

# Israeli Policies of Impoverishment & De-Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory:

## Impacts on Youth Emigration - Case Study of Bethlehem

### Key Information



The right to development, as declared by the UN General Assembly, is applicable to all people, including Palestinians, not only on a macro-based level such as economy and security but also on individual rights like the right to employment, equality and education.



The Oslo Accords marked a significant shift in the Palestinian development and economy. With the creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA), it aimed to achieve full sovereignty and subsequently establish an independent state across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In reality, though, the Oslo Accords led to further fragmentations between the Palestinian territories and were divided to three main areas (A, B, and C).<sup>1</sup>



The Paris Protocol is Oslo's subsequent economic agreement that established the framework for the Palestinian economy. This agreement held the Palestinian market captive to Israel and made it fully dependent on the Israeli economy. It agreed on Israel's control for the ins and outs of economic activities and laid the ground for full control over Palestinian natural resources, trade, tariffs and everything in between.



Settlement construction, restrictions on Palestinian movement, the incarceration of thousands of Palestinians, and command over borders and vital economic sectors, all came together to form a complex system of control that was authorized by the Oslo Accords and applied by the Paris Protocol Agreement.



As per the designations of the Oslo Accords, "Area C" is fully administered by Israel, in terms of civil and security aspects. It covers over 60% of the West Bank. An estimated 300,000 Palestinians live in 532 residential areas located partially or fully in "Area C", along with some 400,000 Israeli settlers residing in approximately 230 settlements. The area is richly endowed with natural resources that Palestinians are banned from having access to.



Israel violates the right to development in the occupied Palestinian territory "oPt" through an array of policies that prevent Palestinians from accessing their lands and resources, controlling their economy and moving freely within their country and internationally, resulting in a severe de-development impacts and the deliberate creation of a coercive environment that manifests a push forcible factor to migration.

### Policies & Human Rights Violations



#### 1. Economy and Trade

- Israel holds the Palestinian economy captive to its costly regulations on tariffs, taxes, labor, monetary and fiscal policies, creating a wicked national economy that is fully dependent on the Israeli economy.

- Palestine is basically a captive market for Israel, which receives some 85% of its exports and provides 70% of Palestine's imports, resulting in a trading deficit in the Palestinian economy. Small Palestinian businesses, which make up almost the entirety of the Palestinian commercial sector, are outcompeted by similar businesses in the Israeli economy and face serious difficulties related to lack of access to resources, high transaction costs, and high tariffs.

- The Palestinian Authority's inability to independently generate revenue without increasing income tax means that it has no sovereign manner of creating policy to promote its economic growth. The excessive increases in income tax limit domestic spending, with serious repercussions for sectors such as small and independent businesses, where many of the youth are employed.

- Towns and cities in Palestine are all disconnected from one another, surrounded and divided by the Israeli controlled "Area C", affecting community, infrastructure, trade, movement, and a host of other important aspects of daily life – all part of the systematic de-development of the West Bank.



#### 2. Access to Resources

- "Area C" comprises the vast majority of the West Bank, making up 60% of the territory, and is placed under full Israeli civil and security administration. This area has most of the West Bank's farmland and natural resources, including water.

- Thus, the vast amount of the Palestinian natural resources is under Israeli control, meaning Palestinians do not have access to their own resources and are banned from any means of mining and using these resources to their economic advantage.



#### 3. Industry & Infrastructure

- Due to the stark discrimination in Israel's planning system imposed on Palestinians in "Area C", which translates in house demolitions, lack of access to basic services like electricity and water, and struggles in accessing raw materials, and obtaining building permits, the required infrastructure for the develop-

1- According to the Oslo Accords, Areas A makes up 18% of the oPt and under full Palestinian jurisdiction, civil and security. Areas B makes up 22% of the oPt and under PA administrative control and Israeli security control. Area C makes up 60% of the oPt and is under exclusive Israeli control.

ment of this area, such as roads, communication networks, plumbing and sanitation systems, is extremely costly, and in many cases not even feasible.



#### 4. Property

• Israel's property demolitions and discriminatory planning systems, coupled with continuous dispossession of people and annexation of land, all make it extremely hard for Palestinians to live and invest in their homeland.



#### 5. Employment

• Given the full dependency of the Palestinian economy on the Israeli economy, restrictions on what, when and where Palestinians can work, political instability and other reasons, unemployment rates have hit the peak in the last decades, resulting in far-increasing poverty rates.

existential threat to the community's presence and long history in its own homeland.

• Facing a strangled economy, high unemployment, demolitions, and annexation of their means of subsistence, along with increasing isolation from other parts of Palestine and bleak future prospects, many Christian Palestinians, especially the youth, see no hope for freedom, dignity, and development in their homeland. The vast majority of these Christians live in Bethlehem. This drives them to consider emigration, posing an existential threat to the already small and dwindling Palestinian Christian community.

## Case Study: Bethlehem



• More than 85% of Bethlehem governorate is made up of "Area C", with only 1% zoned for Palestinian development. Bethlehem is severed from the rest of Palestinian cities physically by Israeli settlement inside of it and surrounding it, and by Israel's Wall. Such physical factors and Israel's overall economic policies suffocate the Palestinian economy, including in Bethlehem.

• Bethlehem is majorly populated with Palestinian Christians who, as a result of such Israeli policies, face extreme levels of impoverishment and de-development, leading to increased emigration and an

To learn more about Israeli policies in the-development and impoverishment in Palestine, read the Report titled "Israeli Policies of Impoverishment & De-Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Impacts on Youth Emigration - Case Study of Bethlehem" prepared by the Balasan Initiative for Human Rights (BIHR):



Report



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