

# Impacts of Israeli settlements in the West Bank on Palestinians’ rights to health and dignity

Medical Aid for Palestinians submission to upcoming report of UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Palestinian territory occupied since 1967

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## About Medical Aid for Palestinians

Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) is a humanitarian and development organisation operating in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) and Lebanon. Our key areas of work are women and children’s health; disability; mental health and psychosocial support; and emergency response, including the provision of essential equipment, medicines, training and other resources to support Palestinian health services to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Situational overview

Since its military occupation began in 1967, the government of Israel has actively pursued a policy of settling its civilian population in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. International humanitarian law prohibits the transfer of the occupying power’s population into the territory it occupies, as established Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Measures to expand and consolidate the presence of settlements, including the confiscation of occupation land for this purpose, are also prohibited.

The international community has repeatedly reaffirmed the illegality of Israel’s settlement project. UN Security Council Resolution 465 of 1980 determined that “Israel’s policy and practices of settling parts of its population and new immigrants in those territories constitute a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention”, and called on Israel to “dismantle the existing settlements and, in particular, to cease, on an urgent basis, the establishment, construction and planning of settlements in the Arab territories occupied

since 1967, including Jerusalem.”<sup>1</sup> UNSC Resolution 2334 of 2016 reiterated that Israel’s establishment of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) “constitutes a flagrant violation under international law” and demanded that Israel “immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and that it fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard.”<sup>2</sup>

To date, more than 280 settlements and outposts have been established in the oPt, comprising a population of more than 660,000 Israeli citizens living in annexed East Jerusalem, Area C of the West Bank, and inside the West Bank city of Hebron.<sup>3</sup> These settlements are supported by extensive physical infrastructure across the West Bank, including access-restricted roads, the separation barrier, checkpoints, military bases and closed military areas, and other movement restrictions. This infrastructure, covering approximately 40% of the West Bank,<sup>4</sup> has fragmented Palestinian communities into disconnected enclaves, restricting the growth of Palestinian population centres and the development of Palestinian infrastructure and economic activity.

Beyond the physical infrastructure, the settlements are also maintained by a restrictive and discriminatory bureaucratic regime and the frequently violent practices of military governance imposed on Palestinians in the West Bank which engender perpetual violations of Palestinians’ rights. These include a discriminatory planning and zoning regime which prevents Palestinians from building permanent infrastructure; the recurrent demolition of Palestinian structures built without permits; nightly raids of Palestinian homes; the military detention of Palestinian children; and arbitrary restrictions to freedom of movement.

Though settlers and Palestinians live under the effective control of a single polity – Israel – they are subjected to extremely different practices, policies, and systems of law. This is reflected in markedly divergent living conditions, access to healthcare, and enjoyment of fundamental rights. These inequalities have been further highlighted and exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, as exemplified by vastly different access to vaccines.<sup>5</sup>

### Area C

Israel maintains full civil and military control in the approximately 60% of the West Bank designated as ‘Area C’ under the 1995 Oslo II Accord. A population of approximately 300,000 Palestinians live in 532

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<sup>1</sup> UNSC Res 465 (1980) <https://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/5AA254A1C8F8B1CB852560E50075D7D5>

<sup>2</sup> UNSC Res 2334 (2016) <https://www.un.org/webcast/pdfs/SRES2334-2016.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Peace Now (2021) <https://peacenow.org.il/en/settlements-watch/settlements-data/population>

<sup>4</sup> B’tselem (2017) <https://www.btselem.org/settlements>

<sup>5</sup> MAP (February 2020) Equal access to COVID-19 vaccines: Who is responsible in the occupied Palestinian territory? <https://www.map.org.uk/downloads/map-position-paper---equal-access-to-covid-19-vaccines-.pdf>

communities entirely or partially in Area C,<sup>6</sup> alongside more than 440,000 Israeli citizens living in 132 settlements and 135 outposts.<sup>7</sup>

Palestinians are routinely prevented from building permanent infrastructure in Area C through a discriminatory and restrictive planning regime. Since 2000, Israel has only granted 3% (210 of 6,532) of permits to build in Area C applied for by Palestinians.<sup>8</sup> To meet their housing and livelihood needs, many Palestinians are left with little choice than to build without permits, risking demolition and displacement. Since 2009, Israel has demolished 5,970 Palestinian structures in Area C, displacing 8,258 people.<sup>9</sup>

Most Palestinian communities in Area C are not connected to the water or electricity network, face severely restricted access to agricultural or grazing land, and experience regular harassment and violence from settlers and the military. In 2013, the World Bank estimated the loss to the Palestinian economy due to Israel's control over area C at US \$3.4bn per annum,<sup>10</sup> a sum over four times greater than the total foreign aid received by the Palestinian Authority in 2016 (\$780 million).<sup>11</sup>

The inexorable expansion and consolidation of settlements in Area C is therefore enabled by the imposition of a coercive environment that puts many Palestinian communities at risk of forcible transfer.

