



Analytical Report

The Gendered Impact of Forced Displacement on Palestinian Families from Northern West Bank Refugee Camps



The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy - MIFTAH

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The Gendered Impact of Forced Displacement on Palestinian Families from Northern West Bank Refugee Camps (Analytical Report)

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Executive Summary

Forced displacement constitutes one of the structural pillars of the Israeli settler-colonial project in Palestine. It is a continuous and long-standing policy that has persisted since the Nakba of 1948, aimed at uprooting the indigenous Palestinian population from their land and reshaping the geographic and demographic space in accordance with a logic of replacement and domination. Within this historical context, the current waves of forced displacement targeting Palestinian refugee camps in the northern West Bank cannot be understood as temporary security measures or isolated events. Rather, they represent an advanced phase in a prolonged and systematic colonial policy of exclusion, intended to empty the camps of their inhabitants and undermine their political and legal significance as living testimony to the Palestinian refugee question and the right of return.

This analytical report, issued by MIFTAH, documents the crime of forced displacement affecting the Jenin, Tulkarm, and Nur Shams refugee camps, as well as other areas in the northern West Bank during 2024–2025, with a particular focus on its complex and multi-dimensional impacts on Palestinian women. The report adopts an integrated human rights and gender-based approach, recognizing women as central actors in documentation and narrative-building, while also acknowledging that they are among the groups most severely affected by long-term policies of forced displacement and settler colonialism.

First: The General Context of Forced Displacement in Northern West Bank Refugee Camps

The report demonstrates that refugee camps in the northern West Bank originally established as temporary shelters for victims of the 1948 Nakba have, over decades, become densely populated residential spaces under constant threat of repeated displacement within their own homeland. In recent years, this targeting has intensified through large-scale military campaigns involving repeated incursions, excessive use of force, the demolition of dozens of residential buildings, the destruction of vital infrastructure (including water, sewage, and electricity networks), severe restrictions on movement, and the creation of coercive conditions that render daily life untenable.

Field data indicate that these operations have resulted in widespread forced displacement affecting tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees, including thousands of women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities. These figures cannot be separated from their political and legal dimensions, as they reflect a

systematic policy aimed at reengineering the demographic landscape, weakening the social and economic fabric of the camps, and undermining their communal stability

Second: Methodology and Analytical Framework

The report adopts a multi-method human rights research methodology, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis and grounded in a human rights–based and gender-sensitive framework. The field survey included 300 forcibly displaced Palestinian women and 20 sworn testimonies geographically distributed across refugee camps and governorates in the northern West Bank. Additional sworn testimonies and affidavits were collected over an extended period from early 2024 through mid-2025.

The report’s distinctiveness lies in its reliance on women’s narratives as a central source of documentation and analysis not merely as humanitarian accounts, but as a critical entry point for understanding the nature of compounded violations, the impact of forced displacement on family and social structures, the levels of protection available, and the escalating forms of vulnerability experienced by displaced women.

Third: The Compounded Impact of Forced Displacement on Palestinian Women

The findings reveal that forced displacement in northern West Bank refugee camps produces disproportionate and intensified impacts on women and girls, due to the intersection of Israeli settler-colonial policies with entrenched patterns of structural gender-based discrimination. The consequences of displacement extend far beyond the loss of housing, undermining women’s economic and social roles, increasing unpaid care burdens, and exposing them to heightened risks of poverty, gender-based violence, and restricted access to essential services, amid the absence of adequate legal protection and institutional support.

Economically, forced displacement has led to a comprehensive collapse of household economic stability, shifting families from low-cost living environments within the camps to financially exhausting conditions marked by rent payments, service bills, increased transportation costs, and loss of income sources. Women were the most affected whether through the loss of their own livelihoods and home-based micro-projects, the unemployment of male breadwinners, or their assumption of primary breadwinning roles under conditions of unstable and insufficient income. This has deepened multidimensional poverty and forced reliance on irregular and partial humanitarian assistance, reflecting the absence of an effective social protection system responsive

to the needs of displaced women, in violation of the occupying power's obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention and CEDAW.

Forced displacement has also reshaped family roles in profoundly unequal ways, with women bearing compounded economic and psychological burdens, including managing scarce resources, securing daily necessities, covering housing and healthcare costs, and providing care in the absence of emergency employment schemes or gender-responsive cash assistance particularly for women heads of household. These pressures have contributed to increased social vulnerability and heightened risks of domestic and gender-based violence.

Health-wise, forced displacement has resulted in severe deterioration in women's physical and mental health due to instability, repeated displacement, lack of privacy, and restricted access to healthcare services—especially for women with chronic illnesses, pregnant women, older women, and women with disabilities. The report documents profound psychological impacts, including chronic anxiety, sleep disorders, depression, and prolonged trauma, constituting violations of the right to health as guaranteed under international human rights and humanitarian law.

At the family level, women have shouldered the primary responsibility for caring for children, older persons, and persons with disabilities amid the collapse of healthcare and social care systems, lack of reasonable accommodations, and disruption of rehabilitation, treatment, and inclusive education services. Inadequate and overcrowded housing conditions have exacerbated health problems—particularly among children—and increased psychological and behavioral risks, in violation of the rights of the child and the rights of persons with disabilities.

The report further highlights that post-displacement housing arrangements such as temporary shelters, overcrowded living with other families, or accommodation with non-relatives have resulted in serious violations of the right to privacy and created unsafe and unsuitable environments for women and girls. These conditions have heightened the risk of gender-based violence, eroded family support networks, and restricted women's access to humanitarian aid and essential services.

In sum, forced displacement in the northern West Bank constitutes a compounded violation of Palestinian women's economic, social, health, and psychological rights. It functions as a mechanism for reproducing

poverty, marginalization, and gender-based violence, necessitating an urgent human rights and humanitarian response that places women at the center of protection policies and ensures sustained support grounded in gender justice and human dignity.

Fourth: Legal Qualification and International Responsibility

The report concludes that the documented Israeli practices in northern West Bank refugee camps amount to grave violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. These include forced displacement, which is absolutely prohibited under international law. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) explicitly prohibits the individual or mass forcible transfer of protected civilians, whether through direct evacuation orders or the creation of coercive conditions rendering continued residence impossible. Any displacement outside these narrowly defined exceptions constitutes a serious breach of international law and a direct threat to civilian protection.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court criminalizes deportation or forcible transfer when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population, classifying it as both a war crime and a crime against humanity—particularly when aimed at altering demographic composition or dismantling the social fabric of civilian communities.

Forced displacement also entails violations of fundamental human rights, including the right to adequate housing, personal security, privacy, and an adequate standard of living, in contravention of international treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Moreover, the targeting of Palestinian refugee camps violates international resolutions, particularly UN General Assembly Resolution 194, undermines UNRWA's mandate, and erodes Palestinian refugees' rights to return and compensation.

These violations trigger international accountability obligations. Individual criminal responsibility applies to any military, political, or administrative official involved in the planning, execution, or support of forced displacement. Palestine's accession to the International Criminal Court provides a critical legal avenue to pursue accountability and challenge impunity. Accordingly, forced displacement in northern West Bank refugee camps constitutes a multi-layered violation of international law, rising to the level of war crimes and

crimes against humanity, and demands effective international accountability to protect civilians and uphold refugee rights.

Fifth: International Obligations to Protect Displaced and Refugee Palestinian Women

Ensuring the protection of displaced and refugee Palestinian women constitutes a core international obligation under international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and the Women, Peace and Security agenda, particularly in light of the compounded vulnerabilities and gender-based violence resulting from occupation and forced displacement. International humanitarian law most notably Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits forcible transfer and collective displacement of civilians in occupied territory, classifying such acts as grave breaches that may amount to war crimes. The impacts of these violations are magnified for women, who face heightened risks during displacement, including sexual violence, exploitation, loss of shelter and livelihoods, and disruption of essential services. This imposes a duty on the occupying power to provide special protection for women and to ensure dignified living conditions through a gender-responsive humanitarian approach.

Simultaneously, international human rights law remains fully applicable during armed conflict, including obligations to ensure non-discrimination, protect the rights to life, health, housing, and education, and guarantee women's access to humanitarian assistance without restriction or discrimination. CEDAW, particularly General Recommendation No. 30, underscores the obligation to adopt special measures to protect women in conflict and displacement settings, ensure their participation in humanitarian planning and durable solutions, and hold perpetrators of gender-based violence accountable.

The UN Security Council's Women, Peace and Security framework beginning with Resolution 1325 further reinforces obligations to protect women during conflict and displacement, ensure safe access to assistance, establish effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms, and involve women in prevention, recovery, and reconstruction efforts. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement complement this framework by affirming displaced women's dignity, safety, and right to participate in camp management and decision-making processes toward durable solutions.

Within the Palestinian context, Palestinian refugees, including women, enjoy specific protections under UNRWA's mandate and relevant UN General Assembly resolutions. The continued functioning of UNRWA is

therefore essential to guaranteeing women's and girls' access to healthcare, education, and social protection services in refugee camps. Any erosion of these protections whether through forced displacement or the dismantling of assistance frameworks constitutes a multi-dimensional violation of international law and necessitates international accountability and comprehensive protection for displaced and refugee Palestinian women.

Sixth: Practical and Strategic Mechanisms for Protecting Displaced Palestinian Women

Palestinian women in northern West Bank camps face compounded vulnerabilities due to forced displacement and restrictions on movement under Israeli occupation. Addressing these challenges requires practical protection measures aligned with international legal obligations.

Humanitarian and Rights-Based Protection

Efforts should focus on preventing forced displacement and ensuring the right of return or alternative protection, in line with UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (1948) and subsequent resolutions. This includes establishing temporary protection mechanisms for women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, creating safe reception points, and guaranteeing equal access to essential services such as healthcare and basic needs.

Advocacy and International Pressure

Protection efforts must combine political, diplomatic, and legal advocacy. Key strategies include applying pressure on the occupation to halt displacement, mobilizing international human rights organizations and media, submitting legal advocacy reports, building coalitions with UNHCR and feminist movements, filing formal complaints to international bodies, and reaffirming obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, human rights treaties, and CEDAW.

Monitoring and Documenting Violations

Specialized mechanisms should document violations against women, children, and persons with disabilities during displacement. Documentation supports accountability, enabling formal complaints and reporting to the UN and human rights bodies, ensuring Israel is held responsible as the Occupying Power.

Access to Services and Women's Empowerment

Programs should enhance access to healthcare, rehabilitation, and assistive devices, including mobile health units for displaced families. Temporary housing must be adapted for accessibility, safe mobility, and child-friendly spaces. Education and psychological support for children and women are essential, including specialized schooling, trauma counseling, and programs to reduce psychological harm.

Economic Empowerment and Support for Caregiving

Women's centers and economic empowerment programs, such as vocational training and micro-projects, should be established to reduce dependence on humanitarian aid. Support for caregiving roles is crucial, recognizing women's central role in sustaining family well-being during displacement.

