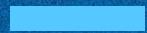


Thematic Report

Destruction of Palestinian refugee camps in northern West Bank

(December 2024 - January 2026)



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Occupied Palestinian Territory

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Executive summary

1. In early December 2024, Palestinian security forces (PSF) launched a series of operations in refugee camps in the northern West Bank, most notably the Jenin refugee camp, also affecting camps in Tulkarm, Nablus, and Jericho, which the Palestinian Authority described as efforts to reassert law and order, and which primarily targeted Palestinians wanted by Israel. The most notable was *Operation Protect the Homeland*, conducted in Jenin between 5 December 2024 and 21 January 2025. Subsequently, on 21 January 2025, Israeli security forces (ISF) launched *Operation Iron Wall* in Jenin and the surrounding towns in the northern West Bank,¹ and expanded it to Tulkarm and its two refugee camps, Tulkarm camp and Nur Shams camp, on 27 January and 9 February 2025 respectively.
2. In the context of these two operations, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) monitored and documented serious human rights violations. Both operations entailed unwarranted use of lethal force, including military-style engagements outside a context of hostilities, rather than operations conducted in line with the rules applicable to law enforcement. This led to unlawful killings and serious injuries and replicated a pattern already evident in ISF and PSF operations across the occupied West Bank since 2022.
3. A few days into *Operation Iron Wall*, ISF consolidated their control over the Jenin, Nur Shams and Tulkarm refugee camps, forcibly displaced their population in their entirety – estimated 33,000 persons at the time of reporting² – and destroyed hundreds of homes, roads and other civilian infrastructure, indicating that the displaced population would not be allowed to return.
4. In addition to raising concerns of forcible transfer of the displaced population, the wanton destruction of homes, roads and infrastructure, which changed the geographic layout of the refugee camps to allegedly allow easier control by ISF, raise concerns that the refugee camps were being re-engineered to consolidate and prolong Israel's unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in the northern West Bank, the area with the greatest Palestinian territorial contiguity and least fragmentation.
5. The destruction of some of the largest refugee camps in the occupied West Bank has eroded the social fabric of these communities, whose residents had been forcibly displaced in the late 1940's during the Nakba³ and have a recognized Palestine refugee

¹ With raids and killings recorded as part of the operation in Bruqin, Qabatiya, Ash Shuhada, Silat al Harithiya.

² In addition, 3,000 to 4,000 residents of Al Faraa' refugee camp, Tubas, were temporarily displaced during the operation.

³ The Tulkarm refugee camp, established in 1950, counted 27,631 Palestine Refugees registered in the camp as of 2023, mostly originating from Haifa, Jaffa and Kissaria areas; the Jenin refugee camp, established in 1953, counted 24,239 Palestinians registered as refugees as of 2023; the Nur Shams refugee camp was established in 1952 and as of 2023 counted 13,739 Palestinians registered as

status, entailing the right to return. The ongoing operation made it impossible for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Middle East (UNRWA) to operate inside the camps. Essential services, including education and health care, have been forced to be relocated elsewhere outside the camps. By the end of the reporting period, Israel was reportedly imposing conditions for the return of those displaced, which included the banning of UNRWA education and health services from the three refugee camps, which were to be provided instead by the Palestinian Authority (PA) as in “non-refugee” towns and villages across the West Bank.⁴ These actions, along with incitement coming from Israeli settler leaders to destroy the refugee camps,⁵ appeared to pursue the aim of progressively erasing the refugee status and identity of thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank.⁶

6. In light of the human rights violations and accountability gaps documented in this report covering the period from 5 December 2024 to 31 January 2026, OHCHR calls for urgent action by the relevant authorities and the international community, including for Israel to end its unlawful presence and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory⁷ and to ensure accountability, rule of law, and remedies for violations by all authorities.

Introduction and background

7. The report is based on OHCHR monitoring including documentation of emblematic cases, and analysis of official documents and data including military orders issued by Israeli security forces and Israeli court decisions. In addition, data and analysis from other UN bodies (primarily the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT) and UNRWA) and NGOs, as well as from open-source monitoring including official statements by key Israeli and Palestinian authorities and stakeholders, were included. Unless otherwise stated, information in the present report is drawn from OHCHR monitoring conducted in accordance with OHCHR methodological standards.
8. OHCHR has repeatedly raised concerns that ISF in the West Bank were using weapons and methods developed for warfare in situations of law enforcement, including airstrikes, combat drones (unmanned aerial vehicles - UAV) and shoulder-launched

refugees, mostly originating from the Haifa area. See [Tulkarm Camp | UNRWA](#); [Jenin Camp | UNRWA](#); [Nur Shams Camp | UNRWA](#)

⁴ <https://www.israelhayom.co.il/news/world-news/middle-east/article/18912765>;

<https://www.kikar.co.il/political-news/t34ptn>

⁵ [Settler leaders call for moving Palestinian population in West Bank 'to combat terror' | The Times of Israel](#)

⁶ UNRWA Commissioner’s statement at the Refugee Forum available here <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1Db5TwrVb5/>

⁷ International Court of Justice, Legal Consequences Arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024, paras. 243, 261, 267-272 and 285.

explosive projectiles.⁸ Since 7 October 2023, ISF have escalated these tactics across the occupied West Bank and especially in the northern West Bank. Since then, and as of 31 January 2026, ISF had killed 1,052 Palestinians (802 men, 20 women, 223 boys, 7 girls) in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, almost half of them (449) during operations applying military means and tactics,⁹ outside of the context of hostilities, of whom at least 306 were killed by airstrikes or other heavy explosive munitions.¹⁰

9. According to OHCHR monitoring, the majority of those killed by ISF were posing no threat to life or limb (476) or their death resulted from the use of apparently unnecessary or disproportionate force against Palestinians alleged to have thrown stones or Molotov cocktails, usually at ISF well-equipped soldiers and armored vehicles (185) during frequent raids to towns and villages across the West Bank. About one third were killed in alleged attacks against Israelis, both civilians and members of security forces (85), or during exchange of fire following ISF raids into West Bank (252), during which ISF consistently used lethal force as the first and only measure with no evidence of the graduated use of force, or other measures to prevent unnecessary loss of life contrary to international human rights law and international standards.¹¹ Since 7 October 2023 and as of 31 January 2026, 62 Israelis (40 men, 17 women, 4 boys and 1 girl), including 22 members of the Israeli security forces, were killed by Palestinians in assaults or armed clashes in the occupied West Bank and Israel.
10. Since the violence in the occupied West Bank does not meet the threshold required for the existence of a non-international armed conflict, and because according to the information available there are insufficient organizational links between armed Palestinians in the West Bank and organized armed groups involved in armed conflicts with the Israeli military in Gaza, the legal framework applicable to any use of force by the ISF in the occupied West Bank is international human rights law and the relevant international standards on the use of force by law enforcement officials.
11. In many cases of killings by ISF since 7 October 2023, they used unnecessary lethal force in situations that suggested the deliberate or reckless killing of Palestinians, including at least 350 incidents in West Bank, raising concerns of extrajudicial executions. In 267 cases, ISF reportedly also obstructed or denied medical assistance, raising further

⁸ A/HRC/55/28, paras 58-61; A/HRC/58/28, paras 5, 31; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2025/01/concern-use-unlawful-lethal-force-jenin-occupied-west-bank>

⁹ The 449 Palestinians killed by ISF during military type operations comprise of 365 men, 10 women, 70 boys and 4 girls. The vast majority of Palestinians were killed in the governorates of Jenin (201), Tulkarm (168), and Tubas (55). Seven Israeli security forces soldiers were killed during those operations.

¹⁰ Among the 449 fatalities in military operations, 259 Palestinians were killed by airstrikes, 47 by multiple weapons used including shelling, 127 by live ammunition, 4 by other means and in 12 cases the cause of death is unknown.

¹¹ These concerns are longstanding, see for example A/78/502 para 14. OHCHR could not verify the context of death of 19 Palestinian fatalities. Since 7 October 2023 and as of 30 September 2025, 59 Israelis (38 men, 16 women, 4 boys and 1 girl), including 22 members of the State armed forces, were killed in Palestinian alleged assaults or armed clashes in the West Bank and Israel.

concerns of the widespread deliberate killing of Palestinians.¹² In the days prior to the Iron Wall operation, they intensified operations with heavy weaponry in the occupied West Bank, killing 37 Palestinians in airstrikes in Jenin, Tulkarm and Tubas governorates between 1 December 2024 and 20 January 2025. Israeli use of airstrikes had subsided by the end of February 2025 once the three refugee camps had been emptied.

