



THE ARCHITECTURE OF COERCION, SUBJUGATION, AND DOMINATION:

*Israel's Intensified Movement Restrictions
in the West Bank*

AUGUST 2025

1. Introduction

The right to the freedom of movement is a fundamental right, internationally recognized as such and enshrined in multiple international human rights instruments¹. It goes beyond the ability to move freely, safely, and with dignity from one place to another, but constitutes a further prerequisite for exercising civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. In the Palestinian context, however, this right is not merely violated as part of a restrictive system composed of physical restrictions or direct forms of closure. It is also systematically re-engineered as a mechanism of control, implemented through legal, military, and technological infrastructures designed to restructure the relationship between Palestinians and their spatial, bodily, and political realities on the one hand, and to collectively punish them on the other.²

The Israeli restrictions on Palestinian movement in their own occupied territory cannot be understood in isolation from its broader context: They are not temporary “security” measures, but rather a deliberate and institutionalized system of domination aimed at producing compliance, dismantling social cohesion, and regulating collective behavior through mechanisms of daily humiliation, unpredictability, and collective punishment. More importantly, Israel’s restrictions on movement in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) are considered a key tool in creating a coercive environment for Palestinians, one that systematically violates their fundamental rights and seeks to encourage their indirect forcible transfer. Military checkpoints, permit regimes, and repeated closures function not only as spatial constraints but as instruments of psychological and bodily subjugation, tools through which Palestinians are rendered governable, and ultimately disposable.³

Movement restrictions imposed on Palestinians have been significantly restricted between 2024 and 2025, following October 7, 2023.⁴ Since then, the West Bank has witnessed an unprecedented intensification of movement restrictions, including the establishment of hundreds of new checkpoints and road blocks of various forms across the West Bank, near-total closures of

¹ Articles 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

² Mapping Israeli Policies - Chapter 1 - UNESCWA

³ Julie Peteet: “*Space and Mobility in Palestine*”, 2017.

⁴ The Guardian: “*They lock us in like sheep’s: new Israeli checkpoints and barriers raise fears in the West Bank*” (15 March 2025), available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/mar/15/israeli-checkpoints-barriers-raise-fears-in-the-west-bank>

entire areas, and the imposition of severe forms of geographic, economic, and social isolation. This escalation is not a mere “outcome” of the overall deterioration of the human rights situation that ensued the events of 7 October 2023, but an extension of long-standing policies, rooted in post-1967 Israeli territorial control of the oPt that kept being entrenched and expanded with time.⁵ Yet the current phase marks a qualitatively new development: the transformation of movement restrictions into a comprehensive coercive environment that operates as a form of indirectly forced displacement, not using visible expulsion, but through exhaustion, fragmentation, and the deliberate erosion of viable living conditions.

This report adopts a critical legal and political lens to examine movement restrictions, not merely as a byproduct of the military occupation reality or a set of ad hoc ‘security’ measures, but rather as a systematic tool of domination over the Palestinians and their lands. It analyzes how these restrictions are designed to produce obedience, condition collective behavior, and generate a state of prolonged submission through daily humiliation, structural unpredictability, and collective punishment.

2. Physical Infrastructure of Control and Recent Escalations in Numbers

2.1 Systems of Restriction: Legal and Bureaucratic Frameworks

The Israeli regime of movement restrictions imposed on Palestinians cannot be understood outside the broader framework that has evolved since the outset of Israel’s occupation in 1967. This regime now constitutes a core pillar of Israel’s “matrix of control” over the Palestinian people, fragmenting their lands in the process. Freedom of movement, a right guaranteed under international humanitarian and human rights law, has been transformed into a conditional privilege, arbitrarily granted or denied by Israeli authorities to serve strategies of domination, subjugation, and demographic and political fragmentation. A central tool of this restrictive regime is the permit system, which governs access to and from the Gaza Strip, movement within the West Bank, entry into East Jerusalem, and even access to Israel for medical treatment or employment. Far from being a mere “security” measure, as officially claimed, the system functions as a bureaucratic apparatus of daily humiliation, political fragmentation, and

⁵ Ahmad Ezzeddin As’ad: “*Barriers, Closures, and Restrictions on Movement in the West Bank Following October 7*” (2023), policy paper for the Institute for Palestine Studies, available at: <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1654908>

coercive subjugation. This system represents “mobility as a mechanism of governmentality and bureaucracy as a tool of degradation,”⁶ where permits are granted or denied arbitrarily, often without justification, undermining Palestinians’ ability to plan their daily lives and reducing movement to a survival request rather than a recognized right.⁷

Moreover, this system is enforced through a series of military orders that apply exclusively to Palestinians in the West Bank, while Israeli settlers enjoy the protection of a civilian legal system. In recent years, such restrictions have been intensified through legislative initiatives that entrench this regime further, most notably the amendments to the “Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law,” which severely restrict family reunification and render residency and movement conditional, precarious, and revocable based on “loyalty” or arbitrary security designations.⁸

