مركز المرأة للارشاد القانوني والاجتماعي
Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling
WCLAC

Nowhere to Call Home:

Palestinian Women from Gaza, Tulkarem, Jenin, and Al-Khalil Tell Their Stories of Forcible Displacement by Israeli Occupation

2025

Introduction

In September 2023, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that 38 Palestinian children had been killed that year, already marking it as the deadliest year for Palestinian children in recent memory. Just 20 months (about 1 and a half years) later, that number surged to over 18,000[01].

Through 77 years of displacement and dispossession, Palestinians have endured ongoing exile, forced transfer, and erasure. Each generation faces new forms of violence rooted in the same colonial logic. Since the formation of the most far-right government in Israel's history in late 2022, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in alliance with extremist settler factions and ultra-nationalist parties, the level of state and settler violence across the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) has reached unprecedented intensity and brutality. This period has been marked by a sharp escalation of military incursions, home demolitions, settler-led pogroms, and the systematic targeting of Palestinian civilians, including women, children, and the elderly.

This current Israeli government coalition includes ministers who are not only convicted terrorists, but also openly advocating for the expansion of illegal settlements, the annexation of large parts of the West Bank, further emboldening settler militias and Israeli forces alike.

This escalation has taken place alongside a significant rise in collective punishment, including movement restrictions, curfews, arbitrary detentions, and attacks on vital infrastructure and services. The result is a coercive environment that has led to the forced displacement of thousands of Indigenous Palestinians, as part of an ongoing attempt at ethnic cleansing, particularly in high-risk areas like Al-Khalil (H2), Masafer Yatta, and the Jenin and Tulkarem refugee camps.

In Gaza, on the other hand, and as of the drafting of this report, and since Israel launched its genocidal campaign against the Gaza Strip in October 2023, more than 55,432 Palestinians have been killed, including at least 18,000 children and 12,400 women, with an estimated 4,700 still missing under the rubble. These figures represent only those whose bodies have been recovered and documented. The actual death toll is believed to be significantly higher, with current estimates suggesting the real number of fatalities may be nearly double. The scale of destruction and loss is so vast that in many cases, entire families have been wiped out without a single survivor to report them missing.

01 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – Occupied Palestinian Territory, Humanitarian Situation Update #294: Gaza Strip, June 5, 2025, https://tinyurl.com/5x3jf3an.

Israel's genocidal campaign has gone far beyond indiscriminate bombing. It has deliberately subjected over 2.4 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip to conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction. According to the report "Genocide as Colonial Erasure," published in March 2024 by UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese, Israel's actions in Gaza constitute acts of genocide carried out within a broader settler-colonial project aimed at eliminating the Palestinian people. These actions meet the legal definition of genocide under the 1948 Genocide Convention. This includes the mass killing of Palestinians, infliction of serious physical and mental harm, and the deliberate imposition of conditions designed to destroy the population in whole or in part[02].

Therefore, on January 11, 2024, South Africa presented a case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), accusing Israel of committing genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. As state parties to the 1948 Genocide Convention, both countries are bound not only to refrain from genocide but also to prevent it wherever it occurs. In its detailed 84-page submission and oral arguments, South Africa argued that Israel's actions in Gaza demonstrate a systematic pattern that falls under the legal definition of genocide. One of the central allegations is the deliberate deprivation of food and water, with Israel imposing a "complete siege" on Gaza beginning on October 9, 2023. This has resulted in extreme levels of hunger and malnutrition, with 93% of Gaza's population facing food insecurity. According to the UN and cited experts, Gaza now contains four of the five hungriest populations in the world, and more Palestinians may die from starvation and disease than from bombings[03].

In addition to the mass killing of civilians, Israel has systematically blocked all means of sustaining life, cutting off access to food, water, electricity, fuel, and medical care. According to Article 8(2)(b)(xxv) of the Rome Statute, it is criminalized intentionally by using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare by depriving them of objects indispensable to their survival[04]. Israel has not only denied humanitarian aid entry but also targeted and destroyed Gaza's capacity for self-sufficiency. Water sources, bakeries, agricultural lands, food warehouses, and even livestock have been deliberately attacked. According to Customary IHL Rules 54 and 55, it addresses the protection of civilians during armed conflict. Rule 54 prohibits attacks on objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as food, crops, and water sources, and Rule 55 mandates the allowance and facilitation of humanitarian relief for civilians in need. These rules are crucial for preventing starvation and ensuring access to

02 United Nations, Genocide as Colonial Erasure: Report of Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied since 1967, November 2024,. https://www.un.org/unispal/document/genocide-as-colonial-erasure-report-francesca-albanese-01oct24

03 International Court of Justice. Application Instituting Proceedings and Request for the Indication of Provisional Measures (Case Concerning Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip, South Africa v. Israel, No. 192). December 28, 2023. https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20231228-app-01-00-en.pdf

04 International Committee of the Red Cross. "Rule 53. Starvation as a Method of Warfare." Customary IHL Database, 2023.https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule53.

essential supplies for civilians during wartime[05]. Related to Article II (c) of the Genocide Convention criminalizes the deliberate infliction of conditions of life that could lead to physical destruction, including starvation[06].

