



Occupying a Land to Erase Its People

The International Observatory of *Mediterranea with Palestine*
in Masafer Yatta

Mid-Year Report

January-May 2025





Occupying a Land to Erase Its People

The International Observatory of *Mediterranea with Palestine* in Masafer Yatta

Mid-Year Report

January-May 2025

Mediterranea Saving Humans APS · <https://mediterranearescue.org>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons [BY-NC-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) International License.

Original language: Italian

Cover photo: Khallet Athaba, 5 May. Palestinian houses demolished by Israeli Occupation forces.

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	1
1 An observatory on the ethnic cleansing in Masafer Yatta	10
2 Data collection and management	12
2.1 Sources and reliability	12
2.2 Criteria for selecting events	13
2.3 Limitations and precautions	13
2.4 Back office information validation	13
2.5 Categories of events	13
3 Results	15
3.1 Frequency and distribution of violations	15
3.2 Repeated and ongoing violations: invasions of private property	17
3.3 The colonisation of Palestinian land	18
3.4 Arrests, detentions and imprisonment	19
3.5 Denial of freedom of movement	21
4 The connivance between settlers and law enforcement forces	23
4.1 Tuba: how the Occupation conducts ethnic cleansing	23
4.2 Coordinated actions between the army and settlers: the assault on Jinba	25
4.3 Demolitions as a tool of ethnic cleansing: the case of Khallet Athaba	27
4.4 The targeting of Ar Rakeez: an escalation of violence	29
5 Nonviolent resistance as a collective response to the occupation	31
<i>Glossary</i>	33

Foreword

Luigi Daniele
Associate Professor of International Law
University of Molise

The events documented in this report amount, from the standpoint of international law, to a pattern of grave, repeated, and systematic violations of peremptory norms of international law. These acts of violence — carried out in execution of, and under the protection of, official state policy — constitute, on one hand, elements of internationally wrongful acts attributable to the occupying power, and on the other, international crimes attributable to the individuals who orchestrate their commission.

From both perspectives, as this analysis will show, third states — including Italy — are under binding obligations not to contribute to these violations. In particular, they must refrain from recognising their effects, and must neither aid nor assist their commission, whether through acts or omissions¹.

Non-derogable limits: the international law of military occupation and the prohibition of annexation

Before turning to the legal characterisation of the documented violations, it is essential to recall that situations of military occupation are governed by a specific regime of international law, codified in treaty law² (to which Italy is a party) and customary international law³ (which Italy does not oppose). This regime operates in the exceptional gap between the exercise of popular sovereignty — a fundamental condition of

¹ See e.g. M. Qandeel, “Territorial Annexation of Palestine: Illegality, Third States Obligations and the ICJ’s 2024 Advisory Opinion”, *EJILTalk!*, 28 February 2025, <https://www.ejiltalk.org/territorial-annexation-of-palestine-illegality-third-states-obligations-and-the-icjs-2024-advisory-opinion/>; M. Goldmann, “Non-Recognition and Non-Assistance: Consequences of the Palestine Advisory Opinion for Third States”, *Verfassungsblog*, 15 October 2024, <https://verfassungsblog.de/non-recognition-and-non-assistance>.

² See sections I, III e IV of the *Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War* (Geneva, 12 August 1949); arts. 63, 69, 85(4) (a) of the *Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts* (8 June 1977).

³ Cfr. arts. 42 to 56 of the *Convention (IV) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land* (The Hague, 18 October 1907) and corresponding customary law.

democracy and a core implication of the right to self-determination — and the effective exercise of authority. International law governing military occupation prescribes a heightened level of protection for the occupied population, recognising its particular vulnerability. It strictly limits the powers of the occupying power. The core principles of this regime are: the temporary nature of occupation, the prohibition on acquiring sovereign rights over the occupied territory, and the duty to administer the territory in the interest of the local population, preserving civil life and public order⁴. From the interrelated nature of these legal constraints follows, among other things, that: (i) the pre-existing legal order must be preserved to the fullest extent possible; (ii) the occupying power is to be treated as a mere *usufructuary* of public property and natural resources in the occupied territory; and (iii) demographic alteration of the occupied territory is prohibited⁵. These legal limits are a corollary of the absolute prohibition on the use of force for the purpose of acquiring territory — a cornerstone of the UN Charter and the international legal order as a whole.

Put simply, if military occupations were allowed to continue indefinitely and to disregard these legal constraints, they would be effectively transformed into armed annexations — thereby legitimising wars of conquest and aggression and reverting the international community to a pre-modern, lawless model of inter-state relations.

The International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion of July 2024: the comprehensive illegality of Israel's military and civilian presence in the entirety of the occupied Palestinian territory

As exemplified by the incidents described in this report, the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory entails a wholesale violation of the legal constraints established by the law of occupation. Any lingering doubt in this regard has been dispelled by the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued in July 2024, concerning the legal consequences of Israel's policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory⁶.

The non-binding nature of ICJ advisory opinions should not be misunderstood: they are authoritative contributions — issued by the principal judicial organ of the United Nations — to the identification, interpretation, and application of international legal obligations. Consequently, all international actors, including the European Union and Italy, are legally bound to give due regard to the ICJ's conclusions. These opinions thus carry legal implications for third states⁷.

⁴ Cfr. M. Sassòli, "Legislation and Maintenance of Public Order and Civil Life by Occupying Powers", *European Journal of International Law*, vol. 16, no. 4, pp. 661-694, 2005, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ejil/chi136>.

⁵ N. Bhuta, "The Antinomies of Transformative Occupation", *European Journal of International Law*, vol. 16, no. 4, pp. 721-740, 2005, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ejil/chi145>.

⁶ ICJ, *Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem*, 19 July 2024, <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/186>.

⁷ See G. Acquaviva, *ICJ Advisory Opinions: The Binding Nature of the Content of Pronouncements under Article 65 of the ICJ Statute*, 2024, <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5029227>.

The 2024 Advisory Opinion concluded that Israel's policies and practices in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 violate the Palestinian people's right to self-determination⁸ and the prohibition of acquisition of territory by threat or use of force. The Court found that these practices have amounted, in effect, to the unlawful annexation of substantial portions of the occupied territory⁹.

In its analysis of decades of uninterrupted settlement construction and the use of state incentives to encourage the transfer of Israeli settlers into the occupied territory, the Court identified a violation of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), which prohibits an occupying power from transferring parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies¹⁰.

Moreover, the Court found that the web of discriminatory measures imposed on the Palestinian population — including the permit regime, denial of freedom of movement, and demolition or expropriation of property — stands in stark contrast to the full protection granted to settlers, who are subject to Israeli civil law. This legal dualism effectively transforms settlers into agents of *de jure* annexation. The Court held that these practices violate international human rights law, in particular Article 3 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), which prohibits “racial segregation and apartheid” and obliges state parties to “prevent, prohibit and eradicate all such practices in territories under their jurisdiction”¹¹.

The Court further identified serious breaches of the prohibitions on forcible transfer or displacement — whether individual or collective — of civilians from occupied territory. In this case, such actions served the aim of clearing space for settlers and settlements¹². Notably, the Court highlighted how systematic settler violence against Palestinians — unchecked and unpunished by Israeli forces and often accompanied by excessive and abusive force against Palestinians — contributes to the creation and maintenance of a coercive environment aimed at the expulsion of the Palestinian population¹³. This dynamic is exactly what this report documents.

Accordingly, the Court concluded that Israel's sustained abuse of its position as occupying power, coupled with grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, has rendered its military and civilian presence in the occupied Palestinian territory *illegal in its entirety*. That presence, in the Court's view, must be brought to an end as soon as possible. The Court also confirmed that Israel is under an obligation to make full reparation for its internationally wrongful acts.

The scale, intensity, and gravity of the violations have led the Court to affirm that all states are under specific legal obligations: to cooperate to bring Israel's unlawful

⁸ ICJ, *Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem*, 19 July 2024, par. 230 to 243.

⁹ Par. 157 to 179.

¹⁰ Par. 115 to 119.

¹¹ Par. 180 to 229.

¹² Par. 142 to 147.

¹³ Par. 148 to 154.

presence to an end; not to recognise any effects of the unlawful acts; and to refrain from rendering aid or assistance in their commission¹⁴.

International crimes committed to entrench international crimes (and the principle of universal jurisdiction)

The ICJ's Advisory Opinion must be understood alongside the international crimes committed by individuals which give effect to, and perpetuate, the internationally wrongful acts identified by the Court. The Israeli occupation thus constitutes a paradigmatic case of state crime and systemic criminality¹⁵.

Foremost among these is the international crime associated with the state policy of settlement construction, expansion, and incentivised transfer of Israeli civilians into occupied Palestinian territory.

Article 8(2)(b)(viii) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) expressly criminalises:

the transfer, directly or indirectly, by the Occupying Power of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies, or the deportation or transfer of all or parts of the population of the occupied territory within or outside this territory.

This prohibition reflects the longstanding customary ban on denationalisation and forced assimilation of occupied territories — codified as early as the post-World War I period, and forming the basis for several charges at the Nuremberg Trials¹⁶.