These policies operate within a material infrastructure of control, including the Annexation Wall, military checkpoints, iron gates, concrete blocks, and a segregated road system inaccessible to Palestinians. Together, they fragment Palestinian territory into disconnected cantons and weaponize geography as a means of domination.⁹

The way by which this regime of calculated movement restrictions in the oPt dismantles Palestinian social cohesion, enforces dependency on Israeli institutions, and obstructs the development of autonomous Palestinian infrastructure, effectively entrenching structural subjugation, has been documented throughout the past decades by multiple credible organizations.¹⁰ UN reports have concluded that these mobility restrictions do not meet the threshold of legitimate security measures, but rather constitute systematic violations of the rights to movement, health, education, and work. In many cases, they amount to collective punishment and to “inhuman and degrading treatment” under international law.¹¹

This regime of movement restriction not only functions as a tool of domination but also produces a coercive environment that encourages silent displacement. It reduces the Palestinian person to a subject of “permit logic,” stripped of agency, disconnected from their geography, and denied the

⁶ Julie Peteet: *“Space and Mobility in Palestine”*, 2017.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ The Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law (Temporary Order), 5782-2022.

⁹ Crossing a Line: Laws, Violence, and Roadblocks to Palestinian Political Expression Amahl Bishara.

¹⁰ See for example: B’Tselem: *“Movement Restrictions”*, November 2017. Available at: https://www.btselem.org/freedom_of_movement/.

¹¹ Mapping Israeli Policies - Chapter 1 – UNESCWA.

freedom of political expression. In this way, the legal and material apparatus of movement control becomes a living embodiment of a prolonged occupation doctrine: not merely to dominate space, but to dismantle Palestinian subjectivity and political existence.¹²

2.2 Escalation Post 7 October 2023

The physical infrastructure imposed by Israeli authorities constitutes one of the most entrenched and visible tools of domination over Palestinians. This system extends beyond fixed checkpoints to encompass a comprehensive network of physical obstacles, segregated road systems, and the Annexation Wall, all of which function to fragment Palestinian geography and enforce a regime of territorial and population control.¹³

Before the prohibitive movement restrictions that were escalated post the events of 7 October 2023, the Israeli occupation authorities maintained the following movement restrictions across the West Bank¹⁴:

- 9 permanent checkpoints within the West Bank.
- 2,941 flying (temporary) checkpoints, an average of 327 per month.
- 476 physical obstructions, including dirt mounds and concrete blocks.
- Additionally, approximately 140,000 Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem were recorded crossing overcrowded checkpoints daily merely to enter their city.

In comparison to more recent data, the current Israeli movement restrictions include¹⁵:

- 47 permanent checkpoints and 11 temporary ones within the West Bank.
- Hundreds of ad-hoc or “flying” checkpoints.¹⁶
- 476 physical obstructions, such as iron gates and earth mounds.

¹² Amahl Bishara: “*Crossing a Line: Laws, Violence, and Roadblocks to Palestinian Political Expression*” (2022), available at: https://primo.bgu.ac.il/permalink/972BGU_INST/23v028/alma9926856196504361

¹³ Space and Mobility in Palestine by Julie Peteet

¹⁴ B’Tselem: “*Movement Restrictions*”, November 2017. Available at: https://www.btselem.org/freedom_of_movement

¹⁵ B’Tselem: “*List of military checkpoints in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*” 5 June 2024. Available at: https://www.btselem.org/freedom_of_movement/checkpoints_and_forbidden_roads

¹⁶ Flying checkpoints refer to ad hoc, short-term soldier-manned roadblocks erected by Israeli forces without prior notice, typically lasting for brief periods and aimed at restricting Palestinian movement in unpredictable locations.

- Surveillance towers at strategic points, in addition to constant police and military patrols, aimed at monitoring and restricting Palestinian movement.

As it is demonstrated above, since 7 October 2023, the West Bank has witnessed a marked escalation in the use of movement restriction measures. Israeli authorities imposed additional movement restrictions affecting 3.3 million Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.¹⁷ By September 2024, there were at least 793 movement obstacles¹⁸, including:

- 89 permanent checkpoints
- 149 partial checkpoints
- 196 closed road gates
- 158 earth mounds
- 104 concrete roadblocks
- 196 road gates, 122 of which are closed
- 316 obstacles that block Palestinian access to eight major roads.

According to the Palestinian Authority, the total number of obstacles has reached approximately 900 checkpoints, while the United Nations has documented over 800,¹⁹ a significant increase compared to 645 checkpoints recorded in 2023.²⁰ According to B'Tselem, these obstructions are part of a broader segregated road network spanning over 312 kilometers,²¹ from which Palestinians are banned and are instead forced to use longer, more dangerous, and inefficient alternative routes.²² According to the UNOCHA fact sheets, the Examples include:

- Route 60 (North-South of Bethlehem, passing near Al-Khader): 129 obstacles over 180 km²³

¹⁷ UNOCHA: “*Fact Sheet: Movement and Access in the West Bank, September 2024*”, available at: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/fact-sheet-movement-and-access-west-bank-august-2024/>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ The Observer: “*Israel’s growing network of roadblocks are cutting off communities*”