This is not only a campaign of mass killing, but also one of total erasure. Palestinians are not only being blown apart in their homes and on the streets; they are being maimed, amputated, and left to die while starving. Hospitals and medical teams have been overwhelmed, bombed, or besieged, forcing surgeries to be performed without anesthesia, in makeshift tents, or by flashlight, if at all. In recognition of these atrocities, on May 20, 2024, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) announced that he was seeking arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the use of starvation as a method of warfare and the targeting of civilians.

While global attention has been focused -rightfully so- on the unfolding genocide in Gaza, Israel has simultaneously escalated its military and settler campaigns across the occupied West Bank. Under the cover of Gaza's devastation, the Israeli army and illegal settlers have intensified violent incursions that include indiscriminate killings and inflicting as much harm as possible at civilians (airstrikes, shooting bystanders, ramming civilians with military vehicles). Forcibly evacuating entire communities. Particularly in the refugee camps of Tulkarem, Nur Shams, and Jenin, these operations have displaced over 40,000 Palestinians, according to UNRWA[07].

In parallel, over 12,000 Palestinians in the West Bank have been subjected to forced disappearance, arrested, held without trial, and cut off from legal representation or family contact[08].

Meanwhile, Israeli settlers have leveled up their attacks on Palestinian towns and villages, committing acts of state-sanctioned terrorism aimed at forcibly displacing rural and Bedouin communities. These attacks are carried out with impunity and under the direct protection, or participation, of the Israeli Forces - in dire violation of the duties of the occupying power under International Humanitarian Law-, making settler violence not an isolated phenomenon but a central component of Israel's broader strategy of territorial expansion and population forcible transfer.

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05 International Committee of the Red Cross. "Rule 54. Attacks against Objects Indispensable to the Survival of the Civilian Population." Customary IHL Database. Accessed July 14, 2025. https://tinyurl.com/5d6cw7s2.

06 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, December 9, 1948, art. II(c), 78 U.N.T.S. 277, https://tinyurl.com/nhhpyr8n.

07 UNRWA, Large-Scale Forced Displacement in the West Bank Impacts 40,000 People, 2025, https://tinyurl.com/ymjdubrp

08 Solidarity-Ps.org, Fact Sheet on Detainees and Prisoners in Israeli Occupation Prisons for June 2025, 2025, https://www.solidarity-ps.org/en/june-2025.

This report documents acts that constitute violations of International Humanitarian Law and International Criminal Law, including grave breaches of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilians in Times of War (IV Geneva Convention), and acts prosecutable under the Rome Statute of the ICC, such as genocide, forcible transfer, and starvation as a method of warfare.

To capture the gendered dimensions of these atrocities, WCLAC's field researchers interviewed 20 Palestinian women, 10 from the Gaza Strip and 10 from the West Bank. These testimonies offer a human-centered lens on the violence, dispossession, and psychological torment endured by women and their families undergoing the televised genocide, from the trauma of losing children and entire families, to being forced to give birth in makeshift tents, to getting limps cut while starving, these voices bear witness to a lived reality that demands urgent international duty- bearers' attention, protection, and accountability.

Women are disproportionately affected by displacement, starvation, and violence in armed conflict, and are also often invisible in legal and political narratives. This report seeks to center their lived experiences not only as survivors but as critical witnesses to patterns of systematic violations under IHL and IHRL.

Gaza: Starvation, Repeated Displacement, and Gender-Based Violence

"According to the UN, at least 1.9 million people – or about 90 per cent of the population – across the Gaza Strip have been displaced during the war. Many have been displaced repeatedly, some 10 times or more[09].

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reports that thousands of women have been forcibly displaced, many of them pregnant and now facing severe malnutrition as a result of Israel's total blockade and the systematic destruction of the health sector, specifically maternity wards. As of mid-January 2024, an estimated 940,000 displaced women remain in the Gaza Strip, struggling to survive amid the collapse of essential services, targeted starvation, and prolonged trauma[10].

09 United Nations, UNRWA Situation Report #164 on the Situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Including East Jerusalem, 2025, https://tinyurl.com/bp9b4cxr

10 UN Women – Palestine Country Office, Facts and Estimates: Women and Girls During the Conflict in Palestine, January 20, 2025, https://tinyurl.com/ymz6fhb3

In addition to annihilating the population and destroying "their offspring to prevent them from creating more offspring" as one right- wing Israeli settler has put it,[11] Israeli leaders had decided to use starvation as a weapon of war, accordingly, the Gaza Strip is suffering a severe deliberate starvation, with 95% of the population facing high levels of acute food insecurity, with over 1.9 million people in catastrophic hunger. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable, often consuming less to prioritize others in their families, putting them at grave risk of malnutrition and serious health consequences[12].

Since the March 2025 ceasefire collapse, over 640,000 people have been newly displaced, with around 400,000 displaced just after the ceasefire ended and over 202,000 more since March and June 2025[13].

