

Photo: Camp for Internally Displaced People on the Egyptian border.  
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**Compelled to Flee:**  
**Cycles of Israeli forced displacement of Palestinians**

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مركز الميزان لحقوق الإنسان  
AL MEZAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

 **OXFAM**

Israel's devastating military assault on the Gaza Strip – deemed by the International Court of Justice to constitute a risk of genocide – has precipitated a catastrophic humanitarian crisis. This includes the forced displacement of nearly two million Palestinians within the besieged enclave, with reports emerging of Israeli plans to expel Palestinians en masse from Gaza. The orchestrated destruction of Gaza's civilian infrastructure, including essential services and facilities, together with the imposition of severe restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian aid, has rendered living conditions in Gaza untenable.<sup>1</sup> This is impacting women and girls differently and disproportionately. With an imminent risk of famine in Gaza, women and girls are expected to be hit the hardest. Women tend to eat less and last when access to food is restricted.



Another day here in the north of Gaza, and I can guarantee that 99% of families here cannot find anything to eat. You know what is hard and difficult when your children are crying out, crying from hunger, and you don't have anything to feed them. The markets here are empty, and you don't find anything to buy. Even if you find anything, it's only rice and way too expensive. We still ask ourselves what we did as civilians... to deserve to live in hunger. If we do not die from bombing, we will die from hunger.

**Jomana Elkhaili, Oxfam Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Assistant, northern Gaza**



I was pregnant when the war began, and I gave birth on the third day [of the war]. We fled under missile strikes, with debris and shattered glass flying everywhere. We arrived at the hospital, but it was soon bombed as well. We had to walk to Jabalia camp where we stayed for a week. When the week ended, we were forced to leave again... We were a complete mess when we arrived there, I gave birth as a result of fear. I gave birth under bombardment, the shattered glass and debris were everywhere... I was so scared that it jeopardized my pregnancy. My placenta was dropping before my contractions started... We faced many issues; I could not get nappies for my child nor sanitary pads for myself. We fled our homes in our summer clothes, we didn't expect the war to last this long. We do not have spare clothes nor mattresses to keep our children warm. We don't have nappies, no food and no baby formula, and no mattresses, either.

**Kawther, 27, mother to a newborn, now staying in a school shelter for people who have been displaced**

This is the latest chapter in a long history of mass forced displacement, expulsion and refugeehood that have overshadowed Palestinian existence since the start of the British Mandate (1922-1947)<sup>2</sup>. Since the creation of the State of Israel, successive Israeli governments have overseen a continuous cycle of dispossession of Palestinians. Yet the magnitude of the current violence and displacement is unprecedented in the Palestinian context, raising concerns that serious violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and atrocity crimes are being committed on a vast scale<sup>3</sup>. This is a human-made and entirely avoidable crisis. The international community must move immediately to bring it to an end.

Silence on claims of serious violations of international law has created an environment in which Israel acts with increasing impunity. Nations bear legal and moral obligations to protect civilians, prevent atrocity crimes and uphold international law. Failing to act condemns future generations of Palestinians to ongoing dispossession and exile, eroding hopes for a just and viable solution rooted in international law.

## Palestinian Displacement: a timeline

### A history of Palestinian displacement and its evolution

The displacement of Palestinians from their homes and lands has unfolded across decades, with several distinct 'waves' of displacement identified by Palestinian rights groups. These include the British Mandate (1922-1947); what Palestinians refer to as the Nakba ('catastrophe' in Arabic) (1947-1949), a phenomenon that the UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) argues is still unfolding<sup>4</sup>; and the beginning of Israel's military occupation of the West Bank including East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip (ongoing since 1967). During the Nakba, which took place immediately before and after the establishment of the State of Israel, an estimated 750,000 Palestinians were forced to flee their homes<sup>5</sup>, lands and communities in fear of violence perpetrated by Zionist militias<sup>6</sup> and, later, the Israeli military. In the period immediately before and after the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, massacres and targeted killings were perpetrated against the different communities.

Samir Zaqout, Deputy Director at the Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights, states that *'The 1948 Nakba is a defining moment in the history, collective memory and shared identity of the Palestinian people. As a descendant of Nakba survivors living in Gaza and currently grappling with forced multiple internal displacements over the past five months, it is natural for me to draw parallels with the experience my parents and grandparents went through in 1948. Looking at the situation in Gaza today, it is clear to me that the Nakba never ended, but rather persists as an ongoing process.'*

This experience left indelible scars on the collective Palestinian memory. Many sought refuge in neighbouring countries or further afield. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), nearly six million Palestinians<sup>7</sup> are today registered as refugees in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.<sup>8</sup> The Gaza Strip has a population of approximately 2.3 million, of whom 1.7 million – reaching 75%<sup>9</sup> – are Palestine refugees. A further 871,000 individuals are registered as refugees in the West Bank<sup>10</sup>.