²⁰ The Observer: “*Israel’s growing network of roadblocks are cutting off communities*”

²¹ List of documented Checkpoints and roadblocks, post Oct. 7 ,2023 - B'Tselem Updated: 05 June 2024

²² Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

²³ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

- Route 505 (East-West): 61 closures along 57 km²⁴
- Route 443: Connects Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, and runs through oPt, but large sections are off-limits to Palestinians.²⁵

Further restrictions include:

- 85% of the Annexation Wall is located within the West Bank²⁶
- 13 checkpoints on the Wall that separates East Jerusalem from the West Bank.²⁷
 - Only 3 of these are accessible to West Bank ID holders, and only with hard-to-obtain permits.²⁸
- Over 800 permits for humanitarian organization staff were revoked after 7 October.²⁹
- 44% of medical permit requests for access to Jerusalem and Israel (out of 46,163 applications) were denied or left pending.³⁰

The UNOCHA report also indicates that:

- 150 agricultural communities lost access to their lands, trapped behind the wall.³¹
- Between October 2023 and March 2024 alone:
 - 86 new checkpoints were installed³²
 - Movement restrictions were tightened at nearly 100 existing checkpoints.³³
 - 105 Palestinian communities were affected, especially in Nablus, Qalqilya, Bethlehem, and Hebron³⁴
 - Over 1,400 access denial incidents were recorded between October and July,³⁵ including:
 - Over 300 sudden closures³⁶
 - 380 flying checkpoints.³⁷

²⁴ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

²⁵ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

²⁶ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

²⁷ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

²⁸ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

²⁹ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

³⁰ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

³¹ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

³² Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

³³ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

³⁴ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

³⁵ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

³⁶ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

³⁷ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

- 760 partial, spontaneous closures³⁸
- More than 580 arrests were made solely at or around checkpoints during this period,³⁹ indicating a likely total in the thousands since October 7, 2023.

Humanitarian consequences are severe. Medical teams and ambulances were repeatedly stopped and searched, with incidents nearly tripling: 387 cases,⁴⁰ compared to 138 previously.⁴¹

2.3 Case Studies: A Closer Look

● Nablus:

A major city in the West Bank,⁴² and serves as the primary hub for 1.3 million Palestinians in the northern parts of the West Bank.⁴³

- 128 checkpoints in and around the city, with severe restrictive impacts on:
 - Patients and hospitals (e.g., An-Najah and Rafidia)⁴⁴
 - Students and educators (110,000 students and 6,000 teachers)⁴⁵
 - Tourism and commerce, with 60% losses of tourism and 20% of goods damaged or delayed⁴⁶

● Hebron – H2 Area:

As part of the Oslo peace process, in 1997, Hebron was divided into the areas of H1 and H2. The area of H1, which makes up about 80% of the city, is under the Palestinian Authority's control, while H2, comprising the remaining 20%, including the Old City and the Ibrahimi Mosque, remains under full Israeli military control. Israel established settlements in the H2 area with a heavy military presence, under the pretext of protecting a few hundred ideological Israeli settlers living among tens of thousands of Palestinians. This division has largely impacted the Palestinian

³⁸ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

³⁹ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

⁴⁰ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

⁴¹ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

⁴² *Nablus*. Nablus.ws, accessed 6 Aug. 2025, <https://www.nablus.ws/>.

⁴³ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

⁴⁴ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

⁴⁵ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

⁴⁶ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

residents, as it has resulted in severe movement restrictions through military checkpoints, and a heavily militarized environment, deeply affecting daily Palestinian life and economy..⁴⁷

- 28 out of 89 checkpoints are in H2, under direct Israeli military control⁴⁸
- As of September 2024:
 - Full closure was imposed for 15 days on 7,000 residents⁴⁹
 - Schools and the only health clinic were closed by Israeli forces for 7 months.⁵⁰
 - Movement is restricted to 7:00–19:00 only, with entry banned for non-registered individuals.⁵¹

● Qalqilya – Deir al-Ghusoun Cluster:

- Lost access to 100 dunams of farmland behind the wall since October⁵²
- Estimated economic loss: \$1.4 million annually⁵³
- Direct impact on food security and agricultural productivity⁵⁴

These intricate and systemic restrictions have become an inseparable part of daily life for Palestinians, consuming their time, deteriorating their physical and mental well-being, and severely impairing socioeconomic activity. Crucially, this expansive matrix of checkpoints and separation infrastructure has been accompanied by a sharp escalation in settler violence, often perpetrated under the protection or complicity of Israeli forces. All of these measures form part of a broader policy architecture rooted in the collective punishment of the Palestinian population in the West Bank.

3. Movement Restrictions as a Tool of Subjection and Control

Beyond the tangible infrastructure of Israel's prolonged military occupation, the Israeli control regime generates profound impacts on the fundamental human rights of Palestinians

⁴⁷ “‘Area H1, H2.’ *Mapping Hebron’s Apartheid*”, HebronApartheid.org, Glossary section, <https://www.hebronapartheid.org/index.php?glossary=area-H1-H2>.