Introduction

Forced displacement is one of the most entrenched and persistent tools of Israel's colonial settlement project in Palestine. Since the Nakba of 1948, this project has systematically aimed at uprooting the indigenous population from their land, undermining their physical and symbolic presence, and reshaping the geographic and demographic landscape. Through sustained policies geared toward imposing a regime of colonial control and settlement expansion, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have been forcibly displaced, their villages destroyed, and their right to return denied.

These practices constitute clear violations of international law: Forced displacement reflects a policy of collective and individual forcible transfer of populations, which is prohibited under international humanitarian law. Moreover, in many of its manifestations, it also constitutes a grave violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and may amount to a war crime and a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

In the Palestinian context, forced displacement has not been a passing event or a reaction to exceptional circumstances; rather, it has been enforced under a sustained, systematic policy and a core pillar of the colonial settlement project since the Nakba of 1948. From the mass displacement of Palestinians and the destruction of hundreds of villages, through the 1967 occupation and ensuing waves of forced displacement, to contemporary policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, displacement has remained a central tool for reshaping the demographic landscape, undermining community stability, and imposing a permanent reality of coercion on the Palestinian population.

The long historical trajectory has led to the emergence of refugee camps across the West Bank. The camps, including those in the northern areas, started as temporary shelters during the first wave of dispossession, and soon turned into overcrowded residential areas where the displaced live under the constant threat of re-displacement. Over the decades, the camps have consistently targeted by the Israeli military operations, becoming theaters for large-scale attacks marked by violent raids, systematic destruction of homes and infrastructure, and severe disruption of basic necessities of life. These recurring practices have imposed repeated patterns of forced displacement on camp residents and reproduced the experience of displacement within the homeland itself.

As such, Israel, as the occupying power has established a system of structural violence that sustained this pattern of displacement and used it as a tool to reengineer Palestinian space, dismantle population centers, and undermine forms of social and economic forms of organization, especially in areas with increased political and national symbolism, such as refugee camps.

Bearing in mind the blatant violations of human rights and international law, the approach to forced displacement in the Palestinian context cannot be limited to describing its direct humanitarian effects without considering the broader systematic and deliberate colonial policy, enforced through overlapping legal, military, and administrative tools. and aimed. In essence, this policy seeks to negate Palestinian presence and undermine fundamental rights, including housing, self-determination, and the right of return. This constitutes a flagrant and ongoing violation of international humanitarian and human rights law.

It is within this historical framework that current Israeli policies and measures targeting Palestinian refugee camps in the northern West Bank must be understood. These include Israeli actions affecting camps in the Jenin governorate, the Nur Shams governorate – including Tulkarm, and in Tubas, Tamoun, and other locations across the northern West Bank. Far from isolated incidents, these measures constitute further episodes in long-standing attempts to empty the camps of their inhabitants and undermine their role as social and political incubators for the refugee cause and the right of return.

During 2024–2025, the occupying power carried out a systematic military campaign that involved the demolition of dozens of residential buildings. By the end of August 2024, the Israeli military announced a large-scale operation targeting three cities (refugee camps included) in the northern West Bank, namely Jenin, Tulkarm, and Tubas, and there was no time limit set for it. On the contrary, it has been expanding with yet another announcement in April 2025 that further launched sweeping military operations in Nablus, adding it to the cities in the northern West Bank where the occupation is waging war.¹

This operation was accompanied by the destruction of water and sewage networks and vital infrastructure, the use of excessive military force, the storming of homes, the looting of property, and the imposition of severe

¹ Al-Salhi, Abdulaziz. Revitalizing Civil Society in the Context of War (Youth Clubs, Grassroots Institutions, Volunteer and Neighborhood Committees). The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy “Al-Miftah,” 2025, p. 9. See the following link: <https://shorturl.at/xfhLL>

restrictions on movement, all of which imposed a coercive reality that threatens the communal existence of the camps. Under international law, this constitutes a war crime and a crime of forced displacement.²

Estimates indicate that these operations have resulted in the forced displacement of some 40,000 Palestinian refugees, including more than 21,000 from the Jenin Camp and about 26,000 from the Tulkarm and Nur Shams camps. Additionally, more than 639 buildings and facilities were demolished. These figures cannot be separated from their profound impact on the social and economic structure of Palestinian society, nor from their nature as part of a systematic policy aimed at reengineering the population to serve the colonial goals of the occupation.³

Based on the historical and political context of forced displacement in Palestine, and considering the specificity of the current displacement in the camps of the northern West Bank as an extension of a systematic and ongoing policy, this report adopts a multi-tool human rights research methodology that aims to document patterns of forced displacement and analyze its complex effects on women. This methodology is based on an analytical approach that combines field monitoring, primary data collection, and analysis in light of relevant international standards of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

Field data show that women suffer from the combined and double effects of displacement. On the one hand, they lose their homes, personal security, stability, and access to basic services, and on the other hand, they bear additional burdens related to caring for children and the elderly and managing family affairs in unsafe displacement conditions, which exacerbates their social, economic, and psychological vulnerability. This report thus takes an integrated human rights and gender approach, viewing forced displacement as a human rights violation that contravenes international law and disproportionately affects women and girls, who are among the groups most affected by policies of exclusion and demographic emptying.

² Ibid., p. 13.

³ Ibid., p. 13.

Purpose and Scope of the Report

This report aims to document and analyze the crime of forced displacement that has affected Palestinian refugee camps in the northern West Bank, with a particular focus on its gendered manifestations and multidimensional impact on Palestinian women, as one of the groups most affected by displacement and settler-colonial policies. The report seeks to highlight the voices of displaced women as a key to understanding the nature of the complex violations they face, particularly those related to the right to adequate housing, personal security, health, livelihoods, and social protection.

It also aims to provide an analytical reading of forced displacement as a systematic and colonial methodology used to dismantle family and social structures, weaken the social fabric and national identity, and undermine the rights of refugee women, including the right to return and protection.

Furthermore, the report examines the impact of displacement on women's economic, social, health, and psychological rights, and outlines the occupying power's obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law, while underscoring the gender-specific impact of violations, particularly on women. As such, it contributes to enhancing opportunities for international accountability and formulating practical recommendations for relevant actors, including mechanisms for accountability, advocacy, protection, and support for Palestinian women and girls.

Report Methodology

The report adopted a research methodology that combines quantitative and qualitative tools, based on a human rights approach and a gender perspective, ensuring an in-depth analysis of women's experiences in the context of forced displacement. The interviews were conducted by female researchers (contracted by MIFTAH) with expertise in human rights and gender documentation, in accordance with the principles of confidentiality, informed consent, and no-harm.

As for the study sample, the field survey included 300 Palestinian women and was conducted in their places of displacement to reflect their direct experience of displacement. The sample was distributed geographically as follows: 145 women from Jenin camps, 142 women from Tulkarm and Nur Shams camps, 10 women from Jericho and the Jordan Valley, and 3 women from Tubas. In addition to the survey, 20 sworn statements were

documented, which contributed to enhancing the reliability of the data and in-depth monitoring of the patterns of violations. Twenty documented statements were also collected from women who were forcibly displaced.

The data and field information were collected over an extended period at the start of the first quarter of 2025 to the start of the third quarter of 2025; a period that marked a significant escalation in Israeli policies and measures targeting Palestinian northern West Bank refugee camps, leading to widespread forced displacement. This time span allowed for the monitoring of the evolution of patterns of violations and their cumulative impact on displaced women and their families.

In terms of geographical scope, the field survey covered camps and population centers affected by forced displacement in cities in the northern West Bank, particularly the camps of Jenin, Tulkarm, and Tubas, as well as areas in Jericho and the Jordan Valley. Interviews were conducted in the locations where the women had been displaced, reflecting the realities of forced displacement and their living conditions. This approach contributed to a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the impact of displacement on women's daily lives across multiple geographical settings.

During the analysis phase, women's narratives were used as primary documentation, as examined within a demographic and gender analysis framework. This approach, which also considered the economic, social, health, and psychological repercussions on Palestinian women and girls, enabled an assessment of the multidimensional impact of forced displacement on family and social structures. It also studied the availability of protection mechanisms for women, with particular attention to vulnerable groups including the elderly and persons with disabilities.

The report based its legal characterization of the documented violations on the applicable rules of international humanitarian law and human rights law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, relevant United Nations resolutions concerning the right of return of Palestinian refugees, and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. This legal framework was used to characterize the documented violations, demonstrate their illegality under international law, and determine the international legal responsibilities that may arise from them.

In this context, a set of indicators was developed to characterize and analyze the nature of the documented violations. The research questionnaire and collected testimonies were informed by a range of human rights and

gender-sensitive indicators, which intersect to form a research basis for information related to the situation of northern West Bank refugees who were forcibly displaced and compelled to leave their homes and possessions and seek refuge in other areas. These indicators also supported the analysis of the social, economic, and demographic characteristics of the affected families, the specific circumstances of women, and the gendered impact of forced displacement on women and their families, including their experiences in new locations of displacement. Within this framework, documenting Palestinian women's narratives was not treated merely as a methodological step, but as a critical feminist re-evaluation of the fundamental source for understanding violations and their consequences, in accordance with what MIFTAH has done by relying on women's testimonies as sources of evidence on forced displacement:

Theme	Indicators
Forced displacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of women forcibly displaced - Number of times the family was displaced - Total or partial loss of the original home - Destruction or confiscation of private property - Prevention of return to the home or camp
Housing and privacy	<p>Type of housing after displacement (shared/temporary/hosted by relatives/shelter centers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Degree of overcrowding in the place of residence - Availability of privacy for women and girls - Availability of safe, separate, and secure sanitation facilities - Perceived sense of safety and security within the place of residence - Suitability of housing for the needs of women, older persons, and persons with disabilities
Economic impact and livelihoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loss of primary source of household income - Loss of women's employment or cessation of income-generating activities - Increase in the cost of living following displacement - Dependence on humanitarian assistance - Increased economic burden on women - Changes in women's economic roles and responsibilities within the household - Increased poverty and economic vulnerability
Physical and mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficulties accessing health services - Disruption of regular health care - Difficulties accessing sexual and reproductive health services

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shortages of medicines and treatment - Impact of displacement on the health of older persons and persons with disabilities within the household - Increased levels of anxiety and persistent fear - Symptoms consistent with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder - Loss of sense of security and stability
Social and family impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family separation or dispersion as a result of displacement - Changes in gender roles within the household - Increased caregiving responsibilities on women - Loss of community ties and social support networks within the camp

Sample Description

The research sample data indicated that the majority of women were married, numbering 242. The sample also included 34 widows, 8 divorcees, and 68 single women. 72 women were the primary breadwinners for their households. More than 30 women had three or more children, and 201 households had more than five members, indicating the prevalence of relatively large families within the sample. Regarding family composition, the data showed that 48 households had more than three female members, while 47 households had elderly members. Additionally, 51 households included persons with disabilities, whether among the women themselves or their family members. The age distribution of the women ranged from under 20 years to over 60 years. These indicators reflect the diverse age groups and varying social and health conditions within displaced households. . Family size is a critical demographic factor in displaced family contexts, as it links to housing conditions and basic service needs.

