

Fact Sheet On Violations against women by Israeli occupation in Areas designated as (C)

Women under occupation

The Fact Sheet highlights the most prominent violations against Palestinian women in areas designated as (C) including deprivation of the most basic rights in the basic components of life, which have dangerously affected them in various aspects, especially the psychological, social and economic. One of the most prominent of these violations is represented through the expansion of settlements, the confiscation of land, the policy of demolition and settler violence that have affected education, health, water and electricity services. Israel, as the occupying power, has a legal responsibility represented in protecting Palestinian civilians and administering the areas it occupies for their benefit, and Israel is under the obligation to ensure security and public order. These violations contravene the Fourth Geneva Convention, which stipulates that the rights of the family must be protected. Article 27 of the Convention stipulates, "Protected persons shall in all circumstances have the right to respect for persons, their honor, their family rights, their religious beliefs, customs and traditions."¹ A similar text was included in the Hague Convention, in addition to article (2) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

In accordance with the progressive Palestinian Agreement of 1995: "Oslo II" the areas of the West Bank were, excluding Jerusalem, administratively divided into three areas. Area A was placed under Palestinian security and civilian control, Area B was under Palestinian civilian control and Israeli security control whereas Area C was entirely subjected to Israeli civil and security control and therefore Israel has full control over the implementation of the law, planning and construction therein.

Subsequently, Area C constitutes the largest sections of the West Bank. It is surrounded by Areas A and B and separated between their parts. Area C covers more than 60% of the West Bank, with an estimated 393,163 inhabitants, or about 10% of the Palestinian population, in 530 residential communities.²

Areas designated as (C) are considered an essential part of the West Bank in terms of their social, geographic and economic interconnection. The population of the West Bank was estimated at the end of 2017 as 2.88 million, of which 1.47 million were males and 1.41 million females³. The number of females is estimated to be half of the population in areas designated as (C).

Seventy percent (70%) of the areas designated as (C) are dedicated to Israeli settlements, and 30% of Palestinians are forbidden to enter or reside there on the pretext that those areas are a firing zone. Six thousands two hundred (6,200) Palestinians -living in 38 residential communities -in these areas are at risk of forced displacement, where severe restrictions are placed on the development or cultivation of 14% of Area C, which are classified as nature reserves⁴. Most of

¹ The International Committee of the Red Cross's(ICRC) explanation of article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

² https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/ocha_opt_area_c_factsheet_August2014_arabic.pdf

³ Report of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018

⁴ https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/ocha_opt_area_c_factsheet_August2014_arabic.pdf

the residents of Area C - marginalized communities, especially vulnerable groups such as children and women - are exposed to many Israeli violations for several reasons:

1. Demolition of houses

In 2017, the number of buildings targeted for demolition was 419 and the number of persons displaced was 664. As of the current half of 2018, the number of buildings targeted for demolition is 197 and the number of displaced persons is 174⁵, while 24% of households in Area C suffer from food insecurity due to house demolitions⁶.

Israeli demolition orders in Area C from 1988 to 2015⁷

Total number of demolition orders	14,087
Executed demolition orders	2,802
Pending demolition orders	11,134
Demolition orders that are ready to be executed	570
Approved license applications for Palestinians 2010-2012	1.5%
Demolition orders targeting buildings located on privately owned Palestinian land	77%
Forbidden construction areas for Palestinians in Area C	70%
Areas where construction/building is strictly restricted	29%
Areas where Palestinians are allowed to build	1%

A report on the impact of house demolitions on Palestinian women revealed that 63% of the respondents in the study state that women are subjected to increased responsibilities and burdens significantly after the demolition of the house and suffering from physical, psychological and practical aspects⁸. Such inability is the suffering of women to cope and proceed to do household chores because of the loss of household items. Some families may resort to living in relatives' homes, causing them to feel uncomfortable and deprived of privacy or some may resort to living in a tent that requires significant effort and suffering to provide the needs of the family. In this context, one of the women has expressed:

"My husband and my three children were living in my father's house because of my husband's illness and his inability to support us after the demolition of the house under the pretext of the lack of authorization without prior notification. As a result, we are out in the open and there is no place to shelter us except for the tents we've been provided with from the Red Cross and the local government."