⁴⁸ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

⁴⁹ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

⁵⁰ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

⁵¹ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

⁵² Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

⁵³ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

⁵⁴ Ibid; UNOCHA - fact sheet

under this control, as well as psychological and collective trauma among them. Daily exposure to unpredictable checkpoints that prohibit their access to their schools, work, hospitals, or places of worship, the arbitrary violence at the checkpoints, beatings, denials, and the constant threat of detention or being denied access to essential services has fostered a pervasive atmosphere of uncertainty, humiliation, and fear. This system produces a “condition of existential constraint,”⁵⁵ whereby individuals are subjected to bureaucratic violations that disintegrate political identity and reduce citizens to mere subjects of surveillance and control.⁵⁶

The inability to predict whether one can reach work, school, or a hospital does not merely constitute systematic violations of fundamental rights but also disrupts practical life; it induces chronic stress, anxiety, and a loss of personal agency. It is an active factor in the creation of a volatile, coercive condition. For many, everyday life becomes a negotiation of survival under a logic rooted in submission, de-politicization, and control through movement. This suppresses the formation of a coherent collective political will, erodes the foundations of social cohesion, and results in collective demoralization, internalized powerlessness, and widespread psychosocial deterioration.

The Israeli occupation employs a comprehensive and highly sophisticated system of control and surveillance that infiltrates all aspects of Palestinian life and space, creating profound individual and collective impacts. This regime is so pervasive that everything becomes a potential tool of control and domination.⁵⁷ Under these systems, architecture, law, and spatial organization construct a matrix of control aimed at disciplining, subjugating, and dehumanizing the occupied population.⁵⁸

3.1 Legal and Spatial Separation

Fragmentation of Space: Palestinian towns and villages are carved into isolated enclaves by highways and military barriers. In the occupied West Bank, the Oslo Accords⁵⁹ fragmented

⁵⁵ Julie Peteet: “*Space and Mobility in Palestine*”, 2017.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Eyal Weizman: “*Hollow Land: Israel’s Architecture of Occupation*”, 2007.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ The Oslo Accords are series of agreements between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel, signed in 1993, aimed at establishing an interim framework for peace. They created the Palestinian Authority and divided the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C.

the territory into Areas A, B, and C,⁶⁰ with Area C (61% of the land) remaining under direct and exclusive military control, where Palestinian development is prohibited. Israeli settlements are strategically placed to disrupt Palestinian territorial continuity.

Dual Legal Systems: In the fragmented and divided space of the oPt, a fundamental component of Israel's occupation and control is legal and spatial separation. Israeli settlers are governed by Israeli civil law and enjoy full civil rights, while Palestinians are subjected to military rule under which civil and human rights are rarely protected. In military courts, according to +972 Magazine, the conviction rate for Palestinians accused of violence stands at 99.74%, while complaints against Israeli soldiers rarely result in charges,⁶¹ creating a system in which violence is institutionally sanctioned. This architecture of control has surpassed South African apartheid in scope, sophistication, and longevity.

Three-Dimensional Enclosure: In his book "Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation," Weizman argues that every Palestinian locality is fully enveloped by Israeli space in three dimensions.⁶² Palestinians must obtain Israeli permission to exit their enclaves (via fences, walls, or checkpoints), to drill wells (penetrating underground), and even to fly (due to Israeli airspace control), theoretically. This structure of layered restrictions is referred to as the "politics of verticality,"⁶³ making vertical apartheid a permanent feature of domination.

3.2 Surveillance and Monitoring

Population Control: Israel maintains control over the Palestinian population registry, requiring that all births, deaths, marriages, and address changes be recorded with the Israeli Ministry of Interior for individuals to "exist" within the legal system, affecting mobility, employment, and access to services. The type of ID that a Palestinian carries directly determines areas "allowed" for him/ her to access, when and under what conditions.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Area A: Around 18% of the West Bank Area and it designates Palestinian absolute autonomy over administrative and security issues and includes the main Palestinian cities.

Area B: Around 22% of the West Bank Area and it is under Palestinian Authority's civil administration and Israel's military administration. Area C: Over 60% of the West Bank, and is under Israel's civil and military administration.

⁶¹ +972 Magazine, "Conviction rate for Palestinians in Israel's military courts: 99.74%", November 29, 2011.

⁶² Eyal Weizman, "Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation", new ed.

⁶³ Eyal Weizman, "Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation", new ed.

⁶⁴ See: Balasan Initiative for Human Rights: "Rights based on IDS" (2024), available at: <https://balasan.org/rights-based-on-ids-israels-unilateral/>

Checkpoints as Instruments of Humiliation: Israeli checkpoints in the oPt function not only as tools of physical control but also as instruments of daily humiliation. By subjecting Palestinians to arbitrary closures, prolonged waits, invasive searches, and degrading treatment, these checkpoints systematically violate personal and collective dignity and reinforce a regime of domination. The routine disruption of basic rights and freedoms, such as access to education, work, and healthcare, serves a broader purpose: to instill fear, asserting the occupying power's supremacy over Palestinians. Humiliation here is not a side effect; it is rather the point, and it is embedded in the structure and intent of the checkpoint system itself.