The sample data showed that the women's places of residence prior to forced displacement were concentrated within a limited number of governorates in the northern West Bank. Specifically, 145 women had resided in camps in the Jenin governorate and its suburbs, while 142 women lived in camps in the Tulkarm governorate, indicating that the majority of the sample originated from these two governorates. In contrast, 10 women had resided in camps in the Jericho and Jordan Valley governorate, and three women in the Tubas governorate, reflecting a lower representation from other governorates in the sample.

With respect to post-displacement residence, the research sample data showed variation in women's places of residence of women following forcible displacement, and the places spread across multiple governorates and areas. The results showed that 23 women resided in camps and suburbs in the Jericho and Jordan Valley governorate, while 34 women resided in camps and suburbs in the Nablus governorate. The data also indicated that 112 women were scattered across various areas within the Jenin governorate, and 85 women across different areas of the Tulkarm governorate, reflecting a pattern of spatial dispersion of displaced women following displacement, and their relocation to multiple places of residence within neighboring governorates.

Forced Displacement in the Colonial Context

The concept of forced displacement in a colonial context is intrinsically linked to the notion of colonial exclusion, which refers to policies and modes of domination employed by a colonial power with the aim of emptying the land of its indigenous population or diminishing political and demographic presence, engineering the social and economic structure to serve the interests of the colonizer, and stripping the colonized people of the legitimacy of their political, legal, and cultural existence. A wide range of tools are deployed to this end, most notably: forced displacement, denial of family reunification, land confiscation, discriminatory legislation, security control, restrictions on freedom of movement, demographic engineering, systematic repression, criminalization of local actors, depletion of resources, and the weakening of institutions.

The forced displacement practiced by the occupying power in the northern West Bank refugee camps constitutes part of a broader system of colonial exclusion aimed at re-engineering the Palestinian demographic, geographic, and political space. This logic is grounded in cumulative practices that include the excessive use of force, destruction of homes and civilian infrastructure, imposition of movement restrictions, deprivation of resources, and the dismantling of social and economic structures within the camps. These policies are not to be understood as isolated incidents, but rather as a central component of a colonial project that seeks to undermine the Palestinian presence, delegitimize it, and create coercive living conditions that compel the population to leave.

In international law, the term forced displacement is used as a descriptive concept encompassing a range of acts that are legally prohibited, including forcible transfer and deportation of populations. Such acts are

prohibited under the 1949 Geneva Conventions, whether in situations of occupation or during international and non-international armed conflicts. They are criminalized under both international humanitarian law and international criminal law, and constitute serious violations of human rights. The legal understanding of these crimes has evolved through judicial practice, particularly in the jurisprudence of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), where ethnic cleansing was a defining feature of the conflict and was carried out through forced displacement.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court further codified the criminalization of forced displacement within international criminal law, classifying “deportation or forcible transfer of population” as a crime against humanity when committed against a civilian population on a widespread or systematic basis. It also constitutes a war crime when committed by an occupying power through the transfer of its own civilian population into occupied territory, or the forcible transfer of the population of occupied territory within or outside that territory, without lawful justification. This criminalization intersects with international human rights law, which addresses forced displacement under the concept of forced eviction, whether in times of peace or armed conflict, thereby protecting the right to adequate housing and freedom of movement and prohibiting arbitrary eviction.

Forced displacement may be defined as the coercive removal of individuals or populations from their lawful place of residence, through expulsion or any other coercive act, without legal justification. Displacement is considered forced when victims are deprived of any genuine choice, including situations involving fear of violence, coercion, or psychological abuse. International humanitarian law defines forced displacement as the unlawful and forcible evacuation of groups of individuals or populations from the land on which they reside. It is also described as a “systematic practice carried out by governments, paramilitary forces, or extremist groups against ethnic, religious, or sectarian communities, with the aim of clearing specific areas and replacing them with other population groups.”⁴ It thus entails the coercion of civilian populations and their compelled removal from their original places of residence through pressure, intimidation, and persecution, and their transfer to new locations within the same state or across international borders, pursuant to carefully planned policies

⁴ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Customary International Humanitarian Law*, Volume I: Rules, Rule 129.

intended to exclude the indigenous population, alter the demographic structure, impose a new reality, or replace them with settlers.

The Gender Dimension of Colonial Policies in Palestinian Camps

The colonial logic of exclusion practiced by the occupation in the camps of the northern West Bank is not limited to marginalizing Palestinian society as a whole, but also takes on a clear gender dimension, making women and girls an implicit target in the dismantling of the social structure of the camps. Military policies such as repeated raids, home demolitions, forced displacement, and restrictions on movement have a double impact on women, as they target the social protection networks that women specifically rely on to provide family security, food, and care.

Reports by UNRWA, OCHA, and Human Rights Watch indicate that women and girls face immediate risks related to physical insecurity, loss of housing, loss of documents, disruption of health services, including reproductive health services, and increased vulnerability to violence in situations of displacement. This is due to their social position as primary bearers of family and caregiving and as guardians of the collective memory and social identity of refugees.⁵

From the perspective of settler colonialism studies, women are targeted not only through direct violence, but also through the creation of an environment that prevents them from performing their essential roles within the family and society, thereby undermining the collective resilience of the camps. These facts reinforce the gendered nature of colonial exclusion, which is not limited to displacing populations but strikes at the heart of the social roles played by women and attempts to dismantle them.⁶

UN Women and the UN Commission of Inquiry on Israel (UN COI) have documented that women in the camps are the most affected by forced eviction policies, as they are exposed to loss of shelter, documents, and identity; insecurity; gender-based violence; and the disruption of health and reproductive services, in addition to bearing additional family responsibilities in the event of the arrest, injury, or loss of male family members. These effects

⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Gaza: No Safe Pregnancies During Israeli Assault* (January 28, 2025), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/01/28/gaza-no-safe-pregnancies-during-israeli-assault>

⁶ Awayes, Sujoud. "Womb Genocide: The Israeli Effort to Reshape Palestinian Women and Their Roles." *Institute for Palestine Studies*, no. 143 (Summer 2025).

are not incidental, but rather demonstrate how the colonial project works to weaken the social fabric of the camps by targeting the groups most central to the reproduction of daily life.⁷

Women in the camps are exposed to a pattern of “complex structural violence” that combines occupation, poverty, restrictions on freedom, and domestic violence, making forced displacement a disproportionate burden for women compared to men. Studies by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) confirm that the loss of housing and the collapse of social safety nets lead to higher rates of early marriage and personal insecurity as a result of women and girls being exposed to sexual violence, harassment, and exploitation during displacement, as well as an increase in school dropout rates among girls and forced reliance on unsafe networks to meet basic needs after displacement.⁸

In this context, forced displacement policies have a clear gender impact, as they not only remove women from the public sphere, but also reproduce economic and social dependency that weakens their capacity for resistance and participation and increases their vulnerability. Therefore, the legal accountability of any displacement policy in camps cannot be complete without incorporating a gender analysis that shows how women's suffering is used as an additional tool to perpetuate the logic of colonial exclusion, and how targeting them directly or implicitly constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law and human rights, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the International Covenants on Human Rights, and the Rome Statute.

The Legal Framework of Forced Displacement

Forced displacement is not merely an individual violation of the right to housing or freedom of movement, but constitutes a compound crime that undermines the legal structure of the human rights system and undermines the international framework within which civilians are protected, particularly in contexts of prolonged occupation. In the Palestinian case, forced displacement takes on a special dimension as a central tool used to

⁷ UN Women. “Gender Alert: The Gendered Impact of the Crisis in Gaza.” January 2024. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/01/gender-alert-the-gendered-impact-of-the-crisis-in-gaza>

⁸ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), *Social and Economic Situation of Palestinian Women and Girls: July 2022 – June 2024* (September 2025).

perpetuate the occupation, reshape the demographic reality, undermine the right of return, and empty international protection of its substance.

[Absolute prohibition of forced displacement in international law](#)

International law, both human rights law and international humanitarian law, has established an absolute prohibition on forced displacement, whether carried out directly through evacuation and transfer orders, or indirectly through the creation of coercive conditions that make it impossible for individuals or populations to remain. International conventions have enshrined this prohibition as a fundamental rule that cannot be restricted or justified on general security, administrative, or military grounds.

This prohibition is based on a number of fundamental rights, foremost among which are the right to housing, the right to personal security, the right not to be subjected to arbitrary exile, the right to property, and the right to human dignity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights affirm that housing is not merely a physical shelter, but an expression of human dignity, family stability, private life, and social belonging. Therefore, any arbitrary or unlawful interference with housing, or any action that deprives individuals of their place of residence, does not constitute a violation of a single isolated right, but rather a serious and complex violation of an integrated system of human rights.

Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights prohibits arbitrary interference with a person's home, and Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights affirms the same protection, considering it to be at the core of the right to privacy and personal security. Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) enshrines the right to adequate housing, including legal security of tenure, protection from forced eviction, availability of basic services, and access to livelihoods.

In its General Comment No. 4, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights emphasized that the right to housing is not limited to the existence of a roof and walls, but includes the ability to live in safety, peace, and dignity in a specific place. In its General Comment No. 7, it affirmed that forced evictions are in themselves a serious violation of the Covenant and can only be justified in the most exceptional circumstances and subject to strict procedural guarantees, which are not available in contexts of military occupation.

As a form of arbitrary interference with housing, forced eviction also affects the right to freedom of residence and movement, guaranteed under Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Any restriction on this freedom, if not provided for by law, not necessary and proportionate, or used as a punitive or collective measure, is an unlawful restriction that amounts to a gross violation.

When practiced extensively or systematically, these violations undermine the essence of human dignity, transforming the home from a safe space into a source of constant threat, and from an inherent right into a temporary privilege. This fundamentally contradicts the purpose for which the international human rights system was established, namely to protect individuals from the abuse of power, safeguard their private lives, and guarantee their right to live in safety and stability without fear of forced eviction or exclusion.

[Legal accountability for forced displacement](#)

These texts provide a legal framework for describing the violations suffered by the residents of the northern refugee camps, where policies of repeated military incursions, mass arrests, and destruction of buildings intersect with patterns of structural discrimination practiced exclusively against Palestinians, reinforcing their classification as international crimes.

They also provide a legal basis for criminal accountability. The Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights have affirmed in their general comments that demolition and forced eviction by a colonial power are among the most serious violations that require accountability, especially when linked to systematic and structural discrimination. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 prohibits the collective or individual forcible transfer of persons, or their deportation from their areas of residence to other territories, except in cases where this is in their best interests in order to spare them the dangers of armed conflict. Article 7(1)(d) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court also criminalizes deportation or forcible transfer, stating that “deportation or forcible transfer of population, when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population, constitutes a crime against humanity.” Under Articles 2, 7, and 8 of the Rome Statute, “unlawful deportation or transfer” constitutes a war crime, and the article prohibiting the transfer of populations from their areas is considered part of customary international humanitarian law.