Nevertheless, since 1967, there has been a continuous and violent policy of dispossession, unlawful appropriation of land, property, and resources, and demographic engineering. Today, over 700,000 settlers reside in the occupied West Bank, according to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights¹⁷. This amounts to a policy of deliberate *de-Palestinisation* of the territory. The Israeli government is open about its intentions: under the penultimate Netanyahu administration, heavily composed of settler movement representatives, the governing coalition's platform asserted the "exclusive and indisputable right" of Jews to all "the historical lands of Israel" — which, in the view of the majority, includes the entirety of the occupied Palestinian territory¹⁸.

¹⁴ Par. 273 to 279.

¹⁵ See P. Green et al., "International Expert Statement on Israeli State Crime", *State Crime Journal*, vol. 2, no. 12, pp. 126-131, 2023, <https://statecrime.org/2024/01/09/international-expert-statement-on-israeli-state-crime>.

¹⁶ See "Germanization and Spoliation", *Nuremberg Trials*, vol. I, ch. XIII, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/chap_13.asp.

¹⁷ OHCHR, *Occupied Palestinian Territory: reporting on settlements and the occupied Syrian Golan*, 26 March 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/03/occupied-palestinian-territory-reporting-settlements-and-occupied>.

¹⁸ Yesh Din, *What Israel's 37th government's guiding principles and coalition agreements mean for the West Bank*, January 2023, 1 February 2023, <https://www.yesh-din.org/en/policy-paper-what-israels-37th-governments-guiding-principles-and-coalition-agreements-mean-for-the-west-bank-january-2023>.

To support and entrench this overarching criminal policy, a host of other acts — each constituting a separate international crime — are carried out. Particularly relevant to the documented attacks on Tuba and Jinba are the following war crimes under the Rome Statute:

- Wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health (Article 8(2)(a)(iii)).
- Outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment (Article (2)(b)(xxi)).

International criminal jurisprudence has recognised that acts such as threats, insults, beatings, and other forms of mistreatment¹⁹ violate the prohibition on inhuman and degrading treatment, constituting the wilful infliction of severe physical or psychological harm.

- Wilfully depriving a protected person of the rights of fair and regular trial (Article 8(2)(a)(vi)).

Palestinians are subjected to a legal regime that normalises arbitrary detention. This regime is the result of over 2,500 Israeli military orders, criminal in nature, that impose harsh sentences for non-offensive conduct or for exercising fundamental rights²⁰ — including minors. A recent amendment to anti-terrorism legislation now permits life sentences to be imposed on Palestinian children as young as 12²¹. In addition, *praeter delictum* forms of detention, such as administrative detention, allow for incarceration without charge or trial for renewable six-month periods based on secret evidence. Crucially, the Israeli military — now for three generations of Palestinians — concentrates legislative, executive, and judicial power, operating military courts with a conviction rate that annually reaches 99.7%²².

The arbitrary arrests documented in this report fall within the scope of the crime of denial of fair trial guarantees or, alternatively:

- Unlawful deportation, transfer or confinement (Article 8(2)(a)(vii)).

This category includes not only arbitrary detention, but also coercive transfer of Palestinians from their areas of residence.

¹⁹ ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Jadranko Prlić*, Judgment, 29 May 2013, par. 115-120; *Prosecutor v. Dusko Tadić*, Judgment, 7 May 1997, par. 730.

²⁰ For an analysis of such military orders and of the consequent mass incarceration of Palestinian civilians, see: OHCHR, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967*, 9 June 2023, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/53/59>; L. Daniele, “Enforcing Illegality: Israel’s Military Justice in the West Bank”, *Questions of International Law*, vol. 44, no. 17, pp. 21-40, 2017, https://www.qil-qdi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/03_Israeli-Military-Justice-System_Daniele_FIN.pdf.

²¹ OHCHR, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29891>, 1 May 2025.

²² Levinson, “Nearly 100% of All Military Courts Cases End in Conviction”, *Haaretz*, 29 November 2011, <https://www.haaretz.com/2011-11-29/ty-article/nearly-100-of-all-military-court-cases-in-west-bank-end-in-conviction-haaretz-learns/0000017f-e7c4-da9b-a1ff-efef7ad70000>.

The application of this crime extends also to the establishment of military zones under various pretexts, none of which can be considered legally valid following the ICJ's Advisory Opinion of July 2024. As recognised in international criminal jurisprudence: "There are two general grounds in international law according to which the displacement of persons may be lawful: if it is carried out either for the security of the civilian population or for imperative military reasons [provided the military presence is itself lawful, ed.]. In both cases, the primary distinction between an unlawful forcible transfer and a permissible evacuation is that, in the latter case, the evacuated persons are returned to their homes as soon as the hostilities in the area in question have ceased. It is therefore unlawful to use evacuation measures as a pretext for forcibly displacing a population and taking control of territory"²³.

Other war crimes relevant to the events documented in this report — particularly in the case of Khallet Athaba — include:

- Extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly (Article 8(2)(a)(iv)) and, even when not extensive, destruction or seizure of property not imperatively demanded by the necessities of war (Article 8(2)(b)(xiii)).

The appropriation and destruction of Palestinian civilian property, whether completely lacking military necessity or justified by questionable military pretexts, happens regularly across the West Bank. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) between 2015 and 2020 alone, 5,361 instances of illegal demolition and confiscation were recorded²⁴.

It is crucial to underline that the "military necessity" referred to in these provisions must itself be lawful under international humanitarian law (IHL). Four cumulative criteria must be satisfied in order for military necessity to lawfully justify seizure or destruction of property: 1) The action must pursue a concrete and specific military objective; 2) The action must be strictly necessary to achieve that objective; 3) The military objective must be lawful under IHL; 4) The action itself must otherwise comply with IHL²⁵. These criteria are fundamentally inapplicable in the context of the occupied Palestinian territory, due to the overarching illegality of the occupation as established by the ICJ Advisory Opinion. That illegality extends to the entirety of the logistical, military, and legal infrastructure underpinning the occupation, nullifying any justification based on military necessity.

²³ ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Šainović et al.*, Judgement, 26 February 2009, par. 166.

²⁴ See e.g. OCHA, *Peak in demolitions and confiscations amidst increasing denial of the right to justice*, 8 December 2020, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/peak-demolitions-and-confiscations-amidst-increasing-denial-right-justice>, and the updated Breakdown of data on demolitions and displacement, available at <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/demolition>.

²⁵ See L. Daniele, "Bedouin Communities and the War Crimes of Extensive Destruction and Appropriation of Property Not Justified by Military Necessity", in A. Panepinto et al. (eds.), *Ending Impunity for International Law Violations. Palestinian Bedouins and the Risk of Forced Displacement*, Hart Publishing, 2025.

Furthermore, none of these war crimes require proof of a systematic policy or large-scale commission in order to be prosecutable. Article 8(1) of the Rome Statute provides: “The Court shall have jurisdiction in respect of war crimes, in particular when committed as part of a plan or policy or as part of a large-scale commission of such crimes”.

This compromise language, as unanimously interpreted by legal scholars, does not establish an element of the crime or a jurisdictional threshold; rather, it informs the Prosecutor’s discretion when deciding whether to investigate isolated incidents. In any case, the Israeli occupation represents a paradigmatic example of systematic commission and functional interdependence between war crimes in the gradual implementation of ethnic cleansing in Palestinian territory.

In this sense, the systematic perpetration of war crimes against the Palestinian population — together with widespread and severe violations of virtually all of their human rights — amounts to crimes against humanity, having been committed “as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack” (Article 7 of the Rome Statute).

Specifically, the following crimes against humanity are engaged:

- e) Imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law.

As previously discussed under the war crime of denial of fair trial guarantees, the occupied Palestinian territory has become increasingly carceral. Since 1967, Israel has arrested approximately one million Palestinians — an average of 47 people per day for 58 years. As of May 2025, Israel is detaining 10,068 Palestinians in prison, but only 1,455 have been convicted. A further 3,190 await trial, and 3,577 are held in administrative detention without charge. Since the start of 2024, the use of administrative detention has surged from 350 to 2,373 detainees per month — a sevenfold increase, now accounting for nearly one-third of all detainees²⁶.

- h) Persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender [...] or other grounds that are universally recognised as impermissible under international law [...].
- j) The crime of apartheid.

There is now a broad international consensus regarding the applicability of these crimes. One may refer to the comprehensive analyses conducted by Amnesty International²⁷, Human Rights Watch²⁸, and the Israeli organisation B’Tselem²⁹.

²⁶ Cfr. AMP, *The Carceral History of Occupied Palestine*, 3 July 2025, <https://www.ampalestine.org/educate/publications/carceral-history-occupied-palestine>.

²⁷ Amnesty International, *Israel’s apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel system of domination and crime against humanity*, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en>.

²⁸ Human Rights Watch, *A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution*, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>.

²⁹ B’Tselem, *A regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is apartheid*, 2021. https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101_this_is_apartheid.

- d) Deportation or forcible transfer of population.

According to international jurisprudence, forcible transfer “means that persons are moved involuntarily or without a genuine choice. Fear of violence, coercion, detention, psychological oppression, and similar circumstances may create an environment where there is no real alternative but to leave, thus amounting to forced displacement”³⁰. It is not necessary for such transfer to be carried out at gunpoint; the creation of a coercive environment is sufficient. As clarified by the ICTY: “The term ‘forcible’ may include physical force, as well as threat of force or coercion, such as that caused by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression or abuse of power, or taking advantage of a coercive environment. The involuntary nature of the displacement is determined by the absence of genuine choice by the victim”³¹.

