

settlements, which are actually small cities built in strategic locations to divide the West Bank in quarters. Since 1967, more than 221 settlements and outposts have been constructed on Palestinian land with direct support from the state of Israel, and today more than 500,000 Jews are living illegally on Palestinian land in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. The media says that settlements lay at the heart of the peace process, but the truth is the longer Israel can get the Palestinians to “negotiate” the more settlements can be built and the more Palestinian land annexed.

UN Resolutions

The United Nations has issued more resolutions demanding Israel comply with international law than any other global issue, all to no avail. While resolutions from the General Assembly are not binding, those from the Security Council are. The problem with the Security Council is, however, that just one veto from any member state will kill the resolution. The United States, as a permanent member of the Security Council, has vetoed at least 65 SC resolutions, thereby allowing Israel to break international law with impunity. Two of the most important resolutions are 242, which demands Israel withdraw from the occupied territories, and 194, which allows for the Right of Return.

US Aid to Israel

At the end of a 10-year Memorandum of Understanding in 2018, the United States will have given Israel \$30 billion in unconditional military aid. This figure will actually be much higher, however, because of other sources of US financing, such as loan guarantees, grants from other US agencies, and free or reduced-cost military supplies and weaponry.

Environment

Palestine has been described as the “land of milk and honey,” and indeed it is majestically beautiful with rolling hills, sloping mountains, river grottos and the Mediterranean Sea coastline. But the beauty belies the reality on the ground: More than 60 years of Israeli occupation have devastated the soil and water. From razing farmland and orchards to dumping illegal Israeli settlers’ raw sewage into Palestinian water sources and to the heavy metal and chemical contamination from spent shells and mortars, Israel has severely injured the land it is fighting so hard to steal.

Gaza

The Gaza Strip used to be a scenic trade center between Egypt and Mesopotamia. It is now the world’s largest open-air prison, with some 1.7 million people trapped inside a strip of land about 25 miles long and about five miles wide at its widest points. With a population density of nearly 4,200 people per square kilometers, it is one of the most densely populated places on Earth. It’s worse in the refugee camps, where there are nearly 75,000 people per square mile. Put into context, this is nearly three times greater than the average population density of New York City.

Israel disengaged from Gaza in 2005, meaning it withdrew its troops and settlers. However, Israel still controls the airspace, the borders and the coast. In 2007, Israel imposed a total blockade on Gaza and has prohibited the Import of most goods and almost all exports. As a result, Gaza’s economy has come to a grinding halt. After the Egyptian Revolution in 2011, the Egyptians agreed to open the Rafah border crossing periodically, which allows some Palestinians in Gaza to leave and return.