The right of refugees to return to the territory from which they were displaced is enshrined in numerous instruments and provisions of international law. These include the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), and customary IHL.<sup>11</sup> It is a right set out in multiple resolutions of the UN Security Council,<sup>12</sup> and explicitly recognized in the case of Palestinian refugees in UN General Assembly resolution 194 (1948), which upholds the right of Palestinian refugees to return to the homes from which they were displaced during 1948.<sup>13</sup> Yet over the past 75 years, Israel has systematically failed to fulfil or recognize this right, preventing millions of Palestinian refugees from returning to their homes and lands<sup>14</sup>.

### Continued displacement policies and practices in the West Bank and Gaza

Israel's forced displacement of Palestinians did not end with the Nakba. Through a range of policies and practices, particularly those enacted following its seizure of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip in 1967, Israel has pursued the forced removal of Palestinians from areas under its control<sup>15</sup>.

Historically, such practices have focused on the West Bank. OCHA reported that from 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2023, more than 13,500 Palestinians, including more than 7,000 children, were displaced in the West Bank<sup>16</sup> as a result of Israel's unlawful destruction of Palestinian homes and other property as well as its illegal settlement policy, accompanied by a rise in settler violence<sup>17</sup>. This violence is enabled by an environment of almost complete legal impunity. Since 2005, more than 93% of all investigations opened by Israeli police into allegations of settler violence were closed without an indictment, with just 3% leading to a conviction.<sup>18</sup>

In the 16 years blockade since the closure of Gaza in 2007, Gaza residents have experienced multiple instances of displacement, often corresponding to escalations in Israeli military attacks. During the

2014 Gaza war, for example, approximately 485,000 Palestinians, 28% of the population, were internally displaced, as reported by UN OCHA.<sup>19</sup> Even after the cessation of hostilities, many individuals continued to face internal displacement for years afterwards as a result of the destruction of their homes.<sup>20</sup>

## Contemporary Palestinian displacement



My family and I have been displaced since five months. Our home was completely destroyed which means that we will have no place to return to. Our home was the incubator for our bittersweet memories with the family and friends. I do pray for an immediate ceasefire even if we no longer have a house but this ceasefire would halt further destruction and prevent further loss of life. It would facilitate vital humanitarian aid reaching Gaza, alleviating the suffering of people who have been starving, particularly in Gaza and North Gaza governorates.

**Haya Abdelhadi, Oxfam Gender Justice Officer**

Following the attacks of 7 October 2023 by Palestinian armed groups, in which some 1,200 Israeli and foreign nationals<sup>21</sup> were killed and 250 taken captive, Israel's all-out military campaign and total siege on Gaza has created a wave of forced displacement which dwarves all previous incidences. As of 3 April 2024, through thousands of land, air and sea attacks, and a large-scale ground invasion, Israel military offensive killed 32,975 Palestinians in Gaza, damaged or destroyed a reported more than 70% of homes and inflicted serious damage on essential civil infrastructure,<sup>22</sup> including medical facilities<sup>23</sup> and water, sanitation, sewage,<sup>24</sup> electricity, transport, and communication networks. In the face of such unlawful violence, and in search of safety, some 1.7 million Palestinians, 75% of Gaza's population,<sup>25</sup> have fled their homes and communities.

Since 7 October, there has also been a dramatic increase in settlement building and in the severity and regularity of Israeli settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank, accelerating displacement.<sup>26</sup> UN figures show that between 7 October and the beginning of March there have been 603 settler attacks against Palestinians in the West Bank resulting in casualties and property damages (more attacks happen on daily bases that do not always lead to casualties and property damages), and 1,240 Palestinians from 19 herding communities have been displaced as a direct result of settler violence.<sup>27</sup> According to human rights groups,

'[Israeli] government ministers and other officials are endorsing this violence and in many cases the military is present or even participate in violent incidents, including in cases where settlers have killed Palestinians.'<sup>28</sup>

Palestinian collective identity is thus inextricably linked with, and shaped by, the legacy of mass forced displacement and refugeehood spanning decades. This historical context has cultivated a deep-rooted Palestinian connection to the land, with Palestinians



Following Israel's military offensive on Gaza in the summer of 2014, which resulted in the killing of over 2,200 Palestinians and the destruction or damage of more than 30,000 housing units, it required several years to reconstruct Gaza. The prolonged period required for reconstruction was mainly attributed to Israel's closure policies concerning Gaza. As a result, hundreds of families remained internally displaced for years. Considering the extensive destruction of housing units and other civilian infrastructure during Israel's ongoing genocidal military campaign, the rebuilding of Gaza is anticipated to span decades.