Palestinian security forces' *Operation Protect the Homeland*

12. Similar tactics involving the use of weapons designed for conduct of hostilities have been adopted by the PSF, notably during *Operation Protect the Homeland*, which was initiated on 5 December 2024 and raised grave concerns regarding human rights violations. According to Palestinian authorities, this 6-week operation in Jenin refugee camp and Jenin city aimed to pursue those serving the agendas of external forces and “prevent another catastrophe and disaster in the West Bank, as happened in the Gaza Strip”.¹³ During the operation, the PSF cut off access to and from the refugee camp, preventing movement and access to schools and hospitals, while cutting off water and electricity and banning the entry of basic goods.¹⁴
13. The operation involved repeated instances of unnecessary or disproportionate use of force and clashes with armed Palestinians, which led to the killing of nine Palestinian residents, including three children and two women (one of them a journalist), and six members of the PSF,¹⁵ with dozens more injured. For example, on 9 December 2024, PSF shot two unarmed Palestinians who were riding a motorbike to deliver food in an area adjacent to Jenin camp, killing a 19-year-old man and injuring his 15-year-old relative. Video evidence, corroborated with witness testimony, shows the young man raising his hands after a PSF vehicle intercepted his motorbike, and officers from inside the vehicle opening fire at him and his passenger. Despite Palestinian authorities announcing investigations into all killings during the operation, as of the end of the reporting period, OHCHR was not aware of the release of any of the findings or the status of investigations.
14. The operation was accompanied by a severe crackdown on civic space by Palestinian authorities. On 14 December 2024 and in subsequent days, peaceful marches by

¹² Those practices include ISF soldiers blocking movement of ambulances, shooting at medical personnel and leaving the injured bleeding to death, among others. See OHCHR [Thematic Report - Israel's discriminatory administration of the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem](#) | OHCHR, paras. 15-16, 19, 26.

¹³ [Palestinian Authority refuses to back down in fight with Jenin fighters, Al Jazeera](#)

¹⁴ See also [PA's brutal siege on Jenin only deepens its crisis of legitimacy, Al Jazeera](#)

¹⁵ OHCHR verified that PSF killed five Palestinians (one of whom reported to be armed); armed Palestinians killed three PSF officers during clashes; two PSF officers were killed while dismantling unexploded ordnance. OHCHR could not verify attribution of five fatalities (four unarmed civilians and one PSF officer).

Palestinians held from Jenin city to the camp, calling for PSF to end its security operations and decrying the high number of fatalities and injuries, were forcefully dispersed by PSF with tear gas and by beating demonstrators, including women, with sticks. On 6 January 2025, Palestinian authorities suspended Al Jazeera's authorization to operate and broadcast in the West Bank for publishing "inciting content, misinformation, sedition and interference in Palestinian internal affairs"¹⁶ in relation to their coverage of the operation and warned Palestinian journalists against providing information to the media outlet. They also prevented journalists from entering Jenin camp.

15. In addition, during the operation, PSF detained more than 300 Palestinians, many of them accused of being armed, their relatives, as well as journalists, and residents who expressed criticism of the Palestinian authorities and the conduct of the operation on social media. According to OHCHR monitoring, many of those detained were subjected to torture and ill-treatment, denied legal representation, family visits, and medical care including those who had injuries. As of 31 January 2026, most of those detained during the operation were still in custody, many of them on uncertain legal grounds and despite the issuance of court rulings ordering their release for at least 55 of them.
16. As a result of the PSF tactics, hundreds of families were forced to leave the camps during the operation. PSF withdrew from the Jenin refugee camp on 21 January 2025, as the Israeli *Operation Iron Wall* started, with intensified unlawful use of force by ISF.

Israeli security forces' *Operation Iron Wall*

17. In the initial stages of *Operation Iron Wall*, there was an escalation of unnecessary use of force, leading to dozens of fatalities, which appeared instrumental to the forcible displacement of residents from the camps in particular. On 21 January 2025, the first day of operation in Jenin, ISF killed 10 unarmed Palestinians (9 men and a 16-year-old boy),¹⁷ 6 of them while they were reportedly departing from Jenin camp on foot or by car, following ISF's demand that residents leave.¹⁸ In one case, according to OHCHR monitoring and a video of the incident,¹⁹ they shot in the chest and killed 43-year-old Ahmad Nimer Al-Shayeb at the Shireen Abu Akleh roundabout, at the western entrance of the Jenin refugee camp, as he was attempting to leave Jenin by car along with his 10-year-old son, two Palestinian women and two elderly men, and while posing no threat to ISF. On the same day, the Israeli army stated that they had "hit over ten terrorists".²⁰
18. Based on OHCHR monitoring, ISF did not plan and conduct operations to minimize loss of life, injuries, and damage. On the contrary, the Israeli military reportedly amended

¹⁶ Decision on file. The ban was subsequently lifted on 12 May 2025.

¹⁷ Including one shot and injured on 21 January, who died from his injuries on 26 January 2025.

¹⁸ OHCHR monitoring.

¹⁹ <https://www.instagram.com/reels/DFGkLtVtNQk/>

²⁰ <https://t.me/idfofficial/13552>.

and further loosened its rules of engagement in the occupied West Bank to permit soldiers to shoot with live ammunition at individuals “messing with the ground” – that is, whom they claim to suspect may be laying explosives – or at vehicles approaching checkpoints in what they call “combat zones”, without following the usual arrest procedures, and adopting in northern West Bank the same operating methods used in Gaza.²¹ While the ISF officially stated that there had been no change in the rules of engagement,²² evidence on the ground suggested the accuracy of the reports on loosening the rules of engagement and that these changes appeared to have contributed to several incidents in which Palestinians, including women and children, were killed.

19. Similarly, after the expansion of the operation to Tulkarm, from 27 to 29 January 2025, ISF killed 15 Palestinians, 8 of them reportedly unarmed.²³ Those reportedly armed were killed by airstrikes while not engaged in clashes and posing no imminent threat.²⁴ One of those killed, a 10-year-old boy, Saddam Hussein Rajab, was shot in the abdomen on 28 January 2025; he died from his injuries on 7 February 2025. As also shown in a video recording of the incident, the boy was shot while standing empty-handed at the doorstep of a building in Tulkarm,²⁵ reportedly waiting to go to the mosque with his father. According to Israeli media, ISF initially stated that the boy “was messing with the ground”²⁶ in a suspicious way and subsequently stated that the Military Police was investigating the killing.²⁷ On 9 February 2025, the first day of the incursion into Nur Shams refugee camp, the ISF killed three Palestinians, including two women. Twenty-three-year-old Sondos Shalabi was shot while 8-months-pregnant, while attempting to drive away from the camp with her husband and her brother-in-law. ISF first shot the husband in the head, injuring him. Later, as the woman got out of the vehicle to seek help, the ISF shot at her at least three times, in the back, pelvis, and thigh. ISF initially stated that on that day they had “struck” several “terrorists”.²⁸ Subsequently, an internal probe on the killing of the pregnant woman revealed that she was shot at because she “looked suspiciously at the ground”, while acknowledging that she was

²¹ See <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-02-10/ty-article/.premium/israeli-army-expands-open-fire-orders-leading-to-surge-in-palestinian-civilian-deaths/00000194-ef85-dd03-add7-ffc72f120000>.

²² Ibid.

²³ Of whom four were killed in Tulkarm, including one who was injured and succumbed to injuries in February 2025, ten in Tammun, and one in Jenin.

²⁴ See for example: Telegram: [@idfofficial](https://t.me/idf_official), and related video at video.idf.azureedge.net/e3652e41-04f6-443a-b270-0aadeb819f22; Telegram: [@idfofficial](https://t.me/idf_official) and related video at video.idf.azureedge.net/d5de251c-e0c0-4339-9b28-4f1b18123a80.

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1d5sanf-TI&rc0=1>.