The term forced displacement alone does not do justice to the brutal realities these women have endured.

WCLAC documented 10 testimonies of forced displacement, starvation, and health violations. These women, often mothers, have been uprooted from their homes due to bombings, evacuations, and infrastructure destruction. They have suffered injuries, including amputations, and their children face malnutrition, untreated chronic illnesses, and psychological trauma. The average testimony collected by WCLAC from Women in GAZA reveals recurring patterns of unimaginable suffering:

- Women sustaining injuries and undergoing amputations, often more than once.
- Forced to flee repeatedly -on average four times and more- all while wounded.
- Starving due to the complete blockade of humanitarian aid, compounded by the deliberate destruction of all Palestinian food production infrastructure by the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF).
- A severe lack of access to medical supplies and life-saving procedures.
- Mothers tend to their injured, hungry children with no resources and no rest.
- Ongoing sleep deprivation caused by shrapnel lodged in their bodies, the constant sounds of bombardment, and the deliberate use of loud drones to instill fear and prevent rest.

11 Middle East Eye, "You Need to Destroy Their Offspring" Says Pro-Israeli Activist, YouTube, June 6, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/shorts/q2QgxICyVb0.

12 Solidarity-Ps.org, Fact Sheet on Detainees and Prisoners in Israeli Occupation Prisons for June 2025, 2025, https://www.solidarity-ps.org/en/june-2025.

13 Ibid

- Women who were detained reported being subjected to sexual assault in detention, including invasive body searches involving the insertion of inspection devices into their genitalia[14].
- During the forced evacuations from northern to southern Gaza, as instructed by Israeli army, women reported that their personal belongings were looted, including jewelry, money, and other valuables.

Women's accounts reveal a reality far more devastating than simply living in tents or having their children scavenging for food in dumpsters. What they describe is a relentless and calculated form of collective punishment: the intentional torment of an entire population. Weak, emaciated, and shrapnel-filled bodies are forced to flee again and again, consumed by fear and despair, with the constant hum of drones overhead. A chilling reminder that in Gaza, you can run, but you cannot hide.

WCLAC interviewed women who sustained injuries on multiple occasions and had to flee over four times. Among them is Kholoud, a 31-year-old woman who now lives with her mother in a tent. Both Kholod and her mother had undergone heart-related surgeries prior to October 2023, making their situation even more precarious. Despite their medical conditions and injuries sustained from the bombing of a school where they had sought refuge, they were forced to evacuate more than four times. Kholod reported being approached twice by men who attempted to exploit their vulnerability as two single, injured women living alone in a tent by offering to give her aid in return for sexual acts. Her experience reveals the heightened risks of gender-based violence and exploitation faced by displaced Palestinian women.

"Life has worsened with the ongoing closure of the crossings and the tightening of the siege. My mother and I have weak immune systems and need healthy food, including meat, proteins, and fruits, but we have been deprived of them. Even basic healthy food is unavailable. My face is pale, my strength has diminished, and I've lost a lot of weight, so has my mother. We can't walk even short distances because of the exhaustion and weakness we feel. The costs are overwhelming, and we have no stable source of income. War has completely destroyed our lives. "

She adds: "I can't sleep at night because of fear. The tent we're staying in offers no protection from the outside world. I am terrified at night that we might be attacked by people or stray dogs. There is nothing separating us from the outside world but thin pieces of fabric".

14 According to Article 7(1)(g) of the Rome Statute classifies rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, and other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity as crimes against humanity, when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population.This aligns with General Recommendation No. 30 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which emphasizes the obligation of states to prevent and address gender-based violence in conflict-affected areas. CEDAW stresses that conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, including rape and sexual slavery, constitutes a form of discrimination under the Convention and must be prosecuted with the same seriousness as other international crimes (CEDAW, 2013).

In Gaza's Yarmouk School playground tent, Rema.A.A., a 22-year-old student in nursing college, spoke to WCLAC about the trauma she endured. The Israeli occupation's heavy bombing destroyed her residential block, killing over 45 people, including her family. She was forcefully displaced to move with her remaining family to a shelter in Beit Lahia, again to a crowded UN school in Jabalia.

Rema was severely injured, with both of her legs amputated to the knee, her fingers in her right hand were also amputated and needing urgent surgery. She endured months in a wheelchair without proper medical care. Living in overcrowded classrooms with no privacy, she faced daily humiliation and physical pain, even avoiding food and water to limit bathroom use. Now living in a tent in Gaza's Yarmouk playground without sanitary facilities or a prosthetic limb, she battles despair, fear, and isolation. She recounts:

"Beyond the suffering of waiting in line just to use the bathroom, I would sometimes deprive myself of food and water so I wouldn't have to go too often. I developed a severe intestinal infection from the contaminated food and water, which were unfit for drinking or human use. We were crammed in a classroom with many displaced people, three families separated only by pieces of cloth, with no privacy or independence. Every word felt monitored, and I was too ashamed to let my cries of pain be heard, afraid of disturbing anyone."

