

Demographic alteration: West bank annexation and U.S. displacement plan in Gaza

Alongside the genocidal war in Gaza, the Israeli occupation authorities continue to enforce policies and measures designed to tighten control over the occupied Palestinian territories and expand their settlement project, in blatant violation of international law and UN resolutions. In this context, Israel is advancing new legislation and on-the-ground practices to effectively annex the West Bank, expand settler control, and enforce demographic changes in Gaza. This occurs alongside military escalation in the West Bank, targeting infrastructure, and imposing new realities that serve the occupation's strategic objectives. These developments are accompanied by controversial international proposals aimed at reshaping the Palestinian situation, necessitating a firm Palestinian, Arab, and international stance to confront these plans.

This report explores the new legislation enacted by the Israeli occupation authorities and its role in advancing the annexation of the West Bank, the military campaign in the West Bank, including the destruction of Jenin refugee camp, and the U.S. plan proposed by President Trump to displace Palestinians from Gaza, along with the positions of Egypt and Jordan on the issue.

The importance of this report lies in providing a comprehensive legal document that advocates for international pressure to confront Israel's expansionist policies, which pose a threat to both the West Bank and Gaza. Furthermore, the report contributes to raising global awareness of the Palestinian cause and documenting the crimes committed against the Palestinian people, thereby reinforcing political and legal advocacy on the international stage.

New legislations and annexation plan

A bill is currently under consideration in the Israeli legislative corridors, aimed at facilitating settlers' acquisition of land in the West Bank. Proposed by Knesset member Shlomo Salmon from the "Religious Zionism" bloc, a coalition partner, the bill has passed its preliminary reading. It seeks to ease the process for settlers to own land and properties in the West Bank, regardless of their location.

For years, settler organizations have been actively working to facilitate settlement expansion in the West Bank and transfer land ownership to Jewish individuals. The "Regavim" settlement group previously filed a petition challenging Jordanian Law No. 40 of 1953, known as the "Law on Leasing and Selling Immovable Property to Foreigners," which governed the West Bank during Jordanian rule from 1948 until the 1967 occupation. This law prohibits the leasing or sale of land and property to non-Jordanian citizens or Arabs and prevents Jews from owning land in the West Bank. The law remained in effect even after 1967, when the West Bank was occupied by Israel.¹

After almost two years of backing from Zionist organizations such as "Regavim"² and the "Lobby for the Land of Israel," along with support from several ministers and Knesset members, Israeli Knesset member Moshe Salmon introduced the bill to the Knesset's Ministerial

¹ Aljazeera

² It is a right-wing Israeli organization focused on monitoring what it terms unauthorized Palestinian construction in "Area C" and initiating legal cases to expedite demolition operations.

Committee for Legislation. The bill was approved by 58 members, while 33 members opposed it. It will need to pass through three readings before it can become law.³

In addition to repealing the Jordanian law, the proposed bill removes the restrictions established by the 1971 decree, which permitted Jews to purchase land in the West Bank after the 1967 occupation, but only through a company registered with the Civil Administration.⁴

What is the Civil Administration?

Israel established a Civil Administration under the Israeli military, responsible for overseeing settlement activities and allowing the ownership of settlement units by institutions and companies registered with this administration. As a result, construction in settlements is subject to approval by the Israeli military.⁵

What is Area C?

Under Oslo Accords, Israel maintained control over security and political matters in 60% of the West Bank, known as Area C. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority was granted limited governing powers in Areas A and B of the occupied West Bank.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pledged to annex parts of Area C, specifically the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea region, where approximately 65,000 Palestinians and around 11,000 Israeli settlers reside.

Area C is home to the vast majority of illegal settlements in the West Bank, which number over 200, with a population of more than 400,000 settlers.

Although control over part of this area was supposed to be transferred to the Palestinian Authority in 1999 under the Oslo Accords, the handover process did not take place. As a result, Israel has maintained control over security, planning, and construction in this area. Israel prevents Palestinians from building on large portions of land in Area C and restricts their access to significant parts of the area.⁶

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, between January 1, 2010, and January 1, 2025, the Israeli occupation demolished around 8,765 Palestinian structures in Area C, most of them under the pretext of unauthorized construction. This included 3,107 agricultural facilities, 2,025 residential homes, and about 700 uninhabited buildings.

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³ [ownership law, Aljazeera](#)

⁴ [ownership law, Aljazeera](#)

⁵ [Warning.. Annexation and west bank displacement started](#)

⁶ [west bank division under Oslo Accords](#)

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What are the implications of this legislation?