Essentially, forced displacement is a crime that falls under multiple legal classifications: It is considered a crime against humanity when committed for political, ethnic, or religious purposes as part of a widespread attack (according to the International Criminal Court,) and for forced transfer, persecution, and apartheid (as classified by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court). It is also considered a war crime, as it constitutes a grave violation of the Geneva Conventions of 1949. It is also a criminal act contributing to genocide, seeing that the forcible transfer of civilians including children is committed, in whole or in part, with the intent to destroy.

Field testimonies reflect these evident violations, documenting repeated raids, destruction of buildings, and mass arrests, with patterns of structural discrimination against the Palestinian population. The data analysis shows that the Israeli occupation practices constitute a three-pronged crime, falling under crimes against humanity, war crimes, and in some cases genocide, due to the attempt to expel civilians from their areas with the aim of forcibly altering the demographic composition.

Moreover, the field data from camps in the northern West Bank showed that the cases of forced displacement include uprooting women and children from their homes, loss of property, and denial of basic services, which constitute a multidimensional violation of the rights under international law to adequate housing, privacy, personal security, freedom of residence and movement, and human dignity.

Testimonies have shown that women in the camps suffer from a lack of adequate shelter, inability to access basic healthcare, and loss of privacy and family security, consistent with Articles 12 and 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Articles of the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as Comments 4 and 7 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the right to adequate housing.

In addition, the crime of forced displacement involves coercion and compulsion that threaten the lives of civilians and their access to food, health, and education services, as well as the loss of their property, savings, businesses, identity documents, and possessions.

Forced displacement also has a clear discriminatory aspect, as it targets indigenous populations that are often marginalized, poor, deprived of their rights, and have been subjected to prolonged pressure. This crime thus increases discrimination and isolation, perpetuates poverty and inequality, contributes to social conflict, and directly or indirectly deprives a segment of the population of a range of rights. In addition, it is often

accompanied by inhuman and degrading treatment, including violence and exposure to harassment, beatings, kidnapping, arrest, extortion, or sexual exploitation. The impact of displacement is particularly evident on women and children who have lost their homes, protection, and privacy, and have been subjected to fear, loss, uncertainty, and terror, often forced to live in conditions that do not provide the minimum requirements for a dignified life.

The testimonies also revealed the impact of displacement on the mental and physical health of women, girls, and children, including psychological violence, loss of security, poverty, and disruption of basic services. These findings reinforce the characterization of forced displacement as an international crime that requires accountability under international law, including before the International Criminal Court, particularly following Palestine's accession to the Roman Statute.

On Nakba Day, Amnesty International stated that the ongoing forced displacement of nearly two million Palestinians and the widespread destruction of civilian property and infrastructure in the occupied Gaza Strip highlight Israel's appalling record of displacing Palestinians and its continued refusal to respect their right of return over the past 76 years. This anniversary commemorates the displacement of more than 800,000 Palestinians following the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.⁹

Erika Guevara-Rosas, Amnesty International's Senior Director for Research, Advocacy, Policy and Campaigns stated: "Generations of Palestinians across the occupied territories are deeply scarred by the trauma of being uprooted and dispossessed multiple times and with no prospect of return to their homes. It is utterly harrowing to see the chilling scenes of 1948 Nakba (catastrophe), as it is known to Palestinians, repeat themselves as droves of Palestinians in Gaza are forced to flee their homes on foot in search of safety over and over, and Israeli army and state backed settlers expel Palestinians in the West Bank from their homes."¹⁰

Since forced displacement in the occupied territory is systematic and widespread, it can be said that it is being perpetrated as a crime against humanity in this case. As for the accused, anyone who participates in the crime,

⁹ Amnesty International. "Mass forced displacement in Gaza highlights urgent need for Israel to uphold Palestinians' right to return." (Nakba Day 2024). <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/05/mass-forced-displacement-in-gaza-highlights-urgent-need-for-israel-to-uphold-palestinians-right-to-return/>

¹⁰ Erika Guevara Rosas for Amnesty International. "Mass forced displacement in Gaza highlights urgent need for Israel to uphold Palestinians' right to return." (Nakba Day 2024). <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/05/mass-forced-displacement-in-gaza-highlights-urgent-need-for-israel-to-uphold-palestinians-right-to-return/>

i.e. anyone proven to be involved in the expulsion of civilians either within or outside the occupied territories, whether a military, judicial, or political official, is considered criminally involved. Palestine's accession to the International Criminal Court marks a key opportunity to advance accountability and justice, as the ongoing forced displacement in the occupied Palestinian territory is multifaceted, and is increasingly concentrated in Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank, in addition to what is happening in Gaza and Lebanon. There is no doubt that each individual case of displacement constitutes a war crime in and of itself.

International framework for Palestinian refugee rights and the right of return

The collective and individual rights of Palestinian refugees, including women and girls, are based on a legal foundation firmly established in United Nations resolutions, which have affirmed over decades the centrality of the right of return and rejected any attempts to abolish or circumvent it. General Assembly Resolution 194 of 1948 is the cornerstone in this context, as it clearly states in paragraph (11) the right of refugees wishing to return to their homes and live in peace to do so “at the earliest practicable date,” while ensuring fair compensation for those who are unable to return. This constitutes an explicit international recognition of the right of Palestinian refugee women to regain their homes and livelihoods, which formed the basis of their family and social security. General Assembly Resolution 3236 of 1974 also affirmed that the right of return is one of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, as an integral part of the right to self-determination, including women, who constitute a fundamental part of the refugee community.¹¹ The resolution reaffirms the right of Palestinians, both women and men, to return to their homes and properties from which they were forcibly displaced, and rejects any arrangements that would detract from this right or replace it with forced resettlement or unjust solutions.¹²

The United Nations has enshrined this principle in a series of periodic resolutions, most notably Resolution 34/52 of 1979, which affirms that all Palestinians displaced from the occupied territories have a legal right to return to their original homes, and that any agreement or measure restricting this right is “null and void.” Although these resolutions have not been effectively implemented, they constitute a morally and politically

¹¹ United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 194 (III), 3rd Session, 11 December 1948, concerning the right of return of Palestinian refugees and compensation.

¹² United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 3236 (XXIX), 29th Session, 22 November 1974, on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right of return.

binding international norm and form the basis for demanding the rights of Palestinian refugees to return, restitution, and compensation.¹³

Testimonies show that ongoing displacement in the camps violates this right, especially when families are separated or forced to move within or outside specific areas. Resolution 608 (1988) affirms the need to immediately return those who have been expelled and to end policies of forced expulsion, thereby ensuring the protection of women and children in particular from systematic violations. The resolution is particularly important for refugee women, as it condemns policies that target the breakup of Palestinian families through deportation and obliges the occupying power to ensure protection from illegal displacement, which is one of the most impactful violations against women and children.

The complex legal status of Palestinian refugee camps

Palestinian refugee camps have a complex and exceptional legal status that cannot be reduced to merely residential communities or densely populated areas. Rather, they constitute protected legal and humanitarian spaces in which the principles of international humanitarian law intersect with the refugee protection frameworks and the body of international legitimacy resolutions concerning the rights of the Palestinian people. This distinct status arises for the following reasons:

- The camps located within the occupied Palestinian territory are subject to the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which regulates the protection of civilian populations under occupation. This Convention establishes that camp residents are “protected persons,” and that the occupying power bears a positive legal obligation to ensure their safety, safeguard their homes, and prevent any forcible transfer, whether directly or through coercive conditions. This obligation has particular significance in the camps given their predominantly civilian character, high population density, and the absence of safe and adequate housing alternatives. As a result, any military operation or security measure carried out in these areas risks causing severe, disproportionate and compounding harm to the civilian population.

- The camps in the northern West Bank are home to Palestinian refugees who are entitled to a special status, recognized by the international community since 1948, as a temporary legal and humanitarian situation pending a just and durable resolution. Refugee status in the Palestinian case is not solely a humanitarian

¹³ United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 34/52, 23 November 1979, reaffirming the right of Palestinians to return to their homes and property.

emergency, but also an ongoing legal situation arising from the mass forced displacement of 1948, the legal consequences of which remain unresolved to this day. Therefore, any new forcible displacement of refugees within the camps constitutes a double violation: a violation of their rights as protected civilians living under occupation, and the renewed imposition of refugee status upon an already displaced population.

- These camps are under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), which was established by UN General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV)(1949) as a temporary international mechanism to provide protection and assistance to Palestinian refugees pending a just and durable solution to their plight. UNRWA's mandate is not limited to the provision of services, but constitutes an international legal presence that embodies the continuing international recognition of the status of Palestinian refugees and their unresolved rights. Therefore, targeting the camps, destroying their infrastructure, or displacing their inhabitants also constitutes a direct attack on the international protection framework represented by UNRWA and an attempt to strip it of its legal and political substance.

- Palestinian camps, including those in the northern West Bank, are a legal and practical symbol of the inalienable right of return. They are not merely temporary places of residence, but rather tangible evidence of the continuing and unresolved refugee issue and a living embodiment of the legal and emotional connection between refugees and their land. Successive UN resolutions, foremost among them Resolution 194, have affirmed that the right of return is an individual and collective right that cannot be forfeited or waived, and that any settlement that does not respect this right is contrary to the principles of international justice.

The forced displacement in the northern West Bank refugee camps cannot be separated from the legal and political structure of the Israeli occupation, nor from the ongoing historical context of the Nakba of the Palestinian people. It constitutes a grave and complex violation of international law, a systematic undermining of the system of protection for Palestinian refugees, and a direct attack on the right of return as enshrined in international legal resolutions. This reality calls for responsible international action to put an end to policies of impunity and restore the authority of international law as a binding framework, not a selective political option.

The Economic Impact of Forced Displacement of Women

Forced displacement causes profound economic hardship for women and families, particularly as many women lose their camp-based sources of income, such as small domestic businesses or work in nearby establishments, as well as critical social support networks, leaving families without a stable source of income. With the move to rented accommodation and the high cost of living, the financial burden on families has doubled, especially with the need to pay rent and transportation costs and purchase necessities away from the free or low-cost services that were previously available in the camp.

S.A., a displaced woman from the Tulkarm Camp, explained, "*Everything was close to us. We didn't need transportation to reach the grocery stores or pharmacies. Everything was close to us, but now we need transportation.*"

Women face significant pressure to seek work in new environments where suitable opportunities are scarce, often accepting irregular or low-paid jobs that expose them to economic exploitation. At the same time, families are forced to cut back on spending on food, medicine, and education, increasing the risk of debt and financial hardship, while traditional community-based social protection within the camp declines. As a result, multidimensional poverty deepens, and women's economic vulnerability worsens, making displacement a sustained source of economic insecurity and family instability.