⁵ <https://www.ochaopt.org/ar/content/new-legislation-impedes-challenges-demolitions-and-seizures-west-bank-0>

⁶ Redundant aid: Israel's repeated destruction of EU-funded projects in Palestine, the Euro-Mediterranean Observatory for Human Rights, 6/6/2016. <https://goo.gl/D78769>

⁷ <https://www.ochaopt.org/ar/content/under-threat-demolition-orders-area-c-west-bank-1>

⁸ Report on the impact of Israeli occupation violations on Palestinian women. (2014). Al - Haq Foundation

2. Expansion of settlements and land confiscation

One of the colonial objectives of land confiscation and appropriation is settlement expansion, which has negatively affected the living conditions of the Palestinians, subsequently resulting in the loss of property and livelihoods, in addition to restrictions on access to services.

The number of settlers in the West Bank has risen from 111,000 to 750,000 following the signing of the Oslo's agreement. The population growth rate reached 3.4% with 15,000 settlers annually⁹. This confirms that the settlements are ever increasing as Israel allocates 42% of the West Bank for settlement expansion; including the lands of Area C¹⁰. Area C has approximately 341,000 Israeli settlers in 135 settlements and approximately 100 outposts¹¹.

Israeli settlement and land confiscation have resulted in both economic and agricultural loss, where agriculture is considered a main source of income for the family and specifically for women. Additionally, 2342 acres of fertile land, which lies in the southern part of Jericho in the Jordan Valley area, was targeted and confiscated for expanding the settlements. 63.8% of women in the Jordan Valley have reported in 2014 that their lands and fruits have been confiscated; they have also reported that Israelis and settlers have prevented them from grazing in the areas they live in. Consequently, there has been no source of employment, which was then considered to be the main source of unemployment. This in turn, has led to an increase in poverty rates in households and among women who are heads of their households. Also, the unemployment rate has increased in the areas designated as (C) to 18.3% in 2011 compared to 2000 which was 8.1%, and the proportion of workers in agriculture decreased from 44% to 23.5% in the years from 2000 to 2011¹² and has changed a large proportion of farmers' lifestyle from an agricultural one into a laborer's lifestyle.

The confiscation of agricultural land increases the economic burden on the family in general and on women in particular, since women combine both the burdens of caring for their homes and their work with knowing that women work as unpaid family members. Therefore, women have the responsibility to provide protection for the family and were forced to work in Israeli settlements under difficult conditions in order to secure a living for themselves and their families. The women who worked in Israeli settlements have been subjected to sexual and security exploitation and they were forced to submit to unethical behavior. In addition they were forced into not receiving any compensation for work injuries and having no control over the time they work as they work from 6 am to 5 pm for a fee of up to 65 shekels¹³.

⁹ <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews/2018/1/24>

¹⁰ arabi21.com/story/1011788

¹¹ https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/ocha_opt_area_c_factsheet_August2014_arabic.pdf

¹² Hamdan, Ashraf and Barghouthi, Fida. 2015. Violations against women in the West Bank. The Palestinian Initiative for Promotion Global Dialogue and Democracy, Miftah. Ramallah, Palestine.

¹³ Israeli settlements and their economic and social effects on the Palestinian territories and the labor sector. (2014). Palestinian Ministry of Labor.

3. Settler violence

Palestinians who live in Area (C) are incessantly exposed to various forms of violations of the right to life, safety of their bodies, property and land, and a wide range of diverse practices. Among these practices perpetrated by settlers are- closing up roads, throwing of stones at cars and houses, raiding of villages and land, burning olive and crop fields, destroying property and unfortunately but ultimately reaching physical attacks and sometimes throwing Molotov cocktails and firing bullets.