²⁶ [Israeli Army Expands Open-fire Orders in West Bank, Leading to Surge in Palestinian Civilian Deaths - Israel News - Haaretz.com](https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-02-10/ty-article/.premium/israeli-army-expands-open-fire-orders-leading-to-surge-in-palestinian-civilian-deaths-1.6611111)

²⁷ [Two Palestinian Teens Killed by IDF Fire in Separate West Bank Incidents, Health Ministry Says - Israel News - Haaretz.com](https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-02-10/ty-article/.premium/two-palestinian-teens-killed-by-idf-fire-in-separate-west-bank-incidents-health-ministry-says-1.6611111); [West Bank Palestinian families struggle to understand kids' deaths by alleged IDF fire - The Times of Israel](https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-02-10/ty-article/.premium/west-bank-palestinian-families-struggle-to-understand-kids-deaths-by-alleged-idf-fire-1.6611111)

²⁸ ISF stated that they “hit a number of terrorists” and arrested others as they started operations in Nur Shams camp. See https://t.me/idf_telegram/15360

unarmed and no Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) were found near her.²⁹ Also on 9 February, 21-year-old Rahaf Al-Ashkar was killed by the detonation of an explosive placed by the ISF, without warning, to break through the door of her house. ISF later stated that they thought there was a “suspected terrorist” inside the home.³⁰

20. The conduct of *Operation Iron Wall* has resulted in significant Palestinian fatalities, including through airstrikes. During the reporting period, 102 Palestinians, including 78 men, 3 women, 19 boys and 2 girls, were killed by ISF in the northern governorates of Jenin, Tulkarm, and Tubas, representing 46 per cent of those killed by ISF across the occupied West Bank in the same period.

Targeted killings and other unlawful killings

21. Between 7 October 2023 and 31 January 2026 there were at least 111 incidents of airstrikes launched by ISF drones or airplanes in northern West Bank,³¹ 36 of them recorded between the start of *Operation Iron Wall* in January 2025 and 31 January 2026. In some cases, those killed were individuals directly targeted by the ISF for alleged associations with armed groups or involvement in or planning of criminal acts against Israelis. These cases amount to extrajudicial executions as, under the applicable law enforcement standards,³² intentional lethal force may only be used where strictly unavoidable to protect life against an imminent threat and targeted killings based on identity, status or alleged affiliation are unlawful. Killing an individual on the basis that they may have been planning a future criminal act is also unlawful under this framework. In one example, on 27 January 2025, ISF killed two Palestinian men and injured four others after an Israeli Air Force drone launched an air-to-ground missile on a vehicle travelling along Nablus Street at the entrance to Nur Shams Refugee Camp, Tulkarm, in the absence of clashes or confrontations. According to the ISF, without providing evidence that the person killed was posing an imminent threat to life, the strike was part of a “counterterrorism operation” coordinated with the Israeli Security Agency/Shin Bet and “eliminated... the head of the Hamas terrorist organization's terror cell in Tulkarm”, along with another “terrorist”.³³ In another example, on 1 February 2025, an ISF drone struck a vehicle in Qabatiya, Jenin, killing two men inside the car who were allegedly wanted by ISF and injuring seven other Palestinians, including a 13-year-old boy who was hit with shrapnel in the head while standing in front of his father's shop and who died from his injuries 16 days later.³⁴

²⁹ [Israeli Army Expands Open-fire Orders in West Bank, Leading to Surge in Palestinian Civilian Deaths - Israel News - Haaretz.com](#)

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ UNDSS, on file with OHCHR. Each incident may involve the firing of several air-to-ground missiles.

³² Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 36 (2018), para. 12. See also the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials.

³³ https://t.me/idf_telegram/15146.

³⁴ ISF stated that the army and the Shin Bet had carried out three airstrikes and hit a “terrorist cell” planning an “imminent attack”. See <https://t.me/idfofficial/13639>

22. In addition to targeted killings, the excessive and indiscriminate use of force by ISF, leading to the killing of Palestinians who posed no apparent threat, remains of major concern. OHCHR records indicate that the majority of Palestinians killed by ISF in the context of *Operation Iron Wall* were not involved in either confrontations or clashes at the moment they were killed, including several killed during airstrikes in densely populated areas, and those killed in their homes, vehicles or public spaces amidst intensive and indiscriminate shooting by ISF. On 25 January 2025, ISF stationed at a residential building in Ash Shuhada village, Jenin, shot multiple rounds at a nearby house and killed, by bullet to the head, a two-year-old girl while she was having dinner with her mother and aunt.³⁵

Methodical, forced displacement of Palestinians

23. The actions of the ISF indicate that the main focus of *Operation Iron Wall* appears to have been the displacement of Palestinians from refugee camps. After entering each of the camps, ISF explicitly instructed residents to leave and threatened that they would be killed if they refused to do so. This, along with evidence of unnecessary and excessive use of force, raises concerns that ISF resorted to lethal force against the general population in the camps, alongside the threat of lethal force, to create chaos, spread fear, quickly force residents out of their homes, and rapidly empty the refugee camps.
24. ISF sealed the camps by controlling all entries and exits, including preventing entry of journalists and humanitarian organizations, and forced UNRWA to suspend services.³⁶ They also cut water and electricity supplies, while providing no alternative shelter or humanitarian assistance to the thousands of displaced residents. As a result, within days of commencing the operation in each refugee camp, they had almost completely emptied them. By 6 February 2025, 90 per cent of Jenin refugee camp's 20,000 inhabitants were forced out, as well as 12,000 or 90 per cent inhabitants of Tulkarm Refugee Camp,³⁷ and by 11 February, almost all of Nur Shams camp's residents were also forced out.³⁸ As of 10 February, at the peak of the crisis, UNRWA estimated that about 40,000 Palestinians from refugee camps in the north and surrounding areas were forced out of their homes.³⁹
25. Other refugee camps in the north of the occupied West Bank were also targeted. On 2 February 2025, ISF expanded the operation to El Fara'a refugee camp, Tubas governorate,⁴⁰ carrying out a ground operation that lasted for 11 days. However,

³⁵ As quoted in Israeli media, ISF surrounded the house based on intelligence that a "terrorist" was inside. ISF reportedly opened an investigation into the incident. See [Palestinian Family Was Eating Dinner When the IDF Sprayed Bullets at Their House, Killing Two-year-old - Israel News](#)

³⁶ [Official statement on the situation in Jenin camp | UNRWA](#)

³⁷ [Humanitarian Situation Update #262, West Bank, OCHA-OPT](#)

³⁸ [Humanitarian Situation Update #264, West Bank, OCHA-OPT](#).

³⁹ [Large-scale forced displacement in the West Bank impacts 40,000 people - UNRWA](#). Figures were an estimate.

⁴⁰ [ISF Continue the Counterterrorism Operation in Northern Samaria - IDF, 2 February 2025](#)

following the withdrawal of Israeli ground forces on 12 February, the vast majority of the approximately 4,000 Palestinians who had been displaced from El Far'a refugee camp returned to the camp, the only camp where UNRWA was able to resume its services.⁴¹

26. Conversely, on 23 February 2025, the Israeli Minister of Defence announced that the Palestinians displaced from Jenin, Tulkarm and Nur Shams refugee camps would not be allowed to return, as he instructed Israeli forces to remain in those camps.⁴² As of 31 January 2026, almost a year later, most of the camps' population, 33,362 people, remained displaced,⁴³ with ISF maintaining its presence in the camps and continuing to demolish and re-engineer them, i.e. to physically redesign and restructure them in a manner that alters their layout, accessibility, and character, allowing easier access, movement, and visibility by the army.
27. The forcible displacement of Palestinians from the camps had been ongoing since the ISF intensified airstrikes and operations in the occupied West Bank after 7 October 2023. These operations became the largest single cause of displacement of all Palestinians in the West Bank (42 per cent of all displacement between January 2023 and December 2024 according to OCHA).⁴⁴ From October 2023 to December 2024, according to OHCHR records, ISF conducted an average of four such operations every month, each characterized by airstrikes, killings, mass detentions, prohibition of movement, and destruction of infrastructure accompanied by water and electricity outages. The camps became increasingly unlivable, forcing those with means to relocate elsewhere, and leaving those without means to survive without basic services.
28. Hundreds of families were further forced to leave the Jenin camp during the 6-week operation "*Protect the Homeland*" carried out from 5 December 2024 by PSF in the Jenin refugee camp with similar tactics – killings, mass arrests and ill-treatment, curfews and cutting of services – as those employed by ISF.⁴⁵
29. *Operation Iron Wall* initiated on 21 January 2025 represented a turning point, not only for the degree of mass forcible displacement – the longest and largest displacement crisis in the West Bank since 1967⁴⁶ – but also for the direct, systematic and methodical use of force to empty the refugee camps. Displaced Palestinians told OHCHR that ISF instructed them to immediately leave their homes, via loudspeakers, mosques, or via drones sent inside homes, coupled with detonations, burning of homes and threats to demolish homes over their heads or to shoot them with live ammunition, if they did not leave.