With regard to all the above war crimes and crimes against humanity, Article 25 of the Rome Statute stipulates:

A person shall be criminally responsible and liable for punishment for a crime within the jurisdiction of the Court if that person:

- a) Commits such a crime, whether individually, jointly with another or through another person, regardless of whether that other person is criminally responsible.
- b) Orders, solicits or induces the commission of such a crime which in fact occurs or is attempted.
- c) For the purpose of facilitating the commission of such a crime, aids, abets or otherwise assists in its commission or its attempted commission, including providing the means for its commission.
- d) In any other way contributes to the commission or attempted commission of such a crime by a group of persons acting with a common purpose. Such contribution shall be intentional and shall either:
 - i) be made with the aim of furthering the criminal activity or criminal purpose of the group, where such activity or purpose involves the commission of a crime within the jurisdiction of the Court; or
 - ii) be made in the knowledge of the group’s intention to commit the crime.

The collusion between the occupying authorities and settlers in acts amounting to war crimes and/or committed within the framework of crimes against humanity also triggers the responsibility of commanders and other superiors under Article 28 of the Rome Statute, which states:

- a) A military commander or person effectively acting as a military commander shall be criminally responsible for crimes within the jurisdic-

³⁰ ICTY, Prosecutor v. Ratko Mladić, Judgement, 22 November 2017, par. 3119.

³¹ ICTY, Prosecutor v. Radovan Karadžić, Judgement, 24 March 2016, par. 489.

tion of the Court committed by forces under his or her effective command and control, or effective authority and control as the case may be, as a result of his or her failure to exercise control properly over such forces, where:

- i) that military commander or person either knew or, owing to the circumstances at the time, should have known that the forces were committing or about to commit such crimes; and
 - ii) that military commander or person failed to take all necessary and reasonable measures within his or her power to prevent or repress their commission or to submit the matter to the competent authorities for investigation and prosecution.
- b) With respect to superior and subordinate relationships not described in paragraph a), a superior shall be criminally responsible for crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court committed by subordinates under his or her effective authority and control, as a result of his or her failure to exercise control properly over such subordinates, where:
- i) The superior either knew, or consciously disregarded information which clearly indicated, that the subordinates were committing or about to commit such crimes.
 - ii) The crimes concerned activities that were within the effective responsibility and control of the superior.
 - iii) The superior failed to take all necessary and reasonable measures within his or her power to prevent or repress their commission or to submit the matter to the competent authorities for investigation and prosecution.

In conclusion, *Mediterranea Saving Humans* holds that the Masafer Yatta region is the site of a multi-layered network of internationally wrongful acts by the occupying power and international crimes committed by its senior officials. Unless promptly and decisively addressed by third states, these acts herald a future in the West Bank marked by tragedies comparable to those witnessed in Gaza, waves of regional destabilisation likely to spread far beyond, and, most gravely, the final stage of a long-term process aimed at the gradual erasure of the Palestinian national group.

1

An observatory on the ethnic cleansing in Masafer Yatta

The *Mediterranea with Palestine* project, which maintains a continuous presence in the Palestinian villages of the Masafer Yatta region in southern West Bank, began a monitoring mission in January 2025 to document human rights violations and crimes committed by the Israeli Occupation forces. Through systematically collecting data and testimonies, the project aims to document the oppression experienced by the Palestinian civilian population, which Mediterranean's activists observe daily on site.

This report, which serves as a preview of a more comprehensive annual report, presents the findings from the first 129 days of monitoring, from 23 January to 31 May 2025. The information gathered is based on the continuous presence and non-violent interposition of our activists in support of the Palestinian population. Interposition and monitoring are the two foundational pillars of the *Mediterranea with Palestine* project, making us an active part of the non-violent resistance of the Palestinian community, with whom we share daily life.

Masafer Yatta — whose name means “the countryside of (or around) Yatta” — is a region within the Governorate of al-Khalil (Hebron in Hebrew) located entirely in Area C, according to the territorial divisions established by the [Oslo Accords](#). It is not an autonomous administrative unit with clearly defined borders. Nonetheless, due to its proximity to both the southern border of the West Bank and the Israeli [settlements](#) located within al-Khalil (the only city in the West Bank with this characteristic), the region holds significant geopolitical importance. Since the 1970s, it has attracted particular attention and has been targeted by operations from Israeli Occupation forces, which maintain numerous settlements and [outposts](#) in the area that are tied to extremist movements.

At the same time, the region serves as a hub for Palestinian grassroots non-violent resistance, exemplified by our field partners, such as [Youth of Sumud](#). By engaging the support and presence of international and Israeli activists — including [Operazione Colomba](#) and [Ta'ayush](#), both active in the area for over two decades — this movement has so far thwarted the Israeli plan to ethnically cleanse the area.

The characteristics of Masafer Yatta make it a setting of constant violations carried

out by Israeli [settlers](#) and authorities. This report, supported by both quantitative evidence (Section 3) and qualitative accounts (Section 4), illustrates the coordinated role played by these two actors and demonstrates how each attack fits within a broader colonial strategy aimed at forcing the Palestinian people to relinquish their land.

This strategy, as confirmed by the information we have gathered, involves daily violence that increasingly endangers the subsistence and physical and mental health of the Palestinian population: repeated intrusions into private property, arbitrary arrests, and other administrative measures issued by the Israeli military authorities (who also exercise administrative control over Area C of the West Bank), home demolitions, destruction of farmland and infrastructure, and even physical assaults on individuals.

The enforcement of the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip on 19 January 2025 coincided with a sharp escalation in settler violence across the [Occupied Palestinian territories](#) in the West Bank — perpetrated with the collusion of the Israeli army and police — which has also affected the southern parts of the region, particularly Masafer Yatta. The total lack of accountability or repercussions for criminal acts committed by settlers and Israeli [law enforcement forces](#) has further encouraged the spread of such violations, which have continued even after the military invasion of the Strip resumed.

Despite all this, the Palestinian population continues to resist, steadfastly refusing to abandon their land. This is reflected in the data presented in this report, and this is the image we hope to convey to readers: a snapshot of the peak of an ethnic cleansing process ongoing since 1967; a portrait of unrestrained, extreme violence; and, at the same time, a portrait of a people who refuse to be erased.

Glossary

The terms highlighted in [blue](#) within the text refer to the glossary at the end of the report, where concise definitions are provided.

Data collection and management

The data used to compile this report were gathered between January 23 and May 31, 2025, covering a total of 129 days of observation. Information collected between January 23 and February 13 refers solely to incidents documented directly by our activists; from February 14 onwards, episodes witnessed by third-party sources and subsequently verified were also included. The following sections outline the methodology used to gather, verify, and catalogue the information.

2.1 Sources and reliability

The data are based on direct or verified indirect testimonies, collected through collaboration with the Palestinian population and with organisations active in the region, such as Youth of Sumud and *Operazione Colomba*. Each testimony is documented in writing and, where possible, supported by photographic or audiovisual material.

Direct testimonies are provided by individuals directly involved in the incidents (victims or eyewitnesses). Verified indirect testimonies come from reliable third-party sources, such as community members and activists, and are cross-checked against audiovisual material, geographical evidence, and other independent accounts.

On-site information gathering is conducted by Mediterranean activists or other local, international, or Israeli activists through detailed written reports of observed incidents, and in some cases, via structured or semi-structured interviews carried out in Arabic or English. Events are mapped and, in certain instances, geolocated using GPS.

All information undergoes a process of cross-verification through the comparison of testimonies, analysis of audiovisual material, and external review by knowledgeable local partners, such as Youth of Sumud and *Operazione Colomba*.

For each incident observed, one event record is created for every type of violation documented. For example, if a settler invades the private property of a Palestinian family and then steals livestock, two separate event records are generated: one for the invasion of property and another for the theft.

All collected data are archived to ensure accurate identification over time and space, traceability, integrity, and uniqueness.

2.2 Criteria for selecting events

The events included in this report meet the following criteria:

1. They occurred in Masafer Yatta.
2. They involved law enforcement forces or settlers responsible for one of the violations listed in Section 2.5, including invasion of property, home demolitions, intimidation, physical assaults, roadblocks, and damage to civil infrastructure or other property.
3. They were documented by at least one of the following objective and verifiable elements: photographs, videos, or multiple consistent testimonies.

2.3 Limitations and precautions

During the monitoring period, access to certain areas was either prevented or severely restricted due to military orders or security risks for activists, such as in the case of new outpost construction. This limited the ability to document some incidents. As a result, the number of violations reported in this document does not reflect the total number of violations that actually occurred in Masafer Yatta.

To protect the safety of Mediterranean activists and those from other organisations, some testimonies have been gathered anonymously or without including identifying details.

2.4 Back office information validation

Once field data collection is completed and event records compiled, the written documentation is forwarded to a back-office working group. Audiovisual material is uploaded to a cloud storage platform, from which all photographs included in this report are sourced.

The back office team of activists is responsible for the subsequent data management phase, which involves further cross-verification of the information and the correction of any discrepancies. The data are then organised and integrated into a centralised database.

2.5 Categories of events

The information collected on site is entered into a database by categorising each incident based on the type of violation committed by the Israeli Occupation forces. Field observation resulted in the identification of 15 event categories, each corresponding to a different type of violation, along with an additional “Other” category.