In 2017, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has documented 89 incidents attributed to Israeli settlers that have resulted in Palestinian casualties (33 incidents) or damage to Palestinian property (56 incidents). On a monthly average, this represents an increase of 88% compared to 2016. These incidents have consequently resulted in the death of three Palestinians and the injuring of 48 Palestinians, of which are seven children, in addition to the damage of more than 2,700 trees and 52 vehicles, among other consequences¹⁴.

69.3% of the women in the Jordan Valley region have reported that they have been denied access to educational services, water or building houses and housing services. 42.9% of the women have confirmed that they have experienced psychological violence and the occupation and settlers in these areas physically and/or verbally harassed 31.9%. In addition, 38.6% of the women have indicated that they were prevented from reaching the city and/or health services. 11.3% of the women were investigated and 47.0% reported having been exposed to the demolition of tents, ponds and wells and 42.0% had lost their sources of income¹⁵.

The increase in settler violence has led to a decrease in women's access to basic services and a decrease in women's meeting of their various needs for life at the following levels:

- **Education**

The Ministry of Education's Monitoring and Evaluation Report 2017 reveals that school students are exposed to abuse, which as a result, causes many psychological and behavioral problems at 42.6%, 39.8% for females and 44.3% for males. The highest proportion in an orderly behavior was in favor of hyperactivity, withdrawal behavior, low motivation towards study, fear, anxiety, speech disorders and finally deviant social behavior¹⁶.

The number of schools that were affected by Israeli settlements has reached up to 34 out of 87 schools. The number of schools that were affected by the wall has reached up to 30 out of 187, the number of remote schools has reached 12 out of a total of 187 whilst the number of schools that were affected by checkpoints and barriers has reached up to 48 out of a total of 187¹⁷.

The Israeli occupation forces have practiced distinct types of violence including school attacks, martyrdom, injuries and arrests of students and teachers on a continuous basis and the purpose obstruction of the safe access of students and teachers to and from their schools. This is due to

¹⁴ <https://www.ochaopt.org/ar/content/increase-settler-violence-during-first-half-2017-1>

¹⁵ Hamdan, Ashraf and Barghouthi, Fida. 2015. Violations against women in the West Bank. The Palestinian Initiative for the promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, Miftah. Ramallah, Palestine.

¹⁶ Same as previous source.

¹⁷ The Status of the Rights of Palestinian Children 2014, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

the occupation's continuous closure of checkpoints, military gates, apartheid wall gates and repeated invasions and violations by Israeli soldiers and settlers¹⁸.

The subjection of children by Israelis exposes them to psychological abuse, deprives them of a safe environment in education and obstructs their school attendance, which as a result has negatively affected their academic achievement. OCHA reports that more than a third of the Palestinian communities in Area C lack primary schools, which consequently forces children to travel or walk long distances passing through Israeli checkpoints or to be harassed by settlers, forcing families to withdraw their children - especially girls - from schools¹⁹.

Because of the violence against females on the educational level, there has been a tendency for families to withdraw girls from education at an early age, which has consequently lead to the spread of early marriage. This is due to the distance of schools from places of residence, barrier setups, school attacks, sexual and verbal harassment and deprivation of a safe environment for education. In this context, a woman from Ain al-Kult has expressed:

"It is certain that girls leave school when they reach seventh grade as it is not safe for girls to walk all that distance every day , especially in winter as it becomes dark very early."

• **Health**

40% of the Palestinian communities were affected by the separation wall, which contributed to the isolation of 46 health clinics and 117,600 pregnant women of whom 17640 are experiencing a high risk pregnancy, are suffering from the lack of ways to access both prenatal and postnatal services and organized supervision during pregnancy²⁰.