⁴¹ [Humanitarian Situation Update #268, West Bank, OCHA-OPT](#)

⁴² [Israel Says 40,000 Palestinians 'Evacuated' West Bank Refugee Camps, Vows to Stay for a Year - Haaretz](#)

⁴³ [According to OCHA, as of 31 December 2025, those displaced were 33,362. West Bank Monthly Snapshot - Casualties, Property Damage and Displacement - December 2025 - OCHA OPT](#)

⁴⁴ [Humanitarian Situation Update #260 - West Bank, OCHA-OPT](#)

⁴⁵ [Teen killed by PSF in the Occupied West Bank, OHCHR Press Release](#)

⁴⁶ [Northern West Bank Humanitarian Response Update - 21 January - 30 April 2025, OCHA-OPT](#)

30. Displaced Palestinians interviewed by OHCHR reported that they had to leave without taking their belongings, including personal identification and medication for children, had to walk for hours through destroyed roads, with additional challenges faced by children, older persons, paraplegics and other persons with disabilities who were often taken by relatives on their backs. According to several of the victims, ISF personnel informed Palestinians that there would be “no more refugee camps”, and that they all should “go to Jordan”.⁴⁷ ISF forcibly evacuated Palestinians at gun point in groups, surveilling them via drones through designated routes. They also set up checkpoints where families were separated, and dozens of Palestinian men detained.
31. At a point when the camps were almost emptied, with only older persons and persons with disabilities left behind, ISF raided homes door-to-door, forcing them out. A 53-year-old Palestinian woman from Jenin refugee camp and mother of three children reported to OHCHR that, on 22 January 2025, ISF raided her apartment after breaking the door, asked them why they had remained, physically assaulted her 13-year-old son, and forced them to leave. In Tulkarm refugee camp, on 1 February, ISF detonated the door and broke into the home of a 64-year-old Palestinian woman who had decided to remain with her 70-year-old brother who was visually impaired and had mobility constraints. The soldiers ordered them to leave immediately and did not allow them to take anything with them, even medications, or to close the door of her house before departing. On 19 February, while in a Palestinian Authority’s improvised shelter, the woman saw footage of her home completely burned down. A 23-year-old woman from the Tulkarm refugee camp, mother of two children (3 and 5-year-old), was also forced to leave on 1 February after ISF shot live ammunition against her family, resulting in the woman being injured by shrapnel in the leg. As in the case above, this violence had a differentiated impact on women who remained in the camps as caregivers, including heightened exposure to violence and harassment during ISF raids and forced evictions.

Shooting, detaining and abusing those attempting to return to their homes

32. As they were abruptly forced to leave their camps, homes and belongings, many residents – already refugees from the 1948 Nakba – found themselves displaced at improvised shelters without documents and other essentials. After having completely emptied the camps, ISF continued to use lethal force against unarmed residents including children who were attempting to return to check on their homes and collect essential belongings.
33. For example, on 6 March 2025, ISF detained a 33-year-old man and his 37-year-old brother, reportedly with a learning disability, for six hours, after they had entered the Jenin camp and collected clothes and utensils from their house. They kept them handcuffed with plastic ties and blindfolded them, beat them, stepped on their backs

⁴⁷ Victims’ interviews with OHCHR.

while pressing their faces in the mud, detonated a stun grenade near their heads and poured water on their bodies. On the same day, a 37-year-old Palestinian woman, displaced from Jenin camp on 23 January 2025, was arrested by ISF along with her 16-year-old daughter and 18 other women and 2 girls while trying to retrieve belongings from the camp. ISF forced them to throw away the plastic bags filled with their belongings, kept them handcuffed and blindfolded on the ground, while terrorizing them by banging a hammer on a metal door, and by detonating more than 10 stun grenades close to them, all while laughing. When one of the women asked for water, a soldier poured about six bottles on her head, also laughing. ISF told the women they would be shot and killed if they returned to the camp, which they have not done since.

34. In several instances, for example on 1 May and 30 June 2025, ISF announced that they would allow those displaced to retrieve belongings from homes on specific days and times.⁴⁸ After attempts to coordinate access through the Palestinian authorities were not successful, many individuals attempted to sneak into the camps, including women, children and persons with disabilities, but were met with live fire by Israeli soldiers,⁴⁹ as well as detention, torture and other ill-treatment. For example, on 8 September 2025, ISF opened heavy fire, without warning, at residents entering Jenin camp to check on their homes and killed two Palestinian boys aged 14, one of whom was exiting the camp with his family and the other who was watching the incident from the outskirts.

Hardships and denial of return

35. In these operations, ISF used tactics designed for the conduct of armed hostilities, including airstrikes, combat drones (unmanned aerial vehicles, UAV) and shoulder-launched explosive projectiles, in all three refugee camps, leading to multiple displacements of those who had moved from one camp to the other.⁵⁰ A 29-year-old Palestinian woman informed OHCHR that she was first displaced on 4 January 2025 from her home in Jenin refugee camp to Tulkarm refugee camp due to the 6-week PSF operation in Jenin. She had returned to Jenin camp and was displaced a second time by the ISF operation on 21 January and forced to move back to Tulkarm refugee camp; and on 28 January, after ISF expanded the operation to Tulkarm refugee camp, she was forced to leave for the third time and went to a Palestinian government shelter in Tulkarm city.
36. As of 31 December 2025, while a few displaced persons from adjacent areas had managed to return to their homes and additional persons were displaced, UNRWA

⁴⁸ On file. See also for example [Statement issued by the Human Rights and Civil Society Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization on the Occupation Notification of the Demolition of Dozens of Houses in Tulkarem and Nour Shams Camps](#).

⁴⁹ OHCHR monitoring. See also: respondents in [MSF briefing note](#) reported over 100 incidents of indiscriminate violence during attempts to return to the camps to retrieve belongings, including more than 30 instances of ISF shooting live ammunition at people.

⁵⁰ MSF reported that nearly half of those displaced between January and May were forced to flee at least three times, increasing mental health needs, especially among women and children - [202506_Briefing_Note_Iron_Wall_5_Months_After_1.pdf](#)

recorded through surveys that about 33,362 displaced Palestine refugees from Jenin, Tulkarm, and Nur Shams remained forcibly displaced.⁵¹ According to assessments in May 2025, over half of displaced families had rented temporary accommodation, 30 per cent had stayed with relatives and 20 per cent had taken refuge in public shelters in nearby towns and villages.⁵² Many have faced limited access to clothes, food, and water, healthcare and education, due to displacement and ISF restrictions, despite UNRWA adapting its services to meet their needs.⁵³

37. Furthermore, as of the end of the reporting period, Israeli authorities had made no further announcement as to whether and when those displaced would be able to go back to their homes,⁵⁴ and what accommodation would be provided to the thousands of people whose houses had been destroyed by ISF.
38. The Brigadier General commanding the West Bank division of the Israeli army stated that the goal of *Operation Iron Wall* was “to dismantle the entire system — from the roots — starting with achieving operational control over key strongholds, particularly Jenin.”⁵⁵ Indeed, after one week of the operation in Jenin, the camp had been emptied, leaving it a “ghost town”.⁵⁶ By 8 May 2025, Israeli media reported mass destruction of the emptied camps, which now resembled military outposts, with no indication reported on when or if the military would allow the residents to return to their homes.⁵⁷ The Israeli Defense Minister was quoted as saying, “I have instructed the IDF to prepare for a prolonged stay in the cleared refugee camps for the coming year. Residents will not be allowed to return, and terrorism will not be allowed to reemerge.”⁵⁸

⁵¹ [West Bank Monthly Snapshot - Casualties, Property Damage and Displacement, December 2025, OCHA-OPT](#)

⁵² [Northern West Bank Humanitarian Response Update, 21 January - 30 April 2025, OCHA-OPT](#)

⁵³ For example, ten UNRWA schools serving about 4,400 Palestinian students in three camps (four schools in Jenin, four schools in Tulkarm and two schools in Nur Shams) were forced to suspend services, switching partially to online learning, with only 27 per cent of students enrolled in online classes as of 30 April 2025. See [Northern West Bank Humanitarian Response Update, 21 January - 30 April 2025, OCHA-OPT](#), p. 9.

