



Occupied Palestinian Territory

Quick facts

Number of IDPs	116,000
Percentage of total population	3%
Start of current displacement situation	1967
New displacement in 2008	612
Returns in 2008	–
Causes of displacement	International armed conflict (occupation), human rights violations
Human development index	106

Since 1967, internal displacement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) has directly and indirectly followed policies and actions of the government of Israel, including house demolitions and the expropriation of land for settlement expansion, construction of the Separation Wall, revocation of residency rights, and military incursions and clearing operations. People have also been displaced where the regime of closures and limitations on freedom of movement have made the situation of residents of OPT's enclaves untenable.

Since the 1993 Oslo Accords most displacement has been reported in the West Bank's "Area C" (under Israeli control and administration) and East Jerusalem, as a consequence of the Separation Wall, the settlement programme and settler violence, revocation of residency rights in East Jerusalem and the military appropriation of land. In 2008, house demolitions continued in the West Bank (though a moratorium on demolitions was observed for several months in Area C). In Gaza the majority of displacement resulted from military incursions along "buffer zones" and border areas such as Rafah. In February 2008, an incursion into Gaza temporarily displaced several hundred people. At the very end of the year, the Israeli government launched a military operation in Gaza, which subsequently led to a large wave of displacement.

IDPs are thought to be dispersed among host communities in various areas. In the West Bank, many people have been forced to relocate away from Israeli settlements and related infrastructure; military zones and security strips; and areas affected by the Wall and its associated regime of restrictions in movement and access to land and other resources. People temporarily displaced due to incursions have sought shelter with relatives, or in public buildings or schools until the violence ends or longer-term accommodation becomes possible.

Palestinians, displaced or not, face a deepening protection crisis. Intermittent cycles of violence, pervasive restrictions on their movement, and discriminatory policies and regulations have increased the vulnerability of the community as a whole, while the humanitarian situation has worsened in Gaza as result of its near-total isolation since June 2007, following the takeover by Hamas. However, those displaced or at risk of displacement face specific protection concerns. Displace-

ment has entailed loss of family unity, social welfare and livelihoods, and has also had wide-ranging physical and psychological impacts including trauma and anxiety for children. Communities in areas under threat of expulsion or eviction have faced heightened protection risks, including harassment and intimidation. They include between 50,000 and 90,000 at risk of displacement due to the construction of the Wall, several thousand families in Area C and East Jerusalem affected by demolition orders, and the Jahaheen Bedouin community, whose traditional land rights are not recognised by Israel.

Internal displacement is generally not recognised by the government of Israel. The Israeli state remains the primary perpetrator of forced displacement and does not provide assistance or protection to IDPs. The Palestinian national authorities, despite attempts to address displacement, have been impaired by the ongoing policies of occupation, their limited jurisdiction under the Oslo accords, political turmoil and poor governance.

Though several UN agencies respond to concerns of victims of displacement within their respective mandates, there is no international agency in OPT with an explicit IDP protection mandate. Palestinian, Israeli and international NGOs have researched and publicised the impact of house demolitions and the Wall on Palestinian populations, and helped grassroots communities to prevent or seek to reverse processes of displacement, on occasion providing legal and other assistance to victims of eviction orders or demolitions.

For the vast majority of internally displaced people in OPT, durable solutions remain tied to the reversal of policies of occupation, and an eventual final resolution to the conflict. NGOs and experts have warned that the failure of the international community to address the underlying sources of forced displacement is increasingly rendering any notion of a two-state solution defunct. Prioritisation of the rights of those affected is ever more pressing, in light of the demographic changes that displacement entails and the continuing consequences that these changes will have for contested areas.