As emphasized in UNFPA guidance, access to dignity kits, private sanitation facilities, and menstrual hygiene is not a luxury, it is a right. Systematic failure to provide these essentials is not a logistical oversight; it is a violation of dignity, and a form of structural gender-based violence.

N. A. k, 39-year-old, a mother of two young children aged 1 and 9, spoke about the trauma she endured. On the morning of November 20, 2023, she was forced to be displaced to Jabalia on foot with her husband, children, and siblings, walking 14 kilometers (about 8.7 mi) under heavy shelling near the Indonesian and Al-Awda hospitals with fear, exhaustion, and chaos surrounding them. But when they reached the Netzarim checkpoint (Israeli military checkpoints that separated Gaza City from the central and southern parts of the Gaza Strip, particularly the Central Governorate (including areas like Nuseirat, Bureij, and Deir al-Balah). Israeli occupation forcibly separated families insulted and threatened them, stripped men, and humiliated women. She was interrogated at gunpoint, threatened with arrest, as they held her for two hours while her children cried nearby.

"I had removed my niqab before leaving the house to avoid being targeted," she said. At the checkpoint gate, soldiers scanned her ID. Then her name and her husband were called out. A soldier shouted, separating them. Her children screamed, and she was taken aside for questioning.

The soldier pointed his weapon at her chest. “What is your name? Where are you coming from? Where were you on October 7?”. He took her phone and bag, which had her money and documents on it. He made her stand for two hours, threatening her with arrest, saying, “You’ll never see your husband again,” and hurling degrading insults. “You’re all dogs,” he told her. She said that the Israeli soldier forcibly placed the inspection device on her breasts and on her body and asked me to turn around. She felt that this intentionally intended to humiliate her.

“I broke inside,” she said. “Those two hours felt like a lifetime.” When it ended, the Israeli soldier told her to go, but her husband was no longer there. She walked alone, crying, until she reached the Al-Zahra area. A stranger let her use a phone. Her brother answered and said the children were safe with their aunt in Deir al-Balah.

But the suffering didn’t end there. N.A.K’s husband was missing when she left, because of that, her sister-in-law refused to give her children back unless she stayed with them in her in-law’s house, yet another layer of oppression. “It was another kind of humiliation,” she said. She endured mistreatment to remain close to her kids. When she was forced to displace from Rafah, she moved again with her sister-in-law to Deir al-Balah. But the abuse worsened, so she moved alone to her brother’s tent in Al-Zawaida, surviving on the food coupons he provided. When the return to Gaza became possible, she went back with her brother. However, her husband is still in an Israeli prison.

Women in Gaza, revealing that they live in tents, shelters, overcrowded UNRWA, and government schools. They testified to a lack of privacy, safety, and the absence of essential basic services like clean water, electricity, food, and healthcare. These testimonies and severe conditions highlight the urgent need for improved humanitarian assistance and support for these women.

West Bank Military Operations: Refugee Camps of Tulkarem, Jenin, and Nur Shams

Since 2022, the Jenin and Tulkarem refugee camps have been subjected to repeated and increasingly aggressive incursions by Israeli Occupation Forces. These operations have included indiscriminate air strikes, home demolitions, and large-scale military raids resulting in the deaths of civilians, as well as widespread intentional destruction of civilian infrastructure, women told WCLAC that drinking water was mixed with sewage, electricity was cut, and the whole streets of the camps were intentionally destroyed by Israeli bulldozers rendering moving impossible, not to mention snipers on top of roofs sniping people including a women WCLAC interviewed in the face.

In 2024 alone, multiple deadly raids were carried out in Tulkarem, Nur Shams, and Jenin camps, with Israeli forces targeting resistance fighters and using heavy weaponry in densely populated areas[15].

In a separate but related development, on the 5th of December 2024, the Palestinian Authority (PA) launched its own campaign in the Jenin refugee camp titled "Operation Protect the Homeland," aimed at dismantling the Jenin Brigades, a local armed resistance group[16]. The Palestinian Authority operation led to the killing of several civilians, militants and a Palestinian Authority officer, and was perceived by many Palestinians as an attempt to suppress resistance under the guise of restoring order[17].

Before the residents of the refugee Camp of Jenin managed to take a breath and on 21 January 2025, the Israeli military launched "Operation Iron Wall," the largest military operation in the West Bank in decades. Initially focused on Jenin and Tulkarem, the campaign quickly expanded to include Tubas, Nablus, and other cities[18]. The assault displaced more than 40,000 Palestinians, and caused massive damage to homes, roads, medical facilities, and water networks[19].

As for Fatalities in West Bank Refugee Camps (2022–2025), Between 2022 and mid-2025, Israeli military operations in the West Bank, particularly in the refugee camps of Jenin, Tulkarem, Nur Shams, and al-Far'a, resulted in the killing of an estimated 1,200 to 1,400 Palestinians, according to aggregated figures from the UN, OHCHR, and humanitarian organizations[20].