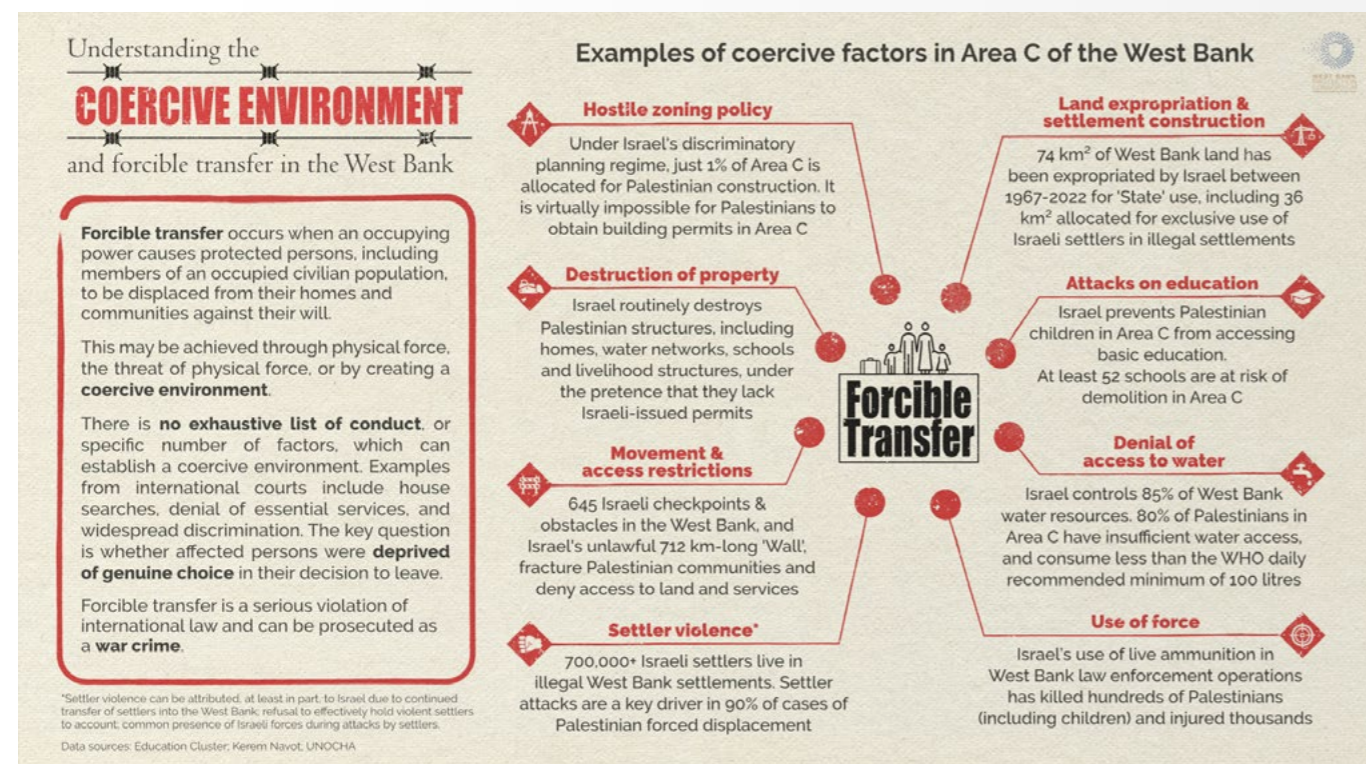
**Issam Younis, Director of Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights**

inside Gaza describing the prospect of permanent exile as a fate worse than bombs.<sup>29</sup>



I work with an international organization in the humanitarian sector. But unfortunately, at this time, during the recent assault on Gaza, I wasn't able to help anyone, as I was amongst those who needed help. I was displaced from my home three times. As a woman, I'm suffering. I don't have access to the basic necessities of life. I suffered during my period. There was no water available for me to get clean. I had no sanitary pads for my own needs throughout my period. We feel helpless looking in our children's eyes, we are unable to ease their worries. We cannot say "It will be alright" or "You're safe". Truthfully, there is no safe place in Gaza. Nowhere is safe here, north or south. We only want this war to stop immediately. We request for the bloodshed, the killing of women and children to stop. My biggest wish now is to go back home. To sleep on my own bed, and use my own bathroom, that's all.