Israelis have permanently erected checkpoints in these areas, which have in turn obstructed women's access to health care facilities during pregnancy or postpartum, which increases the risk of death. Women are forced to give birth at home without medical supervision or have to give birth while at checkpoints. Thus the Israelis deny them access to an adequate and qualitative level of health services. It is worth mentioning here that the health care facilities are about ten kilometers from the communities.

"Women have to ride donkeys to get to clinics and health centers and have to cross a rough road by the hour, how can a woman who already suffers labor pain have the ability to walk or ride on her donkey for a whole hour?" as articulated by a woman in the Jordan Valley²¹.

¹⁸ Monitoring and Evaluation Report of Palestinian Ministry of Education, 2017.

¹⁹ <https://www.ochaopt.org/ar/content/access-education-area-c-west-bank-0>

²⁰ A study published by the Palestinian Institute for Health Information and Policy, 2010.

²¹ Jarar, Suha. (2018). Analysis of Gender Dimensions in Enforced Environments: The Case of the Jordan Valley Region, Al Haq Foundation.

- **Water and electricity sources**

For water:

- Approximately 70% of all or most of the communities in Area C are not connected to a water network²².
- Settlements control 85% of Palestinian groundwater in Area C²³.
- The occupation limits 313,000 Palestinians from access to water networks in the 113 communities²⁴, and 42,000 Palestinians are critically vulnerable, with access to less than 30 liters per day.
- Shepherd communities in the northern Jordan Valley consume only about 20 liters per person per day. This consumption is much less than the 100 liters per person per day as recommended by the World Health Organization. As a comparison, the average water consumption in Israel is between 100 and 230 liters per person per day²⁵.

The lack of water due to the restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation led to a fall back in the quantity of agricultural products and fodder due to the low cultivation of fodder because it requires regular and organized irrigation (watering) and due to the lack of grazing areas and shortage of crops. Lack of water has affected crop irrigation and has led to a decline in agriculture in general which therefore led to an increase in fodder prices in the market and a decrease in the number of livestock²⁶.

Women bear the main burden of coping with this suffering since it is linked to the role of women in providing care for their families in accessing services such as drinking, cleaning and washing. A woman in the Jordan Valley has articulated:

"There is not enough water for personal hygiene, drinking, cleaning and cooking. We have to buy water at an expensive price; we cannot wash clothes well. Women suffer the most due to their urgent need of water when they are menstruating."

²² https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/ocha_opt_area_c_factsheet_August2014_arabic.pdf

²³ Report entitled "Water for one people only: discrimination in access to water and the apartheid regime in the water sector" in the occupied Palestinian territory, Al Haq Foundation, 2013.

²⁴ Israel's Administrative Destruction of Cisterns in Area C of the West Bank. Diakonia IHL Resources Centre

²⁵ Special Report on Human Rights' Violations and Colonial Policy in Area C, issued by the Jerusalem Legal Aid Center, 2011

²⁶ Discrimination in Access to Water and the Apartheid System in the Water Sector in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. (2013). Al - Haq Foundation

For electricity:

- In 2012, the Civil Administration issued demolition orders for electrical systems that use both solar and air power which were installed by the non-profit Comt-Middle East- in nine villages in the south of Hebron²⁷.

- The main reason for lack of electricity is considered to be Israeli's control over the electricity supply. Israeli authorities have allowed only limited supplies to different villages in Area C disregarding population growth.

- Until 2014, there hasn't been any electricity in 41% of households in Area C²⁸.

Electricity is considered to be one of the basic services for women since most of their household work is dependent upon it including washing, cooking, heating and ironing as most of the household appliances that women need are electrically powered. In this regard, a woman from the Jordan valley has explained her suffering with electricity by saying:

"Due to the lack of electricity, we wash clothes using our hands. We can't keep milk and food refrigerated which as a result forces us to consume food the same day and this increases the food budget. We have to buy and eat meat and certain food on the same day because if it isn't consumed on the same day then we'll unfortunately have to get rid of it."