This legislation allows Israeli settlers to acquire Palestinian land in Area C. Even if the annexation plan fails, the land made available for purchase under this law will officially be under the ownership of Israeli individuals and entities, making them legal owners. This ownership will remain unless the law is repealed.

The new law removes the "enemy" designation from settlers, classifying them only as "foreigners," and makes it possible for them to own land, which was previously prohibited. This law has significant implications for the legal status of West Bank land, paving the way for its full annexation, similar to what happened with the occupied Golan Heights and East Jerusalem.

This change redefines West Bank land, shifting it from being under military occupation to being considered part of Israeli territory.

Annexation of Archaeological Sites

In 2023, the Israeli government announced the annexation of Palestinian archaeological sites, transferring control to what is known as the Israeli Antiquities Authority. This includes 3,200 sites in the West Bank, the majority of which are located in Area C, with hundreds in Area B.⁸

Bill to Rename "The West Bank"

On February 9, 2025, the Israeli Ministerial Committee for Legislation approved, in its preliminary reading, a bill that aims to change the replace the term "West Bank" in Israeli legislation with "Judea and Samaria." The bill will be voted on in a subsequent Knesset plenary session.

This bill is part of a broader set of measures by the Israeli government to pave the way for the full annexation of the West Bank into Israeli sovereignty.

Bill to Complicate Withdrawal from the West Bank

The Israeli Knesset is considering an amendment to a law that would require any government to hold a public referendum before withdrawing from West Bank territories, or to gain the approval of 80 Knesset members, or before transferring land to any "foreign entity." This would extend the scope of the referendum law to include the West Bank, which was previously limited to land within the Green Line.

The amendment also imposes restrictions on any administrative actions in the West Bank, such as reclassifying land from Area C to Area A or granting additional powers to the Palestinian Authority.

A parliamentary lobby group called "Land of Israel," in partnership with the Yesha Council of

⁷ [Demolition and displacement in Area C](#)

⁸ [Israeli plans to annex West Bank](#)

Settlements, is pushing for this bill. Proponents argue that it prevents "any irresponsible concessions" by the Israeli government.⁹

It is important to note that Israel governs the land in the West Bank as an occupying power, and any efforts to solidify its legal sovereignty over these territories represent a clear violation of international law.

The Military Offensive on the West Bank and the Destruction of Jenin Refugee Camp

Since January 21, 2025, Israel has continued its assault on the city of Jenin and its refugee camp under the operation known as "Iron Wall," causing widespread destruction to infrastructure and property. According to estimates from relevant authorities in the targeted refugee camps, Israeli forces have killed 44 Palestinians and arrested dozens. As a result, more than 90% of the residents of the Jenin and Tulkarm camps have been displaced, along with dozens of families from the Far'a and Nur Shams camps, after the complete and partial destruction of hundreds of homes.¹⁰

Around 30,000 Palestinians have been displaced from their homes in the northern West Bank. In Jenin, nearly 16,000 Palestinians were displaced over the course of two weeks from the Jenin refugee camp¹¹. Additionally, 10,500 Palestinians were displaced from the Tulkarm camp, leaving only 400 Palestinian families remaining within the camp. Furthermore, 4,000 Palestinians¹² were forcibly displaced from the town of Tammoun.¹³

This military operation has led to the destruction of civilian structures and critical infrastructure in the West Bank, with Israeli forces deliberately causing maximum damage to essential facilities necessary for the survival of the population, especially roads, electricity and communication lines, and water systems.

Security Concerns or a Plan for Displacement?

The Israeli government claims that the military campaign in the West Bank is merely a means of securing settlements and preventing imminent security threats. According to Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, "The attack on Jenin is the beginning of an intense and ongoing campaign to protect settlers and settlements."¹⁴

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant stated that the army is currently applying "lessons" learned from Gaza in the West Bank, adding that efforts are underway to ensure that what he called "terrorism" does not return to the Jenin refugee camp and to prevent the establishment of a "terrorism front" against Israel from the east.¹⁵

⁹ [Israeli bill to complicate future withdrawal from West bank](#)

¹⁰ [largest displacement in the west bank since 8 decades](#)

¹¹ As if we are in Jabalia

¹² As if we are in Jabalia

¹³ As if we are in Jabalia

¹⁴ Haaretz

¹⁵ Yedioth Ahronoth

Field data and official statements suggest that Israel's military operations in the West Bank, particularly in Jenin, are aimed at creating a coercive environment that forces Palestinian residents to migrate. The scale of destruction and the targeting of civilian infrastructure, including the demolition of homes and vital facilities, reflect a pattern of pressure that compels residents to leave. Moreover, Israel is employing multiple strategies to bring about demographic change in the West Bank, including intensive military attacks, escalating settlement activities, and imposing stringent movement restrictions, leaving residents with two choices: live in inhumane conditions or leave.