Checkpoints additionally entail extremely invasive and advanced technologies. Facial recognition system known as the “Red Wolf” is being used in Hebron in the occupied West Bank, where Palestinians’ faces are scanned and added to extensive surveillance databases without their consent⁶⁵. Additionally, Amnesty International documented the use of facial recognition technology against Palestinians in East Jerusalem, especially following protests and in areas surrounding illegal settlements. In both Hebron and East Jerusalem, this technology supports a dense network of CCTV cameras that monitor Palestinians almost continuously⁶⁶. This surveillance forms part of a deliberate attempt by Israeli authorities to create a hostile and coercive environment for Palestinians, aiming to reduce their presence in strategic areas.

Through this highly engineered system, the Israeli military has become the “world champion of occupation”, transforming its control over millions into a refined art form, an exceptionally efficient and brutal form of territorial control and segregation. This regime extends far beyond the 1967 Occupied Territories, inspiring further separation within Israel proper and expanding Israel’s system of domination over the entire geography from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. Palestinians are thereby reduced to bodies without agency, subjugated by force, confined by architecture, and stripped of freedom from all directions.

⁶⁵ Amnesty International, “Israel/OPT: Israeli authorities are using facial recognition technology to entrench apartheid”, (2 May 2023), available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/05/israel-opt-israeli-authorities-are-using-facial-recognition-technology-to-entrench-apartheid/>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

3.3 Crafting a Coercive Environment

As this report demonstrates, the Israeli checkpoints across the occupied West Bank are not merely passive ‘security’ installations. One of the less highlighted aspects is the use of movement restrictions across the oPt as key components in the deliberate crafting of a coercive environment, designed to exert significant pressure on Palestinians as they pursue their daily lives, to leave their homes. Besides the fact that the existence of such severe movement restrictions is in and of itself a systemic apparatus of violations of fundamental rights, but also, by obstructing access to essential rights and services, severing family and social ties, and subjecting Palestinians to daily uncertainty, humiliation, and violence, checkpoints systematically disrupt and shape Palestinian life and daily decisions. The deliberate unpredictability of passage, the arbitrary long wait times, and the risk of arbitrary denial are not mere inconveniences; they are calculated methods of a carefully crafted coercive environment that seeks to induce, through the accumulated pressure from movement restrictions, a Palestinian ‘choice’ to relocate, in search of safety, dignity, and survival. As such, under the guise of ‘security’, movement restrictions serve as tools of engineered indirect displacement, strictly prohibited under international law.

3.4. Collective Punishment

Over the past decades, and in the aftermath of any operation against Israel carried out by Palestinians, one immediate common measure has been the intensification of movement restrictions or even the complete closure of checkpoints for the entire population, either in the area of the operation or, at times, in all of the occupied West Bank. Rather than targeting individuals suspected of carrying out the operation, Israel uses the checkpoint regime to impose sweeping restrictions on entire communities, limiting movement for tens of thousands of people based on their geographic location, identity, or proximity to settlements or military infrastructure inside the oPt, thereby punishing the entire population for the alleged operation, constituting a prohibited practice of collective punishment.

This practice reinforces a system of control rooted in collective repression. The intensification of movement restrictions across the entirety of the occupied West Bank post 7 October 2023 is reflective of this logic: Israel considered all Palestinians responsible for the attacks of 7 October

2023 and applied a blanket collective policy of restrictions, entrenching further an incredibly volatile human rights situation.

4. Impacts

4.1 Fundamental Human Rights Violated

As this report demonstrates, Israel's policy of inflicting severe movement restrictions in the oPt, and the intensification thereof, notably post 7 October 2023, systematically violates a wide array of fundamental human rights that are guaranteed for Palestinians, extending way beyond the right to the freedom of movement. The design of the movement restrictions, both physical and administrative, their longevity and permanence reflect their primordial role as a tool of dominance in the oPt at the expense of Palestinian rights. The fundamental rights violated as a result of Israel's policy of movement restrictions include, among others:

- The right to self-determination: Israel's Annexation Wall, the permit regime, and the checkpoint regime have, besides artificially dividing the oPt geographically and administratively, destroyed the territorial contiguity necessary for any viable Palestinian state, or any potential thereto, an essential condition for the exercise of self-determination. Moreover, Israel's Annexation Wall, which deviates deep inside the oPt, operates a permanent de facto border, annexing not only occupied lands but also resources vital for Palestinians. Israel's absolute control over the Palestinian population registry, borders, and resources, among others, is deeply tied to the movement restrictions policies and is indeed prohibitive of any potential exercise of their right to self-determination and sovereignty.
- The right to freedom of movement: Israel's restrictive regime of physical obstacles, including walls, checkpoints, roadblocks, and permit systems, severely limits Palestinians' ability to move freely within their cities in the occupied West Bank, as well as between the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Palestinian movement has become significantly more time-consuming due to arbitrary closures and lengthy waits at

the checkpoints, and more dangerous with the increased violence and humiliation at the checkpoints against Palestinians.