⁵⁴ On 4 December 2025, media reported that Israel had presented requirements to the Palestinian Authority in exchange for returning the Palestinians to the refugee camps, including banning the entry of international aid organizations, in particular UNRWA, and to erase the refugee status. https://x.com/inon_yttach/status/1996646083837985067. The orders declaring the camps “closed military areas” where no Palestinian is allowed in, have been further extended, for Tulkarm and Nur Shams camps until 30 September 2026, and Jenin Camp until 20 August 2026.

⁵⁵ [3 months into major Jenin operation, IDF signals gains as residents face ruin, The Times of Israel](#)

⁵⁶ [Official statement on the situation in Jenin camp - UNRWA; A Week Into IDF Operation 'Iron Wall,' the Jenin Refugee Camp Has Become a Ghost Town - Israel News - Haaretz.com](#)

⁵⁷ [Empty Streets, Homes in Ruin: Israeli Army Gives No Timeline for Leaving West Bank's Jenin - Israel News - Haaretz.com](#)

⁵⁸ [ל להיערך לשהייה במחנות פליטים - וואלה חדשות"שר הביטחון הנחה את צה](#)

Mass destruction of homes, community services and infrastructure

40. In parallel with the mass forcible displacement of its inhabitants, the Israeli army carried out detonations, demolitions and burning of homes and buildings in the three camps, already severely affected by repeated Israeli operations. Between 7 October 2023 and the start of *Operation Iron Wall* in January 2025, ISF had conducted 67 militarized operations according to OHCHR records, during which ISF, claiming the presence of “terrorist infrastructures”⁵⁹ and IEDs, routinely demolished and bulldozed homes, shops, arches, monuments and commemorative landmarks, as well as roads and the underlying water, sewage and electricity infrastructure. Already in August 2024, the World Bank had estimated the damage to roads, water sources, sewage, electricity lines, municipal heavy machinery and other equipment in refugee camps and municipalities in Tulkarm, Jenin, Ramallah, and Al Bireh, to exceed USD 25 million.⁶⁰

Widescale demolition of private and public property

41. Several days into the operation in Jenin, while almost no exchanges of fire with armed Palestinians were being reported, and the camps were already almost emptied, ISF started to carry out destruction of buildings and infrastructure in a systematic manner and on a widespread scale. ISF cited the destruction of “terrorist infrastructure” or generic operational and military needs, while providing very little information to those affected. In some cases, only vague red dots on aerial maps were provided to the Palestinian Liaison Office, which were insufficient to identify the affected buildings. Owners were given at most 24 to 72 hours, and in some cases no notice, to retrieve belongings or challenge the demolitions.
42. For example, on 2 February 2025, ISF carried out the first mass demolition of at least 23 residential buildings (a total of about 70 homes) in the Jenin refugee camp, by detonating them simultaneously, as shown in a video published by the Israeli military.⁶¹ They stated that they had demolished buildings that were used as “terrorist infrastructure” without providing supporting evidence of such claims or notifying the owners ahead of the demolition to challenge it.⁶² Subsequently, Israeli military sources disclosed that large scale demolitions in the camp had been approved by the political leadership to change the physical structure of the camp, to allow easier movement of troops and the striking of armed Palestinians,⁶³ who the ISF claims often find refuge in densely built-up areas. This was confirmed by analysis of satellite imagery, including post-destruction visuals, indicating that the demolition of 2 February affected buildings along narrow alleys and created wider passageways in multiple locations, most notably

⁵⁹ [Multiple Mosques Exploited in Judea and Samaria, IDF, 11 January 2025](#); [Dozens of Weapons Located as the Menashe Brigade Continues the Counterterrorism Operation in Jenin, IDF, 27 January 2025](#)

⁶⁰ [Gaza and the West Bank, Interim Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment, February 2025](#)

⁶¹ [Military says it demolished 23 buildings used by terror operatives in Jenin, The Times of Israel](#)

⁶² <https://t.me/idfofficial/13642>

⁶³ [IDF Razes Homes in West Bank's Jenin to Ease Troops' Movement Through the Camp, Haaretz](#)

in the camp's southern side. Subsequent demolition orders targeting buildings in Jenin refugee camps were issued, as follows: on 19 March 2025, ISF issued a military order for the demolition of 95 structures (280 apartments), giving residents 24 hours to collect their belongings or challenge the order, attached to an aerial map with the geolocation of structures; on 9 June 2025, they issued a military order for the demolition of 96 structures, and gave residents 72 hours to retrieve belongings and challenge the order including an aerial map marking with dots the buildings slated for demolition (each building containing an average of three housing units). On 25 November, they issued a military order containing the announcement of complete demolition, for “purely military purposes” of buildings marked as red (12 in total) in an aerial photograph from satellite imagery and the partial demolition of 12 other buildings marked as yellow (72 housing units in total).⁶⁴ As in other instances, ISF informed Palestinian liaison offices about the order and the map, who in turn informed camp residents through the camp’s committees and social media, giving the residents only 72 hours to retrieve their belongings, without any individual communication to the owners of the building affected.⁶⁵ On 18 February 2025, ISF issued the first military orders in Tulkarm camp for the demolition of 14 residential buildings (about 42 housing units) for allegedly clear military needs, which were reportedly carried out by 20 February, resulting in the opening of a new road in the camp. On 25 February 2025, they issued the first such demolition order for Nur Shams refugee camp targeting 11 structures (about 33 housing units). Subsequent demolition orders were issued for Tulkarm refugee camp as follows: on 1 May 2025, ISF issued demolition orders for 58 buildings (about 200 housing units); and on 30 June 2025, a demolition order targeting 104 buildings (estimated 400 housing units), including a map marking the targeted buildings and giving affected residents 72 hours to appeal or remove their belongings. Subsequent demolition orders were issued for Nur Shams refugee camp, namely: on 5 March 2025, demolition orders targeting 16 buildings (around 48 housing units), providing residents with a two and a half hour deadline to retrieve belongings; on 1 May 2025, they issued demolition orders for 48 buildings (144 housing units); and on 14 December 2025, they issued demolition orders for another 25 buildings.

43. By the end of the reporting period, ISF had issued demolition orders for a total of 514 buildings, totaling about 1,500 homes or community structures in the three camps: at least 238 buildings demolished or slated for demolition in Jenin camp; 176 in Tulkarm camp; and 100 in Nur Shams camp.⁶⁶ OHCHR recorded multiple instances when ISF did not allow residents to collect their belongings ahead of demolitions, despite stating they would do so. Although as of the end of January 2026, the refugee camps had remained off limits to humanitarian organizations and journalists, information gathered by OHCHR, including from available satellite imagery and affected residents, indicates that many

⁶⁴ Demolition order on file with OHCHR.

⁶⁵ All military orders mentioned in this and the following paragraphs are on file with OHCHR.

⁶⁶ Among these the main office of the Al Galilee Charitable Society for Care and Community Rehabilitation for people with disabilities in Jenin refugee camp was included in the 9 June 2025 demolition order.

other structures⁶⁷ were also destroyed fully or partially, and made uninhabitable, without the issuance of demolition orders or other prior notification shared with those affected or the public.

44. An assessment based on UNOSAT satellite imagery taken in October 2025 indicated that 48 per cent of all structures standing in Nur Shams refugee camp prior to the start of Operation Iron Wall had been destroyed or damaged by then, as well as 36 per cent of all structures in the Tulkarm refugee camp, and 52 per cent of all structures in the Jenin refugee camp.⁶⁸
45. Aerial maps from the Israeli military, as well as satellite imagery acquired by OHCHR and media outlets, showed that the mass destruction of buildings had created wide pathways crossing through the camps, allowing easier movement for military vehicles.⁶⁹ Widespread destruction by ISF encompassed the bulldozing and removal of tarmac from roads with damage to the underlying water and sewage networks, with 17.5 km (10.9 miles) of road networks demolished in Jenin camp and 12.5 km (7.8 miles) of roads destroyed in Tulkarm and Nur Shams camps as of March 2025.⁷⁰ The Israeli army stated that such destruction aimed at allowing “freedom of movement and operational capability for IDF forces in the area”, “prevent[ing] the return and entrenchment of gunmen” by “reshaping and stabilizing the region, in part by demolishing homes, based on the operational needs”, to turn the camps “from fortified strongholds into urban neighborhoods” where Israeli soldiers would be able to “drive” and “walk” with the aimed “psychological impact: [R]educing the phenomenon of refugee camps as terror hubs”.⁷¹ According to a Palestinian source, citing Israeli media, the operation was calculated to halve the population in the refugee camps.⁷²

⁶⁷ Exact figures are not available due to lack of access to the camps by UN and humanitarian organizations.