These practices constitute a blatant violation of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the forcible transfer of populations, and amount to a crime of forcible displacement under Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

This Israeli approach is not new; its roots extend over decades of practices aimed at reshaping the demographic map of the West Bank. These practices seek to reduce the Palestinian population in areas of military and strategic significance, transforming other areas into isolated and fragmented points that are easier to control, making it difficult to achieve economic and social unity among Palestinians within them.

The destruction of infrastructure is a clear violation of the Geneva Conventions, especially Additional Protocol I of the 1977 Geneva Conventions. This protocol, in Article 54, calls for the protection of civilians during armed conflicts, prohibiting attacks on civilian objects and infrastructure that are indispensable for the survival of civilian populations.

The U.S. Forced Relocation Plan and the Positions of Jordan and Egypt

The Forced Displacement Plan Under the Guise of Reconstruction: From "Riviera Gaza" to Forced Deportation

Concerns have resurfaced regarding the plan aimed at reshaping the Palestinian demographic reality under the cover of economic and developmental projects, introduced by U.S. President Donald Trump's administration. This plan proposes turning Gaza into the "Riviera of the Middle East" through massive investment projects along its coastal strip, along with statements about the "ownership of Gaza." The project was promoted as an opportunity to rebuild the Gaza Strip and achieve economic prosperity, offering a bright future for the Palestinians. However, this was seen as a preliminary step toward emptying the strip of its population, particularly in the face of mounting military and humanitarian pressures.

In this context, the current U.S. administration is working on securing "suitable land" for Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank in neighboring countries—a proposal rejected by both Egypt and Jordan. U.S. president has stated that "Palestinians will not have the right to return, as they will be given far better housing." This position aligns with the Israeli approach, which involves expanding military operations in the West Bank and imposing a suffocating blockade on Gaza, forcing residents to leave their lands. Such actions constitute a flagrant violation of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the forcible transfer of populations in occupied territories.

1. **Emptying Gaza of its Population:** This U.S. strategy is viewed as an attempt to bring an end to the Palestinian issue. The American plan calls for the displacement of 2.2 million Palestinians from Gaza to neighboring countries like Egypt and Jordan, with the aim of depopulating the Strip. This still somewhat unclear plan is seen as a systematic ethnic cleansing and an existential threat to the Palestinian people.
2. **Annexation of the West Bank by Israel:** One of the most prominent components of the Trump plan is its full support for Israeli government plans to annex large parts of the West Bank, particularly the areas housing Israeli settlements. This proposal implies the imposition of Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank, formally incorporating it within Israel's borders. This step is a blatant violation of international law and United Nations resolutions, which regard the West Bank as occupied territory, especially with respect to altering the geographical status of nations under occupation. Recent Israeli legislative actions have solidified the annexation plan, making it closer to realization than ever before.

Jordanian and Egyptian Stance

This plan has been met with strong resistance from neighboring Arab countries. The Jordanian government, through its Foreign Minister, reaffirmed that Jordan will not accept any scheme aimed at liquidating the Palestinian cause through forced displacement. The minister emphasized that acceptable solutions must be within the framework of the two-state solution, ensuring the establishment of a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders.

Similarly, the Jordanian Prime Minister declared that “no resettlement, no displacement, and no solutions at Jordan’s expense” would be accepted. This stance was echoed by King Abdullah II, who presented Jordan’s position during his talks with the U.S. President in Washington. The king asserted that Gaza’s reconstruction can be achieved without displacing its residents.

Arab nations are expected to issue a collective response to Trump’s plan following Egypt’s proposal and further discussions in Saudi Arabia. The matter is set to be addressed at an upcoming Arab summit in Cairo on the 27th of this month, where leaders will discuss the latest developments regarding the Palestinian issue.

From the other side, Egypt has categorically rejected any proposal aimed at relocating Gaza’s residents to Sinai, considering it a direct threat to Egyptian national security. Cairo has reaffirmed its stance that Gaza’s reconstruction must take place without the displacement of its Palestinian population.

As for the broader Arab response, it has been one of firm rejection, especially from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, both of which have emphasized their commitment to rebuilding Gaza while opposing any plan that seeks to uproot Palestinians from their land.