15 Al Jazeera, "Israeli Drone Strike Kills Two in Tulkarem Refugee Camp," October 19, 2024.

16 Al Monitor. "PA launches crackdown on Jenin Brigades." Al Monitor, December 2024.

17 The New Arab. "Palestinian Authority operation in Jenin seen as crackdown on resistance." The New Arab, December 2024.

18 UNRWA. "West Bank Emergency Situation Report." February 2025.

19 The Guardian. "Israel launches largest West Bank operation in decades." January 2025.

20 UNRWA, Large-Scale Forced Displacement in the West Bank Impacts 40,000 People, 2025, https://tinyurl.com/2s3uwnrs

These incursions caused not only mass fatalities but also large-scale displacement, destruction of homes and infrastructure, and long-term trauma within the affected communities.

Between May and early June 2025, WCLAC's researchers had collected 6 testimonies from displaced women in Jenin, Tulkarem, and Nur Shams Refugee Camps.

These women kindly spoke to WCLAC[21] on the attacks on them and their families, describing using them as human shields, looting and theft of personal property, destruction of homes and businesses, and loss of income, contributing to a deeper strategy of dispossession, dehumanization, and despair. These are the patterns that we saw:

- Heavy and disproportionate use of force in densely populated civilian areas.
- Repeated instances of indiscriminate gunfire, including against women and children.
- Deliberate destruction of essential services, including water, electricity, and telecommunications.
- Direct targeting of journalists and paramedics with live ammunition.
- Total loss of livelihoods due to the destruction of shops in the camp, compounded by ongoing military attacks and the prolonged closures imposed across the West Bank over the past three years.
- A constant state of terror and anxiety, with families living in fear, anticipating the next military assault.
- Increasing brutality in army raids, including ramming vehicles into civilians, firing at schoolchildren, and targeting elderly people and women.
- Using Palestinians including women as Human shields[22].

21 We acknowledge the power imbalance between researchers and the women who generously share their experiences. While we approach their narratives with deep empathy and respect, we also recognize the need to continually learn how to genuinely value their contributions—not only by expressing gratitude, but by engaging in actions alongside them to help transform their lived realities. Their stories are a source of learning, and we remain profoundly grateful for their trust.

22 According to Article 8(2)(b)(xxii) of the Rome Statute defines various forms of sexual and gender-based violence—such as rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, and enforced sterilization—as war crimes when committed in the context of an international armed conflict. It further criminalizes "any other form of sexual violence constituting a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions." While these acts constitute direct violations of international humanitarian law, other grave violations—such as the use of civilians as human shields—are also addressed under the legal framework of IHL. Rule 97 of Customary International Humanitarian Law explicitly prohibits the use of human shields, recognizing it as a method of warfare that unlawfully endangers civilian lives and violates the principle of distinction.

Women, as always, carry the heaviest burdens, navigating gunshots, making sure they packed everything for the kids, and the sole responsibility of getting out of the camps alive. In the context of repeated displacement, women bear the burden of protection not just for themselves but for their dependents. This unpaid, unrecognized labor is a survival mechanism that humanitarian response must account for.

Refugee Camps of Tulkarem

WCLAC's field researcher documented four testimonies of displaced women who were subjected to violent military raids by Israeli occupation forces in Tulkarem and Nur Shams refugee camps. Their experiences included the deliberate destruction of homes, theft of personal belongings, psychological humiliation, and the loss of livelihoods.

In an official interview conducted by WCLAC field researcher Nadwa Barghouthi, with Mr. Thabet Omar, Head of Anabta Municipality, Tulkarm: "The ongoing Israeli military occupation attacks on Tulkarm and Nur Shams camps have led to mass forced displacement of the camps. Approximately 85% of residents fled due to raids, home demolitions, and live fire. Around 658 displaced individuals sought refuge in Anabta, where the municipality provided shelter and support," he said.

The accounts of four women who were forced to leave their homes due to military raids, reveal how their property and household contents were completely destroyed. They also reported theft of personal belongings, including gold jewelry and cash. The women experienced psychological trauma and humiliation, including the tampering with and public display of personal items. They lost their income sources, including home-based businesses, due to the destruction of property and displacement. The repeated military violence created a constant state of fear and insecurity, making everyday life untenable.

For example, Wesam. A., a 42-year-old mother of a family of seven, was displaced to Tulkarem/Salam Roundabout. During the incursions, Israeli occupation forces ransacked her home, deliberately destroying all its contents. They also tampered with and provocatively displayed her private clothing, adding humiliation and psychological trauma to the physical devastation. This conduct forms part of a broader pattern of outrages upon personal dignity, prohibited under Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and Article 8(2)(c)(ii) of the Rome Statute. When committed on a widespread or systematic basis, such acts may amount to war crimes and constitute persecution as a crime against humanity.

"On February 9, 2025, in the early hours of dawn, I heard the sounds of gunfire and explosions in the area. My husband was sitting beside me, overwhelmed with fear and anxiety, while all our children were still asleep. He said to me, 'At first light, we will leave the house and not stay here, as we always do during every raid.' The sound of explosions and gunfire grew louder until it hit the walls of our home.