**Anonymous, staff member at ActionAid Palestine in Gaza**



## Forced displacement in international humanitarian law

Forced displacement can occur in various contexts.<sup>31</sup> In the context of war, IHL places specific obligations on an occupying power regarding the treatment of the civilian population under its control. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 explicitly prohibits an occupying power from deporting or forcibly transferring members of the occupied civilian population, regardless of motive. This provision is a cornerstone of the laws

of occupation; it is designed to prevent demographic changes being made by the occupying power to the occupied territory, regardless of any 'justification' it may provide for such changes. It underscores the principle that the rights and dignity of the civilian population must be protected, reflecting an occupying power's broader obligations to ensure the welfare and security of those under its administration.

As per Article 6(e), Element 1 of The Rome Statute Elements of Crimes, the 'forcible' aspect of the displacement is 'not restricted to physical force, but may include threat of force or coercion, such as that caused by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression or abuse of power against such person or persons or another person, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment'.<sup>32</sup> The key question is whether the displacement was involuntary, i.e. if the 'relevant persons had no real choice' in their 'decision' to leave.<sup>33</sup>

**Occupation:** a situation when, during an international armed conflict, a territory, in full or in part, comes under the effective provisional control of a foreign power without consent.

**Forcible transfer:** forced displacement by an occupying power, without grounds permitted by international law, of members of an occupied civilian population *within* the borders of a territory.

**Deportation:** forced displacement by an occupying power, without grounds permitted by international law, of members of an occupied civilian population *beyond* the borders of a territory.

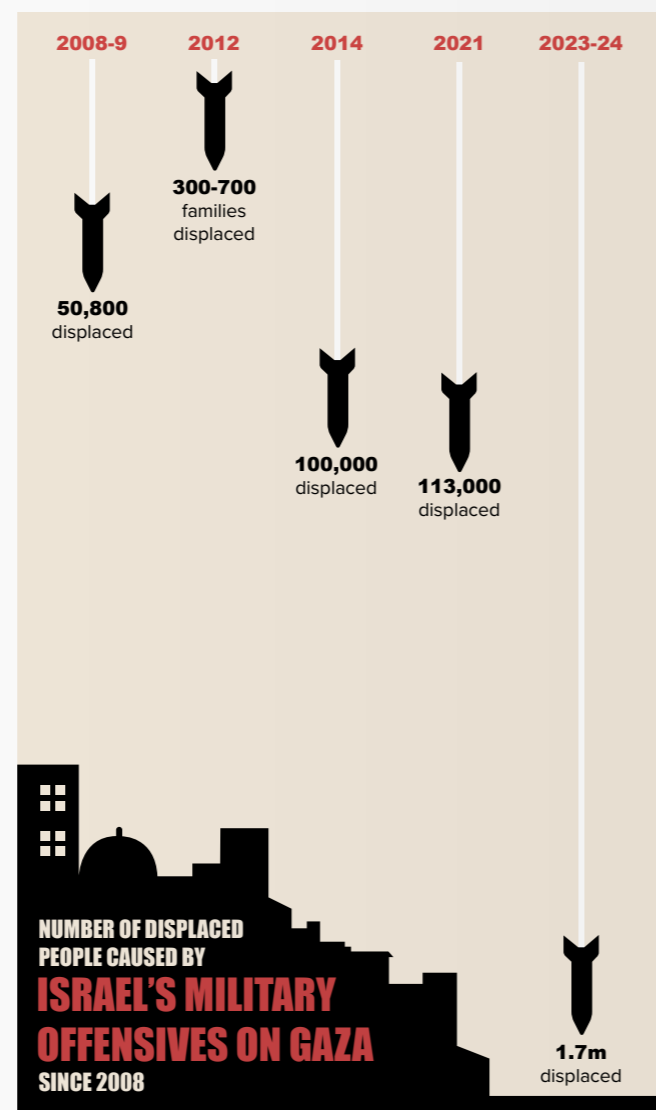
**Evacuations:** temporary removal of a civilian population during armed conflict to protect that population from the effects of military operations, or when removal is essential to permit legitimate military operations. To the extent possible, affected persons must receive adequate human aid during displacement.

