



# Occupied Palestinian Territory



## Quick facts

Number of IDPs	At least 160,000
Percentage of total population	At least 4.0%
Start of current displacement situation	1967
Peak number of IDPs (Year)	250,000 (2009)
New displacement	About 600
Causes of displacement	Armed conflict, deliberate policy or practice of arbitrary displacement, human rights violations
Human development index	–

In 2010, there were at least 160,000 IDPs within OPT, who had been forced from their homes during the preceding four decades. They had been displaced by various activities of the Israeli government and army, which indicated a continuing policy of displacing Palestinians and divesting them of ownership rights guaranteed under international law in order to acquire land and redefine demographic boundaries.

Palestinians have been displaced due to Israeli settlement construction, settler violence, Israeli military incursions and clearing operations, evictions, land appropriations and house demolitions, discriminatory denial of building permits, and the revocation of residency rights in East Jerusalem. Many people had also been displaced by violence committed by settlers.

Tens of thousands of people were still displaced within Gaza at the end of 2010, two years after an intense three-week Israeli offensive had destroyed their homes. They were enduring precarious living conditions: many were living in makeshift structures while others were sharing overcrowded facilities with hosts. Their recovery had been hindered by the Israeli government's blockade of Gaza, in particular its refusal to allow in construction materials.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza improved slightly in 2010 as restrictions in place since 2006 were eased, however the blockade continued to stall reconstruction efforts. In 2010, 20,000 people in Gaza displaced in 2008 and 2009 were receiving rental assistance, while an undefined number were still staying with hosts. A further 2,900 families displaced due to previous incursions were still unable to rebuild their homes.

In the West Bank, people became more vulnerable as the illegal expansion of settlements and related infrastructure continued despite an Israeli moratorium on settlement growth. It was also estimated that 100,000 people remained at risk of displacement throughout the West Bank, including 60,000 in East Jerusalem alone. Communities threatened with expulsion or eviction, particularly along the Jordan Valley and south Hebron Hills in the West Bank and in the buffer zone in Gaza, faced harassment, violence and intimidation by Israeli settlers as well as Israeli authorities.

In areas of the West Bank under Israeli administration, including East Jerusalem, almost 600 people were displaced and 14,000 affected when their homes and livelihood related structures were demolished in 2010. The number of demolitions was 60 per cent higher than in 2009. There were no figures on the number of people whose residency in East Jerusalem was revoked during the year.

The Separation Wall has continued to cause restrictions on freedom of movement, and put tens of thousands of people at risk of displacement. The Wall was built beyond the "Green Line" demarcating areas administered as part of the State of Israel since 1949, and though some restrictions were removed in 2010, the continuing system of closures made life untenable for many residents of the enclaves which it had created.

There have been no exercises to profile the internally displaced population or assess their protection and humanitarian needs. IDPs are thought to be dispersed among communities in areas away from Israeli infrastructure. In Gaza, people displaced due to incursions have sought shelter with relatives, or in public buildings or schools until longer-term accommodation becomes possible. IDPs have lost livelihoods and access to social welfare, and families have been separated by displacement. Internally displaced adults and children have faced wide-ranging physical and psychological impacts.

The government of Israel has not generally recognised the internal displacement, even though it remains the primary perpetrator. 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, their limited jurisdiction under the Oslo Accords, political turmoil and poor governance.

Palestinian, Israeli and international NGOs have researched and publicised the impact of house demolitions and the Wall on communities, and sought to prevent displacement, on occasion providing legal and other assistance to victims of eviction orders or demolitions. There is no international agency in OPT with an explicit IDP protection mandate, though several UN agencies have responded within their respective mandates. Nevertheless, the international community has remained largely ineffective in preventing displacement in OPT.

For the vast majority of IDPs in OPT, durable solutions remain tied to the reversal of policies of occupation, and an eventual final resolution to the conflict. Human rights agencies and humanitarian NGOs have long warned that the failure of the international community to address the underlying sources of forced displacement is increasingly rendering any two-state solution unviable. 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.