⁶⁸ According to the UNOSAT assessment, 201 buildings in Jenin refugee camp were completely destroyed, 117 severely damaged, 358 moderately damaged (representing 52% of all structures); in the Nur Shams refugee camp, 147 buildings were destroyed, 37 severely damaged, and 198 moderately damaged (representing 48% of all structures); and in the Tulkarm refugee camp, 254 buildings were destroyed, 52 severely damaged, and 96 moderately damaged (representing 36% of all structures). See [OCHA-CBPF-OPT-034 UNOSAT CE20231007PSE WestBank RefugeeCamps_CDA_SA_20251016](#).

⁶⁹ Ibid. See also [Satellite Images Reveal the Destruction Wrought by the IDF in West Bank Refugee Camps](#), Haaretz

⁷⁰ [Mapping how Israel's land grabs are reshaping the occupied West Bank](#), Al Jazeera

⁷¹ [As IDF demolishes hundreds of houses in West Bank camps, residents are determined to return](#), The Times of Israel

⁷² Ibid.

Endorsement by the Israeli judiciary of demolitions for military purposes

46. On 23 March 2025, the Israeli Supreme Court, in its capacity as High Court of Justice, dismissed three petitions by the Jenin municipality and others including the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI)⁷³ challenging the demolition orders issued on 19 March 2025. The Court stated in its ruling, *“the purpose of the operation, as the respondent clarified, is a clear and immediate military need to demolish the structures in question, in order to ensure the operational freedom of action of IDF forces in the Jenin refugee camp. In order to deal with the terrorist threats in the camp, it was found that it was necessary to break through new routes and expand existing routes, in a way that would allow mounted movement of the security forces operating there, including on heavy and armored vehicles; and in a way that would allow the forces to arrive near the various spaces within the camp, and would eliminate the need for the fighters to unload their vehicles and move significant distances in the area while risking their safety.”*⁷⁴ While claiming the military commander’s authority to order the demolition of buildings for “military purposes”, the Court did not examine whether the demolitions complied with the conditions set out in Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which permits demolitions only where they are rendered absolutely necessary by military operations.
47. On 9 May 2025, the Israeli High Court dismissed a petition filed by the Adalah civil society organization,⁷⁵ which sought to annul military orders issued on 1 May for the demolition of 106 structures in Nur Shams and Tulkarm refugee camps. The Court upheld the military's decision, emphasizing the authority of the military commander to demolish buildings due to urgent military needs, such as the need *“to ensure the freedom of action of IDF in the two refugee camps, and to deal with the real risk posed to the lives of the forces in the current situation, given the difficulty in maneuvering necessary in the two refugee camps. Thus, ... it is necessary to expand the existing routes and to open new routes to allow for the mounted movement of the security forces required to operate in the refugee camps.”*⁷⁶ The Court held that the military had conducted a thorough and specific examination of each building, balancing the necessity of the demolitions against the rights of the affected individuals. The ruling emphasised the broad discretion granted to military authorities in matters of security and the Court's reluctance to interfere with such decisions.⁷⁷

⁷³ A civil and human rights organization in Israel.

⁷⁴ HCJ 54641-03-25 Jenin Municipality v. The Military Commander in the West Bank (March 23, 2025), <https://supremedecisions.court.gov.il/Home/Download?path=NetVerdicts/2025/3/23/2025-3-54641-2-2&fileName=9e9c47833b214e1c8df99bfaa610e819&type=4>, end of p. 2.

⁷⁵ Adalah the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights, another human rights organization in Israel.

⁷⁶ HCJ 12276-05-25 Adalah v. Minister of Defense (May 9, 2025) <https://supremedecisions.court.gov.il/Home/Download?path=NetVerdicts/2025/5/9/2025-5-12276-3-2&fileName=ba12f1b01df24af385e27144f6c9e43c&type=4>, para 10.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

48. On 17 June 2025, the Israeli High Court rejected another petition filed by Adalah on 12 June to stop the demolitions of nearly 90 civilian buildings, comprising approximately 300 residential units, in the Jenin Refugee Camp, and authorized the military to proceed. The Court again accepted the military's claim that the demolitions were necessary to ensure "*freedom of movement*" for Israeli forces within the camp.⁷⁸ The Court did not address the fact that the area was already empty and that no confrontations or combat were taking place, nor did it question the military commander's classification of the entire refugee camp as a "*combat zone*".⁷⁹
49. On 2 July 2025, Adalah petitioned the Israeli High Court to cancel a military demolition order, which targeted 104 buildings for alleged "military-operational purposes",⁸⁰ affecting 2,000 residents of the Tulkarm refugee camp. The Court temporarily halted the demolitions, "*subject to urgent combat and obvious security needs (as is customary)*".⁸¹ The military claimed the demolitions were necessary for restructuring the area in a way that ensures operational freedom in the camp. In the absence of a further judicial decision, the State informed the Court on 6 July of its intention to begin implementing the demolition order. On 29 July, the Court rejected the petition after the demolition orders were carried out.⁸²
50. In all these rulings, the Court stated that the petitions should be dismissed at the outset, citing the absence of grounds for judicial intervention in the decision of the military commander. Despite numerous opportunities to undertake a substantive review, the Court consistently deferred to the discretion of the military authorities and accepted their assertions at face value. It did not conduct a rigorous scrutiny of the commander's justifications for the mass demolitions, nor did it examine the absence of concrete and imperative military necessity on the ground. This pattern of deference has been exercised in disregard of the prohibitions enshrined in international humanitarian law, which obligate the occupying power to ensure the effective protection of civilian property.

⁷⁸ HCJ 32501-06-25 Adalah v. Minister of Defense (June 17, 2025), <https://supremedecisions.court.gov.il/Home/Download?path=NetVerdicts/2025/6/17/2025-6-32501-2-2&fileName=9c56977d97010000090037f6ae31a035&type=4>

⁷⁹ [Israeli Supreme Court Approves Mass Demolitions in Jenin Refugee Camp, Backing Military - Adalah](#)

⁸⁰ [Israeli Military Signals Start of Mass Demolitions in Tulkarem Refugee Camp - Adalah](#)

⁸¹ <https://supremedecisions.court.gov.il/Home/Download?path=NetVerdicts/2025/7/2/2025-7-6221-1-1&fileName=b29241cc97010000090037f6ae5725b3&type=4>

⁸² HCJ 6221-07-25 Jubeihi et al. v. Minister of Defense (July 29, 2025), <https://supremedecisions.court.gov.il/Home/Download?path=NetVerdicts/2025/7/29/2025-7-6221-8-2&fileName=1fe1dc545b934167bcb19f232a2e5da2&type=4>, para 6. Except for 4 buildings, the army decided not to demolish at this stage. See also [Israeli Supreme Court Issues Decision Freezing Mass Demolitions in Tulkarem Following Adalah's - Adalah](#)

Applicable legal framework

51. International human rights law and international humanitarian law apply concurrently in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, namely Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The human rights obligations of the State of Israel within the Occupied Palestinian Territory stem from the jurisdiction and effective control exercised by Israel as the occupying Power, as well as a consequence of the exercise of its powers under Article 43 of the Hague Regulations of 1907. Under that article, Israel is obliged to take all the measures in its power to restore, and ensure, as far as possible, public order and safety in the occupied area, while respecting, unless absolutely prevented, the laws in force in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.⁸³ The applicability of this law has been continuously asserted in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, in reports of the Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, by various human rights treaty bodies, and by the International Court of Justice.⁸⁴
52. Given Israel's occupation of the West Bank, and as the situation does not amount to distinct active hostilities,⁸⁵ the use of force is subject to international human rights law, and international standards on the use of force in the context of law enforcement, despite Israel's deployment of tactics and means of warfare in the West Bank. In this regard, there is insufficient information to conclude that the sporadic violence committed by armed Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is sufficiently linked to the conduct of hostilities in Gaza. The fact that ISF face sporadic armed resistance in the West Bank, does not transform the legal framework from that regulating law enforcement to that regulating the conduct of hostilities, nor does Israel's unilateral escalation and its use of war-like weapons of themselves do so.
53. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, intentionally lethal force, whether by ISF or PSF, may only be used under the law enforcement framework to prevent a real and immediate life-threatening danger, while potentially lethal force may only be used to prevent threats to life or serious injury. If the use of deadly force exceeds the restrictions prescribed under international human rights law and results in the killing of any person, this constitutes an unlawful violation of the right to life and, in the context of an occupation, may amount to the war crime of willful killing.⁸⁶

⁸³ Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Uganda), Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 2005, p. 168 at para 178.