Hence, women are subjected to many violations and the most important include: the daily political occupation violations that have affected all social, economic and human levels and this is manifested by restricting the movement of women by preventing them from moving and closing the suffocating barriers, demolishing houses and displacing families. Marginalization is attributed to the Israeli military occupation, which has severely affected the right of women to education, health and social care.

Recommendations:

International laws protect the rights of peoples through the Charter of the United Nations and the international conventions on human rights, including the political, economic, social, cultural and the security of the member states of the United Nations Organization for All Individuals and Peoples, including their right to self-determination and their right to justice, equality and others. By reviewing the resolutions of international legitimacy that Israel has not complied with, we find that the right of self-determination applies to the Palestinian people, namely that each person has the right to self-determination (Resolutions 242, 338 and 2334). Therefore, the State of Israel must abide by legal responsibilities, under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War.

Hence, there are obligations on international institutions towards the Israeli violations of women in areas (C) as follows to:

²⁷ B'Tselem. Planning & building in Area C. Non-development of infrastructure and services in Area C. 2013

²⁸ Agegurin, Rafael and Saadeh, Luna. Protection in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2014.

1. Compel Israelis to physically and morally compensate families in the areas designated as (C) in accordance with the old standards of international law.
2. Monitor and assess the damage inflicted by Israel on women and assess the needs of women and integrate them into their policies.
3. Take all the necessary actions to activate international accountability tools for their severe violations in Area C including house demolitions, building of settlements and forced displacement.
4. Support the voice of women in international forums and support the Palestinian demand to end the occupation and hold Israel accountable for all crimes and violations committed against Palestinian women through the reinforcement of international solidarity with Palestinian women.

Position Paper on violence against women in Area (C)

House demolition is a crime against humanity

“I was living with my husband and three sons in my father’s house because my father was sick and could not provide for us. After demolishing the house without prior notice on the pretext of lack of permit, we were outdoors and had only tents that the Red Cross and the local government gave to us. We suffered harsh conditions, with no water in the area to which we were displaced, so we filled water from remote areas, and no electricity, so we lived a primitive life. The children had to walk for around five kilometers to go to school and we were preoccupied with how to provide food after they displaced us from our lands”.

A woman whose house was demolished by the occupation in the so-called Area “C”

The occupation state has been systematically demolishing the houses of Palestinians residing in the so-called Area “C” and forcibly displacing them from their houses, while those houses do not pose any threat on the settlers who live in the area. In 2017, 419 houses were demolished and 664 persons displaced, while until mid-2018, 197 houses have been demolished and 174 persons displaced.

The occupation state gives unacceptable justifications for house demolition, and its planning and construction policy ignores the needs of the Palestinian inhabitants, as it does not meet their minimum needs in that area. Palestinians were banned from participating, while the settlers were fully participating in the planning process.

The occupation state has been demolishing Palestinian houses in the so-called Area “C”, and forcibly displacing inhabitants on the pretext of lack of building permits, in accordance with the approved planning and construction policies. Israel has adopted a large set of laws, policies and practices designed to create harsh conditions that Palestinians cannot tolerate. The measures that Israel implements to displace and exile Palestinians are founded on a discriminatory system in the planning and construction procedures, and on unlawfully destroying their properties, through demolishing the houses that the Palestinians own and imposing constraints that prevent them from accessing natural resources, especially land and water. These discriminatory measures have a clear gender impact, as they more adversely affect the livelihoods of Palestinian women than men.

Women and rights-based organizations consider house demolitions a violation of the rights of the family in general and women in particular, as they compound the challenges that women face, because of their suffering to provide shelter, which constitutes safety and security for families. Women are responsible for providing protection and adequate housing for their families. Many Palestinian families are forced to live in tents or in houses that lack the minimum basic amenities, which forces women to multiply their efforts to provide family needs.