My children woke up in fear and panic, especially my daughter Sana, who is 18 years old; she was so frightened she couldn't stand on her feet. The occupation soldiers gave us no time until sunrise, loudspeakers began calling out to all residents of the area: 'You must leave now."

Mervat A., 52 years old, lives alone in Nur Shams Refugee Camp. After losing her parents at a young age, she took on the responsibility of raising her siblings. As a result, she never got married. All of her siblings eventually married and moved out, while Mervat stayed alone in the family home. For years, she worked cleaning houses in Israeli settlements. However, following the events of October 2023, her work permit was revoked, and she has remained unemployed since.

She had the chance to travel to perform Umrah and was to return home in February 2025. Upon her return, she learned that she could not go back, the camp was under a violent Israeli military assault.

She temporarily moved in with her sister and her family in Ya'abad village. After 115 days, she managed to sneak into the camp to see what remained. What she found devastated her: the home she had built over decades was gone. Her money and gold had been stolen by Israeli soldiers. She said, "I wish I never went there. I screamed and cried until I fainted. I couldn't recognize the camp, my home was gone, the neighborhood was gone, rubble everywhere."

Her 18-year-old nephew was also killed by Israeli forces during the same attack.

Mervat returned to her sister's house overwhelmed by grief and despair. She had lost her livelihood, her home, a lifetime worth of labor. She says she has made peace with staying at her sister's house, but the family is now scattered and rarely sees each other. "I lost all hope," she says.

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Refugee Camp of Jenin

WCLAC visited Jenin and interviewed two women currently residing in the dormitories of the Arab American University. Which is the designated place that was granted for residents of Jenin Refugee Camp by the Palestinian Authority. WCLAC interviewed two women who testified to having lost their homes and livelihoods completely by the recent Israeli military incursion in the Camp. They now rely entirely on humanitarian aid and donations, waiting to salvage whatever they can to provide for their children.

Women are currently crammed into university dormitories in a village near Jenin, where entire families are forced to share single-student studios. Their sources of income have been completely annihilated, shops, homes, and vehicles have been destroyed, leaving them with no means of livelihood or stability. All of them testified to having lost their homes and livelihoods completely. They now rely entirely on humanitarian aid, waiting to salvage whatever they can to provide for their children.

WCLAC's field researcher conducted an official interview with Mr. Mohammad Jarrar, Head of Municipality of Jenin, who described the humanitarian situation in Jenin and its refugee camp as catastrophic. Over 600 homes were destroyed, and more than 21,000 residents, about a quarter of the city's population, were forcibly displaced. The aggression extended beyond material destruction, resulting in the killing and injury of many residents and the arrest of hundreds from Jenin. A complete siege was imposed on the governorate, home to 360,000 people. Essential service lines, especially for electricity and water, were cut due to the destruction of supply infrastructure.

In Jenin Refugee Camp, 28-year-old Wala, a mother of two young children aged 3 and 1, spoke to WCLAC about the trauma she endured. Her husband was left completely paralyzed after being shot by Israeli occupation forces in December 2024. Just one month later, in January 2025, Wala' was forced to evacuate the camp with her children following an Israeli military incursion. She recounts:

"We woke up to the sound of loudspeakers warning residents and urging them to evacuate, as the occupation army's tanks had reached the entrances of the camp. The sound of exploding bullets hitting the walls echoed every minute. Out of sheer fear, I held my children tightly and ran. That night, I fled with my children; the streets were packed with hundreds of residents running out of the camp in a panic. It was a very cold night, and all I could think about was protecting them."

Amina S., 62, and Husniya B., 75, are two elderly women forcibly displaced from Jenin refugee camp amid ongoing Israeli military operations.

Husniya B., a 75-year-old woman, owned a small grocery shop in the camp. She described her life before the last attack as very dynamic, as the shop gathered people from all over the camp. On the 15th of November, Husniya lost her grandchild, who was 15 at the time. He was killed by Israeli forces, leaving her heartbroken over his loss.

On the 7th of March 2025, while the Israeli military operation was ongoing, Husniya went out to check on her shop. She was shot in the arm and in the chest. She was hospitalized, and her sons refused to let her return to the camp, which was being completely annihilated by bulldozers.

Husniya said her shop was looted by Israeli soldiers, and she lost items worth 20,000 NIS. She says she only left the camp with the clothes on her back. Currently, she resides in the Arab American University dorms, where she managed to open a small shop to sell groceries and vegetables to other refugees living there.

She says, "I know I'm old, but I'm never going to rely on people to feed me." She pays the electricity and water bills from the shop's income. She dreams of returning to the camp, even at her age. Husniya thanked the field researcher deeply for coming to hear her story, and the stories of other women, hoping they will not be forgotten.

Amina, on the other hand, fled the camp during the Palestinian Authority's operation. She and her family initially moved to Faqqua village near Jenin but couldn't afford to stay there after the Israeli Forces consequently invaded the Camp. Eventually, they heard they could stay in a small studio apartment at the Arab American University dorms in Jenin and relocated there.