### East Jerusalem

East Jerusalem was occupied and illegally annexed by Israel in 1967. Since then, the government of Israel has pursued discriminatory demographic goals, promoting illegal settlement of Israeli citizens while continuously and overtly seeking to drive Palestinian transfer from the city.<sup>12</sup> Today approximately 370,000 Palestinians live in East Jerusalem, alongside approximately 225,000 Israeli settlers.

In East Jerusalem, too, Israel imposes a discriminatory planning and zoning regime on Palestinians. While 35% of East Jerusalem has been confiscated for settlements, Palestinians are allowed to build on only 13%

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<sup>6</sup> There are 241 communities located entirely within Area C, with a population of approximately 67,000. OCHA (2017) OPT: Humanitarian facts and figures

[https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/factsheet\\_booklet\\_final\\_21\\_12\\_2017.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/factsheet_booklet_final_21_12_2017.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Peace Now (2021) <https://peacenow.org.il/en/settlements-watch/settlements-data/population>

<sup>8</sup> New Israel Fund (2020) New report on construction permits in the West Bank

<https://newisraelfund.org.uk/issue/construction-west-bank/>

<sup>9</sup> OCHA (2021) Data on demolitions and displacement in the West Bank

<https://www.ochaopt.org/data/demolition>

<sup>10</sup> World Bank (2013) Palestinians access to Area C key to economic recovery and sustainable growth

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/10/07/palestinians-access-area-c-economic-recovery-sustainable-growth>

<sup>11</sup> Norad (2017) [https://alaatartirdotcom.files.wordpress.com/2017/06/5-17-country-evaluation-brief\\_palestine.pdf](https://alaatartirdotcom.files.wordpress.com/2017/06/5-17-country-evaluation-brief_palestine.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> JLAC, Al Haq & MAP (2020) COVID-19 and the systematic neglect of Palestinians in East Jerusalem

<https://www.map.org.uk/downloads/covid-19-and-the-systematic-neglect-of-palestinians-in-east-jerusalem.pdf>

of land, much of which has already been built on.<sup>13</sup> Despite comprising 40% of Jerusalem's population, only 7% of housing permits are granted to Palestinians.<sup>14</sup> One third of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem lack a permit, placing more than 100,000 people at potential risk of displacement.<sup>15</sup> Since 2009, Israel has demolished 1,479 Palestinian structures in East Jerusalem, displacing 2,692 people.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the Jerusalem Municipality overtly avoids significantly investing in infrastructure and services in Palestinian neighbourhoods, where over 72 per cent of all Palestinians live below the poverty line.<sup>17</sup>

Israel's construction of a wall in and around East Jerusalem, the route of which was designed to incorporate Israeli settlements, and its associated permit and closure regime has sealed off Palestinian communities in the city from the rest of the West Bank, with clear negative impacts on Palestinian cultural, social and economic life and access to healthcare.

### Hebron

Approximately 20% of the city of Hebron (the 'H2 area') remains under direct Israeli control, with several hundred Israelis and around 33,000 Palestinians.<sup>18</sup> The presence of settlers in the centre of the city has a profound impact on the lives of Palestinians living there, who are subjected to a range of abusive policies, practices and phenomena including severe restrictions to movement and access to essential services, regular home incursions, and daily harassment and violence from settlers.<sup>19</sup>

## Impacts of settlements on social, economic and environmental determinants of health

In its General Comment 14, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights identified that:

“...the right to health embraces a wide range of socio-economic factors that promote conditions in which people can lead a healthy life, and extends to the underlying determinants of health, such

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<sup>13</sup> OCHA (2014) East Jerusalem: Key humanitarian concerns <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-200882/>