Testimonies from women displaced from northern West Bank camps reveal a profound collapse in the economic structure of families resulting from the occupation's repeated military raids and policies of forcible transfer. Displacement has marked a critical turning point, shifting families from relatively stable camp-based environments into harsh realities characterized by high living costs, loss of income sources, and the erosion of social protection networks. The data confirms that women have been disproportionately affected, particularly due to the loss of primary (often male) breadwinners, the cessation of their own livelihoods, and the increased economic and social burdens placed upon them.

Increased reliance on humanitarian assistance

Before displacement, life inside the camp was structured around a low-cost economic system that provided a degree of protection for vulnerable groups. Housing was rent-free, and basic services such as electricity and

water were provided at no cost. Moreover, the short distances within the camp enabled families to meet their daily needs without incurring additional expenses.

B.F. described this reality, stating: *"We didn't pay rent or electricity... The house was ours, and everything was close by."* Another participant in the study confirmed: *"Yes, I was greatly affected... We didn't pay rent... And we were exempt from paying for water and electricity in the camp."*

However, displacement completely changed this equation. With the move to rented accommodation, families entered a new cycle of financial burdens that had not previously been part of their lives, such as monthly rent, utility bills, and high transportation costs to reach schools, work, and health centers.

As A.A. noted: *"My husband's salary is not enough... The current place requires much higher costs than living in the camp... Services are more expensive... and there is not enough support."*

In addition to these new burdens, displacement has caused men to lose their camp-based sources of livelihood. Economic activity within the camp relied on an integrated social and spatial structure that enabled men to practice trades, operate small workshops, manage shops, and engage in seasonal work linked to the local market. As a result of the repeated Israeli incursions and destruction of property, families lost not only their homes but also their tools of trade. This loss represents not merely temporary unemployment, but the collapse of livelihood systems tied to the camp and the destruction of essential work assets, which constitutes a direct violation of the protected population's right to livelihood and the right not to be subjected to arbitrary economic deprivation under international humanitarian law.

On this note, N.A. said: *"My husband used to work in a workshop in the camp... All the construction equipment was left in the camp and was destroyed."* In another testimony, one woman explained: *"My husband has not worked a single day since the displacement... We used to manage on our own in the camp, but now we are staying with my brother and paying him for electricity and expenses."* In a third case, H.A. stated: *"My source of income was my son... He worked at al-Hisba market in Jenin... Now he is unemployed."*

N.M. also described her spouse's work prior to displacement: *"My husband worked as a welder in his family's butcher shop... In the evenings, he also worked as a grill chef and caterer... All of that stopped after the displacement."* In another particularly revealing testimony, one woman said, *"My husband worked as a*

plasterer and builder... All of his construction tools are still in the camp... Now he is unemployed... Our only source of income is my son's salary as a prisoner, which we pay for rent, food, and transportation. How can that be sufficient?"

In one case that reflects families' reliance on the functioning of crossings as a source of livelihood, M.K. shared: *"Before the displacement, my husband worked on a transport vehicle when the Jalameh crossing was open... People there provided him with assistance... But after the displacement, the crossing closed, his work stopped, and he fell ill."* Evidently, this loss did not constitute merely temporary unemployment, but rather the complete collapse of an economic system that depended on geographic access, social relations, and key work assets. Due to displacement, families lost three main pillars of stability: their homes, their economic environment, and their source of income.

The impact of displacement was not limited to the loss of formal jobs or income that men relied on inside the camp, but also directly affected small businesses and home-based initiatives run by women, which had provided an additional economic safety net for families, gave women limited financial independence, and expanded their participation in the local economy.

"My online dessert business has stopped... All the tools and materials are still at home in the camp," F.A., a woman displaced from Jenin Camp, pointed out. This shows that besides the loss of income, displacement also destroyed the physical and intellectual capital that women had invested in their businesses. In another case, N.Y. said, *"We had a small grocery store in the camp... Now we have no income other than our pension,"* illustrating how local economic activity ceased entirely due to displacement, as did opportunities to generate independent income that would have eased the financial burden on families.

Home-based businesses, whether sewing workshops, small grocery stores, food sales, or handicrafts, were an integral part of the camp's local economy. They were not only a source of income but also spaces that enabled women to exercise social and economic roles, enhance their resource management skills, and contribute to strengthening family resilience. The loss of these projects represents the loss of women's monetary productivity—economic capacities, knowledge, and skills they had built up over many years—and places them at risk of compounded poverty as economic pressures multiply (with the loss of resources and income,) and their dependence on the limited earnings of their husbands or sons, or on unsustainable aid, increases.

S.A., a displaced woman from Tulkarm Camp, confirmed this dire impact: *"Yes, I was greatly affected. I lost my job as a seamstress in a workshop inside the camp, and my daughter lost her job at a women's association. As a result of the displacement and her inability to leave the house early every morning due to the distance, the lack of public transportation, and the high cost of private transportation, and given that her salary was not enough to cover these costs, she preferred to stay at home."*

Many testimonies revealed the increasing vulnerability of displaced families following the loss of their direct sources of income and the rising cost of living. This compelled women and families to rely almost entirely on external aid or family support networks, despite their limitations and unsustainability. N.M. explained: *"We live on aid... My husband and I depend on my family for food. Even the aid is only 100 or 200 shekels [approximately 30-60 USD] a month."* This shows that such aid, despite its importance, is insufficient to meet the family's basic needs, and fails to provide economic or psychological stability, particularly for women who bear the main burden of supporting their households.

Testimonies indicate that women have come to shoulder compounded and multiple responsibilities, including managing scarce resources, striving to secure daily necessities such as food, water, electricity, transportation, and healthcare, in addition to overseeing their children's education. As one woman stated: *"Yes, a lot. I work as a support teacher for displaced children from the camp, in residences close to the city and with associations located far from my current place of residence. A significant portion of my salary goes toward transportation back and forth, especially since commuting costs have become very high due to the current conditions."*

This situation places women in a continuous cycle of poverty, as their livelihoods increasingly depend on partial and irregular assistance rather than stable income or sustainable support programs. F.A. explained that her family has been facing major difficulties in securing its daily needs. Her husband's salary is not sufficient to cover the minimum requirements of a dignified life, including rent, food, and basic services. This clear inability to meet essential needs amid the scarcity of assistance has evidently exacerbated hardship.

Field testimonies show that many displaced families have not received any material assistance, despite repeated promises of support to address the repercussions of forced displacement. M.A. stated: *"We never received any in-kind or financial assistance at all... We were shocked to see certain names of people who are not displaced receive all forms of assistance, while we kept waiting, until we eventually resigned ourselves to*

the corruption of some associations and those running these initiatives... The situation has become extremely unfair, especially when we see the same people receiving assistance multiple times."

N.A. confirmed: *"We did not receive any assistance from any entity... My children, my husband, and I were forced to risk our lives to retrieve the gas cylinder, washing machine, refrigerator, and some mattresses and blankets from our home."* Similarly, B.B. mentioned: *"We did not receive any financial or in-kind assistance... I applied to more than one entity, even with regard to rent payments by the governorate, but received nothing... We managed to retrieve furniture from our old house with the help of my children and neighbors."*

These testimonies reflect families' feelings of exclusion and discrimination and point to a serious dysfunction in aid distribution mechanisms. Detailed testimonies also indicate that the assistance received by some families was partial and insufficient to cover basic needs.

As M.A. said: *"We did not receive any assistance except food parcels from institutions such as the Women's Development Center Association; I received parcels once or twice."* Meanwhile, A.A.'s family received only "some essential but insufficient items." Similarly, B.M. "received mattresses, but they were not sufficient, as well as some kitchen utensils and an electric gas cooker." R.S. reported: *"Since the beginning of the events, we have not received any assistance... Before Eid al-Fitr we received food items from UNRWA, and again during this Eid."*

R.A. stated: *"We received an assistance of 730 shekels [approximately 230 USD] from the Palestinian Medical Relief."* One woman further confirmed: *"From the moment of displacement until today, we have received only one payment of 200 shekels and four sporadic food parcels. They were not sufficient to cover even our most basic daily needs, but they carried a small sense of consolation that someone was paying attention to our suffering."*

These testimonies show that institutional support, despite its symbolic importance, remains extremely limited compared to the scale of living and social losses, particularly for women.

The forced reliance on assistance highlights the absence of an effective social protection system for displaced women. This contradicts international humanitarian protection principles that emphasize the need to provide sustainable support to the most vulnerable groups, especially women who shoulder family-support

responsibilities amid displacement and forced poverty. CEDAW affirms the importance of protecting women affected by conflict, empowering them economically, and ensuring fair access to support resources in ways that enhances their independence and resilience.

The near-total dependence on partial assistance has created socioeconomic instability, depriving families of the ability to plan for the future or consistently meet their basic needs. Women are disproportionately affected by this reality, facing poverty and marginalization directly without an effective safety net to protect them or enable them to rebuild their livelihoods and small-scale economic initiatives. These conditions expose serious gaps in the local and international humanitarian systems and underscore the urgent need to establish transparent and fair aid distribution mechanisms that focus on protecting the most vulnerable women and displaced families as a top priority to ensure their economic security and social dignity.

From a legal perspective, this reality constitutes a violation of civilians' right to social protection and basic economic support, as stipulated in international humanitarian law. It also reflects a failure to fulfill the obligations of the occupying power under Articles 55 and 56 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which require adopting all feasible measures to ensure the provision of essential goods and services to the civilian population and to prevent their exposure to hunger, deprivation, or extreme poverty.

Increased economic burdens on women and livelihood pressures

Forced displacement from the northern West Bank camps has resulted in a sudden and unbalanced reshaping of economic roles within families. Women have been confronted with a multifaceted crisis characterized by economic collapse, lack of protection, exacerbated responsibilities, and widening gender gaps. Field testimonies reveal unprecedented levels of economic and psychological strain on women, who have borne the brunt of the collapse of the camp's economic and social infrastructure.

Moreover, these testimonies confirm a radical shift in the economic and social structure. Before displacement, the camp provided a minimum level of stability for residents, as it had been a low-cost living system that integrated with family and neighborhood support networks and offered a local labor market based on small workshops and nearby services where daily movement consumed neither time nor money. This interconnected fabric extended beyond the routines of daily life; it formed an economic and social safety net that allowed

women to participate in work within or near the camp while managing family roles without incurring excessive financial strain.

Displacement has completely destroyed this system. Shops and workplaces have closed, the local market cycle has halted, and the small business opportunities that women relied on have vanished. In this context, D.M. said: *"I lost my sewing job at the workshop inside the camp... and my daughter lost her job because she can't commute every day due to the distance and high transportation costs."* Besides the loss of jobs, this testimony indicates the collapse of the enabling economic environment that had allowed women to work without obstacles.

Consequently, women's income has diminished, rendering it "ineffective income" due to rising transportation and new living costs. Even women who maintained their jobs after displacement faced sustained economic depletion as new distances, rising transport costs, and changes in housing patterns have entirely swallowed their income. As R.F. shared: *"I am a substitute teacher... my entire salary goes toward transportation. My husband works for two days and stays home for a week."* This reality becomes even clearer among women who have become the sole breadwinners. In such cases, the impact of displacement appears not only in the distribution of economic roles within the family but also on the mental and physical health of women who have assumed doubled responsibilities without adequate support.