She says the Israeli occupation forces destroyed the home they had spent their entire lives building, completely scattering and displacing her family. "These days, it feels like we've lived through a thousand Nakbas," she says. "We lost a home we spent a lifetime building. My daughter is still young, I wanted her to grow up in comfort, and this is nothing like it".

West Bank: Escalating Settler Terrorism and Displacement

As a result of ongoing settler violence, including armed attacks, indiscriminate arson, the poisoning of water wells, and the killing of livestock, and accompanied by demolitions and constant intimidation by Israeli forces, more than 24 Bedouin communities have been completely displaced between October 2023 and August 2024 alone according to the Colonization & Wall Resistance Commission.

Here is one example of how this operates on the ground: An Israeli settler arrived at the Ein Samya Bedouin community, accusing residents of stealing one of his goats. Without permission, he forced his way into their barns, took photos of their sheep, and left. Shortly after, the Israeli Occupation Forces arrived and presented the community with two options: either leave the area with their belongings, or face mass detention. As a result, the Ein Samya Bedouin community was fully displaced in May 2025.

Alkhalil– Settler terrorism and Displacement

In Alkhalil H2 area, women and girls are constantly subjected to Gender-based Violence either by the settlers or by the IOF. the H2 area, in 1997, the Hebron protocol was signed, segregating Alkhalil into two areas: H1 and H2. Control of H1 shifted to the Palestinian Authority and H2 remained under Israeli military control. According to UN OCHA, the H2 area is inhabited by approximately by 35,000 Palestinians[23] and a couple of hundred settlers living in four downtown settlements inside the Old City[24]. In 2017, and according to UN OCHA a new municipal entity was established to administer the settlements in the city, resulting in a year later with the approval of 31 new housing units within the settlement in the H2 area.

Consequently, the Centre of old city of Alkhalil has been physically detached from the rest of the city through the deployment of physical obstacles, among other means. Currently, there are 121 such obstacles, including 21 permanently staffed checkpoints. In a report published by UN OCHA, demonstrates that 81% of the Palestinian population in the H2 area must cross checkpoints to access their homes on foot, while 89% cannot access their homes by vehicle.

23 Hebron Apartheid Mapping Project, Area H1 – H2, accessed April 3, 2023, https://tinyurl.com/3375y9dk.

24 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, The Humanitarian Situation in the H2 Area of Hebron City, April 2019, https://tinyurl.com/483ukw83.

As for the settlers' violence against Palestinians in the H2 area, it includes intimidation and threats, physical and sexual assaults, stoning, access prevention, shooting as well as property damage. The violence is often carried out by Israeli settlers who are part of extremist groups and who seek to expand their control over the area. The Israeli government has been criticized for failing to prevent settlers' violence in the H2 area and for providing support to the settlements. The Palestinian Authority has also been criticized for not doing enough to protect Palestinians from settlers' violence.

As for settlers' violence specifically targeting women and girls in the H2 area, the attacks include physical assaults, verbal and sexual harassment, and intimidation. Palestinian women and girls in the H2 area have reported incidents of harassment and assault by Israeli settlers, including being spat on, cursed at, and subjected to physical violence such as being punched or kicked. Settlers have also been reported to throw rocks and garbage at Palestinian homes and schools, .putting the safety of women and girls at risk

In addition to physical violence, Israeli settlers have also been known to engage in discriminatory practices against Palestinian women and girls, such as restricting their access to public spaces and services, and vandalizing or destroying Palestinian-owned property[25].

WCLAC interviewed four women from Alkhalil who have experienced settler violence and harassment that denied them access to education, healthcare, and employment. As a result, their families stopped sending them to school, while their brothers continued to attend. For example, two women from Tel Rumeida face daily settler terrorism, including verbal and physical assaults, invasive phone searches, arbitrary detention, and attacks by settler-released dogs. They are also routinely threatened with weapons by settlers and subjected to forced detention at Israeli checkpoints.

Sexual violence is becoming more prominent and reported. Soldiers and settlers take turn into exploiting the social stigma, knowing women and girls are less likely to report them. Women and girls have reported to WCLAC soldiers exposing themselves at checkpoints,

S. A.S., an 18-year-old from Alkhalil- Tel Rumeida, on May 20, 2025, while making her daily passage through the Atmar and Martyrs Street checkpoints in Alkhalil, was subjected to routine settler violence. Settlers regularly obstructed her access to work through verbal abuse and harassment, including the forced and invasive searches of her phone and bag at the checkpoint by the IOF.

"The settlers prevent me from going to work because they stay just 15 meters from our house. I endure the filthy language and insults from the soldiers at the checkpoint, they call me terrible names like 'sharmota,[26] daughter of a prostitute,' and 'dog.' They search my bag and phone at the checkpoint and

25 Ibid

26 Whore in slang Arabic.

sometimes forced Detention for 10 minutes, other times for an hour while I wait to cross to my home."