- The right to health: In addition to Palestinians in the West Bank being unable to access medical care in Jerusalem without permits, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip face even more restrictive conditions to access health care outside the Gaza Strip. Israeli movement restrictions regularly hinder the movement of ambulances on duty, largely risking the lives of the patients. Moreover, such movement restriction undermines the entirety of the Palestinian health care system, which has been greatly compromised by the restricted movement of medical supplies, equipment, and professionals, undermining the development of a sustainable and autonomous health system. Training opportunities abroad or in East Jerusalem are often inaccessible to West Bank and Gaza health workers due to permit denials.
- The right to adequate housing: Israeli-imposed movement restrictions in the West Bank mentioned in this report severely undermine Palestinians' right to adequate housing, notably in Area C. Restricted access to land, building materials, and the almost impossible-to-obtain building permits effectively prevent many Palestinians from building or maintaining homes, leading to overcrowding, deterioration of housing conditions, or displacement. Many Palestinian communities are isolated by the Wall or checkpoints, face Israeli demolitions for their proximity to the Wall or their falling in “buffer areas” of it, even when they are located in Area A ⁶⁷or B. In Jerusalem, Israeli authorities apply discriminatory planning policies that severely restrict Palestinian construction, making building permits nearly impossible to obtain, while expanding Israeli settlements.⁶⁸ As a result, Palestinian neighborhoods are encroached upon and face frequent home demolitions. These policies and measures stand in violation of the right to adequate housing of Palestinians, but not of Israelis, both residing in the same city.

⁶⁷ For example, see: Yara Al Huwari: “*Wadi Hummus: Another Israeli celebration of ethnic cleansing*” (2019), available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/7/23/wadi-hummus-another-israeli-celebration-of-ethnic-cleansing>
And: The Balasan Initiative for Human Rights: “*Alarming: Israeli Demolitions Extended to Areas A and B of the Occupied West Bank*” (January 2025), available at: <https://balasan.org/alarms-israeli-demolitions-extended-to-areas-a-and-b-of-the-occupied-west-bank/>

⁶⁸ UN Human Rights Council, “*Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967*”, (2022), A/77/356.

- The right to an adequate standard of living: Movement restrictions across the West Bank directly erode Palestinians' right to an adequate standard of living, which includes access to sufficient food, water, health care, and livelihoods. Checkpoints, road closures, and permit systems severely disrupt access to markets, employment, and essential services. Farmers are cut off from agricultural lands; traders face delays and losses; and families are denied consistent access to affordable goods and services. This engineered economic fragmentation has entrenched poverty and food insecurity, particularly in areas most affected by closures and mobility constraints.
- The right to family life and unity: Israel's control over the Palestinian population registry, and the ensuing permit regimes and restrictions have a detrimental impact on Palestinian families: they separate them, prevent spouses from living together, and impose a situation of chronic uncertainty on them and deny Palestinians different parts of their homeland; in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, the ability to reunite with family members or attend family events.
- The right to work and livelihoods: Israel's checkpoint regime is so widely entrenched across the West Bank that, in effect, any Palestinian working outside their municipal area will have to cross a checkpoint or face movement restrictions. Palestinians in the West Bank who wish to work in East Jerusalem for better working conditions are unable to do so without an easily revocable and conditional permit, as well as going through the daily hassle and humiliation of crossing a checkpoint twice a day. Palestinians are also cut off from their agricultural land due to the wall and checkpoints. This has led to rising unemployment, poverty, and economic dependence, particularly in communities near the Annexation Wall or in Area C of the oPt.
- The right to education: Palestinian students and teachers across the West Bank face daily delays and harassment at checkpoints, largely undermining their right to education. Moreover, schools that are classified in "Seam Zones" areas, or closed military areas near the Annexation Wall, are effectively inaccessible.

- The right to development: Israeli movement restrictions in the West Bank fundamentally obstruct the Palestinian people's right to development. The web of physical and administrative restrictions prohibits access to and the development of Area C, which holds the Palestinian development potential and resources, and cripples the ability of Palestinians to plan, invest in, and benefit from their economic growth and resources. These restrictions fragment communities, sever economic and institutional linkages, and prevent the realization of national infrastructure, agricultural development, and industrial expansion. By undermining Palestinian governance in their lands and limiting their access to their natural resources, Israel imposed economic dependency that not only impedes the individual basic rights but also blocks the collective advancement of the Palestinian people.
- The right to equality and non-discrimination: Israeli movement restrictions apply almost exclusively to Palestinians, while Israeli settlers move freely in the oPt and inside the Green Line, entrenching a system of racial segregation against Palestinians in the oPt. The coercive environment created by movement restrictions, land confiscation, and settler violence contributes to indirect forcible transfer, especially in Area C and East Jerusalem. By reducing the Palestinian presence in strategic areas and reinforcing a Jewish demographic majority, Israel further obstructs the collective will of the Palestinian people to exist and flourish as a nation within their homeland.
- The right to freedom of religion and worship: Millions of Palestinians, particularly from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, are routinely denied access to religious sites in their capital city, East Jerusalem, especially during holidays and religious occasions. This is due to both Israel's administrative barriers, i.e., the permit system, and the physical barriers that isolate East Jerusalem geographically from the rest of the Palestinian cities.