## Evacuations and international humanitarian law

IHL prohibits an occupying power from carrying out either individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations, of members of the civilian population

living under occupation. The sole exception to this prohibition is outlined in Article 49(2) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which permits the occupying power to carry out total or partial evacuations of a specific area solely to safeguard the security of the civilian population, or when deemed necessary for reasons of military imperatives. This relates to scenarios where the civilian population risks serious harm, for example from intense bombing, or where its presence would prevent the execution of lawful military operations in conformity with IHL.<sup>38</sup>

However, **for evacuations to be lawful, they must be temporary**, with displaced persons being allowed to return to their homes as soon as hostilities end. In addition, the occupying power is obligated to provide, as far as possible, displaced persons with access to shelter, hygiene facilities, healthcare, safety and nutrition, and to ensure that family members are not separated.<sup>39</sup>



## Israel's mass forced displacement of Palestinians within Gaza

At the beginning of its bombardment and following ground invasion in October 2023, Israel issued a series of evacuation orders covering the entirety of the northern Gaza Strip. These orders forced the evacuation of some 1.1 million Palestinians, within a mere 24-hour timeframe, to areas where little or no humanitarian aid was available. To compound the resulting crisis, designated 'safe' routes from northern Gaza to areas south of Wadi Gaza, such as Salah al-Din Road and the coastal highway, were targeted by airstrikes<sup>40</sup> and reportedly subject to attack from ground forces and other hazards<sup>41</sup> that jeopardized safe passage.

As Israel's ground invasion advanced southward, Israeli forces issued further mass evacuation orders displacing families multiple times, for example in Khan Younis in December 2023<sup>42</sup> and January 2024<sup>43</sup>.

The transformation of Khan Younis from a proclaimed 'safe zone' by Israel into a battle ground lays bare the intensifying humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. Moreover, the erratic and inconsistent evacuation instructions,<sup>45</sup> compounded by a lack of access to electricity and

**||** We really need the basic necessities; it is difficult to get fresh drinking water. My son goes on several trips to fill only one gallon [with water]. It is a long way to get water, and it is also tiring. Sometimes my kids fall asleep without water because we couldn't get any.

**Suhaila, a mother who has been displaced**

the internet, plunged residents into confusion and vulnerability. Consequently, around 1.5<sup>46</sup> million people are now crowded into Rafah Governorate, Gaza's southernmost governorate at the border with Egypt. Before the war, this was home to around 280,000 people;<sup>47</sup> today, six times as many people are squeezed into the area.

As the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>48</sup> and the Norwegian Refugee Council<sup>49</sup> have highlighted, Israel's evacuation orders failed to provide



**||** I spent the last three months of my pregnancy as a displaced person, sleeping on the floor. I was ill and exhausted, and that heavily affected my pregnancy. When my contractions started, an ambulance took me to Al-Awda hospital in Nuseirat. It was such a long way there. We were continuously attacked on the way to the hospital. And the hospital barely had enough resources. I tried getting some baby essentials. Not much was available for me, and I barely had any money to buy what I need. I bought used clothes, just a few pieces to get by. But I only managed to get two changes of clothes for my baby. I didn't have proper food or drinks to help with my milk supply after I gave birth. Toilets [at the shelter] are dirty and very polluted. And hepatitis is spreading. I was really scared for my baby [being at risk] from disease. There's a large number of people living here, and it's bad for a newborn. It is unsanitary and unhealthy for a baby to live here. I'm sad that my baby has been born amid this suffering and need.

**Fatima, new mother, displaced to a school shelter<sup>44</sup>**

safe routes of travel, safe final destinations where people's basic humanitarian needs can be met or guarantees of return once hostilities have ceased. As such, they cannot constitute lawful evacuations under IHL. The resulting displacement is thus likely to constitute forcible transfer; this is a grave breach of IHL and is defined as both a war crime<sup>50</sup> and a crime against humanity<sup>51</sup> under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Other warfare practices which Israel is alleged<sup>52</sup> to have employed in Gaza – which would naturally contribute to and/or exacerbate the effects of forced displacement – also amount to war crimes, these include directing attacks against civilians<sup>53</sup> and civilian objects,<sup>54</sup> launching indiscriminate attacks,<sup>55</sup> starvation<sup>56</sup> and collective punishment.<sup>57</sup>



The women of Palestine are enduring some of the direst conditions ever witnessed. Here in Gaza, we live in a state of conflict that affects every facet of our existence. Many are displaced from their homes, living in tents without the basic necessities for survival. They lack access to food, hospitals, security or safety. We, at The Palestinian Development Women Studies Association (PDWSA), strive to provide the appropriate response to women's needs. However, the ongoing war has made us victims too. With the constant displacement and limited telecommunications, our humanitarian response is significantly hindered.