Table 1 groups these 15 categories into four broader categories: actions against Palestinian property, actions against Palestinian individuals, actions involving control

over or appropriation of Palestinian space, and actions against international and Israeli activists. The labels **Settlers** e **Law enforcement** further indicate whether the violations were committed by the former, the latter, or both.

These macro-categories are provided solely for illustrative purposes: the line between actions against property, individuals, and the living space of Palestinians is often blurred. They represent a range of practices carried out by different actors, all aimed at a single, clear goal.

Table 1: *Violation categories*

Actions against Palestinian property	Actions against Palestinian individuals	Actions for control over or appropriation of Palestinian space	Actions against Israeli or international activists
Invasion of private property to intimidate or harass Settlers	Armed assault Settlers	Unjustified raid in village Law enforcement	Detention or arrest Law enforcement
Arson of homes Settlers	Assault with sticks or other blunt objects Settlers	Roadblock Settlers Law enforcement	Violent assault Settlers
Demolition of homes Law enforcement	Verbal or armed intimidation Settlers Law enforcement	Construction or expansion of outpost Settlers	
Arson or damage to farmland, crops or irrigation systems Settlers Law enforcement	Arbitrary arrest Law enforcement		
Arson or damage to cars or other property Settlers Law enforcement			
Attack on or theft of livestock Settlers			

3

Results

The analysis of the data collected aligns fully with the broader context of ethnic cleansing carried out by the State of Israel across all the occupied Palestinian territories. It also highlights how this operation is characterised by the coordinated and deliberate involvement of both law enforcement and settlers, aimed at circumventing the limited legal constraints imposed on the Occupation forces.

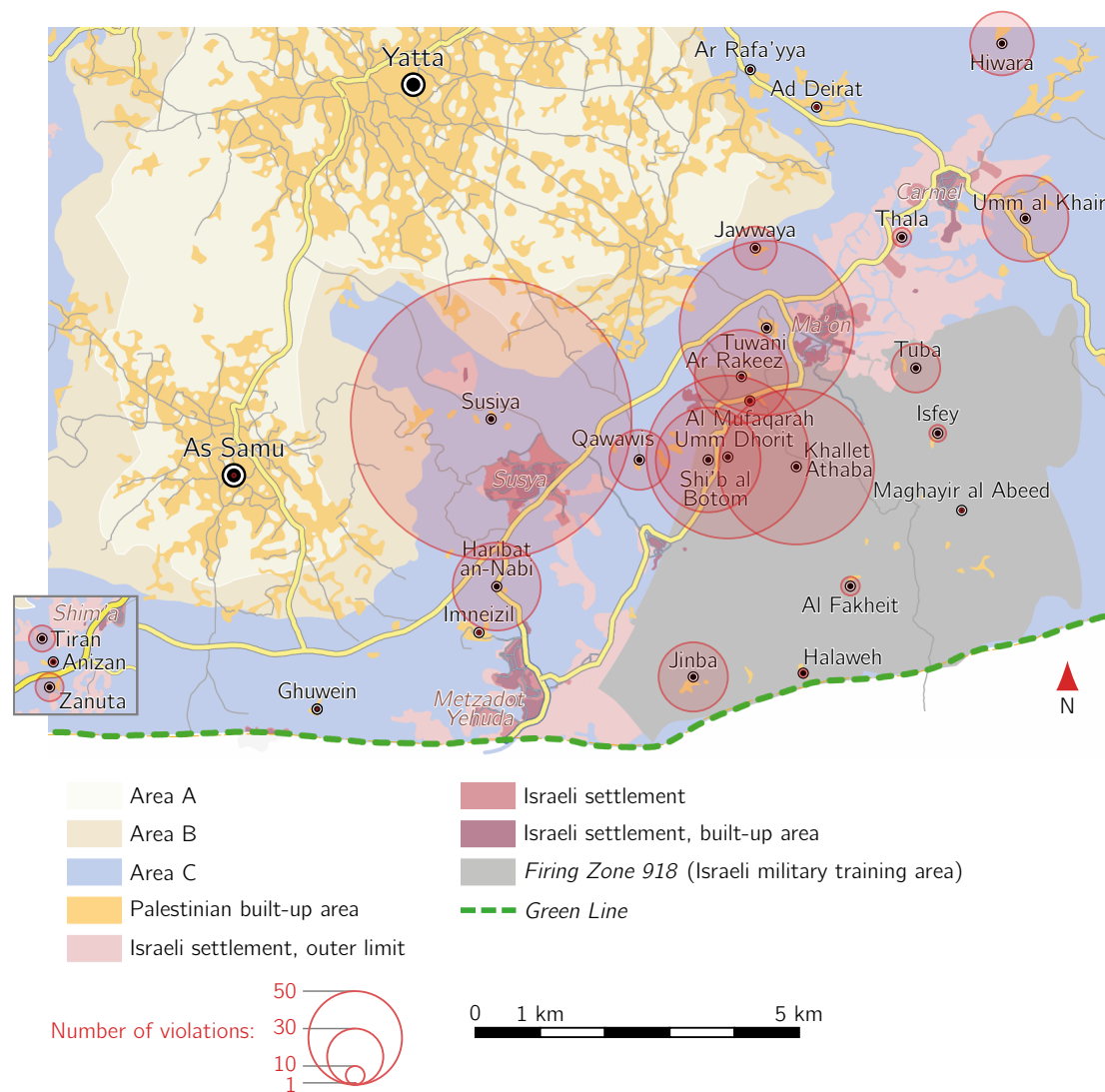
3.1 Frequency and distribution of violations

Figure 1 shows the geographical distribution of the documented violations. The inhabited areas marked on the map with a red circle are those where at least one incident was recorded; the size of each circle is proportional to the number of incidents registered in that area. It is clear that no part of Area C is exempt from Israeli violence: a total of 838 violations were recorded in 27 Palestinian villages over a period of just over four months.

The highest concentrations of incidents were recorded in the areas of Susiya (150), Tuwani (93), Umm Dhorit (87), and Khallet Athaba (83). These four villages alone account for 49% of all recorded incidents. It is also noteworthy that most of the worst-affected villages are in strategic locations: either very close to or surrounded by Israeli settlements (in red on the map), on the edge of or within [Firing Zone 918](#) (a designated military training area), or near key routes linking Palestinian communities.

Figure 2 illustrates the breakdown of violations by category. The invasion of private property, discussed in detail in Section 3.2, is by far the most frequent violation, with 409 recorded incidents, accounting for over 48% of cases. Assaults against the Palestinian population total 56 cases, averaging more than 13 incidents per month; of these, 39 involved the use of batons or other blunt objects, and 11 involved firearms, while 6 targeted international or Israeli activists. Similar numbers were recorded for incidents involving arson or damage to Palestinian property (62), evenly split between agricultural land and irrigation systems on one hand, and vehicles or other belongings on the other. Less frequent but of major significance is settler activity related to the construction and expansion of outposts, recorded on 12 occasions and further discussed in Section 3.3.

