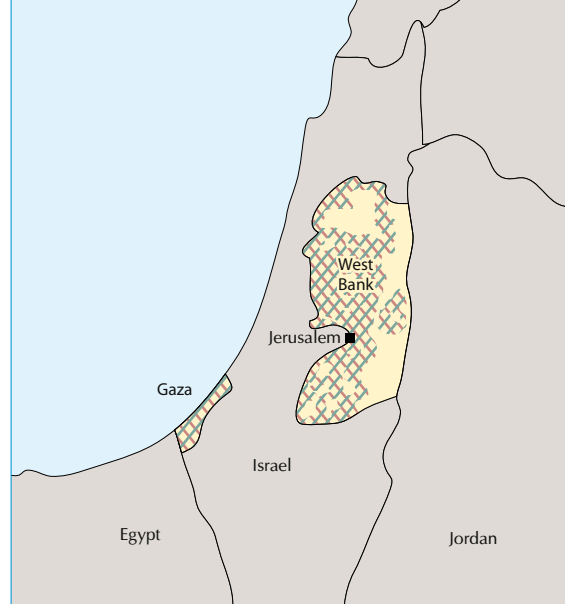


Occupied Palestinian Territory



Quick facts

Number of IDPs	At least 160,000
Percentage of total population	At least 3.7%
Start of current displacement situation	1967
Peak number of IDPs (Year)	250,000 (2009)
New displacement	100,000–200,000
Causes of displacement	International armed conflict



2009 marked one of the most violent periods in the West Bank and Gaza since they were first occupied in 1967. The three-week Israeli offensive launched in Gaza in December 2008 cost the lives of over 1,000 people and led to the displacement of between 100,000 and 200,000 people. Though reported estimates varied, at least a further 129,000 people had been displaced within the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) during the preceding four decades. As of the end of 2009, conservative estimates suggested that over 160,000 people were internally displaced, of whom 20,000 were in Gaza; however this latter figure may be much higher.

Tens of thousands of people were still displaced in Gaza at the end of the year, owing in part to the Israeli government's refusal to permit the transit of construction materials following the offensive. At the end of 2009, 20,000 people were receiving rental assistance but an undefined number remained displaced among the host community. IDPs were enduring precarious conditions with many living in makeshift structures or sharing overcrowded facilities with hosts.

In areas of the West Bank under Israeli administration, including East Jerusalem, several hundred Palestinians were displaced by house demolitions in 2009. There are no figures on the number of people whose residency in East Jerusalem was revoked during the year, but figures published for 2008 revealed an unprecedented number of revocations, affecting over 4,000 Palestinians. An estimated 100,000 people also remained at risk of displacement, including 60,000 in East Jerusalem alone.

The lack of profiling makes it hard to say where they have been displaced to. Generally, IDPs are thought to be dispersed among host communities in various areas away from Israeli infrastructure. In Gaza, people 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.

The persistence of displacement since 1967 attests to an Israeli policy of forced displacement for the purpose of acquiring land, redefining demographic boundaries, and divesting Palestinians of ownership guaranteed under international law. According to the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the human rights of IDPs, it has been caused by incursions and military clearing operations, evictions, land appropriations and house demolitions, the illegal expansion of settlements and

related infrastructure, the construction of the Separation Wall, violence by settlers, discriminatory denial of building permits, and the revocation of residency rights in East Jerusalem. Displacement has also been caused by restrictions on freedom of movement and a system of closures that make life untenable for many residents of Palestinian enclaves. In 2006, the former UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in OPT described the displacement arising from the construction of the Separation Wall as analogous to what had been described as ethnic cleansing in other contexts.

Palestinians, displaced or not, face a deepening protection crisis. Violence, 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 a result of its isolation since the 2007 takeover by Hamas and the 2008–2009 offensive. In addition, displacement has entailed loss of family unity, social welfare and livelihoods, and has had wide-ranging physical and psychological impacts including trauma and anxiety for children. Communities in areas under threat of expulsion or eviction have also faced harassment and intimidation.

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

Though several UN agencies have responded to concerns of victims of displacement within their respective mandates, there is no international agency in OPT with an explicit mandate for IDP protection. Palestinian, Israeli and international NGOs have researched and publicised the impact of house demolitions and the Separation 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 IDPs in OPT, durable solutions remain tied to the reversal of policies of occupation, and an eventual resolution to the conflict.