<sup>14</sup> Haaretz (2015) Only 7% of Jerusalem Building Permits Go to Palestinian Neighborhoods <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-only-7-of-jlem-building-permits-go-to-palestinian-neighborhoods-1.5432437>

<sup>15</sup> OCHA (2018) High numbers of Demolitions: the ongoing threats of demolition for Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/high-numbers-demolitions-ongoing-threats-demolition-palestinian-residents-east-jerusalem>

<sup>16</sup> OCHA (2021) Data on demolitions and displacement in the West Bank <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/demolition>

<sup>17</sup> JLAC, Al Haq & MAP (2020) COVID-19 and the systematic neglect of Palestinians in East Jerusalem <https://www.map.org.uk/downloads/covid-19-and-the-systematic-neglect-of-palestinians-in-east-jerusalem.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> WHO (2020) Health conditions in the oPt [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/WHA73/A73\\_15-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA73/A73_15-en.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> OCHA (2019) The humanitarian situation in the H2 area of Hebron City [https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/h2\\_spotlight\\_april\\_2019.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/h2_spotlight_april_2019.pdf)

as food and nutrition, housing, access to safe and potable water and adequate sanitation, safe and healthy working conditions, and a healthy environment.”<sup>20</sup>

The presence of the settlements and the discriminatory policies and practices of the Israeli authorities to maintain them have severe and wide-ranging impacts on the enjoyment by Palestinians of these and other key social, economic and environmental determinants of health, resulting in divergent health outcomes and deepening health inequalities between Palestinians and settlers.

These impacts have been compounded by the arrival of the COVID-19 crisis since March 2020. Staff of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society mobile clinic supported by MAP reported to us that they have witnessed increased unemployment and poverty, and in turn rising levels of malnutrition, anaemia in children, mental distress and gender-based violence among the marginalised Area C communities it serves during the pandemic.<sup>21</sup>

### Water

The WHO recommends a minimum safe water consumption of 100 litres per capita per day (l/c/d). **Israeli settlements are connected to water networks and the abundant water resources of the Jordan Valley, consuming an average of 369 l/c/d,**<sup>22</sup> with sufficient access to water resources to run export-led agricultural industries, swimming pools and spas.

Due to the restrictive planning regime, more than 70% of Palestinian communities in Area C are not connected to the water network, are unable to develop wells or essential water infrastructure. **In 2020, Israel demolished or confiscated 83 WASH structures in the West Bank, citing a lack of building permits.**<sup>23</sup> Instead, these communities must purchase water tanks from private sellers, at rates of six times the price of piped water (30 NIS per cubic metre vs 5 NIS per cubic metre), costing up to 18% of total family income. **According to the WASH cluster, 150,000 people in the West Bank access less than 50 l/c/d.**<sup>24</sup> **Some Area C communities consume less than 20 l/c/d.**<sup>25</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic, restricted water access in these communities has also frustrated essential hygiene measures needed to prevent the spread of the disease.

Limited access to water has clear impacts on the health and living standards of affected Palestinian communities, driving down hygiene standards and increasing the risk of water-borne diseases. For example, **Palestinian Bedouin children in the West Bank – living predominantly in Area C – are significantly more likely to suffer the giardiasis (a waterborne small intestine infection caused by the**

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<sup>20</sup> CESCR (2000) General Comment No. 14: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4538838d0.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> MAP (2021) <https://www.map.org.uk/news/archive/post/1220-ahonestly-the-mobile-clinic-is-our-only-hope-of-adequate-access-to-healthcare>

<sup>22</sup> UN Secretary-General (2013) Israeli settlements in the OPT (A/68/513) <http://undocs.org/en/A/68/513>

<sup>23</sup> WASH Cluster (2021) Critical access to water during COVID-19 endangered by a rise of demolitions in the West Bank [https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/WASHCLUS\\_150221.pdf](https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/WASHCLUS_150221.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> WASH Cluster (April 2021) infographic: Challenges accessing water in the West Bank <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/challenges-accessing-water-west-bank>

<sup>25</sup> OCHA (2017) OPT: Humanitarian facts and figures [https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/factsheet\\_booklet\\_final\\_21\\_12\\_2017.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/factsheet_booklet_final_21_12_2017.pdf)

**Giardia parasite) (32.5%) than Palestinian children in villages (8.2%) and camps (5.6%), and higher rates of infections identified in households not connected to water networks and those households exposed to displacement.**<sup>26</sup>

### Food security

A significant proportion of Palestinian households in Area C (38%) rely on insecure employment and daily wages for part of their income, many of these (38%) working in Israel or Israeli settlements.<sup>27</sup> More than three quarters (78%) of Area C households also rely on agriculture and livestock for party of their household incomes.