The impact of house demolition on women and access to services

The Israeli practices related to house demolition have deprived Palestinian women living in Area “C” from their right to enjoy the highest attainable health services and facilities and from enjoying basic health rights, such as the right to food and nutrition, housing and safe drinking water, which are gender-sensitive services. The consequences of house demolition and displacement on women in the so-called Area “C” include taking refuge in communities that lack basic services such as education, health, water, electricity and work.

- I. The house demolitions and forcible displacement of women worsen access to health services, as women are forced to live in areas that are over four kilometers away from healthcare facilities. For example, pregnant women had to walk or ride animals in barren land to go to the hospital for antenatal care or for delivery. How can a woman take such routes when she has labor pain? Consequently, women are forced to deliver their babies at home. Furthermore, pregnant women do not receive antenatal care, which puts their lives at risk.
- II. The Israeli violations of house demolition and displacement of women constitute a violation of women’s right to education, as they include demolishing educational institutions on the pretext of lack of permits. Moreover, they impede the students’ access to school, because going to school takes longer, and students have to leave their places of residence at dawn (5 am) and come back after dark during winter, which forces girls to quit school.
- III. Water is a basic need for women, for drinking, cooking and sanitation. Water is an indispensable human right. The Israeli violations of house demolition and displacement to areas that lack water networks force women to resort to the closest communities to obtain small quantities of water to meet their basic needs. This has adversely affected their personal hygiene, especially during menstruation, and put women and their family members at risk of communicable diseases.
- IV. Electricity is a basic service for women because most house chores depend on it, such as washing, cooking, heating and ironing. Most household appliances that women need use electricity. Tents or houses to which Palestinians are displaced after their houses are demolished lack electricity. This has forced women to undertake hard labor to compensate the lack of electricity and meet the household needs.
- V. House demolitions and displacement of inhabitants forced Palestinians away from their lands, while agriculture is their main source of livelihood, which raised the unemployment rate. Women shoulder the economic burdens with their husbands, which compels them to accept working at Israeli settlements for low wages, long working hours, and no rights. This has compounded women's responsibilities that include house chores and work.

Finally, the mental health of Palestinian women and girls is gravely affected by the continuous threats of demolition, and the attacks of the Israeli occupation forces against their houses, families and properties, which deprive them from their basic rights.

The legal status of house demolition and displacement of Palestinians

The state of Israel is violating the prohibition imposed by Customary International Law on forcible displacement of protected persons, as provided in Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israel is also violating its basic obligations in accordance with the International Humanitarian Law, namely to preserve the area temporarily, provide the basic needs and ensure the safety of civilians living in the so-called Area “C”, as an occupied area. It is committing several violations, including demolishing houses, displacing the inhabitants and depriving Palestinians from their basic needs, namely education, health, water and electricity services, and adequate housing, in accordance with International Humanitarian Law and Articles 64 and 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention in addition to Article 43 of the Hague Statutes. The occupation state is violating the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), as it violates Articles 2, 3, 12, and 14(2) (b) (h), which demand the right of women to live without discrimination.

Once we understand the goals of house demolition and forcible displacement of the inhabitants of the so-called Area “C”, we can identify the necessary steps to end such violence. Accordingly, women and rights-based organizations demand the following from the international agencies:

- 1- End and annul all the policies that contribute to creating a coercive environment for Palestinians, particularly those that target the communities in Area “C”, and which place Palestinian women and girls under the risk of illegitimate forcible displacement, which in turn obstructs the right of women and their families to access basic services: education, health, water and electricity.
- 2- Lobby with Israel to meet its obligations towards Palestinian women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) in accordance with CEDAW, and ensure their right to protection from the violations of occupation.
- 3- Activate the mechanisms of accountability against violations of International Law, including Israeli crimes in the OPT. End the continuing occupation since more than five decades; grant the Palestinian people their right to self-determination and permanent sovereignty over their natural resources; restore the properties to their forcibly displaced original owners, and compensate them for the losses that Israel has inflicted upon them.