

Statement by ESCWA introducing the Note of the Secretary-General on
**The Economic and Social Repercussions of the Israeli Occupation on the Living Conditions of the
Palestinian People in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem, and of the
Arab Population in the Occupied Syrian Golan**
Economic and Social Council – 2023 Substantive Session
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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

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

The Note is mandated by resolutions from the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly and covers the period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

I would like to thank all colleagues and agencies for their input and support.

During this period, concerns persisted over Israel's policies and practices and aspects of its protracted occupation and their severe impact on Palestinians and their ability to exercise their fundamental rights.

Israel also continued consolidating its occupation, through measures and policies many of which are unlawful, discriminatory and appear to constitute collective punishment.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

Israeli measures and practices raise serious concerns about excessive use of force and unlawful killing, in some cases possibly amounting to arbitrary deprivation of life, including extrajudicial executions, coupled with an almost total failure to ensure accountability.

A notable case in this regard was the killing of veteran journalist Shireen Abu Akleh while covering a military raid on the Jenin refugee camp on 11 May 2022.

Furthermore, Israel not only failed to prevent settler violence, which reached record high levels, or to hold perpetrators accountable. To the contrary Israeli security and military appeared complicit in many of these attacks.

The August 2022 escalation against Gaza resulted in extensive civilian deaths and injuries, destruction and damage to civilian infrastructure.

The arrest, incarceration and arbitrary detention of thousands of Palestinian men, women and children persisted, including hundreds of administrative detainees held, without charge or trial. And amid documented cases of torture and ill-treatment, including of children, the Israeli Knesset approved legislations aimed at punishing Palestinian "security prisoners".

Concurrently, during the reporting period, Israel withheld the bodies of 386 Palestinians, in what may constitute collective punishment.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

Israel continued its settlement expansion policies, in what amounts to the illegal transfer of its population into an occupied territory.

In parallel, forced evictions, mass and individual displacement, and other practices in Area C and East Jerusalem have created a coercive environment that compels Palestinians to leave their homes in what could amount to forcible transfer.

Often associated with settlement expansion plans, demolitions of Palestinian homes and other structures, including those funded by donors increased. Compared to the same period in 2022, the first quarter of 2023 witnessed a 47% increase in such demolitions

Punitive home demolitions of families and neighbors of Palestinians suspected of carrying out attacks have tripled compared to the previous reporting period.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

Israel's restrictions on Palestinians movement disrupts their lives and affects their rights to work, to an adequate standard of living, to education and to health.

These restrictions include Israel's 16-year blockade on Gaza and the complex physical and administrative system in the West Bank, including the wall, "barrier", which fragment the territory into isolated islands.

Israel's policies continue to deprive Palestinians of access to their own natural resources to the benefit of its settlements and industries. A clear example is that the daily consumption average of an Israeli settler that is quadruple that of a Palestinian.

Gaza's main water source has been depleted or contaminated and its water unfit for human consumption.

In addition to the physical destruction of crops, trees, and other resources, Israel severely prevents Palestinians from using the most fertile West Bank agricultural lands and 35% of Gaza's farmland.

Israel's exploitation of mineral resources in the West Bank continued while denying Palestinian companies from doing so. Similarly, Israel severely limits Palestinian access to energy reserves located within their land and coastal waters.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

Approximately 2.1 million Palestinians, including 1.3 million Gazans were in need of humanitarian assistance during 2023

Israel's system of restrictive policies hollowed the Palestinian economy of many elements that are vital for its healthy operation, rendering it highly vulnerable to internal and external shocks and highly dependent on Israel and external transfers.

As international aid to the Palestinian budget continues to dwindle, GDP per capita in 2022 failed to recover to its 2019 level, worse still, it remained below its 2011 level. Palestinian trade deficit rose by 35.4% from 2021 to 2022.

A quarter of the Palestinian workforce was unemployed, reaching 45% in Gaza. Unemployment among youth remained very high (35%), a figure that rises to almost 50% among educated youth.

Almost two thirds of Palestinian households were experiencing severe or moderate food insecurity in 2022, mainly because they cannot afford it.

The Note documents the resulting deterioration of the social conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially in terms of access to WASH services, health care and education.

the Israeli policies, practices have different and disproportionate impacts on women and girls, including exacerbating instances of SGBV and obstructing the access of women and girls to education and health care.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

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

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

Israel's policies have resulted in harsh economic and social conditions for Syrians in the Golan, which are expected to worsen as a result of Israel's new future plans.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

The lack of implementation of international law, including security council resolutions pertaining to the Question of Palestine undermines the prospects of the implementation of internationally agreed frameworks across the region, including the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Note reiterates that adherence to international law is an absolute imperative for securing justice and peace for all those living in the region,

Thank you