**Sahar, Palestinian Development Women Studies Association (PDWSA), a partner of ActionAid in Gaza**

## Israeli government plans to deport Palestinians across international borders

Since the onset of the current Israeli offensive on Gaza, reports have emerged of plans by Israeli governmental bodies and officials to 'relocate', or expel, Palestinian residents of Gaza to areas outside the OPT.

One of the most prominent 'concepts' proposed, in a leaked paper drafted by Israel's Intelligence Ministry,<sup>61</sup> is an initiative entailing the protracted or permanent mass displacement of Palestinians from Gaza to the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula. According to a separate paper<sup>62</sup> authored by an Israeli think tank headed by a former Israeli national security advisor, the 7 October attacks represent 'a unique and rare opportunity to evacuate the whole Gaza Strip in coordination with the Egyptian

In December 2023, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Paula Gaviria Betancur, warned<sup>58</sup> that Palestinians in Gaza were at risk of 'ethnic cleansing', stating that 'Israel is seeking to permanently alter the composition of Gaza's population with ever-expanding evacuation orders and widespread and systematic attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure'<sup>59</sup> in the whole besieged enclave. Current and previous UN Special Rapporteurs to the OPT have taken similar positions.<sup>60</sup>

government'. In October 2023, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly lobbied European counterparts to pressure Egypt<sup>63</sup> into accepting Palestinians displaced from Gaza.

Senior Israeli officials are also reportedly discussing the mass displacement of Palestinians in Gaza to other third countries.<sup>64</sup> In January 2024, three months into Israel's military assault on Gaza, it was reported<sup>65</sup> that Israeli officials have privately reached out to several African countries to explore the possibility of these states accepting permanent resettlement of large numbers of Palestinians from Gaza. Prime Minister Netanyahu is reported to have requested a 'thinning out'<sup>66</sup> of the Gaza

population and claimed that 'our problem is [finding] countries that are willing to absorb Gazans, and we are working on it'.<sup>67</sup> Within the same month, Israel's Communications Minister, Shlomo Karhi, stated, 'we certainly need to encourage emigration' from Gaza. When pressed on how Israel would achieve this, he replied that 'the war does what it does'.<sup>68</sup>

These reported plans have been revealed against the backdrop of settler groups' open advocacy and promotion of the re-establishment of Israeli settlements inside Gaza following the end of the present hostilities. Though seemingly not official Israeli policy, such initiatives have received explicit support from Israeli ministers<sup>69</sup> who are also advocating for resettling Palestinians from Gaza.<sup>70</sup>

In response to these emerging reports, on 11 January 2024, while proceedings were simultaneously taking place at the International Court of Justice relating to alleged violations by Israel of the Genocide Convention, Prime Minister Netanyahu stated that 'Israel has no intention of permanently occupying Gaza or displacing



Rafah has become the destination for displaced people who hope to escape the bombardment. Now, if you walk in Rafah's streets, you feel like it's a pressure cooker. Everything is overcrowded, and the city's capacities and facilities need to meet the needs of the people. There are very limited food supplies, inadequate health and sanitation services, and a shortage of hospital and healthcare facilities... Shelters are also extremely crowded, and rainfall has worsened the situation. Many people who fled from their homes didn't bring enough clothes or blankets because they thought it would only be a couple of days before they could return home. However, days turned into weeks, and weeks turned into months. Many makeshift tents cannot withstand the wind and rain, leaving them and their children sick. It is very saddening to see children get sick only because they couldn't find warm clothes or a warm shelter to stay in.

**Ghada Alhaddad, Oxfam Media and Communications Officer, Gaza**



We are still suffering inside the Gaza Strip, especially in Rafah which currently accommodates 1,500,000 people in a small area of land which should only accommodate 250,000. The needs of women and children are great. There is a need for psychological support for women due to the [anxiety] and fear they experience as a result of the successive bombing of all areas of Gaza. Women and children are most affected by the suffering experienced during displacement and while living in shelter centres or inside tents. Most pregnant women who [have] attended group therapy [say they] fear going into labour and not being able to find a doctor. They fear that they may need a caesarean section without aesthetic. The anxiety overwhelms them.