Israel's discriminatory planning and zoning policies, frequent demolitions of livelihood structures such as livestock shelters, and restrictions on access to land all directly undermine Palestinian livelihoods in Area C of the West Bank, particularly farming. Livelihoods have similarly been undermined by the building of the separation wall which, while designed to envelop settlements while excluding Palestinian populations, has cut tens of thousands of Palestinians from their land.

**As a result of livelihood restrictions, poverty has become entrenched, and moderate and severe food insecurity is higher among Area C communities (26%) compared to those in Areas A and B (17%).<sup>28</sup> Among Bedouin communities in Area C, food insecurity has been reported as high as 79%.<sup>29</sup>**

In turn, this food insecurity has direct and potentially life-long impacts on health. **A 2016 survey of malnutrition among children and their mothers in the Jordan Valley, an area that overwhelmingly lies within Area C, found that 16% of children under five years of age were stunted (small for their age). Bedouin children were more at risk of stunting (23%), compared to children living in villages (10%), and camps (9%).** Similarly, children from homes exposed to any form of forced displacement had higher prevalence of stunting, (19%), than children who had never been forcibly displaced (10%). Stunting has been linked to life-long impacts on physical health, cognitive development, and educational and economic outcomes.<sup>30</sup> The study also found that almost half of all children in the Jordan Valley (49.3%) and 19.1% of mothers were anaemic.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> PNIPH (2016) Prevalence and Determinants of Malnutrition and Intestinal Infections among Children and their Mothers in the Jordan Valley. p.25 <https://www.map.org.uk/downloads/preval1.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Oxfam & Birzeit University (2019) Addressing the needs of Palestinian households in Area C [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Area%20C%20Complete%20Report%20web\\_FIN\\_AL.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Area%20C%20Complete%20Report%20web_FIN_AL.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> PCBS (2016) Socio-economic and food insecurity survey 2014 [https://fcluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/sefsec2014\\_report\\_all\\_web.pdf](https://fcluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/sefsec2014_report_all_web.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> UNDP (2013) In focus: Bedouins in the occupied Palestinian territory <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/papp/docs/Publications/UNDP-papp-reserach-bedouinsoPt.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> Dewey & Begum (2011) Long-term consequences of stunting in early life <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21929633/>

<sup>31</sup> PNIPH (2016) Prevalence and Determinants of Malnutrition and Intestinal Infections among Children and their Mothers in the Jordan Valley <https://www.map.org.uk/downloads/preval1.pdf>

### Housing and basic amenities

Access to adequate housing is a prerequisite for the enjoyment of the right to health. Israel's discriminatory planning regime, imposed to support the consolidation and expansion of settlements, makes it almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain building permits across Area C and East Jerusalem. This contributes to a coercive environment, pressuring Palestinians to relocate from these areas.

**Though the Government of Israel stated that it would hold almost all demolitions of Palestinian structures during the pandemic,<sup>32</sup> the number of Palestinians made homeless because of demolitions reached a four-year year high in 2020.<sup>33</sup>** These demolitions are additionally harmful during the COVID-19 pandemic as they inhibit necessary COVID-19 infection control measures including stay-at-home orders, and compound the exposure of affected families to food insecurity and dependency on humanitarian assistance.

In the H2 area of Hebron, 70% of households report that their homes are in need of repair or renovation to improve their habitability (e.g. because of poor ventilation, leaks, or unsafe doors and windows). More than three quarters report that access restrictions imposed in the area inhibit the entry of construction materials, equipment or materials, and 34% report that settler harassment inhibits necessary works.<sup>34</sup>

### Healthy environment

Industrial pollution, quarrying, waste dumping and untreated wastewater runoff from settlements also present significant environmental hazards that undermine Palestinian health. A 2020 report by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) found that the Israeli environmental regulations are less stringently monitored in the 11 industrial settlements in the West Bank than inside Israel.<sup>35</sup> The presence of industrial settlements such as Nizanei Shalom, where the Geshuri chemical works is located near the Palestinian city of Tulkarm, have been associated with poor health outcomes in nearby Palestinian communities including "high rates of cancer, asthma, and eye and respiratory health anomalies compared with residents in other districts."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Times of Israel (April 2020) Israel agrees to halt most demolitions of Palestinian buildings during pandemic <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-agrees-to-halt-most-demolitions-of-palestinian-buildings-during-pandemic/>