4.2 Specific Impacts: The Case of Bethlehem

The entrenchment of Israel's movement control over the oPt and its structures has enabled the consolidation of a regime that not only violates basic rights on a systematic basis but also actively seeks to reshape the demographic and spiritual landscape of Palestine by erasing

entire indigenous communities. Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of Bethlehem, which, according to our latest report issued in March 2024, is the most heavily restricted city, with the highest number of Israeli checkpoints.⁶⁹

Bethlehem holds the largest population of Palestinian Christians in the oPt, and Israel's continued dispossession of land reflects the exclusionary logic of the prolonged occupation power, one that aims to redefine the very identity of the land. These systematic policies, including the deliberate and intensified restrictions on movement, have created a very coercive environment and have impeded the enjoyment of the most fundamental human rights for Palestinians, violating their dignity and humanity in the process. While the impacts of such Israeli systems are felt by all Palestinians, in Bethlehem, an additional layer unfolds: it threatens the remaining 1 percent of the Palestinian Christian presence in their historic homeland (the land of Christ himself), exacerbating the threat to the survival of this deeply rooted community in historic Palestine. This is not merely the result of individual choices to “migrate” but rather the consequence of a coordinated and structural process of marginalization, deprivation, and forced displacement. Palestinian Christian families who increasingly left Palestine after Israel's heavy militarization of the oPt post 7 October 2023, cited restrictions on movement as a key factor to their choice to leave, as they prohibit not only their safety and dignity, and their families', but also a wide set of their fundamental rights, hindering their daily lives and choices.

Key contributing factors include ongoing land confiscation, restrictions on worship and movement, and a growing sense of despair among Christian families, particularly among the youth.

Historically, Christian towns in the West Bank have experienced a sharp demographic decline. In Bethlehem, the Christian population fell from 84% in 1922 to 28% in 2007. In Beit Jala, it declined from 99% to 61%, and in Beit Sahour, from 81% to 65% over the same period.⁷⁰ Such an alarming decline of an indigenous population in its ancestral land is directly tied to Israel's

⁶⁹ The Balasan Initiative for Human Rights: “*Further Fragmented Reality: The Impacts of the War on Gaza on the Bethlehem Governorate*”, (March 2024), available at:

<https://balasan.org/further-fragmented-reality-the-effects-of-the-war-on-gaza-on-the-bethlehem-governorate/>

⁷⁰ Ramzy Baroud: “*The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestinian Christians that Nobody is Talking About*” (2019), available at: <https://ramzybaroud.net/the-ethnic-cleansing-of-palestinian-christians-that-nobody-is-talking-about/>

systematic oppression of the Palestinians, of which movement restrictions are a key tool, stripping them of safety, freedom, and dignity.

5. Legal Analysis

As an occupying power in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israel is bound by international humanitarian law (IHL), international human rights law (IHRL), and customary international law. These legal frameworks impose specific obligations on occupying powers to respect, protect, and fulfill the rights of the protected civilian population under occupation. The Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), the Hague Regulations (1907), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and other key instruments are applicable and binding on Israel.⁷¹

As the occupying power, Israel is legally obligated to uphold the fundamental rights of the Palestinian population. These include the right to liberty of movement and residence (ICCPR Article 12),⁷² the right to family life (ICCPR Article 17), freedom of religion (ICCPR Article 18), and the right to be free from discrimination (ICCPR Articles 2 and 26).⁷³ Israel's regime of movement permits, discriminatory zoning and planning laws, targeted restrictions on access to religious and family spaces, and arbitrary travel bans violate these core protections, as outlined in Section 4.1 of this report.

The Annexation Wall, which has become a central tool of Israel's movement restriction system, was declared illegal under international law by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in its 2004 Advisory Opinion⁷⁴. The ICJ found that the construction of the Wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, violates international law and results in severe restrictions on the movement of Palestinians, impeding access to work, education, healthcare,

⁷¹ Human Rights Watch, "Use of Force in the Occupied West Bank," May 8, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/05/08/use-force-occupied-west-bank>.

⁷² UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "*Report on Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*", March 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/03/occupied-palestinian-territory-reporting-settlements-and-occupied/>.

⁷³ Amnesty International, "*Israeli Settlements and International Law*", January 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/01/chapter-3-israeli-settlements-and-international-law/>.

⁷⁴ International Court of Justice (ICJ), "*Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion*", July 9, 2004, <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/131>.

and religious sites. The ICJ also found that the Wall contributes to *de facto* annexation, strictly prohibited under international law.⁷⁵

Despite repeated documentation and denunciation by credible international organizations, including the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch,⁷⁶ and Amnesty International,⁷⁷ Israel continues to implement policies that amount to systematic violations of international law. These include collective punishment, racial discrimination, and potentially crimes against humanity under the legal definition of apartheid, as outlined in the Rome Statute, as concluded by multiple reputable organizations⁷⁸. However, no effective measures have yet been adopted by the international community to hold Israel accountable or to deter further violations.⁷⁹

In its 2024 advisory opinion, the ICJ is examining the legal consequences of Israel's ongoing occupation.⁸⁰ Preliminary findings and expert submissions strongly indicate that Israel's entire presence and prolonged occupation of the occupied Palestinian territory, including its policies of fragmentation and movement control, are unlawful under international law. Movement restrictions are a central mechanism in this regime, facilitating land appropriation, demographic manipulation, and coercive control.