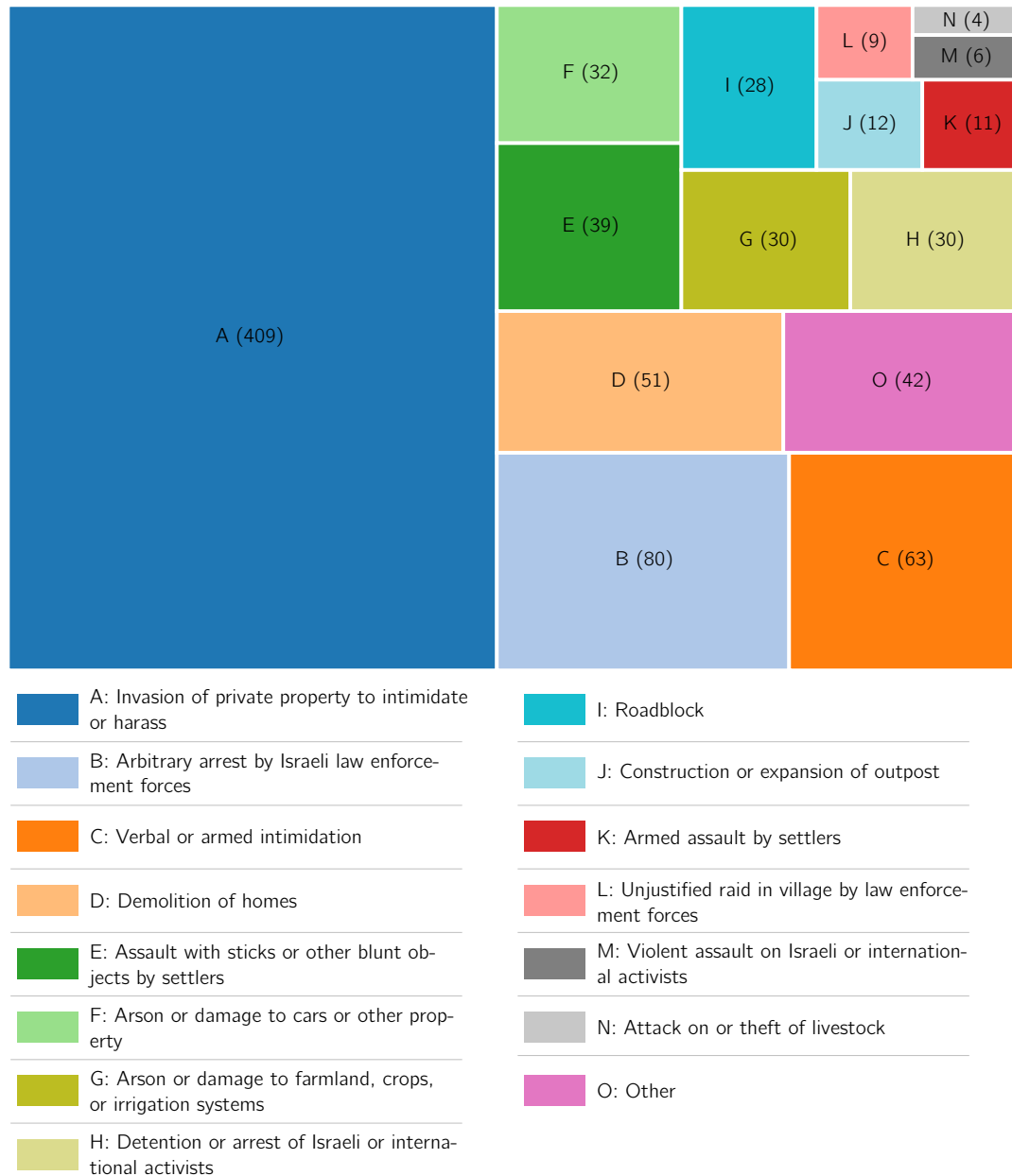
Figure 1: Map of violations



No. of violations per village: Ad Deirat 2; Al Fakheit 10; Al Mufaqarah 4; Anizan 3; Ar Rakeez 50; Ar Rafa'yya 1; As Samu 2; Ghuwein 1; Halaweh 4; Haribat an-Nabi 47; Hiwara 34; Imneizil 2; Isfey 9; Jawwaya 23; Jinba 37; Khamlet Athaba 83; Maghayir al Abeed 2; Qawawis 32; Shi'b al Botom 56; Susiya 150; Thala 10; Tiran 14; Tuba 6; Tuwani 93; Umm al Khair 46; Umm Dhorit 87; Zanuta 15.

Demolitions of Palestinian homes by Israeli law enforcement were recorded 51 times — an average of nearly 12 homes demolished per month. As detailed in Section 3.2, the majority of demolitions occurred in Khamlet Athaba, which alone accounts for roughly 61% of these events (see Section 4.3). Arrests or detentions totalled 110 cases, of which 80 involved Palestinians and 30 involved international or Israeli activists. Verbal or armed intimidation and unprovoked raids by law enforcement into Palestinian villages were documented on 63 and 9 occasions, respectively.

Other recorded violations include 28 roadblocks (Section 3.5), 4 livestock thefts or attacks, and several incidents falling under the “Other” category, such as the use of Israeli drones to monitor Palestinian villages.

Figure 2: *Distribution of violations by category (absolute values in brackets)*

3.2 Repeated and ongoing violations: invasions of private property

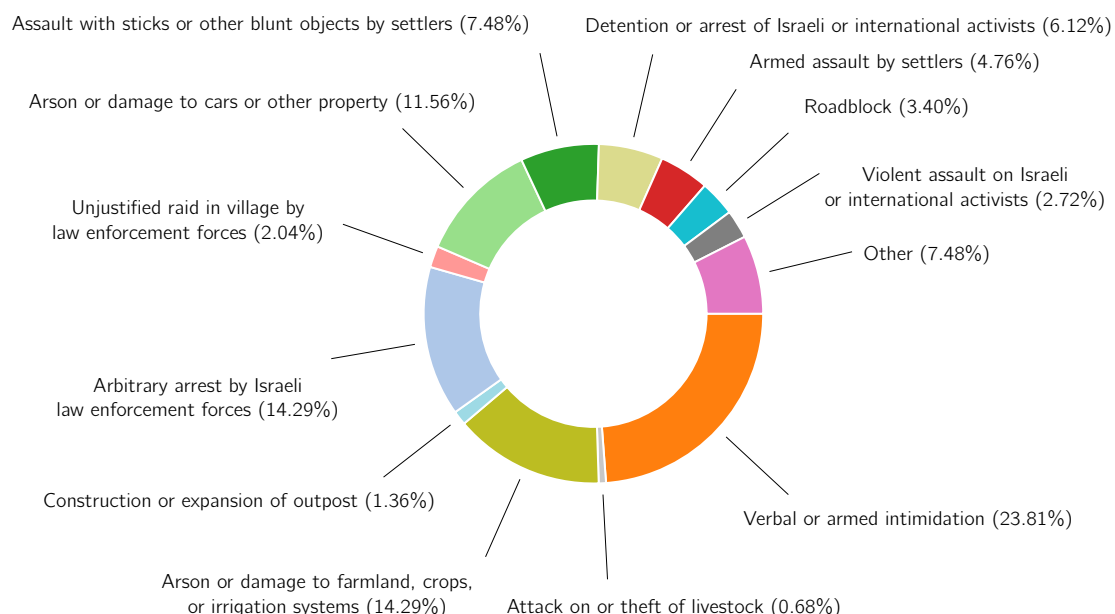
If ethnic cleansing can be traced back to a colonial plan for the exclusive appropriation of land, the initial step in its realisation is the invasion of private property. It is therefore no coincidence that the most frequently recorded breach is the invasion of Palestinian property by settlers for the purpose of intimidation or harassment. These invasions happen at an average rate of 3.2 incidents per day and are the most common reason for emergency calls and requests for the deployment of our on-site activists.

Israeli intrusions into Palestinian spaces have multiple meanings: when a settler

invades a Palestinian's private property, the immediate effect is a feeling of threat and insecurity, often causing an entire family to remain on high alert. Such invasions also reinforce, day after day, the widespread perception that one's space is no longer protected and can be violated with impunity by settlers — an essential first step in eroding Palestinians' right to stay on their land and weakening their sense of belonging.

However, invasions of property are also often a warning sign that something more serious may occur. In 147 of the 409 documented cases — over one-third — the invasion was accompanied by other types of violations. As shown in Figure 3, 23.8% of these involved verbal or armed intimidation by settlers, the army, or the police. In approximately 15% of cases, physical assault by settlers occurred, and in 14.3%, Palestinians present on the property were arrested. In an additional 14.3% of cases, fires or damage to land, crops, or irrigation systems were reported, while in 11.5%, other forms of property — such as vehicles or personal belongings—were damaged or set on fire.

Figure 3: *Relative frequency of incidents associated with the invasion of property (147 cases in total)*



3.3 The colonisation of Palestinian land

As a consequence, or often simultaneously with the invasions of private property, the Occupation forces frequently seize and permanently take over Palestinian land, initiating a process of colonisation. The most blatant example of this is the construction of residential outposts³². In such cases, the violations are carried out by settlers who, using intimidation and violence, act with the complicity and active support of the Israeli authorities.

³² Residential outposts refer to settlements marked by a stable and continuous presence of settlers. There are also non-residential outposts, such as greenhouses for cultivation, livestock farms, military posts on Palestinian land, and others.

Over the course of just over four months, 12 episodes of outpost construction or expansion were recorded in Masafer Yatta. Notably, two new outposts were established: one near the village of Anizan and the other close to Shi'b al Botom (shown in Figure 4).

Israeli outposts within the occupied West Bank are illegal not only under international law but also under Israeli law. Nonetheless, Israeli citizens who choose to settle in or build new outposts receive substantial incentives from the government, including land discounts (up to 69% of its value) and coverage of up to 50% of development costs³³. Once these outposts become more established and increase in size and population, they are legalised and officially recognised as settlements, which are then protected under Israeli law.

Through this method of coercive land appropriation — backed by official policy — Israeli settlements continue to expand across Masafer Yatta, and the colonisation of Area C proceeds rapidly and systematically.

Figure 4: *Shi'b al Botom, 21 May. The new Israeli outpost*



3.4 Arrests, detentions and imprisonment

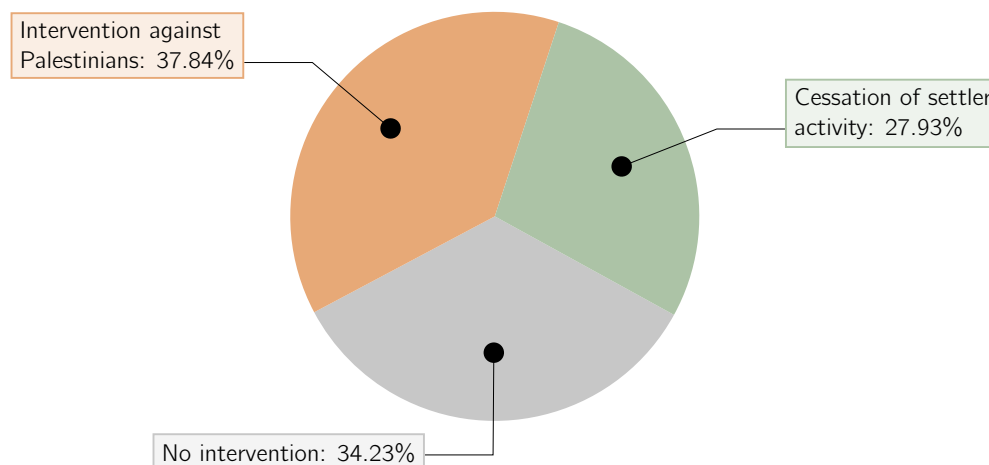
In 136 instances of violations committed by settlers, the presence of law enforcement was recorded. As an occupying force, these authorities are obliged to ensure the rights of the population under Occupation; yet, during the monitoring period, they never formally sanctioned the perpetrators. On the contrary, in most cases, law enforcement agents were directly or indirectly responsible for additional acts of violence against the Palestinian population.