<sup>33</sup> Independent (October 2020) Number of Palestinians made homeless by Israeli demolitions hits four-year high despite pandemic <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/israel-palestine-west-bank-jerusalem-demolitions-homeless-b1451560.html>

<sup>34</sup> OCHA (2019) The humanitarian situation in the H2 area of Hebron City [https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/h2\\_spotlight\\_april\\_2019.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/h2_spotlight_april_2019.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> UNEP (2020) State of Environment and Outlook Report for the occupied Palestinian territory 2020 <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/state-environment-and-outlook-report-occupied-palestinian-territory-2020>

<sup>36</sup> Qato & Nagra (2013) Environmental and public health effects of polluting industries in Tulkarm, West Bank, occupied Palestinian territory: an ethnographic study. Lancet 382:S29 [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(13\)62601-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(13)62601-X/fulltext) See also Al Haq (2015) Environmental injustice in the occupied Palestinian territory



2.5 million cubic metres (mcm) of wastewater from settlements is untreated and disposed of into streams and absorption pits, severely affecting a number of Palestinian communities. According to UNEP, these include:

- The Wadi al-Nar area, affected by 4,500 m<sup>3</sup> of wastewater per day from the settlements near Jerusalem;
- The north-eastern region of Hebron, affected by wastewater from settlement wineries;
- The Wadi Qana area, affected by wastewater from the Ariel settlements and other settlements in the area;
- Wadi Qalqilya, Wadi Fukeen, Jenin and Wadi al-Samn in Hebron, and Zawata in Nablus, all affected by settlement wastewater; and
- Settlements like Barqan and others surrounding Salfit impacting Bruqin and villages nearby Salfit<sup>37</sup>

Settlements in the West Bank produce around twice the amount of solid waste per capita (1.9kpg/capita/day) than the Palestinian population (0.9kg/capita/day), placing additional strains on West Bank waste management sites.<sup>38</sup>

The uprooting of trees, destruction of Palestinian cultivated land, discriminatory management of water resources and the construction of the separation wall in service of the settlements have all also contributed to environmental degradation, desertification and impacted local ecosystems and biodiversity in the West Bank.

### Access to health services

With permission to build routinely denied, there is no meaningful development of permanent health infrastructure in Area C to meet the needs of its residents. There are no permanent Palestinian healthcare centres serving Palestinians in Area C, while Israeli settlers access modern hospitals and clinics. According to UN OCHA, nearly half of communities in Area C report that their access to emergency and basic health care is impeded by the long distances to the nearest clinic, and/or the need to pass a checkpoint.<sup>39</sup> In 2020 there were 593 permanent obstacles (checkpoints, earth mounds, roadblocks, gates etc) across the West Bank, frustrating freedom of movement for Palestinians while serving to consolidate settlements, as reported by OCHA:

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[https://www.alhaq.org/cached\\_uploads/download/alhaq\\_files/publications/Environmental.Injustice.Report.En.pdf](https://www.alhaq.org/cached_uploads/download/alhaq_files/publications/Environmental.Injustice.Report.En.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> UNEP (2020) State of Environment and Outlook Report for the occupied Palestinian territory 2020. p 74  
<https://www.unep.org/resources/report/state-environment-and-outlook-report-occupied-palestinian-territory-2020>

<sup>38</sup> Ibid p.111

<sup>39</sup> OCHA (2017) OPT: Humanitarian facts and figures  
[https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/factsheet\\_booklet\\_final\\_21\\_12\\_2017.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/factsheet_booklet_final_21_12_2017.pdf)



“Many of the above restrictions are aimed at protecting and providing space for the expansion of Israeli settlements and their gradual annexation to Israel, some de jure (as in East Jerusalem) and others de facto (as in Area C), in contravention to international law”<sup>40</sup>

As a result, **more than 160,000 people in Area C, the Hebron H2 area and the Seam Zone are dependent on mobile clinic services provided by NGOs, the UN and the Palestinian Authority for primary healthcare.**<sup>41</sup>

Access to communities for these mobile clinics is also sometimes obstructed by the Israeli authorities, for example in July 2018 a mobile clinic supported by MAP was prevented from entering the Jordan Valley community of Khan al Ahmar that was under imminent risk of forcible transfer.<sup>42</sup> **A 2014 survey of households in Area C that had experienced a medical emergency in the previous year requiring urgent medical treatment found that 39% reported obstacles to accessing treatment as a result of Israeli military, checkpoints or settlers.**<sup>43</sup> Respondents also reported significant barriers resulting from the long distances to services (65%) and lack of transport (72%).