Further, Israel's use of closures, checkpoints, the permit regime, and the Wall form a deliberate policy of coercive environment creation that leads to forced displacement and transfer, strictly prohibited under IHL, namely Articles 49 and 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as under the Rome Statute and customary international law.⁸¹ In Area C and East Jerusalem in particular, Palestinians face heightened vulnerability to displacement due to restrictions on residency, access to services, and building permits. Forced population transfer could be a result

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Human Rights Watch, "*A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution*", 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>.

⁷⁷ Amnesty International, "*Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: A Cruel System of Domination and a Crime Against Humanity*", 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en/>.

⁷⁸ Human Rights Watch: "*World Court Finds Israel Responsible for Apartheid*", (July 2024), available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/19/world-court-finds-israel-responsible-apartheid>

⁷⁹ Shane Darcy: "*Israel's Practices of Collective Punishment in Violation of International Law*", Al-Haq (2002), available at: https://www.alhaq.org/cached_uploads/download/alhaq_files/images/stories/PDF/ShaneDarcy.pdf.

⁸⁰ International Court of Justice (ICJ), "*Advisory Proceedings on the Legal Consequences of Israel's Occupation*", July 2024, <https://www.icj-cij.org/node/204176>.

⁸¹ Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC): "*Legal Opinion: Forcible Transfer of Bedouin Communities in the West Bank*", 2013, <https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/legal-opinions/legal-opinion-on-forcible-transfer-of-bedouin-communities-in-the-west-bank.pdf>.

of the interference of the state in a way that leads to the displacement of the indigenous population, or through the implantation of civilian settlers of that state in the territory under its authority. The Israeli policies manifest both dimensions of population transfer: (1) the displacement of the indigenous Palestinian population, and (2) the implantation of Jewish-Israeli settlers in their place. Displacement is considered to be forced when a population is made, by force, to leave an area, and/or by creating circumstances that make their lives in that area impossible.⁸²

According to Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the forcible transfer of protected persons within an occupied territory is strictly prohibited, except for temporary evacuations justified by absolute military necessity. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Art. 7(1)(d)) further defines forcible transfer as a crime against humanity, where civilians are displaced without lawful grounds and often under coercive circumstances. Importantly, the crime of forcible transfer does not require the use of direct physical force. As affirmed in ICC jurisprudence, a coercive environment including fear, systemic discrimination, or denial of basic needs, may render displacement involuntary and, therefore, unlawful.

Under international law, all States have an obligation not to recognize as lawful a situation resulting from serious breaches of peremptory norms (*jus cogens*), including annexation and forcible transfer, direct and indirect. States must also ensure non-assistance in maintaining such a situation and must take positive steps to bring it to an end.⁸³ The continuing failure of the international community to act, despite overwhelming legal and factual evidence, represents a serious abdication of legal responsibility. As emphasized in our recent updates, third States must uphold international law through accountability measures, including sanctions, legal proceedings, and diplomatic pressure.⁸⁴

⁸² BADIL: “*Forced Population Transfer: Displacement and Colonization*”, 2014, https://badil.org/phocadownloadpap/Badil_docs/Information_and_Advocacy_Tools/FPT-brochure2014-eng.pdf

⁸³ International Law Commission (ILC), “*Articles on the Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts (ARSIWA)*”, with commentaries, 2001/2022, https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/commentaries/1_14_2022.pdf.

⁸⁴ Law for Palestine, “*The Legal Responsibility of Third States in Cases of Apartheid and Forcible Transfer*”, 2025, https://www.law4palestine.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/L4P_Third-State-Economic-Responsibility-Booklet-PDF.pdf.

6. Conclusion

As this report demonstrates, the Israeli regime of movement restriction is far from being a temporary security measure, but rather a comprehensive colonial structure designed to subjugate Palestinians and exert control over every aspect of their daily existence. Through an entrenched system of permits, checkpoints, surveillance, and institutionalized discrimination, Palestinians are systematically reduced to surveilled and restricted bodies, stripped of agency and political cohesion. This regime functions not in the service of security but as a mechanism of domination and humiliation. At its core, it aims to dismantle collective identity and erode resistance through bureaucratic and spatial violence. Such a system demands genuine international accountability to end impunity and restore the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Moreover, this architecture of coercion cannot be understood in isolation from broader strategies of Israel's unlawful, prolonged occupation that underpin Israeli policies across the occupied territory. Movement restrictions are not only tools of physical confinement, but also of political fragmentation, economic suffocation, and territorial dismemberment. They are part of a deliberate strategy to entrench Israeli control while erasing the Palestinian presence and obstructing any viable path toward self-determination. In light of these systemic violations, the international community must move beyond rhetoric and take concrete, enforceable, legal, political, and economic measures to dismantle this regime and uphold international law.

