

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 – 2022 Substantive Session
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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

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

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

I would like to thank all colleagues and agencies for their input and support. And to note that the report covers the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

Israel continued policies and practices that have raised concerns over many aspects of its protracted occupation that have had a severe humanitarian, economic, social and political impact on Palestinians and their ability to exercise their fundamental rights.

Israel intensified its repression of Palestinians expressing dissent and targeting organizations, especially those documenting and seeking accountability for Israeli violations of international law and accusing Israel of apartheid.¹

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

Despite its obligations under international law, Israel escalated its excessive use of force against Palestinians, including unwarranted force amounting to arbitrary deprivation of life, coupled with a lack of accountability.

The May 2021 escalation against Gaza resulted in extensive civilian deaths and injuries, destruction and damage to civilian infrastructure, despite Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law to abide by the principles of distinction and proportionality

In the West Bank, Israel continued to fail protecting Palestinians from settler violence, which reached its highest level since 2017, or to hold perpetrators accountable. To the contrary Israeli security and military appeared complicit in many of these attacks.

The arrest, incarceration and arbitrary detention of thousands of Palestinian men, women and children persisted. Hundreds were held in administrative detention, without charge or trial for an indefinite period, with documented cases of torture and ill-treatment of detainees, including children.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

¹ Paragraph 5

Israel's policies and practices in Area C and East Jerusalem have created a coercive environment that compels Palestinians to leave their homes in what could amount to forcible transfer.

Often in relation to settlement expansion plans, the demolition of Palestinian homes and other structures, including those funded by donors, as well as the consequent displacement of Palestinians continued during the reporting period.

At the same time, Israel continued its settlement expansion policies, in what amounts to the transfer of its population into an occupied territory, prohibited by international humanitarian law.

Punitive home demolitions of families and neighbors of Palestinians suspected of carrying out attacks continue, and amount to collective punishment, also prohibited in international humanitarian law.

In Gaza, some 16,250 housing and commercial units were damaged during the May escalation, aggravating the shortage in housing units in one of the most densely populated areas in the world.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

Israel's restrictions on Palestinians movement in the occupied Palestinian territory has continued to disrupt the daily life of Palestinians, profoundly affecting their rights to work, to an adequate standard of living, to education and to health.

Israel's 15-year blockade on Gaza amounts to the collective punishment of more than 2.1 million Palestinians, severely exacerbating their living conditions, and impeding development and reconstruction.

The West Bank has been effectively fragmented into more than 100 cantons by Israel's complex system of movement restrictions.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

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

Israeli authorities divert water resources to settlements at the expense of Palestinians. This includes seizure of wells, blocking Palestinian access to natural water resources and the destruction of others.

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

Israel severely prevent Palestinians from using over two thirds of West Bank agricultural resources and 35% of Gaza's farmland. For example, Palestinian olive farmers are allowed 1 to 7 days per year to access their groves whereas at least 133 days of work annually are necessary to adequate maintain one.

Israel has continued to exploit the \$30 billion reserves mineral resources in the West Bank and has not issued quarrying permits for Palestinian companies since 1994.

Similarly, Israel severely limits Palestinian access to energy reserves located within their land and coastal waters, including an estimated 1.525 billion barrels of oil reserves in the West Bank at about and \$2.57 billion worth of natural gas off the Gaza coast.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

In 2022, approximately 2.1 million Palestinians in need of humanitarian assistance, including three-quarters of Gaza's. This has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, decline in external funding, and the May 2021 escalation against Gaza.

Israel's system of policies and practices has systematically stripped the Palestinian economy of vital elements, whose productive base continues to shrink.

The May 2021 escalation resulted in the destruction of about 2 per cent of Gaza's capital stock and approximately 8,000 households were expected to fall into poverty in the ensuing months. Gaza's GDP per capita remained at 52% lower than its 2005 levels.

Unemployment in the occupied Palestinian territory was 26% with a hyper-unemployment in Gaza at 47%. Notably, women's unemployment rate was 43%, almost double that of men.

The number of food-insecure people increased across the Occupied Palestinian Territory to 2 million in early 2021 from 1.7 million in 2018.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

The Note reiterates that the Palestinian health-care system has been fragile, disconnected, undergoing de-development and lacking human, financial and material resources, which severely impaired its capacity to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. Gaza's health infrastructure has been particularly affected, owing to the blockade and previous military operations.

The Note also details aspects of the impact of the occupation on education and WASH services and infrastructure, noting the compounded and specific effects on women and girls.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

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

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

These policies result in harsh economic and social conditions. These conditions are expected to worsen as a result of new Israeli projects and plans.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

I am afraid that the situation during the reporting period covered in the Note has further deteriorated in the past months, reinforcing its conclusions regarding the detrimental effects of the protracted Israeli occupation on the living conditions of Palestinians and Syrians and on development prospects in the occupied territories.

Current trends and persistent Israeli policies render the attainment of the SDGs and the establishment of a viable Palestinian State almost impossible. The occupation has led to de-development, especially in Gaza, and resulted in a fragmented economy that is dependent on Israel and foreign aid.

Many of these policies are contrary to international law. Some are discriminatory, while others may amount to forcible transfer and collective punishment

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

Thank you