Israel’s separation barrier, built far beyond the Green Line in places in order to encompass major settlement blocs, imposes significant barriers to Palestinian access to healthcare. **In 90% of ambulance transfers into East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, patients were forced to undergo a “back-to-back” transfer procedure, being moved from a Palestinian-registered ambulance to an Israeli-registered ambulance, causing unnecessary discomfort, risk and delay.**<sup>44</sup> The wall’s associated bureaucratic regime also cuts the majority of Palestinians off from major Palestinian hospitals in East Jerusalem which offer services such as radiotherapy which are unavailable elsewhere in the oPt. The majority of patients and their companions from the West Bank who lack a Jerusalem ID must apply for a permit to access these hospitals. However, 19% of these were denied or delayed in 2019.<sup>45</sup>

In Hebron, the extensive security infrastructure put in place by the Israeli authorities to protect the small number of settlers in the H2 area severely restricts access to healthcare. Palestinian Red Crescent Society ambulances and paramedics face frequent obstruction and delays due to checkpoints or other barriers. **Of 63 households surveyed that requested an ambulance in a six-month period in 2018, the average waiting**

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<sup>40</sup> OCHA (2020) Humanitarian needs overview [https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/hno\\_2021.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/hno_2021.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> WHO (2020) Health conditions in the oPt [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/WHA73/A73\\_15-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA73/A73_15-en.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> MAP (2018) Urgent action needed to stop impending demolition and forcible transfer of Bedouin communities <https://www.map.org.uk/news/archive/post/877-urgent-action-needed-to-stop-impending-demolition-and-forcible-transfer-of-bedouin-communities>

<sup>43</sup> Oxfam & Birzeit University (2019) Addressing the needs of Palestinian households in Area C [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Area%20C%20Complete%20Report%20web\\_FIN\\_AL.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Area%20C%20Complete%20Report%20web_FIN_AL.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> WHO (2020) Health conditions in the oPt [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/WHA73/A73\\_15-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA73/A73_15-en.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> WHO (2020) Health conditions in the oPt [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/WHA73/A73\\_15-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA73/A73_15-en.pdf)

time in the prohibited area of H2 was 44 minutes. Eighteen households (29%) reported that an ambulance could not reach their homes at all.<sup>46</sup>

Settlers in all areas of the West Bank, by contrast, enjoy unimpeded access from the occupied West Bank to modern hospitals, clinics and other health services located inside the settlements or in Israel.

## Direct threats to Palestinian health and wellbeing resulting from the settlements

### Physical injury

The presence of settlements on Palestinian land presents a number of direct threats to the physical and mental health of Palestinians. Physical violence, harassment and coercion by the military and settlers is a daily factor of life for many Palestinians living in Area C, Hebron and East Jerusalem. **In the four-year period from 1 April 2017 – 1 April 2021, 446 Palestinians were injured and 7 killed in settler attacks in the West Bank in 2,905 incidents.**<sup>47</sup> 31,726 trees were also vandalised, including olive trees and other plants that are a source of food and livelihoods for Palestinian farmers.

**Rates of settler violence are also high in the H2 area of Hebron, where nearly 70% of households have experienced settler violence or harassment since 2015,** of which nearly half (48%) report having experienced physical assault and a third (33%) stoning by settlers.<sup>48</sup>

The rate of settler attacks has been rising since 2016, and has continued during the COVID-19 pandemic despite lockdown and social distancing measures in the West Bank.<sup>49</sup> Israeli authorities routinely fail to hold the perpetrators of these attacks to account, failing its duty as an occupying power to ensure the safety and welfare of the Palestinian population.<sup>50</sup> In 2013, the report of the UN independent Fact-Finding Mission noted that “the intent of these attacks was to pressure Palestinians to leave the land.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> OCHA (2019) The humanitarian situation in the H2 area of Hebron City  
[https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/h2\\_spotlight\\_april\\_2019.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/h2_spotlight_april_2019.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> UN OCHA (April 2021) <https://www.ochaopt.org/page/settler-related-violence>