**Buthaina Subeh, director of Wefaq Association, a partner of ActionAid in Gaza**

its civilian population.<sup>71</sup> This statement, however, must be weighed against the plans apparently being explored by his administration, as well as Israeli military conduct in Gaza. On 9 February 2024, it was publicly announced that Netanyahu ordered<sup>72</sup> Israeli forces and the security establishment to submit a plan to the Cabinet for 'evacuating the population' from Rafah.

Under IHL, the prohibition of deportation and forcible transfer does not require the existence of a formal plan which seeks to achieve such displacement. Israel's physical destruction of the Gaza Strip and its essential infrastructure, coupled with its systematic deprivation of humanitarian aid essential for the survival of Gaza's occupied civilian population<sup>73</sup>, has turned Gaza into a nightmare, depriving them of genuine choice. According to IHL, if Palestinians from Gaza are displaced to a location outside of the OPT due to the impossible living conditions imposed by Israel, such displacement could be considered deportation/ forced displacement across an international border<sup>74</sup>.

## The international community must act now

For decades, the Israeli government has systematically worked to expel Palestinians from the areas it controls. This strategy, evident in the West Bank through coercive measures and the restriction of access to resources, is now being intensified in Gaza at a horrific scale, resulting in a large-scale humanitarian crisis. Use of starvation tactics<sup>75</sup> and the restriction of access to basic necessities<sup>76</sup> and services in Gaza underscore Israel's intent to control, coerce and, ultimately, displace the Palestinian population.<sup>77</sup>

Forcible transfer and deportation are serious violations of international law and atrocity crimes. Third states have a legal obligation to stop existing transfers and prevent such acts taking place in future.<sup>78</sup> This obligation must also be viewed in light of the finding by the International Court of Justice in January 2024<sup>79</sup> that it is plausible that Israel's acts in Gaza could amount to genocide<sup>80</sup>.

The international community's public response to Israel's reported deportation plans has been unequivocal. US President Joe Biden stressed<sup>81</sup> the importance of 'ensuring that Palestinians in Gaza are not displaced to Egypt or any other nation', with other members of the US administration describing Palestinian resettlement to the Sinai Peninsula as a 'nonstarter'.<sup>82</sup> In a statement<sup>83</sup> issued on 3 January 2024, the US 'reject[ed] recent statements from Israeli Ministers Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir advocating for the resettlement of Palestinians outside of Gaza', calling such comments 'inflammatory and irresponsible'. The same statement emphasized that 'Gaza is Palestinian land and will remain Palestinian land'. Similar positions have been adopted by Russia,<sup>84</sup> China,<sup>85</sup> the EU Commission,<sup>86</sup> Germany,<sup>87</sup> France,<sup>88</sup> the UK,<sup>89</sup> the Netherlands,<sup>90</sup> Qatar,<sup>91</sup> Saudi Arabia<sup>92</sup> and Australia, Canada and New Zealand.<sup>93</sup>

World leaders' public rejection of any deportation of Palestinians from Gaza is an important step. It must be followed with further measures – particularly to address forcible transfer, which is likely to have already occurred inside both Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The US, for instance, has not demonstrated any inclination to shift from a policy of unconditional military support for Israel, even when its apparent 'red lines' are crossed.

Furthermore, such displacement cannot be viewed in isolation from Israel's broader unlawful conduct in the OPT, manifested in an expansionist intent and the annexation of territory. To this end, a recent 'discussion paper' circulated among Israeli Cabinet members, providing an outline for the 'day after' in Gaza,<sup>94</sup> has been criticized as seeking to establish a fait accompli situation, including the annexation of territory in Gaza under security pretences, and the rejection of Palestinian self-determination.<sup>95</sup>

The actions and inaction of powerful nations have aided Israel in its unlawful practices and policies. Silence on serious violations of international law, undermining of diplomatic and legal initiatives to hold Israel to account and, at times, the provision of material support such as arms transfers, have created an environment in which Israel acts with increasing impunity<sup>96</sup>. The result is a deepening crisis and continued forced displacement of Palestinians, stretching across generations.

In IHL, nations bear legal and moral obligations to protect civilians, prevent atrocity crimes and uphold international law. Failing to act condemns future generations of Palestinians to ongoing dispossession and exile, eroding any remaining hopes for a just and viable solution that is rooted in international law.

## To end the forced displacement and prevent the possible deportation of Palestinians, the international community must:

1

Through all available means, actively pursue a **full, immediate and unconditional ceasefire** and the withdrawal of all Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip. Call for Israel's compliance with its obligations under international law, including the prohibition of forcible transfer and deportation, reparations for damages caused by violations, and implementation of the provisional measures indicated by the International Court of Justice.