The proposals outlined in Trump’s initiative represent a blatant violation of international laws and norms. Forced population transfers from occupied territories constitute a war crime and are strictly prohibited under all circumstances. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention

explicitly forbids the collective or individual forcible transfer of people from occupied territories to the territory of the occupying power or any other state. Moreover, Article 47 of the convention prohibits any measures by the occupying power aimed at altering the legal or demographic status of occupied territories, including settlement expansion or population displacement.

The American plan and the right of return

The United States has long sought to reshape the political landscape of the Palestinian issue, particularly regarding refugees and the right of return. Various American proposals, including the "Deal of the Century" and what Trump has described as "Buying Gaza," have been accompanied by attempts to dismantle the right of return. These efforts have included redefining the status of Palestinian refugees, reducing international support for UNRWA, and promoting the resettlement of refugees in host countries or through alternative compensation schemes.

The right of return is an inalienable right enshrined in international law, particularly UN Resolution 194 (1948), which affirms the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes from which they were displaced. This right is also supported by fundamental principles of international human rights and humanitarian law, including Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees every individual's right to return to their country, and the Fourth Geneva Convention, which explicitly prohibits forced displacement.

American policy aligns with the Israeli vision of erasing this right by offering economic and developmental solutions as substitutes for addressing the refugee issue, disregarding the legal and historical legitimacy of the right of return. Any attempt to nullify this right constitutes a clear violation of international law, which upholds the right of peoples to self-determination and prohibits forced displacement or the imposition of solutions that contradict the will of the refugees themselves.

These developments call for urgent action on all levels, including strengthening legal and diplomatic efforts, exposing Israeli violations in international forums, and supporting Palestinian resilience on their land. Reconstruction must be carried out in a manner that safeguards Palestinian rights, without being tied to political conditions that serve the occupation.

In this context, the Palestinian Association for Human Rights (Witness) reaffirms that the international community bears a legal and moral responsibility to hold Israel accountable for its crimes, put an end to its ongoing violations, and take concrete steps to protect Palestinian rights. Achieving justice and stability in the region will not be possible without ending the occupation and enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate rights, foremost among them the right to self-determination.

Conclusions

- **Accelerated Annexation and Settlement Expansion**
 - Israel is advancing legal measures to consolidate its control over the West Bank, including legislation facilitating settler land appropriation.

- Policies include annexing Palestinian heritage sites, change the West Bank to "Judea and Samaria," and complicating future withdrawal efforts.
- These actions constitute clear violations of international law, imposing a new settlement reality at the expense of Palestinian rights.
- **Military Escalation and Forced Displacement in the West Bank**
 - Israel's intensified military operations, particularly in Jenin, have displaced thousands and caused extensive infrastructure destruction.
 - Evidence suggests these actions extend beyond military objectives, aiming to depopulate Palestinian areas and alter demographics.
 - Such violations amount to war crimes under international law, notably Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits forced population transfers.
- **The U.S. Plan to Reshape Palestinian Reality**
 - Growing concerns over disguised displacement efforts through development projects designed to alter Gaza's demographic composition.
 - Plans for Palestinian resettlement in neighboring countries face firm Arab rejection, particularly from Jordan and Egypt.
 - These initiatives align with Israeli policies seeking to erase the Palestinian issue by depopulating Gaza and annexing the West Bank.

Recommendations

In light of the above, we at the Palestinian Association for Human Rights (Witness) call for the following:

1. **Intensifying Legal and Diplomatic Efforts**
 - Mobilizing pressure on international bodies, particularly the UN Security Council and General Assembly, to take concrete legal actions against Israel's policies of annexation and forced displacement.
2. **Raising Global Awareness and Strengthening Media Advocacy**
 - Launching large-scale media campaigns to expose the dangers of annexation and forced displacement, highlighting them as war crimes and violations of international law.
 - Documenting testimonies of displaced individuals and publishing field reports that illustrate the devastating humanitarian impact of these practices.
3. **Escalating Political and Economic Pressure**

- Strengthening international calls for economic sanctions against Israel and corporations complicit in settlement expansion.
- Intensifying diplomatic efforts to prevent any recognition of Israel's annexation of the West Bank.

4. Supporting Palestinian Resilience and Legal Empowerment

- Providing legal and financial aid to communities at risk of displacement, ensuring their ability to remain on their land.
- Expanding legal education initiatives to equip Palestinians with knowledge of their rights and international legal protections.

5. Safeguarding Reconstruction and the Right to Stay

- Advancing reconstruction efforts while holding Israel accountable as an occupying power for the destruction it has caused.
- Upholding firm international and Arab rejection of any forced displacement schemes and ensuring that reconstruction does not serve as a pretext for altering Palestinian demographics.