

Israel

Quick facts

Number of IDPs	200,000 (including children of IDPs)
Percentage of total population	2.9%
Start of current displacement situation	1948
New displacement in 2008	–
Returns in 2008	–
Causes of displacement	International armed conflict, human rights violations
Human development index	23

There were two principal groups of long-term IDPs within Israel in 2008: Arab villagers displaced during and after the conflict which accompanied the creation of Israel in 1948, and their descendants dispersed across the country; and Bedouin communities concentrated in the southern Negev region, who had been displaced in several waves. In addition, residents of towns near the borders with Lebanon and Gaza have in recent years experienced shorter-term displacement due to rocket attacks during periods of conflict with Hezbollah and Hamas.

The main concern of those displaced since 1948 has been to assert their right to the property they lost when they were displaced. Their situation effectively depends on the resolution

Syria

Quick facts

Number of IDPs	433,000 (including children of IDPs)
Percentage of total population	2.1%
Start of current displacement situation	1967
New displacement in 2008	–
Returns in 2008	–
Causes of displacement	International armed conflict (occupation), human rights violations
Human development index	105

In the 1967 war, Israel occupied Syria's western Golan Heights. Between 70,000 (according to Israeli estimates) and 153,000 people (according to the Syrian government) were forced to leave or fled into unoccupied Syria during the war. Following the end of the conflict, Syrians were not allowed to return by the Israeli government, and hundreds of villages were destroyed and razed to the ground. IDPs and their descendants numbered as many as 433,000 by 2007.

The Syrian government has made some efforts to help those displaced from areas bordering the occupied Golan Heights, including by rebuilding the town of Quneitra and neighbouring villages bordering the occupied area, but progress has been slow.

of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; in 2003 the Israeli Supreme Court accepted the government's argument that the current security situation and the persistent assertion by Palestinian refugees of their right of return could not justify allowing the claims of the internally displaced petitioners. Meanwhile, the majority of the land from which they were displaced has been nationalised.

The displaced Bedouin in the Negev, and indeed all the Bedouin communities there, face numerous protection concerns, including very limited access to livelihoods, education and other services. The government's programme to demolish villages it views as illegal means some communities have been recently displaced and others remain at risk of displacement.

The government has not mandated any office to address internal displacement; nor has it enacted or implemented any law or policy to protect IDPs. A number of NGOs including BADIL and ADALAH have advocated for the rights of IDPs, while the Regional Council of Unrecognized Arab Bedouin Villages in the Negev has helped to persuade relevant ministries to halt planned demolitions of villages.



The living conditions of displaced Syrians are not well documented; though most displaced families appear to have integrated, many have expressed a desire to return to Golan. Some reports suggested that IDPs have been given priority for public service jobs and university places. A pressing human rights issue is the separation from their families remaining in the Golan, caused by entry and exit restrictions imposed by the Israeli government.

Grassroots organisations on both sides of the border have called for the situation of the displaced people to be resolved. Observers remark that neither the return of the displaced population nor compensation for property lost can be envisaged without a peace agreement between Israel and Syria.

The international response to the situation has largely been political rather than humanitarian. Apart from ICRC, there are no international humanitarian or development organisations addressing the needs of affected people either in Golan or elsewhere in Syria.