However, the other two women testified to a night raid, search, forced detention, and physical abuse by the IOF at the checkpoint. For example:

Zuhdiya A.R., 73, from Wadi Alsamen, experienced a violent night raid on May 19, 2025, when Israeli occupation forces stormed her home. During the raid, she was abducted and taken away in military vehicles, she and her daughter were physically assaulted by a military dog, and Zuhdiya was used as a human shield in an attempt to arrest her son. Her son turned himself in following her abduction, Zuhdiya was released same night, she said she was left with severe bruises.

Similarly, N.A.J., 34, who is nine months pregnant, was beaten along with her husband when Israeli soldiers stormed her house in the H2 area on the 3rd of May 2925, she said she was physically assaulted by Israeli soldiers and forcibly detained for several hours. She was hospitalized following that attack, leaving her with bruises and a broken nose all because her kids were playing ball in the street in front of her house.

Why is it a War Crime?

Methods and areas may vary but there is one thing in common: Palestinians all over Palestine are being forcibly displaced. We believe that the Israeli Occupation Forces are employing so many tactics, and here is how International Humanitarian Law tackles it in the Palestinian context:

Definition of Forced Displacement

Forced displacement refers to the involuntary removal of civilians from their homes or places of habitual residence due to conflict, violence, or coercion, often .without adequate legal justification or safeguards

Prohibition Under IHL

1. Geneva Convention IV (1949), Article 49:

"Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive."

- This explicitly bans the forcible transfer or deportation of civilians from occupied territory.
- Only temporary evacuations are permitted if required for the security of the civilians or imperative military reasons, and even then, they must be humane, safe, and non-permanent.

2. Customary IHL Rule 129 (ICRC):

- Reaffirms the prohibition of arbitrary displacement of civilians in both international and non-international armed conflicts.

Legal Consequences

- Forced displacement may amount to a war crime or crime against humanity, especially if carried out on a widespread or systematic basis (Rome Statute of the ICC, Articles 7 and 8).
- Occupying Power has the duty to ensure the protection and welfare of the occupied population and must not alter the demographic composition of the occupied territory.

Coercive Environment and Forced Displacement under IHL

Under International Humanitarian Law, displacement is considered "forcible" not only when people are physically removed from their homes, but also when they are compelled to leave due to a coercive environment created by the Occupying Power or other actors in this case Israeli Settlers. This understanding is supported by International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) jurisprudence, notably the Krstić case, as well as findings by the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) on the situation in the OPT (2018–2021), which explicitly recognize that a coercive environment fulfills the "forcible" element required to establish population transfer crimes[27].

27 International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Krstić (IT-98-33). https://www.icty.org/en/case/krstic

A coercive environment refers to a situation in which civilians feel they have no real choice but to flee their homes because of:

- Sustained violence or threat of violence (e.g., military raids, settler attacks)
- Systematic harassment or intimidation
- Severe movement restrictions or checkpoint closures
- Cutting off access to basic services (e.g., water, electricity, education, healthcare)
- Destruction of homes, shops, and infrastructure
- Legal insecurity or revocation of residency or building rights

Application to the Occupied Palestinian Territory

- Repeated instances of home demolitions, violent military raids, settler violence, and evacuations under fire, particularly in areas like Jenin, Tulkarem, Alkhalil, and Gaza, constitute unlawful forced displacement under IHL.
- Road closure and denial of Palestinians to move freely around the OPT is also causing so much harm to the economy and to small businesses resulting in forced displacement.
- These acts often lack the lawful justification of imperative military necessity and lead to permanent dispossession.
- The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry and UN Special Rapporteurs have repeatedly warned that Israel's actions in the West Bank (especially in Area C and places like Alkhalil H2, Masafer Yatta, and the northern camps) are creating coercive environments that lead to unlawful forcible transfers.
- The International Criminal Court (ICC) has recognized the forcible transfer of Palestinians as part of its investigation into the situation in Palestine since 2014.

Recommendations to Partners in Civil Society (Palestinian & International)

- Document & Report: Continue credibly gathering testimonies and evidence of coercive environments, settler violence, home demolitions, and restrictions on movement, while minding the importance of gender- and age-disaggregated data.
- Support Victims: Provide aid, including legal aid, psychosocial support, and emergency shelter to displaced communities.
- Strengthen Advocacy and Amplify Palestinian Voices: Ensure testimonies, especially from marginalized groups, are central in advocacy, media, and legal submissions, Counter disinformation by providing verified data and firsthand stories to local and international media outlets while prioritizing marginalized groups, including women-headed households, children, persons with disabilities, and survivors of sexual violence.

Recommendations to Third States (High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions)

- Condemn Publicly: Issue official statements condemning Israel's policies of forcible transfer and settlement expansion as violations of IHL, as it is a legal obligation under the Geneva Convention.
- Apply Diplomatic Pressure: Use bilateral and multilateral forums to demand that Israel end its systematic acts of forcible transfer.
- Impose arms embargo, suspend Military & Economic Support: End the transfer of arms, technology, or trade benefits that may contribute to violations of international law.
- Support Accountability Mechanisms: Back ICC investigations and other international legal avenues addressing the crime of forcible transfer and acts of genocide including The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel and the work of Special Rapporteurs.

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