⁸⁴ See, eg., A/HRC/34/38, para 7; the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion of 9 July 2004 on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, <https://icj-web.ileman.un-icc.cloud/sites/default/files/case-related/131/131-20040709-ADV-01-00-EN.pdf>, para 124.

⁸⁵ As defined by Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and interpreted by international tribunals e.g., ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Tadić*, (Appeals Judgment) IT-94-1-A (15 July 1999) [120].

⁸⁶ ICCPR, Article 6; Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 36 (CCPR/C/GC/36); Article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention lists wilful killing of protected persons as a grave breach. Article 8(2)(a)(i) of the Rome Statute defines wilful killing in an international armed conflict as a war crime.

54. In its advisory opinion of 19 July 2024, the International Court of Justice stated that Israel “*is under an obligation to bring to an end its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as rapidly as possible.*” Actions by Israel which are intended to maintain or entrench this unlawful presence are contrary to this obligation.
55. The extensive destruction of civilian infrastructure, not justified by military necessity, and the forcible transfer of the civilian population violate the applicable norms of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in situations of occupation.
56. While under international humanitarian law the occupying power may take certain measures dictated by military exigencies or on security grounds, these measures are subject to the provisions concerning the law of occupation, in particular Articles 49 and 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Article 23(g) of the 1907 Hague Regulations, with their narrow definition and scope.⁸⁷
57. While Article 23(g) of the 1907 Hague Regulations prohibits the destruction or seizure of enemy property unless such destruction or seizure is imperatively demanded by the necessities of war, this applies to the context of the conduct of hostilities and does not apply to law enforcement operations during an occupation. In the context of an occupation, Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits any destruction by the occupying power of private property or public property, except where such destruction is rendered “*absolutely necessary by military operations*”. The expression “*military operations*” refers strictly to actions directly related to fighting or combat, such as movements and maneuvers intended for fighting.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ “Military necessity or expediency do not justify a violation of positive rules. International law is prohibitive law”. United States v. List (The Hostage Case), Case No. 7 (Feb. 19, 1948), reprinted in 11 Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals Under Control Council Law No. 10, at 1230 (1950).

⁸⁸ [IHL Treaties - Geneva Convention \(IV\) on Civilians, 1949 - Commentary of 2025 Article | Article 53 - Prohibited destruction of property | Article 53](#), pp. 3370: As to the meaning of ‘military operations’, in 1981 the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) took the view that: [T]he expression ‘military operations’ must be construed to mean the movements, maneuvers and other action taken by the armed forces with a view to fighting. Destruction of property as mentioned in Article 53 cannot be justified under the terms of that article unless such destruction is absolutely necessary – i.e. materially indispensable – for the armed forces to engage in action, such as making way for them. This exception to the prohibition cannot justify destruction as a punishment or deterrent, since to preclude this type of destruction is an essential aim of the article... Consequently, the concept of ‘military operations’ refers to fighting or combat and activities directly related to it.” While not defining “military operations” for the purposes of article 53, the ICRC commentary defines the phrase in the context of article 28 as, “any acts of warfare ... whether it is a matter of bombing or bombardments of any kind or of attacks by units near at hand,” see J. Pictet (ed.), The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949. Commentary (Geneva: ICRC), vol IV (1956) page 209. Such a definition should be instructive to interpret article 53 and would exclude law enforcement conducted under the occupying power’s obligation to restore and maintain public order and safety, which cannot be considered acts of war. Indeed, according to Michael Bothe Dr.jur. Professor emeritus of international law, J.W. Goethe University, Frankfurt/Main in *Expert Opinion: Limits of the right of expropriation (requisition) and of movement restrictions in occupied territory* available at

58. As a general rule, therefore, destruction of civilian property, total or partial,⁸⁹ is only lawful where it is required by imperative military necessity linked to particular military operations, which requires that *“there must be some reasonable connection between the destruction of property and the overcoming of the enemy forces.”*⁹⁰ In applying these rules to another context, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia has held that in the absence of substantial resistance, there was no military necessity to destroy civilian property.⁹¹
59. The exception in Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention must be narrowly construed, considering the reference to *“absolutely necessary”*, and in addition any destruction *“must be proportional to the potential harm to the affected civilian and their property”*.⁹² The exception in Article 53 should not be applicable to law enforcement operations in the absence of substantial armed resistance to the occupying forces, meeting the threshold of intensity applicable to hostilities. In addition, no claim of military necessity can justify the destruction of property explicitly intended to drive residents of a particular nationality or ethnicity out of an area.⁹³
60. The extensive destruction of civilian infrastructure in refugee camps emptied of their population, in the absence of hostilities and lack of armed resistance, and in the face of only sporadic and in most cases unplanned attacks on Israelis and ISF, does not appear to fall within the exception in Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Taken as a whole, the deliberate destruction of homes, roads, and other civilian infrastructure across three refugee camps in northern West Bank, amounts to extensive, unlawful destruction of property, not justified by military necessity and as such may amount to a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and a war crime. In addition, the forced displacement of the population of these refugee camps does not appear to have been demanded by any imperative military necessity, particularly in the absence of hostilities or organized armed attacks on Israelis or ISF, and was not demanded by the safety of civilians, given that most apparent threats to the civilian population stemmed from actions undertaken by the ISF themselves. Instead, it appears, based on numerous statements and actions by the Israeli authorities and IDF, that the displacement was itself the goal, entrenching Israel’s control over the occupied West Bank, which may

<https://law.acri.org.il/he/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/hit413expert3.pdf> page 3, the reservation applies only to combat operations.

⁸⁹ [IHL Treaties - Geneva Convention \(IV\) on Civilians, 1949 - Commentary of 2025 Article | Article 53 - Prohibited destruction of property | Article 53](#)

⁹⁰ United States v. List (The Hostage Case), Case No. 7 (Feb. 19, 1948), at 1253-54 (1950). See also as quoted by Schmitt M, “Military Necessity and Humanity in International Humanitarian Law: Preserving the Delicate Balance,” 50 *Va J Int Law* (2010) 795 at 797.

⁹¹ ICTY The Prosecutor v. Radoslav Brdanin <https://legal-tools.org/doc/21e3bc> para 639.

⁹² J. Pictet (ed.), The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949. Commentary (Geneva: ICRC), vol IV (1956), Commentary to Art. 53, sec. 3. See also the Hostage Case, id. 797-798.

⁹³ ICTY *Prosecutor v. Radislav Krstic* (Trial Judgement), 2 August 2001, para. 527. <https://www.refworld.org/jurisprudence/caselaw/icty/2001/en/40159>

indicate the commission of forcible transfer amounting to a grave breach and war crime of unlawful transfer.⁹⁴

61. The forcible transfer of protected persons, including from their homes, is prohibited according to Article 49(1) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and amounts to the grave breach of unlawful transfer.⁹⁵ The only exception permitted is an evacuation as a temporary means if “*the security of the population or imperative military reasons so demand*” (Art. 49(2)).⁹⁶ Such an evacuation must be strictly temporary until the need for the evacuation is ended, after which the displaced persons must be allowed and facilitated to return to their homes, and in the meantime, the occupying power must ensure the protection of displaced persons, the provision of basic services and needs, and the respect of their full range of human rights.⁹⁷
62. The large-scale, long-term and systematic displacement of over 33,000 Palestinian refugees from refugee camps such as Jenin, Nur Shams and Tulkarm during Israel’s *Operation Iron Wall* also raises serious concerns of the crime against humanity of forcible transfer. Forced displacement of persons lawfully present in an area, by expulsion or other coercive acts, without grounds permitted under international law, constitutes a crime against humanity when committed as a part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population.⁹⁸ As above, the documented use of airstrikes, armored bulldozers and controlled detonations, to render entire camps uninhabitable, to force the displacement of their residents and to prevent their return, in the absence of imperative military necessity to justify such destruction and displacement, are not permissible under international law, appear to amount to collective punishment and raise concerns of ethnic cleansing. The forcible emptying of refugee camps, destruction of civilian infrastructure, and denial of humanitarian access suggest a deliberate strategy to effect the mass forcible transfer of large parts of the population of the northern West Bank.
63. The Israeli operation emptied entire communities from the three refugee camps. The destruction of at least 850 homes and critical civilian infrastructure rendered the camps uninhabitable and prevented residents — including thousands of children — from returning. Such unlawful violence against Palestinians, deliberate destruction of homes and prolonged displacement, are inconsistent with Israel’s obligations under

⁹⁴ Fourth Geneva Convention articles 49 and 147; Rome Statute 8 (2) (7). See also for example ICTY *Prosecutor v. Radislav Krstic (Trial Judgement)* 2 August 2001, <https://www.refworld.org/jurisprudence/caselaw/icty/2001/en/40159>, para 527.