³³ United Nations, *Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan*, Report by the Secretary-General, 2013, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/68/513>.

The data regarding the outcomes of law enforcement interventions, summarised in Figure 5, is alarming: in 34.23% of cases, they simply monitored the situation without intervening to stop the violations, while in 37.84% of cases they actively harmed Palestinians, for example by making one or more arrests³⁴. In only 27.93% of cases did their intervention lead to the cessation of settler activity — yet even then, no punitive measures were taken against those responsible.

These dynamics result not only from the collusion between the various branches of the Occupation forces but also from the legal discrimination suffered by Palestinians in the West Bank — one of the key pillars of the apartheid³⁵ regime. As discussed in the Foreword to this report, while Israeli and foreign citizens in the Occupied Territories are subject to Israeli civil law, the Palestinian population falls under military jurisdiction.

Figure 5: *Relative frequency of the outcomes when law enforcement forces are called (136 cases in total).*



This is compounded by the fact that when a Palestinian is arrested or detained, there is a high likelihood they will be subjected to physical and psychological abuse while in the custody of Israeli authorities, particularly since 7 October 2023. This has been documented by numerous investigations carried out by international and Israeli human rights organisations in Israeli prisons³⁶.

Hamdan Ballal, activist and co-director of the Oscar-winning documentary *No Other Land* (2025), powerfully describes the treatment of Palestinians in Israeli custody. Arrested on 25 March in his home village of Susiya, Ballal was held overnight at the police station in the Kiryat Arba settlement. “I felt as though they were beating me with the intention of killing me. The soldier kept threatening to shoot. And then he did. First two shots into the air. Then three more. They took me, blindfolded, to a very cold place.

³⁴ See Sections 4.1, 4.2, and 4.4. On average, between 23 January and 31 May, Israeli security forces arrested over four Palestinians per week.

³⁵ Amnesty International, *Israel’s apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel system of domination and crime against humanity*, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en>.

³⁶ See e.g. B’Tselem, *Welcome to hell: The Israeli prison system as a network of torture camps*, 2024, https://www.btselem.org/publications/202408_welcome_to_hell.

They forced me to sit in a given position. And then they forbade me from moving at all throughout the night. If I tried to shift position, they would beat me with a stick”³⁷.

3.5 Denial of freedom of movement

Restricting — and where possible, entirely denying — the freedom of movement of the Palestinian population is one of the main tools used by the Occupation forces to uphold the apartheid regime, whether in the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, or the West Bank. For example, all major Palestinian cities located within Area A are surrounded by checkpoints, which the Israeli army can close arbitrarily and without warning, for equally arbitrary periods of time.

Figure 6: *Tuwani, 10 April. An Israeli army checkpoint eliano*



Palestinians face restrictions not only when entering or leaving cities or the occupied territories of the West Bank³⁸, but also within those areas. A major barrier to movement is the danger Palestinians encounter simply by approaching Israeli settlements³⁹. Roadblocks are also common and can be imposed at any location and time under military order. During the monitoring period, the roads connecting Palestinian villages, or linking them to the nearby city of Yatta, were blocked 28 times by either law enforcement or settlers.

Particularly notable is the case of the al-Birkeh entrance, one of the main access points between the village of Tuwani and the city of Yatta, situated in Area A: 28.5%

³⁷ Interview aired on Sky TG24, 26 March 2025, <https://tg24.sky.it/spettacolo/cinema/2025/03/25/ballal-regista-no-other-land-liberato>.

³⁸ To leave the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and travel to Jerusalem, Gaza, Israel or abroad, residents of the region must obtain a permit from the Israeli authorities — a permit that is rarely granted. The same applies to Palestinians living in Gaza and Jerusalem.

³⁹ All Israeli settlements are surrounded by barbed wire, monitored 24 hours a day by armed men who make up the so-called settlement security force.

of roadblocks (8 cases) impacted this crossing. Its closure effectively isolates the main population centre of Masafer Yatta, preventing residents from entering or leaving.

This form of mobility restriction is a crucial tool in the hands of the Israeli Occupation: any movement, even the shortest, can be halted at any moment, making daily life unpredictable and unmanageable.

The connivance between settlers and law enforcement forces

The common thread running through all the violations we have documented is, without doubt, the collusion between Israeli settlers and law enforcement forces. As shown in the previous section, their actions are coordinated and pursue a shared objective: the ethnic cleansing of Masafer Yatta. To further illustrate this trend, we present four representative cases below, selected because they exhibit specific features that make them emblematic of the daily human rights violations suffered by the Palestinian population: the high level of violence involved, the deliberate targeting of a particular village, family, or activist, and the strategic location of the villages targeted.

Settler attacks are seldom made off-the-cuff: they are usually part of a series of repeated actions aimed at terrorising the population of a specific area or village. These actions are enabled through the collusion and complicity of the Israeli military and police, who are, by law, supposed to protect all residents of the West Bank — both Israeli and Palestinian.

4.1 Tuba: how the Occupation conducts ethnic cleansing

Tuba is a small village in Masafer Yatta situated within Firing Zone 918. The increasing frequency and severity of settler attacks along the road connecting Tuba to Tuwani have made this route impassable for Palestinians, worsening the isolation of Tuba and the nearby villages of Maghayir al Abeed and Isfey. Since mid-January, our field activists have observed a further escalation in settler violence against Tuba and its residents, particularly targeting Ali Awad, a Youth of Sumud activist and journalist, and his family.

One particularly serious incident happened in the early afternoon of 25 January, when six masked settlers attacked Tuba. They immediately set fire to Ali Awad's car, then destroyed three rooms of his grandparents' house, damaged equipment used for dairy production, and stole a mobile phone. During the assault, they also injured two children at the scene by throwing stones at them.

Two settlers from the Avat Ma'on outpost were identified and detained by Israeli

Figure 7: *Tuba, 25 January. Ali Awad's car burned by settlers*

police, but after only a couple of hours at the Kiryat Arba station, they were released without any charges. Their names are Gur Aryeh Tor and Tohar Landau. The attack lasted about twenty minutes and marked the beginning of a series of violent actions by settlers against the people of Tuba.

Just a few days later, on 29 January, a settler was grazing his flock on land owned by a Palestinian near the village. Alerted by the settler himself, the police arrived and arrested five individuals — including Ali and two of his underage relatives — without cause. According to our activists, one of the five arrested was definitely not present at the scene. Upon release from Kiryat Arba, Ali Awad displayed numerous injuries to his hand. He and the two minors were held until late at night, while the other two detainees remained in Israeli prisons for over a week.

On 9 February, we documented another assault in Tuba: around midnight, two settlers approached the home of Issa Awad, a sixteen-year-old relative of Ali, while he was sleeping outside near the family's pen for sheep and chickens. Michele, a Mediterranean activist who was inside the Awad house at that time with another international activist, recalls the scene: "At one point, we heard shouting. We immediately rushed outside and saw Issa with blood on his face. The settlers had attacked him, punching him while he slept". The following day, Issa Awad was due to appear at the Kiryat Arba police station for questioning in relation to the events of 29 January.

Another assault took place on 13 March, targeting one of the Palestinian minors who had been arrested the previous month

Throughout this entire period, rather than investigating and identifying the perpetrators of the attacks, the Israeli police and army systematically attempted to obstruct — and ultimately eliminate — the international presence in Tuba.

For instance, on 30 January, Luisa Morgantini, president of Assopace Palestina and former Vice-President of the European Parliament, travelled towards Tuba along with

Sole 24 Ore journalist Roberto Bongiorno, a Palestinian activist, an international activist, and a Palestinian citizen of Israel. The Israeli army arrested all five individuals on the charge of entering a military training zone without authorisation. A few hours later, Morgantini and Bongiorno were released, followed shortly after by the other three, none of whom faced any charges.

This targeting of international observers also directly affected Mediterranean's field activists. On 11 February, while in the village of Tuba, Rebecca, a Mediterranean activist, was arrested alongside another international activist. "We were approached by a yellow-plated car⁴⁰ coming towards us, with the occupants shouting at us to stop and claiming they were police. In fact, there were no markings on the vehicle identifying it as a police car"⁴¹.

Based on the data and images we have, we can confidently conclude that it was a security vehicle from the Ma'on settlement, and that the two individuals inside were settlers, not police officers. The two activists were subsequently detained by police, who had been alerted by the settlers, and were issued with expulsion orders preventing them from entering Masafer Yatta for 15 days.

Finally, on 6 March, the police raided two homes in Tuba, frightening the families inside. The stated reason was to search for international activists, who, however, were not in the village at the time.