2

**Firmly oppose and actively prevent any actions or policies by the Israeli government that could legitimize or lead to the ongoing or extended forced displacement of Palestinian residents of the OPT**, including any 'evacuation plans' within or beyond Gaza's borders, or reduction of the physical territory of the OPT, including Gaza. This includes insisting on guarantees against the repetition of unlawful acts such as forcible transfers, deportations, forced evictions, the demolition of homes and productive assets, and any Israeli authorities practices, policies or legislation that contribute to the acquisition of Palestinian territory and negate the Palestinian right to self-determination.

3

Take all possible steps to **ensure that all displaced Palestinians within Gaza are permitted to safely return to their usual place of residence** as soon as hostilities in those areas cease.

4

Take all possible steps to **ensure that all displaced Palestinians within the West Bank are permitted to safely return to their usual place of residence**.

5

Ensure that all essential aid, including water, food, medicine and fuel be allowed into Gaza immediately, and ensure immediate, safe humanitarian access across Gaza so that humanitarian assistance can be safely distributed in sufficient quantity to meet the needs of the civilian population, including the specific needs of women, children, elderly people and people with disabilities. This entails:

- a. **Demanding the immediate opening of all Gaza crossings** for unhampered humanitarian aid, and that aid levels are significantly elevated to meet actual demand.
- b. **Emphasizing the restoration of vital services**, including water and electricity, and advocating for a principled humanitarian approach governed by a UN-led oversight that replaces Israel's control to guarantee unbiased, well-coordinated and autonomous aid delivery and prevent undue influence from any conflicting party.
- c. **Highlighting the critical need for global leaders and donors to move from dialogue to action**, ensuring the safety of humanitarian workers and prioritizing urgent, effective relief efforts for the people of Gaza, particularly vulnerable groups, amidst the relentless bombardment, occupation and blockade, and the resulting shortfall in aid.

## 6

Demand that Israel complies with international law, including by realizing the Palestinian right to self-determination, **ending the military occupation of the OPT and the 16-year closure and blockade of Gaza**, and ensuring the free and unrestricted movement of people and goods across the entire OPT. Advocate for making bilateral and multilateral relations with the Israeli government contingent on demonstrable progress towards ending the military occupation and lifting the blockade while fully respecting the obligations of international law.

## 7

**Ensure the full participation of Palestinian women's and young people's organizations in humanitarian funding decision-making processes**, and that humanitarian funding allocated includes **full provision for a rapid, gender-responsive and inclusive Gaza reconstruction and recovery process**. This should meet needs for protection, shelter, WASH, health, livelihoods and education needs, so that Palestinians returning to their usual place of residence can live in safety and dignity. The international community must connect reconstruction efforts to a time-bound plan to end the blockade, including benchmarks and accountability mechanisms.

## 8

Provide **full support for prompt, thorough and effective investigations** by qualified and independent bodies, including judicial and non-judicial accountability mechanisms, of all alleged violations of international law in the context of the OPT. This may include financial or logistical support for such bodies and for NGOs promoting accountability.

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Author: Simon Randles

Contributors: Riham Jafari, Bushra Khalidi and Giulia Marini

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**ActionAid** has been working in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) since 1993 through ActionAid Spain / Alianza por la Solidaridad, since 2007 through ActionAid Australia and since 2012 as ActionAid International supporting Palestinian people living without access to basic services and the most fundamental human rights and freedoms. ActionAid works in Gaza hand in hand with our Palestinian partners, which include Al Awda Hospital and women's organisation Wefaq Association and Palestinian Development Women Studies Association (PDWSA). Through our partnerships with local organisations, we provide essential support and protection to the most marginalised segments of the population, with a particular emphasis on women and children facing the harsh realities of violence and rights violations.

**Al Mezan Center for Human Rights (Al Mezan)** is an independent, non-partisan, non-governmental human rights organization based in the occupied Gaza Strip. Since its establishment in 1999, Al Mezan has been dedicated to protecting and promoting the respect of human rights, especially economic, social and cultural rights, supporting victims of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and enhancing democracy, community and citizen participation, and respect for the rule of law in Gaza as part of the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT).

**Oxfam** has been working in the OPT and Israel since the 1950s and established a country office in the 1980s. We work in the most vulnerable communities in Gaza, East Jerusalem, and Area C, the 61 percent of the West Bank where the government of Israel maintains full military and civil control. In total, we work with more than 60 Palestinian and Israeli partner organizations.