⁹⁵ Fourth Geneva Convention articles 49 and 147; Rome Statute 8 (2) (7). See also for example ICTY *Prosecutor v. Radislav Krstic (Trial Judgement)* 2 August 2001, <https://www.refworld.org/jurisprudence/caselaw/icty/2001/en/40159>, para 527.

⁹⁶ See also for example ICTY *Prosecutor v. Radislav Krstic (Trial Judgement)*, 2 August 2001, para. 526.

⁹⁷ [Mass displacement of Palestinians from northern West Bank - source of growing concern \[EN/AR\] - OHCHR OPT](#)

⁹⁸ Rome Statute article 7.

international human rights law,⁹⁹ particularly under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)¹⁰⁰ and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).¹⁰¹ Hundreds of Palestinians were killed or injured¹⁰² due to the unlawful use of force, in violation of the rights to life and security of the person. Israeli authorities made no alternative arrangements for access to shelter and other necessities of life, rendering thousands of Palestinians homeless, either hosted by relatives or at improvised government shelters, and leaving them without access to health, water and sanitation services, and causing severe disruptions to their schooling. These actions violated their right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to adequate housing, health, education, water and sanitation. Children were among those killed and injured, and around 12,000 were displaced from the camps, comprising a large share of the population displaced.¹⁰³ They face heightened risks of disease, trauma, loss of education, family separation, and unsafe living conditions, with no primary consideration for their best interests. Israel's prevention of return, destruction of homes, and obstruction of humanitarian access is also incompatible with applicable international law and standards, which require safe, voluntary, and dignified return and prohibit arbitrary displacement.¹⁰⁴

64. OHCHR has monitored a coercive environment throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, marked by discriminatory laws, policies and practices that systematically restrict Palestinian movement, access to land and resources, housing, planning rights, and legal protections. These measures have created conditions conducive to forcible transfer, which in recent years have escalated into active, mass forcible displacement, further entrenching Israel's unlawful presence in and annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank. Reports of the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights have indicated that these dynamics continued to change the demographic composition of the occupied territory and to advance

⁹⁹ International Court of Justice, Legal Consequences Arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024 para 99, citing Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Uganda), Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 2005, p. 243, para. 216, citing Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion, I.C.J. Reports 2004 (I), pp. 178-181, paras. 107-113

¹⁰⁰ ICESCR, 1966, including rights to adequate housing (Art. 11), health (Art. 12), education (Art. 13), and cultural participation.

¹⁰¹ ICCPR, 1966, including right to security of person (Art. 9), freedom of movement and residence (Art. 12), protection from arbitrary exile and forced expulsion (Art. 12.4).

¹⁰² According to OCHA database: from the beginning of the operation and as of 31 December 2025, a total of 553 Palestinians were injured by ISF in the governorates of Jenin, Tulkarm and Tubas of which 250 by live ammunition and 16 by airstrikes. [Data on casualties, OCHA OPT](#)

¹⁰³ <https://www.unicef.org/media/177756/file/SOP-Humanitarian-SitRep-30-November-2025.pdf>

¹⁰⁴ See the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/535577?v=pdf> and the 2025 Handbook on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons – Implementing the Pinheiro Principles: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/housing/pinheiro-principles-middle-east-north-africa-housing-refugees-en.pdf>

annexation of large parts of the territory, thereby entrenching a regime of segregation, fragmentation, and domination that denies Palestinians their right to self-determination.¹⁰⁵ In this context, the forced displacement of the population of refugee camps as a result of attacks by ISF must be understood as part of this broader coercive environment – calculated to deepen Israel’s unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and consolidate its unlawful annexation over northern parts of the West Bank, being the area of greatest Palestinian contiguity so far least fragmented by settlements and outposts.

65. In parallel with the mass displacement of Palestinians from refugee camps, the Israeli Government took steps in the reporting period to further expand settlements, including re-establishing settlements in the northern West Bank previously evacuated by Israel in 2005 under the disengagement plan. In May 2025, the Government announced its decision to establish 22 new settlements across the occupied West Bank, including the settlements of Sanur and Homesh, which were evacuated in 2005. In a subsequent decision of 12 December 2025, the Government announced the establishment of 19 new settlements including re-establishing the settlements of Kadim and Ganim, about 40 km south of Jenin, also evacuated in 2005. Since this decision, the presence of Israeli military and settlers in the area has intensified.
66. The destruction of the refugee camps, together with escalating settlement expansion, forms part of a broader pattern in which Israel appears to utilize settlement activity on the one hand and displacement of Palestinians on the other, to re-engineer the spatial order and demography of the occupied West Bank, cementing Israeli control, deepening the territorial fragmentation and undermining the viability of a Palestinian presence, thereby rendering a contiguous Palestinian State practically non-viable.

Recommendations

67. OHCHR reiterates its long-standing offer to the Government of Israel to provide technical assistance to ensure compliance with its international obligations and calls on the Israeli authorities to provide full and unhindered access to its international staff to the Occupied Palestinian Territory to fully implement its mandate.
68. OHCHR reiterates Israel’s obligations under international law, including to bring an end to its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as rapidly as possible, as affirmed by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion of 19 July 2024 and demanded by the General Assembly in resolution ES-10/34. In the meantime, as the occupying power, Israel must ensure the protection of the Palestinian population, the provision of basic services and needs, and the respect of Palestinians’ full range of

¹⁰⁵ [A/HRC/58/73](#), para 61. [A/80/399](#), para 71. See also OHCHR [Thematic Report - Israel’s discriminatory administration of the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem](#)

human rights, as underscored by recommendations made by the High Commissioner in his previous reports.

69. Specifically, the High Commissioner calls on the Government of Israel to:

- a) End the 59-year occupation of Palestinian territory;
- b) Urgently end the unlawful killing and injury of Palestinians during operations in the occupied West Bank and ensure that all use of force is in full compliance with international human rights law and standards governing law enforcement operations;
- c) Immediately cease all actions contributing to the unlawful destruction of refugee camps, forcible displacement of Palestinians, and expansion of settlements across the occupied West Bank, which are effectively re-engineering the spatial order and demography of the West Bank;
- d) End the unlawful destruction of public and private property in refugee camps in northern West Bank and immediately ensure that appropriate measures are taken to enable the safe, voluntary, and dignified return of the Palestinian communities forcibly displaced by state violence;
- e) Immediately repeal and end all systems of laws, policies and practices that create or perpetuate discrimination against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which impose and serve to maintain a near-complete separation between the settler and Palestinian communities, in breach of article 3 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;¹⁰⁶
- f) Where there is evidence of the commission of crimes arising from the human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law documented in this and other reports, ensure prompt, effective, thorough, independent, and transparent investigations and ensure that those responsible are prosecuted and, if convicted, punished with appropriate penalties; and
- g) Ensure that all victims of these violations and abuses are provided with effective remedies, including adequate reparation, in accordance with international norms and standards.

70. The High Commissioner also calls on the Government of the State of Palestine to:

- a) Take steps to ensure compliance by its security forces with its obligations under international human rights law and the international standards on the use of force by law enforcement officials;
- b) Conduct prompt, thorough, independent, impartial and effective investigations into alleged violations and abuses of international human rights

¹⁰⁶ See, e.g., [A/HRC/58/73](#), paras. 6, 7 and 10.

law, including killings, displacement and arbitrary arrests during *Operation Protect the Homeland* carried out by PSF in Jenin; and

- c) Ensure that those responsible are held accountable, in accordance with international standards, including duly prosecuting alleged perpetrators where warranted, and that victims are provided with effective remedies.