The aim of the Occupation forces is clear: to intimidate Palestinians, physically attack them, and force them to leave their homes and land. In Tuba's case, this aim has been pursued by targeting not only the Palestinian population but also the international activists present there, showing the Israeli state's intention to drive away any witnesses who might report the crimes being committed.

4.2 Coordinated actions between the army and settlers: the assault on Jinba

Our field monitoring has enabled us to document events that clearly demonstrate a close military and strategic coordination between the army and settlers, especially in attacks on isolated villages within Firing Zone 918 and near the [Green Line](#), such as Jinba.

Regarding the assault on Jinba, the clear coordination among the various Occupation forces was so obvious that it led senior military officials to publicly distance themselves from their troops' actions and prompted a formal investigation by the Israeli judicial authorities — an exceedingly rare event in Israel. However, to date, no verdict has been reached and no disciplinary measures have been implemented against those responsible for the assault on Jinba, indicating that the official response was merely superficial.

⁴⁰ Yellow number plates indicate Israeli civilian vehicles.

⁴¹ Police cars have "Police" written on the doors, and their number plates are red.

The events unfolded between 28 and 29 March, 2025.

At around 1 PM on 28 March, village surveillance cameras captured the first assault, carried out by settlers against the local residents. A group of masked settlers from the Mitzpe Yair settlement stormed the village. Armed with wooden sticks and iron bars, they began attacking anyone in their path and destroying everything they encountered. All the houses were targeted — windows were smashed, interiors ransacked, televisions and refrigerators broken. The school, the mosque, and the health clinic were also attacked.

Videos show settlers swarming and beating Palestinians, including minors, with wooden sticks. The attack lasted several tens of minutes. A few hours later, after five people had been seriously injured, the army arrived in the village, but, instead of intervening against the attackers, they arrested 22 Palestinian men, accusing them of violence against the settlers. Of these, 15 were released after midnight, though only after being taken to the Kiryat Arba military base, several kilometres from Jinba.

At 2 AM on 29 March, with most of the village's men still absent, the Israeli armed forces raided Jinba and destroyed everything. They stormed houses, smashed windows and appliances, slashed water tanks, and emptied stores of oil and rice, mixing them with agricultural products to render the food inedible. In doing so, they completed the raid that the settlers had begun the previous day, targeting all the areas that had only been partially affected in the initial assault.

The army's violent incursion, carried out without any justification, continued until 6 AM. Residents recognised several of the soldiers as settlers from nearby Israeli settlements. In the span of less than 18 hours, the village was pillaged. The buildings were left standing, but everything inside them was destroyed.

Figure 8: *Jinba, 29 March. The village school ransacked by settlers*



Aziz Rabai, one of the Jinba residents who was arrested, says: “They came while we were resting, arrived with sticks and attacked the houses. They falsely accused

us of throwing stones. The settlers caused me head injuries, and I was taken away in an ambulance. It's absurd that every time we are attacked, we also end up being arrested. My son Ahmed was beaten and injured too. He is only 17 years old". Of the 22 Palestinians arrested, 7 were released only on 1 April after paying bail of 5,000 shekels (around 1,200 euros) each.

The presence of settlers among the soldiers who conducted the night raid on 29 March, along with the timing of the two assaults, clearly demonstrates the coordination between settlers and law enforcement. Overall, the two attacks on Jinba caused extensive damage to Palestinian homes and buildings, the loss of food supplies, a total community expenditure of 35,000 shekels (approximately 8,400 euros) to free seven unjustly arrested individuals, the destruction of the village's surveillance camera system, the initiation of 22 legal proceedings against village residents —and, what is worst, the widespread instillation of fear among the Palestinian population.

4.3 Demolitions as a tool of ethnic cleansing: the case of Khallet Athaba

It is evident that demolishing homes is a highly effective way of displacing the Palestinian population from their land. Demolition orders hang over families like the sword of Damocles: their unpredictable nature thrusts Palestinian families — who may see their homes destroyed at any moment without warning — into a state of constant insecurity. In the first four months of Mediterranean's monitoring activities, 51 Palestinian homes were demolished by the Occupation, an average of one every two and a half days.

It is important to clarify that Palestinians must apply for permits from the Israeli authorities to construct new buildings on their own land, but in the vast majority of cases, these permits are not granted. The most recent data available, collected by the Norwegian Refugee Council⁴², shows that between 2016 and 2020, Palestinians submitted 2,550 building permit applications for Area C. Of these, only 24 were approved by the Israeli authorities, meaning that over 99% were rejected. Additionally, every structure located within designated military training zones, such as Firing Zone 918, is automatically subject to a demolition order, and construction in these areas is prohibited.

In the early months of 2025, the most significant example of forced demolitions used as a tool of ethnic cleansing was in Khallet Athaba. This small village is situated on a plateau within Firing Zone 918, in a strategic position for connecting with other Palestinian villages, but also highly vulnerable and exposed to settler violence. Mediterranean had documented first-hand instances of aggression and violence in Khallet Athaba as early as summer 2024⁴³. Destroying the village would mean encircling

⁴² Norwegian Refugee Council, *Area C is everything: Planning for the future of Palestine*, 2023, <https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/area-c-is-everything/area-c-is-everything-v2.pdf>.

⁴³ See Mediterranean Saving Humans, *Cisgiordania: assalto dei coloni a villaggio palestinese, pestato a sangue at-*

and isolating the neighbouring communities of al-Mufaqarah and Umm Dhorit, while simultaneously making the surrounding area an easy target for further Israeli territorial expansion.

Figure 9: *Khallet Athaba, 10 February. Rubble of a demolished house*



From February to May, Khallet Athaba experienced a systematic campaign of home demolitions targeting Palestinian civilians. In three consecutive raids — on 10 and 29 February, and again on 5 May — the army and police, accompanied by settlers, stormed the village with bulldozers and heavy machinery, destroying homes. Our activists witnessed these operations.

In total, 31 inhabited buildings have been demolished in Khallet Athaba. As of now, only one house and the school remain standing: the village faces the threat of being completely erased. The rate of demolition is unprecedented: alongside homes, water tanks, solar panels supplying electricity, livestock shelters, storage units, olive trees, and the village's communal hall have all been destroyed. The Israeli authorities went even further, demolishing tents and makeshift shelters that residents had erected in an effort to remain in the village. This assault was not merely an act of destruction, but an attempt to eliminate every material possibility for Palestinians to continue living in Khallet Athaba.

In May, settlers living in the area around the Palestinian village forcibly occupied Khallet Athaba. They started camping on the ruins of demolished houses and farmland — damaging the land, issuing constant threats, and hurling abuse at the Palestinians who still lived in the village. Meanwhile, the tents and even some inhabited caves where displaced villagers had sought refuge were also destroyed by bulldozers on 5 May. At the time of writing, the very existence of the village remains under threat.

tivista italiano, 4 July 2024, <https://mediterraneaescue.org/it/news/cisgiordania-assalto-dei-coloni-a-villaggio-palestinese-pestato-a-sangue-attivista-italiano>.

4.4 The targeting of Ar Rakeez: an escalation of violence

The final example in this section concerns the village of Ar Rakeez, with a case culminating in the armed assault on Sheik Saeed al-Amor. This was the first instance of a Palestinian being injured by gunfire since October 2023⁴⁴.

Ar Rakeez is a small village just a few hundred metres from Tuwani. It is strategically located, as it lies along the only accessible road connecting Tuwani to al-Mufaqarah. If the occupation forces succeeded in driving Palestinians out of Ar Rakeez, only the isolated village of al-Mufaqarah would remain between the large Israeli settlements of Ma'on and Avigayil. This would, in effect, enable the settlements to merge, making the area inaccessible to Palestinians.

In the week before 17 April, Israeli settlers invaded Palestinian farmland four times with their flocks, damaging olive trees and protective fencing, and injuring a villager. The situation escalated on 17 April, when four *settler-soldiers* returned to the al-Amor family's land to damage property. In response, Sheik Saeed went to his fields, where Binyamin Budnhaimer — a settler-soldier and head of security in Avigayil — shot him in the leg.

Valerio, a Mediterranean activist, recalls what happened immediately after the shooting: "As soon as the settlers arrived, Shaikh Saeed's wife called us in a panic, and we rushed to Ar Rakeez. We arrived about five minutes after the settler had shot her husband". The seriousness of the situation was immediately clear: "When we got to Ar Rakeez, we saw Shaikh Saeed on the ground, wounded and surrounded by soldiers who would not allow him to receive medical assistance".

Around thirty soldiers were present, along with several armed settlers, including Budnhaimer. "Even though the al-Amor family had clearly identified the settler responsible for the attack," Valerio explains, "the soldiers did not even attempt to identify him, allowing the settlers to move about freely, while the army formed a cordon to prevent Palestinians and international activists from helping Shaikh Saeed or documenting what was happening. Meanwhile, the army arrested Elias, Shaikh Saeed's sixteen-year-old son, as he tried to reach his injured father".

It was later revealed that the settler-soldier used an expanding bullet – more commonly known as a dum-dum round. These bullets are designed to fragment upon impact with the body, causing maximum internal damage. The use of expanding bullets was first outlawed by the Hague Convention of 1899, to which Israel acceded in 1978, and is considered a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court⁴⁵.