Furthermore, testimonies clearly reveal that there are no government or international programs responding to the needs of female breadwinners and displaced women, for whom there are no social safety nets, no emergency cash funds, and no special employment programs. In essence, women have become the most economically vulnerable link in a harsh economic chain, bearing the burden of monthly rents, water and electricity bills, rising transportation costs, healthcare expenses, and the responsibility of securing daily food.

The absence of protection leaves women in direct confrontation with multi-dimensional poverty without any structural interventions. It is worth adding that economic pressures contribute to rising rates of domestic violence, as women become more vulnerable to psychological, verbal, and economic abuse, particularly as men shift from providers to unemployed, accompanied by a loss of status and social role.

Testimonies show that women have assumed multiple roles after men lost their jobs, either as primary breadwinners or key income contributors. While any women stopped working due to displacement, others were forced to work under dire economic conditions and for wages insufficient even to cover transportation. In some cases, women became the family's sole providers: "*The source of income is my [the wife's] salary, and it's not enough... the family expenses and the burden on me have increased due to rent, water, electricity, and medication for a child with autism.*"

These shifts, reflecting the collapse of the social structure that was based on men working within the camp, place women in direct confrontation with poverty.

These testimonies reveal multiple violations of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living as stipulated in the ICESCR Article 11. Moreover, the situation contradicts CEDAW, particularly its provisions mandating protection for women affected by armed conflict, safeguarding against economic discrimination and gender-based violence, ensuring equal and decent work opportunities, and providing targeted support for female breadwinners and mothers bearing increased family responsibilities.

The reality of displaced families reveals a traumatic transition from a low-cost camp-based living system to a financially draining environment. This shift represented a sudden and profound economic shock for women, who found themselves facing expenses previously absent from their daily lives. Camp life operated within a semi-subsidized service structure characterized by the absence of rent, minimal utility costs, and the proximity of markets and essential services, which reduced the need for transportation. Despite its fragility, this model had provided a degree of economic stability for impoverished families and allowed women to manage limited household budgets within controllable limits.

However, forced displacement has shattered this system. Families relocated to new areas lacking the social and economic infrastructure previously available, and expenses doubled unprecedentedly. A.A. described this shift as follows: "*Our expenses increased... we started buying clothes; we pay for everything now. Even transportation costs increased because we are living on a mountain.*" This testimony shows that families moved from a life where basic needs were met locally and at minimal cost to a life where every step, commodity, and

service is calculated at a high price. Even purchasing clothes, once obtained through the camp's social networks or nearby markets, has become an additional burden.

Y.M.'s testimony also reflects the burden of rents and utilities, which have become the most pressing challenges for displaced families: "*We pay 1,400 shekels for house rent... plus water, electricity, and transportation. My son, who works in the vegetable market, earns a salary that barely suffices.*" These rising expenses extend beyond housing to include high transportation costs due to residing in mountainous or remote areas, making access to work, schools, or healthcare services a daily challenge that consumes much of the little available household income.

Furthermore, the shift from the camp environment to rented housing marked a transition from a participatory economy to an individualistic monetized system based on direct payment. In the camp, residents benefited from a shared living structure characterized by close neighborly relations and informal social support networks such as exchanging tools, sharing food, support during crises, and access to services within the camp at nominal cost. This system particularly enabled women to manage household needs without significant financial strain. After displacement, these networks collapsed, forcing women to pay cash for all; from daily transportation and food to children's needs, medication, and utility bills – which had never been part of their calculations before.

This economic transformation was not driven by natural circumstances but resulted from the occupation's policies that enforced displacement and produced a new living reality marked by high costs and instability. Under Articles 55 and 56 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the Occupying Power bears legal responsibility to ensure the provision of essential goods and services to the civilian population, prevent economic deprivation, and maintain minimum standards of living.

Testimonies clarify that the occupation did not stop at destroying homes and infrastructure but also created a suffocating economic reality for displaced families. Forcing families to bear rent, utility bills, and transportation costs amid declining or lost income constitutes a form of forced impoverishment. M.Sh., displaced from Jenin Camp, confirmed: "*Yes, the economic situation was greatly affected; we used to pay neither rent nor electricity... During displacement, my husband fell ill with cancer, and treatment costs increased, and then he passed away during displacement.*" This sharp rise in living costs has intensified pressures on women, who must manage

scarce resources while ensuring household survival. From a gender perspective, this shift represents an additional violation of women's economic and social rights, revealing the absence of adequate protection for those most vulnerable to the consequences of forced displacement.

Impact of Forced Displacement on the Physical and Mental Health of Women and Families

Field testimonies reveal the magnitude of the deterioration in the physical and mental health of families displaced from northern West Bank camps, in light of the absence of systematic interventions to address the needs of the most vulnerable, particularly women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities (PWDs). These accounts reveal clear violations of the right to the highest attainable standard of health, children's rights to care and protection, and the rights of PWDs to reasonable accommodations and specialized services. Such conditions contradict the legal obligations of the Occupying Power under international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Impact on women's physical and mental health

The testimonies of displaced women from the northern West Bank camps reflect the severe physical and psychological suffering caused by repeated forced displacement and the absence of adequate medical and social support. R.K. from Nur Shams Camp explained that her burn injuries led to foot deformity and blood clotting, while the lack of necessary treatment exacerbated her health condition. The unsafe living conditions and lack of privacy, coupled with childcare responsibilities, have doubled her physical and mental strain, deepening her sense of helplessness and exhaustion. She described her psychological state as "extremely difficult due to repeated displacement and losing one's home more than once," pointing to the compound impact of forced displacement on women's physical and mental health.

Moreover, the testimony of A.S., from Jenin, highlights how deteriorating humanitarian conditions undermine access to treatment for chronic and serious illnesses, including breast cancer and spinal conditions. She relies on government hospitals and UNRWA cards for periodic check-ups but is sometimes forced to purchase medication with her own money or from a sister's salary, placing her under severe economic pressure that heightens her health vulnerability. Her current housing lacks safety and privacy fails to provide a supportive

environment for self-care or childcare, thereby doubling the impact of displacement on her physical and psychological well-being.

J.S. from Tulkarm Camp provides another example of women living with chronic physical disabilities that have worsened due to the lack of necessary facilities in their housing, such as mobility difficulties for those with diabetes or injury-related impairments. With limited personal resources, she depends on UNRWA, charitable individuals, and government hospitals for periodic visits, which makes the sustainability of her treatment unassured and increases the likelihood of further health deterioration.

These testimonies illustrate the combined physical impact of chronic illness and injury and the psychological toll of repeated displacement and loss of stability. As family and health support networks collapse, the risk of compounded violations of women's rights to physical and mental health and family stability heightens.

From an international legal perspective, these violations constitute a breach of the Occupying Power's obligations under International Humanitarian Law (IHL), including the protection of civilians in occupied territories under the Fourth Geneva Convention. They also violate women's right to health as stipulated under Article 12 of CEDAW, which mandates states to ensure appropriate healthcare for women in all circumstances, including maternal care and chronic disease management. Periodic reviews by international organizations confirm that forced poverty, displacement, and insecurity are primary factors exacerbating the deterioration of women's and girls' health, weakening community resilience amid recurrent humanitarian crises.

Accordingly, forced displacement in northern West Bank camps is not only a violation of housing and economic rights but also a threat to the physical and mental health of women and girls, thus calling for urgent intervention to ensure healthcare and psychological protection in accordance with international standards and relevant UN resolutions concerning Palestinian refugees.

Women—particularly pregnant women, caregivers, and older women—experience disproportionate psychological deterioration, manifested in chronic anxiety, sleep disorders, depression, and trauma-related symptoms, as well as stress-related physical conditions such as hypertension and diabetes. These effects are

compounded by the loss of privacy, spatial identity, and social connectedness due to displacement, leading to psychological instability and intensified trauma-related symptoms.

N.J.'s testimony illustrates the severe psychological harm caused by displacement: "*Since losing my home and being displaced, I suffer from a loss of psychological stability... constant exhaustion, anxiety, insomnia... continuous crying... sometimes I feel I need psychological sedatives.*" These symptoms clearly indicate a state of chronic trauma resulting from repeated raids and displacement, violating the right to health and protection from inhuman or degrading treatment under IHL.

J.S. also expressed the depth of this impact, linking the loss of her home, the death of her husband, and the imprisonment of her children to her worsening physical disability: "*Sometimes I have a mental breakdown... displacement changed our entire situation... my nervousness increased, and new diseases like blood pressure and diabetes appeared due to overthinking, tension, and anxiety.*"

S.A., an older woman, reflected a clear pattern of gendered and age-related vulnerability, as age further compounded women's fragility during displacement, making the loss of home more psychologically devastating. She stated: "*I feel a permanent psychological weight, as if I am a burden on those around me... I lost the sense of privacy and independence... I miss the feeling of safety.*" This description points to a violation of older women's right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

K.M., a pregnant mother of two, demonstrated the highly sensitive gendered dimension of displacement: "*I always feel negative... anxious about the fate of my children and my childbirth... how will I endure giving birth in such narrow and very poor housing conditions? I don't feel comfortable and cannot sleep.*" This violation threatens a woman's right to reproductive health and the protection of pregnant women in times of conflict.

Collectively, these testimonies show that anxiety and insecurity are not momentary feelings but a continuous state produced by a coercive environment characterized by fear of raids, proximity to military checkpoints, housing instability, declining resources, and lack of privacy. J.S. directly linked displacement to ongoing fear: "*Displacement changed everything... especially when I remember the sounds of shooting and what happened to my house.*"

These findings confirm that forced displacement generates a state of prolonged trauma, in violation of the Occupying Power's obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention to protect civilians and safeguard their physical and psychological well-being.

Impact on family health conditions

Field testimonies reveal a profound collapse in the healthcare and social support systems that families rely on in their daily lives. In the absence of a safe environment and the disintegration of community support structures within the camp, women have borne the primary burden of ensuring a minimum level of healthcare for their children, older persons, and persons with disabilities within the family, under conditions marked by severe deprivation, lack of privacy, and a drastic reduction in resources.

The testimony of H.M. points to the breakdown of access to basic healthcare services: "*Since we left the camp, there is no longer a nearby health center or a doctor we know... we even have to search everywhere for my mother-in-law's blood pressure medication and wait for someone to donate it to us.*" This statement demonstrates how forced displacement has led to a direct violation of the right to health, as enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, particularly the right to accessible, available, and continuous healthcare services.

Other accounts highlight the impact of forced displacement on children's health. As S.A. said: "*We are all now in one room... the children have no place to play, and every day I fear they will get sick and I won't know where to take them.*" This reflects the direct impact on children's physical and mental health, and the mothers' inability to provide primary care amid the absence of public health services and the limited capacity of relief organizations.