<sup>48</sup> OCHA (2019) The humanitarian situation in the H2 area of Hebron City  
[https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/h2\\_spotlight\\_april\\_2019.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/h2_spotlight_april_2019.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> B'tselem (April 2020) Spike in settler violence during pandemic: Palestinians and homes repeatedly attacked, [https://www.btselem.org/video/20200412\\_spike\\_in\\_settler\\_violence\\_during\\_pandemic#full](https://www.btselem.org/video/20200412_spike_in_settler_violence_during_pandemic#full)

<sup>50</sup> Of the 1,163 Israeli police investigations into offenses perpetrated by Israeli citizens against Palestinians in the West Bank assessed by Yesh Din between 2005-2017, only 8.1% resulted in indictments. See: Yesh Din (December 2017) Law enforcement on Israeli civilians in the West Bank: <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/files.yesh-din.org/December+2017+Law+Enforcement+Datasheet/LAW+ENFORCEMENT+Data+12.17+-+ENGLISH.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> UN independent international fact-finding mission (2013)  
[https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session22/A-HRC-22-63\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session22/A-HRC-22-63_en.pdf)

### Mental health and quality of life

The policies and practices of Israel associated with the maintenance of its settlement enterprise – including constant restrictions on free movement as a result of checkpoints and barriers, harassment by settlers, regular contact with a foreign occupying military force, and demolitions of homes and livelihoods<sup>52</sup> – feed pervasive experiences of humiliation, personal insecurity, and ‘feeling broken or destroyed’ among Palestinians.<sup>53</sup> House raids, arrests and military detention all have serious repercussions for Palestinian children in the West Bank,<sup>54</sup> and these practices are inextricably linked to the presence of settlements: most children detained by the military live within 2km of a settlement.<sup>55</sup>

Surveys using the WHO’s ‘quality of life’ (QoL) assessment tool, which measures subjective wellbeing, have shown lower self-reported quality of life among people in the oPt when compared to other countries where the tool has been used: *“In a population that has endured generations of war-like conditions and chronic exposure to violence, the results potentially point to the influence of the political context in explaining QoL differences.”*<sup>56</sup>

**The majority of the Palestinian population of Area C measured high (47.2%) or moderate (42%) on a survey of human insecurity, reporting fears about threats to their safety and wellbeing and that of their families.**<sup>57</sup> Half (50%) reported experiencing fear about losing their homes to demolition or evacuation all or most of the time. Half also reported fear about displacement or uprooting (48.5%) and 60.8% reported fear about not being able to provide daily life necessities for their families. Human insecurity was higher among communities located in Area C territory designated as closed military zones or nature reserves. Most women in Area C communities also reported high (23.5%) or moderate (44.9%) levels of individual distress.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See: MDM (2016) Destroying Mental Health? Mental health and psychosocial impacts of the current wave of demolitions in Palestine <https://issuu.com/medecinsdumonde/docs/rapport-palestine-sante-mentale-20184a83851d368f3>

<sup>53</sup> Barber et al (2016) Mental suffering in protracted political conflict: Feeling broken or destroyed <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4883798/>

<sup>54</sup> MAP (2017) Health Under Occupation (Chapter 3) <https://www.map.org.uk/downloads/map-ch3-mental-health-and-quality-of-life.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> Military Court Watch (2019) Fact sheet <http://www.militarycourtwatch.org/page.php?id=a6r85VcpyUa4755A52Y2mp3c4v>

<sup>56</sup> Mataria et al (2009) The quality of life of Palestinians living in chronic conflict [https://fada.birzeit.edu/bitstream/20.500.11889/701/1/qol%20awad%20etc%202009\\_0.pdf](https://fada.birzeit.edu/bitstream/20.500.11889/701/1/qol%20awad%20etc%202009_0.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> Oxfam & Birzeit University (2019) Addressing the needs of Palestinian households in Area C [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Area%20C%20Complete%20Report%20web\\_FINAL.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Area%20C%20Complete%20Report%20web_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> More detail on the mental health impacts of Israel’s policies in the West Bank are available in Chapter 3 of MAP’s 2017 ‘Health Under Occupation’ report: <https://www.map.org.uk/downloads/health-under-occupation---map-report-2017.pdf>