A few days later, news came that Shaikh Saeed al-Amor's right leg had been amputated due to the damage caused by the dum-dum bullet and the delayed medical

⁴⁴ On 13 October 2023, Zakriha Adra was shot by settlers in the village of Tuwani. See <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-middle-east-67174672>.

⁴⁵ On the 1899 declaration against the use of expanding bullets, see e.g. <https://international-review.icrc.org/articles/humanitarian-bullets-and-man-killers-920>.

Figure 10: *Ar Rakeez, 17 April. The Occupation forces keep Palestinians away from the site of the shooting*



assistance. Al-Amor remained handcuffed and under guard for the entire duration of his hospital stay, as he was being held on charges of assaulting a settler. However, footage from the scene and multiple eyewitness accounts tell a very different story. Shaikh Saeed was eventually released after paying a bail of 5,000 shekels (approximately 1,200 euros). His son Elias was released a few days later, also following the payment of the same amount in bail.

On 18 April, just one day after the shooting, a group of settlers — including those involved in the assault — returned to the al-Amor family's land. Escorted by the army, the group began planting iron posts in the cultivated fields.

In the following days, several settlers on quad bikes repeatedly passed close to Palestinian homes, threatening and intimidating families in Ar Rakeez. One night, they even planted Israeli flags just a few dozen metres from Shaikh Saeed's house. Then, during the night of 23 May, a group of settlers entered a property adjacent to Shaikh Saeed's, where a relative of his had all 30 of the family's sheep stolen — livestock that, along with their olive trees, represented their main source of livelihood.

What has occurred in Ar Rakeez in recent months demonstrates how the Israeli Occupation's ethnic cleansing in Masafer Yatta is intensifying, and how extreme violence is being deliberately used as a tactic to force the Palestinian population to leave their land and property.

Nonviolent resistance as a collective response to the occupation

The data collected in this report consistently and clearly document the crimes against humanity and human rights violations that the Israeli Occupation commits daily against the Palestinian population of Masafer Yatta. These practices serve a clear purpose. As Mohammad Hureini, a Youth of Sumud activist, explains: “The idea is to confine people to the cities in Area A, while in Areas B and C, settlers are given free rein to commit increasing acts of violence and build more settlements and outposts”. The model that the Israeli Occupation aims to impose is essentially the same as that of the Gaza Strip: a vast open-air prison where Israel controls who enters and exits, entirely surrounded by a colonised Area C.

Within this broader context, it is important to emphasise a shared and collective decision — one not easily captured by data or charts — that has led the community of Masafer Yatta to adopt a nonviolent form of resistance to the Occupation.

In mainstream narratives, Palestinians are often depicted solely as victims of Israeli violence. However, this perspective is limited. The Palestinians of Masafer Yatta are political actors, living in a community that persists and endures through acts of solidarity and resilience, which have developed gradually and with great effort over time.

To engage in nonviolent resistance is not to passively endure the Occupation — it is, rather, a collective and active response, one that challenges violence through communal and participatory acts. Cultivating land destroyed by settlers, pitching a tent where a demolished house once stood, heading out to graze livestock each day despite the risk of arrest—these are all tangible expressions of resistance.

A powerful example is Ali, 86, who has spent his entire life in the village of Khallet Athaba and now stays on land occupied by settlers. He chose to sit on a chair in front of the ruins where his house once stood. In simple, direct words, he expressed the heart of resistance: “I was born here before Israel existed; my family has owned this land for generations. How can they now try to drive me out, claiming it’s no longer mine?”

In this particularly complex historical moment, the Palestinian community is keenly aware of the challenges it will face in the near and medium-term future. They understand that they can only stay on their land by resisting every day. It is only by holding

Figure 11: *Khallet Athaba, 2 June. Ali sits facing a group of settlers feasting on the rubble of his demolished home*



onto this determination — and this strong refusal to submit to the will of the Occupation — that the data presented in this report can be fully understood. As Hafez Hureini, a leading figure in nonviolent resistance in Masafer Yatta, puts it: “Unfortunately, we haven’t yet been able to end the Occupation, but we’ve managed to remain on our land, in our villages. That, in itself, is already a great victory for us”.

Glossary

Firing Zone	An area designated as a military training zone by the Israeli authorities. Apart from the Israeli armed forces, only Palestinian and Israeli civilians residing within the zone are permitted to enter without authorisation. However, any civilian structure within a Firing Zone is automatically subject to a demolition order. Firing Zones, which cover approximately 18% of the West Bank (nearly one-third of Area C), are a mechanism used by the Occupation to seize Palestinian land ⁴⁶ . Masafer Yatta's Firing Zone 918 was designated in the 1980s, but did not officially come into operation until May 2022, following a prolonged legal battle by the area's Palestinian residents.
Green Line	The Green Line was the armistice boundary established between Israel and the neighbouring Arab states (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria) following the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli War. Since 1967, it has marked the boundary between the occupied Palestinian territories and the internationally recognised State of Israel.
Law enforcement forces	In this report, this term refers to the Israeli police and military across all their branches (including border police, intelligence services, and others).
Occupied Palestinian territories	In this report, this term refers to the Palestinian areas of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem that were occupied by Israel in 1967 following the so-called "Six-Day War".
<i>Operazione Colomba</i>	The nonviolent peace corps of the Pope John XXIII Community, <i>Operazione Colomba</i> has been active in Palestine since 2002. Since 2004, it has maintained a constant presence in the village of Tuwani and throughout the entire Masafer Yatta region.

⁴⁶ See e.g. Assopace Palestina, *Cos'è la "Zona di tiro 918" e come Israele la usa per accaparrarsi altra terra palestinese*, 2023, <https://www.assopacepalestina.org/2023/10/05/cose-la-zona-di-tiro-918-e-come-israele-la-usa-per-accaparrarsi-altra-terra-palestinese> (in Italian).

Oslo Accords	Signed in Oslo in 1993 by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (which later became the Palestinian National Authority, or PNA). The accords established a division of the West Bank into three areas: - <i>Area A</i>: Under full civil and security control of the PNA. It covers approximately 8% of West Bank and includes major Palestinian cities. - <i>Area B</i>: Under Palestinian civil control and Israeli military control. It functions as a buffer zone around Palestinian cities and covers about 22% of West Bank. - <i>Area C</i>: Under full Israeli civil and military control, it covers roughly 66% of West Bank, largely consisting of rural areas. Masafer Yatta is located entirely within Area C. The nearest Area A cities are Yatta and al-Khalil (Hebron in Hebrew).
Outpost	An Israeli settlement in the occupied Palestinian territories, considered illegal not only under international law but also under Israeli law. Outposts are typically small settlements which, once they grow in terms of population and area, are often declared official settlements, thereby falling under the jurisdiction of the State of Israel. Due to their informal and unregulated nature, it is difficult to determine the exact number of outposts in the West Bank.
PNA	Established under the Oslo Accords, the PNA is the only authority recognised by the international community as representing the Palestinian people. In Arafat's vision, it was intended as the foundation for a future Palestinian state — one that never came into being. The current president, who succeeded Arafat after his death in 2004, is Mahmoud Abbas (also known as Abu Mazen), elected in 2005. Since then, no further elections have taken place in Palestine, despite their originally being scheduled to occur regularly. Since 2007, and despite the Oslo Accords, the PNA has no longer exercised control over the Gaza Strip, which has been governed by various administrations led by members of Hamas.
Settlement	An Israeli settlement in the occupied Palestinian territories, considered legal by the State of Israel but not by the International Court of Justice. In a ruling issued in July 2024, the Court declared all Israeli settlements in the West Bank to be unlawful and called for their complete evacuation by December 2025⁴⁷. According to United Nations data, there were approximately 150 settlements in the West Bank as of 2024⁴⁸.

⁴⁷ ICJ, *Legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem*, 2025, <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240719-adv-01-00-en.pdf>.

⁴⁸ United Nations, *Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan*, Report A/HRC/58/73 of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2025, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/58/73>.

Settler	An Israeli citizen who lives in a settlement or outpost in the occupied Palestinian territories. According to United Nations estimates, over 700,000 settlers currently live in the occupied West Bank ⁴⁹ .
Settler-soldier	This profile emerged after 7 October 2023. Following that date, Israel declared a state of war and summoned all military reservists. Consequently, many settlers effectively became soldiers, acquiring the authority that comes with serving in the Israeli army. On the ground, it has become progressively harder to distinguish between soldiers, settler-soldiers, and civilians, as many settlers — whether in uniform or civilian clothes — are armed.
Ta'ayush	Literally meaning “living together” in Arabic, <i>Ta'ayush</i> is a grass-roots movement founded in Israel that brings together Palestinians and Israelis in the struggle against discrimination, racism, and segregation within Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. Since the early 2000s, it has been actively engaged in nonviolent protective presence and solidarity actions in Masafer Yatta.
Youth of Sumud	A Palestinian organisation active in Masafer Yatta since 2017, made up of young people from the local community who repopulated the Palestinian village of Sarura after it had been evacuated due to the Israeli Occupation. Since then, they have become the leading Palestinian group practising nonviolent resistance in the area.

⁴⁹ United Nations, *Human Rights Council Hears that 700,000 Israeli Settlers are Living Illegally in the Occupied West Bank – Meeting Summary*, 2023, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/human-rights-council-hears-that-700000-israeli-settlers-are-living-illegally-in-the-occupied-west-bank-meeting-summary-excerpts>.