Mothers' testimonies also indicate a severe psychological crisis among displaced children, especially in the absence of support programs. One mother stated: "*My son, Ezzedine (8 years old), shows symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)... he wakes up terrified at night upon hearing any loud sound, believing the army is attacking again.*" She added: "*He suffers from constant fear and exhibits signs of anxiety and tension... there is no psychological support or stable environment to help him recover.*"

This aligns with documented cases of children living in inhuman conditions, such as sheltering under a mosque without space to sleep or play. As per a testimony, "*The young child lacks a sense of comfort and reassurance. The absence of routine, safety, nutrition, and healthcare has caused him anxiety and social withdrawal.*"

Evidently, inadequate housing –whether temporary rooms, overcrowded rented houses, or shared accommodations– has exacerbated the spread of skin and respiratory diseases and increased the risk of malnutrition, especially among children and pregnant women. As M.N. reported: "*The place is damp... my son developed allergies. I wish I could return home just to have a clean bathroom.*" This situation reflects the denial of the rights to adequate housing, water, sanitation, and a healthy environment, all of which are intrinsically linked to the right to health. It is also a flagrant violation of the child's right to live in a safe and healthy environment, as guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including access to appropriate healthcare, psychological support, and protection from harm.

Testimonies collected from displaced families reveal the scale of systematic rights violations affecting persons with disabilities as a result of forced displacement, undermining their fundamental rights stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), foremost of which are the rights to health, rehabilitation, mobility, and to live with dignity in an accessible environment. Older persons and persons with disabilities (PWDs) were among the groups most severely affected by the sudden disruption of specialized services.

L.K. stated: "*My son has a disability and his medications are no longer available... we used to go to centers inside the camp, and now travel is difficult and expensive.*" This testimony reflects the denial of the right to rehabilitation and the guarantees for protecting PWDs in emergency situations.

B.M. reported that her son, who has a hearing impairment, was deprived of essential assistive devices after his hearing aid and external cochlear implant were damaged during raids. This was expensive equipment that the family has been unable to replace, resulting in a decline in his ability to hear and communicate.

Similarly, S.A. recounted that her son, who has a physical disability, experienced a deterioration in his condition due to the lack of a suitable environment for physical therapy and the cramped space that hinders his

movement, in clear violation of his right to reasonable accommodation. Furthermore, several families reported being deprived of inclusive education services; one mother noted that her grandchildren with disabilities were denied access to education due to the absence of specialized schools in displacement areas.

The suffering of children with autism is particularly acute. N.Y. stated that her son now experiences frequent fits of rage and emotional breakdowns, suffering from extreme sensitivity to noise and difficulty adapting due to the loss of routine and spatial security. Children with physical disabilities, as per S.A.'s testimony, also experienced worsening conditions due to the lack of accessible environments for physical therapy and limited space. Meanwhile, visually impaired children (such as "Khaled") suffer from mobility difficulties due to unfamiliarity with the new environment and the absence of assistive facilities, despite having previously navigated their environment independently within the camp.

Adults with disabilities face compounded challenges that severely undermine their independence and dignity. T.K. described the suffering of her husband, whose mobility became nearly impossible due to unpaved roads and the lack of accessible facilities within shelters. This increased his reliance on others and negatively affected his psychological wellbeing and self-esteem. H.D. also provided a painful testimony about her non-verbal husband, who had been a well-known, loved, and understood person in the camp, but who lost his social standing after displacement. He became a stranger in a new environment, and is at times subjected to mockery and bullying, further deepening his social isolation and distress.

Older persons with disabilities experience compounded neglect. For example, S.K. indicated that her elderly father is unable to even access the bathroom or move within the room due to the lack of adapted spaces. Other testimonies described the suffering of the elderly with chronic diseases, as essential medications for diabetes, blood pressure, and joints are not regularly available, forcing families into debt. There were cases of one older man who requires constant care due to a prior injury that left him bedridden, of a grandson who suffers from brain seizures with no available periodic treatment, and of a five-year-old girl who requires speech therapy sessions that are currently inaccessible, increasing the risk of developmental delay.

The suffering of visually impaired persons is particularly striking. H.D. recounted that her blind child, who used to move confidently within the camp, is now unable to move without assistance due to unfamiliar surroundings

and the absence of guidance aids. F.Y. added that her visually-impaired son, Khaled, lives in a "real prison" inside the house, as unpaved roads and lack of assistive tools or appropriate educational services leave him in a state of profound despair.

Gender-focused testimonies reflect the immense burden placed on women caring for children with disabilities. M.A. stated that her daughter, who has a physical disability, lives without support or respect for her needs. As a mother, she described her "double pain" of seeing her daughter suffer and her own inability to provide treatment, and added that all she wishes for is "a safe place for my daughter to live in with dignity, not besieged by helplessness at every moment."

Similarly, D.A. explained that her son experiences severe isolation after losing his hearing aids, while her two daughters with ADHD lack the needed calm environment and treatment, making their behavior more disordered. She attributed this deterioration directly to displacement and the loss of specialized services.

These testimonies reinforce the gendered nature of these violations, presenting a clear picture of the profound impact of displacement on persons with disabilities and the absence of an integrated protection system that ensures accessibility, healthcare, and dignity. They speak volumes about the physical, psychological, and social burden borne by women caring for family members with disabilities amid the lack of institutional support. The lack of access to basic treatment and essential medicines reveals the blatant violation of women's health and rehabilitation rights. Many women indicated that key treatments, whether medications for chronic illnesses like diabetes and hypertension or rehabilitation and physical therapy programs are not regularly available. They often rely on cheap medications obtained from nearby pharmacies or on free clinics that frequently lack essential drugs and equipment, forcing them to forgo or delay treatment due to financial constraints.

In conclusion, this reality reflects a structural defect in the health and social protection systems for displaced people, particularly women, who have become the most vulnerable link and bear the heaviest burdens despite limited resources and the absence of institutional support. The situation demonstrates that forced displacement is not limited to the loss of shelter; rather, it extends to a comprehensive deterioration of fundamental rights, most notably the rights to health, care, living with dignity, and access to essential services without discrimination.

Impact on the right to privacy and increased risk of domestic violence

The findings indicate that displaced families have been distributed across fragile housing arrangements. Specifically, 233 families live in rented houses, 29 families reside in "shelters" (labor dormitories, temporary rooms, or substandard small units), and 97 families live with another family. Furthermore, the data shows that while 311 families had kinship ties with their hosts, 187 families sought refuge in locations without any kinship links, placing them in unfamiliar environments lacking protection networks.

From a gender perspective, displacement without family ties exposes women to heightened risks of gender-based violence, and erodes family support networks they rely on for childcare, mental health support, and securing food and basic services. Seeing that resource allocation in communities often depends on familial or geographical ties, displacement diminishes access to humanitarian aid, thus increasing burdens on women, the primary caregivers during emergencies, and compounding the vulnerability of female-headed households.

The fact that 29 families are residing in temporary "shelters" indicates unsafe and inadequate housing conditions, which are not only unfriendly to women, but also violate the standards of adequate housing established under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This situation poses severe risks to women and girls due to total lack of privacy, absence of basic facilities, adverse health effects, and heightened vulnerability to exploitation or harassment.

As SJ, displaced from Jenin Camp, stated: *"I don't see any privacy for females within these shelters. I cannot speak freely or even enjoy a cup of coffee in peace. I can no longer take care of myself as I used to. My problems with my husband have increased, and I find myself repelled by any word or situation."*

T.T., also from Jenin Camp, confirmed: *"There is a total lack of privacy. I cannot even raise my voice for fear of being overheard, as our customs and traditions govern our behavior. The excessive pressure and tension have led to increased conflicts with my husband. I don't feel that my personal needs are being met."*

The situation is even more challenging for women residing in shared accommodations with other individuals or families. Data indicates that 97 families were forced into shared housing arrangements, which is considered

one of the most stressful sheltering situations for women. This is due to the complete lack of personal privacy, difficulties in caring for children, social tensions, and the increased likelihood of conflicts within host families.

This type of housing also elevates the risk of domestic violence and inter-family conflict under conditions of overcrowding and psychological distress. All testimonies from women who lived in collective shelters or shared homes highlight the complete absence of privacy for themselves and their family members, particularly women and girls. This transforms daily life into an exhausting and suffocating ordeal and exacerbates family tensions, further compounded by men's sense of helplessness in providing more suitable alternatives.

The following testimonies clearly illustrate these conditions:

"I live in one room with my children in a house shared by three families. How can I have privacy? I have lost my privacy; I cannot dress freely or deal with my children as I wish. I left all my personal belongings at home. I can't even use the bathroom comfortably. I am restricted in this place; I lost my privacy the moment I left my home."
—S.A (displaced from Tulkarm Camp).

"The lack of privacy, given my pregnancy and the extreme heat, means I must remain in prayer clothes at all times. I cannot feel free or wear lighter clothing. Conflicts with my husband have increased, especially in mixed-gender floors. I have to stay in the room day and night with the door and window shut; I am almost suffocating."
—L.S. (displaced from Jenin Camp).

"There is a total lack of privacy, especially since we are women alone. I cannot meet my needs as a woman or take care of myself. I have no ability to buy personal care items. I cannot breathe freely; I cannot open a window or a door, or even walk in the hallway of the mixed-gender shelter which houses all ages and groups." —K.A.

"My privacy and my daughters' privacy have vanished. There is no suitable place or time to change clothes, and no place for women's personal care. We wear our hijabs constantly for fear of sudden visitors. My relationship with my husband is worsening; we even lack privacy during sleep." —H.N. (displaced from Tulkarm Camp).

"I'm unable to meet my own needs. I feel constant shame when interacting with men or even women in collective housing. Traditions always restrict me, especially in my husband's absence; I keep the doors and

windows locked on myself for fear of gossip. There's a complete lack of privacy; even when I want to take a quick shower, I stay afraid that something might happen while I'm alone." — A.M. (displaced from Jenin Camp).

"There is no time or space for me to sit alone or even have a cup of coffee in peace. There is a total lack of privacy in these shelters, which are closely adjacent to strangers. I want to open a window to breathe freely for a few minutes, but even this is restricted. My conflicts with my husband have increased significantly; I cannot wear the clothes I like and must always dress modestly, even inside my room."—S.A. (displaced from Jenin Camp).

"I have lost my personal freedom due to the housing situation; my mother-in-law lives with me in the same room. I cannot do anything freely. There is nothing private for me in this dwelling, and there is no healthcare. I no longer care about my appearance or my clothes."—A.A.

"The impact on privacy is immense. A woman needs to see a gynecologist, but the means are unavailable. She also needs to purchase sanitary and personal care items but lacks the financial capacity. She needs to buy clothes, as she has none of her belongings left and the weather has changed, but she has nothing suitable for the current season. Additionally, she requires essential vitamins and supplements following her recent childbirth to recover her health, but the resources are non-existent. All these unmet needs have compromised women's privacy and increased their psychological burden." —T.A. (displaced from Tulkarm Camp).

Testimonies highlight the great challenge in attaining personal necessities, which (as A.A confirmed), "the difficult financial situation does not allow for." Moreover, the families forced to suddenly flee their homes were unable to take their daily essentials: *"We had no clothes with us at the beginning of the displacement; we had to wash our clothes and wait for them to dry. We couldn't sleep comfortably due to overcrowding. There were many days when we couldn't even afford to buy sanitary pads."*—A.S. (displaced from Jenin Camp).

International Obligations for the Protection of Displaced and Refugee Palestinian Women

The protection of displaced and refugee Palestinian women constitutes a central obligation under International Humanitarian Law (IHL), Human Rights Law, and UN frameworks on Women, Peace, and Security. Women and girls, particularly in contexts of occupation and forced displacement, face compounded forms of

vulnerability and violence. Accordingly, it is the duty of the Occupying Power and the international community to ensure effective, comprehensive, and gender-sensitive protection in line with international legal obligations.

International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

According to IHL, all forms of forcible transfer or mass deportation of civilians, particularly women and other vulnerable groups, are strictly prohibited under the Fourth Geneva Convention (Article 49). This provision emphasizes that any forced displacement of a protected person from the territory of the occupying power constitutes a grave breach of international law and may amount to a war crime according to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.¹⁴

The vulnerability of displaced Palestinian women is multiplied by the intersection of their status as displaced civilians and gender-specific dimensions. Women face specific risks during displacement, including sexual violence, economic exploitation, disruption of access to education and healthcare, and loss of livelihoods. Field reports indicate that the repeated Israeli military operations in northern West Bank camps have caused the displacement of women, children, and entire families, creating severe humanitarian conditions characterized by lack of protection, shelter, and basic services.¹⁵

IHL imposes a special duty on the Occupying Power to ensure the protection of women, including their physical, mental and moral integrity, preventing sexual violence, and providing basic living conditions in temporary displacement sites. Furthermore, the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement mandate authorities to apply a gender-sensitive approach that ensures the specific needs of women and girls are met, enabling their access to aid and protection from exploitation and violence.¹⁶

From this perspective, any forced displacement of Palestinian women from camps is a multidimensional violation: legally, as a breach of IHL and human rights principles; humanely, as severe psychological, social, and economic harm; and in gender-specific terms, as disproportionate targeting of women. An effective international response to these violations requires ensuring the Occupation's accountability, protecting

¹⁴ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Articles 7 and 8, 1998.

¹⁵ Commentary on the Fourth Geneva Convention, 1958.

¹⁶ United Nations. Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 1998

women in displacement sites, and integrating gender considerations into every relief and humanitarian intervention to guarantee their dignity and their right to a safe return or durable solutions.¹⁷

International Human Rights Law

Even in situations of armed conflict and occupation, human rights remain legally binding on all parties, including the Occupying Power, as affirmed in both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These obligations include the duty to respect the principles of non-discrimination and equality before the law, and to guarantee that all civilians enjoy their fundamental rights without distinction based on gender, social status, or legal standing.

Displaced Palestinian women in northern West Bank camps face multiple risks due to the intersection of their status as civilians and as women. Forced displacement poses a compounded threat to their lives and their physical and psychological safety. In this respect, international law imposes obligations on the occupation to protect women from all forms of violence, including sexual violence, exploitation, and discrimination in the access to aid and essential services.

The enforceable duty of human rights law amid conflict also encompasses the rights to life, health, education, and adequate housing. This would entail preventing direct violations such as the destruction of homes or depriving women of access to health services and psychological support. Furthermore, international law mandates the provision of special protection for pregnant and injured women and ensures their access to humanitarian assistance without restriction or discrimination, thereby translating international legal obligations into tangible protection for women and girls during situations of conflict and displacement.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

CEDAW, particularly General Recommendation No. 30, emphasizes that states must take special measures to protect women from the risks of armed conflict and displacement, including gender-based violence (GBV) and forced displacement. It further stresses the obligation to ensure women's access to services and humanitarian

¹⁷ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Women and Displacement in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, 2023.

assistance in a manner that considers their specific needs and prevents discrimination, while supporting their participation in decision-making processes related to displacement responses and durable solutions. CEDAW also obligates parties to ensure non-discrimination in the delivery of services and to conduct gender-specific needs assessments for women and girls in displacement settings.

In the case of Palestinian women in the northern West Bank camps, the recommendations of CEDAW translate into practical duties for the occupation and the international community under International Humanitarian Law, including: preventing forced displacement, protecting women from gender-based violence (GBV), ensuring accountability for perpetrators, securing their access to humanitarian aid, and promoting their participation in formulating policies for durable solutions to displacement. Thus, the application of CEDAW recommendations becomes an essential element and a legal tool to guarantee women's rights under conditions of conflict and occupation, complementing the international legal obligations set forth in International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law.

Security Council Resolution 1325 and Subsequent Resolutions

Adopted in 2000, UNSCR 1325 forms the foundation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. It recognizes the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and calls for their protection from gender-based violence, meaningful participation in decision-making, and access to relief and recovery processes. In contexts of occupation and displacement, UNSCR 1325 reinforces the obligations of both the international community and the Occupying Power to safeguard women's security, ensure access to gender-sensitive humanitarian assistance, and include women in camp governance and reconstruction efforts. Subsequent resolutions, including United Nations Security Council Resolution 1820, further strengthened accountability for sexual violence in conflict settings.

Additionally, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement outline duties to guarantee the dignity, safety, and participation of displaced women, while promoting durable solutions such as safe return, local integration, or resettlement.

Special Protection under the UNRWA Mandate

Palestinian refugees, including women, are entitled to special protection under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and relevant UN General Assembly resolutions, which affirm the

international community's responsibility to continue providing essential educational, health, and legal protection services. Any weakening of the Agency's operations reflects directly on the ability of women and girls in refugee camps to access critical care, protection, and relief services.

Accordingly, international legal standards impose clear obligations on the Occupying Power and the international community to prevent forced displacement, protect women from GBV, secure basic needs and humanitarian assistance, empower the participation of women in decision-making, and provide durable solutions for displacement. Any breach of these obligations is considered a violation of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law, entailing international accountability.

The protection of displaced and refugee women in West Bank camps centers on the Occupying Power's adherence to the IHL and IHRL principles, the implementation of CEDAW recommendations, and the execution of practical mechanisms to monitor violations, protect physical and psychological safety, ensure access to aid, and uphold legal accountability. Any failure by the Occupying Power to fulfill these obligations is a flagrant violation that exposes Palestinian female civilians to grave risks and constitutes a multidimensional breach of international law.

Practical and Strategic Mechanisms for Protecting Displaced and Refugee Palestinian Women under Israeli Occupation

Palestinian women in the northern West Bank camps are exposed to compounded vulnerabilities resulting from forced displacement and restrictions on freedom of movement under Israeli occupation. This necessitates the implementation of practical protection mechanisms that take into account the international and legal obligations imposed on the Occupying Power. This necessitates the implementation of practical protection mechanisms that take into account the international and legal obligations imposed on the Occupying Power as follows:

Enhancing Humanitarian and Rights-Based Protection for Displaced Women and Families

In accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution **194 (1948)** affirming the right of return for Palestinian refugees, and subsequent resolutions such as **302** and **3236**, emphasis must be placed on preventing forced

displacement and respecting families' right to return or to receive alternative protection. On a practical level, this involves establishing temporary protection mechanisms for women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities both inside and outside the camps, creating safe reception points that provide access to basic care and health services, ensuring equality and non-discrimination in the provision of these essential services.

Advancing Advocacy and International Pressure

- **Political Pressure:** Exercising political and diplomatic pressure on the occupying power to halt displacement and ensure safe return, with a specific focus on the rights of women and girls.
- **International Mobilization:** Mobilizing support from human rights organizations and international media to highlight violations, thereby holding perpetrators accountable to scrutiny.
- **Legal Advocacy:** Utilizing field reports and live testimonies to advance legal advocacy before international courts and human rights bodies.
- **Building Alliances:** building coalitions with international and regional organizations such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), human rights organizations, and feminist movements to spotlight violations against women and girls.
- **Formal Complaints:** Filing official complaints and legal memoranda before international courts and specialized human rights bodies, particularly regarding the violation of refugee rights and women's rights to health and safety.
- **Legal Frameworks:** reinforcing the occupation's obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, the International Bill of Human Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Establishing Mechanisms for Monitoring and Documenting Violations

In line with international accountability frameworks addressing violations against Palestinian refugees and human rights, a specialized mechanism must be established to document violations against women, children, and persons with disabilities during displacement operations to facilitate follow-up on violations and support international accountability to hold Israel, as the Occupying Power, responsible. It is essential to utilize this documentation to facilitate follow-up on violations, to submit formal complaints and reports to the United

Nations and human rights committees, and to support international accountability to hold Israel, as an Occupying Power, responsible.

Supporting Access to Health and Rehabilitation Services

Consistent with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and relevant UN resolutions concerning the health and humanitarian rights of Palestinian refugees, integrated programs must be provided. These should include:

- Distributing essential medications for chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension.
- Providing assistive devices for children with disabilities.
- Ensuring the continuity of physical therapy and psychological rehabilitation sessions.
- Establishing mobile health units to reach displaced families to ensure continuity of specialized care.
- Strengthening partnerships with local and international organizations to secure sustainable funding and provide necessary medical equipment.

Improving Infrastructure for Temporary Housing

States and relevant parties are obligated to uphold the human rights of Palestinian refugees in accordance with international standards, including the provision of housing adapted for persons with disabilities and older persons. Therefore:

- Temporary shelters must be modified to include accessible bathrooms, ramps, and safe mobility areas.
- Safe, inclusive and suitable spaces for children to play and grow must be created.
- Roads and pathways leading to housing and clinics must be improved to ensure safe and unobstructed movement, particularly for blind children and those with physical disabilities.

Supporting Education and Psychological Rehabilitation for Children

The Convention on the Rights of the Child and UN resolutions (such as Resolution 2252 and relevant UNHCR mandates affirming the right of Palestinian refugees to education), the following is required:

- Establishing specialized schools and educational programs for children with disabilities and autism.

- Providing psychological support sessions for children and women to address, mitigate, and support recovery from the impact of forced displacement and related trauma.
- Focusing on Prioritizing the prevention of psychological violence and fostering resilience, self-confidence, and social reintegration among displaced populations.

Economic Empowerment of Women and Supporting Caregiving Roles

In accordance with CEDAW and international resolutions regarding the rights of Palestinian refugees, the following measures should be implemented:

- **Women's Support Centers:** Establish centers that enable women to access legal counseling and family protection services, aiming to alleviate the psychological and physical burdens associated with caring for family members, particularly those with disabilities.
- **Economic Support Programs:** Design specific economic empowerment programs for women during displacement, including micro-projects and vocational training. These initiatives aim to enhance women's financial independence and reduce reliance on humanitarian aid.
- **Support for Caregiving Roles:** Recognize and support the pivotal role women play in managing households during crises by providing resources that help them sustain their families' well-being under displacement conditions.

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