



## Report

# Israeli Policies and Practices of Collective Punishment: An Analytical Report on Home Raids and Demolitions in the West Bank

The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue  
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# Israeli Policies and Practices of Collective Punishment: An Analytical Report on Home Raids and Demolitions in the West Bank

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# Israeli Policy and Practices of Collective Punishment: An Analytical Report on Home Raids and Demolitions in the West Bank

## Executive Summary Methodology

MIFTAH's report, 'Israeli Policy and Practices of Collective Punishment: An Analytical Report on Home Raids and Demolitions in the West Bank' employs a mixed-methods approach, combining primary data analysis through 31 testimonies from affected women with secondary data sourced from existing literature and reports, including from UN bodies and civil society organisations. The research team conducted thematic analysis to identify patterns and codes related to home raids and demolitions across the West Bank, including Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarem, Hebron and Bethlehem, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the impact of these practices on Palestinian communities in general and women in particular. The testimonies were primarily collected from interviews with affected women, providing a rich qualitative dataset that highlights the lived experiences of Israel's policy of collective punishment, and wider policy of settler colonialism.

The report is structured into substantive sections that first present the findings from primary data and then contextualise these findings within the broader framework of secondary sources. This dual approach allows for a robust analysis of the implications of home raids and demolitions, situating individual experiences within the larger narrative of collective punishment, settler colonialism, and human rights violations. The report demonstrates that these practices are not -isolated incidents, but rather longstanding practices that seek to suppress Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation.

The section on home raids is based on 23 testimonies that illustrate how Israel employs this tactic to suppress Palestinian resistance. Home raids are characterised by excessive use of force, psychological trauma, property damage, destruction of property, and arrest, among other aspects. Testimonies reveal that Israeli soldiers conduct raids frequently as a measure of collective punishment, thereby instilling fear and terror within the community, with severe consequences for vulnerable social groups, including women and children.

The report identifies several prevalent patterns during home raids, including the use of military force, destruction of personal belongings, and psychological abuse. The testimonies indicate that these raids are not only punitive but also serve to reinforce military control over the Palestinian population. The emotional and psychological consequences of these raids are profound, leading to long-term trauma for individuals and families, particularly children who witness the violence and disruption of their homes.

Estimations indicate that between October 7, 2023 and end of September 2024, the Israeli occupation forces have carried out more than 5,505 raids, with the northern West Bank subject to particularly severe military violence, including but not limited to raids. In the H2 area in Hebron, in this same period, at least 290 Palestinians, including 37 children, have been arrested at checkpoints, during raids, or through ad-hoc detention by Israeli forces. This figure is more than double the weekly average of arrest recorded between January 1, 2023 and October 6, 2023.

The section on home demolitions is informed by 8 testimonies that demonstrate how this practice is utilised as a means of forced displacement and suppression of resistance, within the framework of the imposition of military rule on Palestinians in the West Bank. There are two main types of home demolitions. Administrative demolitions are the most common and are carried out due to 'unlawful' construction when families build without Israeli-issued permits, primarily East Jerusalem, area 'C' of the West Bank, and H2 area of Hebron. These permits are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain due to the restrictive and discriminatory planning system, such that between the years 2000 and 2020, the Israeli occupation rejected more than 96% of Palestinian building permit applications. This is not surprising given that the Israeli occupation has allocated 0.24% of land in area 'C' in the West Bank for growth and development, compared to 99.76% for the growth and development of illegal Israeli settlements. This leaves families facing the choice of building and expanding 'illegally' or going without adequate housing, public services, and schools, and with under-developed community infrastructure. Due to this, some 10,000 Palestinian homes in the West Bank have demolition orders pending.

The second type of home demolitions are punitive demolitions, which are retaliatory actions taken by Israeli occupation against Palestinians who have allegedly attacked or are suspected of attacking Israeli soldiers/security forces, settlers, and/or civilians. However, the person who has allegedly conducted the attack is killed or arrested in the vast majority of the cases. Consequently, in most cases the persons adversely affected by such demolitions are the other members of the household; thus, this policy constitutes collective punishment at its core, and which is absolutely prohibited under international law. While Israeli occupation claims that these demolitions act as a deterrent to others, there is scant evidence supporting this, and in all cases, deterrence does not justify a breach of the absolute prohibition of collective punishment. While courts around the world treat collective punishment as a war crime, Israel's Supreme Court, has consistently rejected the claim that the Israeli government's practice of punitive home demolitions amounts to collective punishment. Between 2004 and 2025, a total of 335 homes were punitively demolished completely, and 3 partially, leading to the displacement of 1,591 Palestinians, 250 of which were minors.

Overall, the report highlights that both administrative and punitive home demolitions are a key tool in Israel's settler colonial policy, aimed at displacing Palestinian communities and consolidating control over land. Testimonies reveal the devastating impact of home demolitions on families, including physical abuse, damage to possessions, and insufficient time for evacuation. The emotional toll is particularly severe for children, who experience trauma and anxiety as they witness their homes being destroyed. The report emphasises that the psychological effects of these demolitions extend beyond immediate displacement, affecting future generations and perpetuating a cycle of trauma and insecurity.

The legal analysis section examines the practices of home raids and demolitions through the lens of international law, including international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and international criminal law. The report argues that these practices constitute collective punishment, which is prohibited under international law. It highlights the legal obligations of Israel as an occupying power to protect the rights of civilians and refrain from actions that cause unnecessary suffering.

Specifically, home raids violate the right to human dignity and privacy as contained in Article 46 of the 1907 Hague Regulations, and Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, in addition to Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees the right to privacy. Home raids also violate the special protection provided to women under Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which provides for the protection of women from attacks against their honour. Similarly, Israeli practices contravene the provisions of several general recommendations issued by the Committee on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, namely General Recommendation 35 on violence against women, and general recommendation 30 on conflict prevention, conflict, and post-conflict situations.

With respect to home demolitions, Israeli policy and practices violate a myriad of obligations, including the Advisory Opinion by the International Court of Justice, issued in July 2024, on the prohibition of collective punishment, in addition to Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Article 23(g) of the 1899 Hague Regulations on prohibition of destruction of real and personal property. Home demolitions also give rise to forced displacement of the local population, which is prohibited under Article 49(1) of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The report concludes with a set of recommendations delineated by stakeholder, including the international community, State of Palestine, and Palestinian civil society organisations. The report, specifically, recommends that the international community increase pressure on Israel as an occupying power to cease home demolitions and home raids as an integral part of Israel's policy of collective punishment and forced displacement. The report also recommends that the international community move beyond the standard discourse of condemning Israeli policies and practices and take concrete steps to hold Israel accountable for war crimes and crimes against humanity. At the level of the State of Palestine, the report recommends that the State of Palestine capitalises on the July 2024 Advisory Opinion by the International Court of Justice and vest concerted efforts in order to freeze Israel's membership at the level of the United Nations General Assembly. The report recommends to Palestinian civil society organisations that they continue to submit complaints and communications to the International Criminal Court to maintain the pressure on the Court vis-à-vis the Palestine investigation.

In conclusion, the report underscores the urgent need for action to address the ongoing violations associated with home raids and demolitions in the West Bank. By implementing the recommendations outlined, national and international duty bearers can contribute to the protection of human rights and the promotion of justice for affected communities.

## Introduction and Report Methodology

This report is based on 31 testimonies that underscore the use of collective punishment as a key tool for suppressing resistance, which feeds into Israel's settler colonial policy. Israeli occupation's use of collective punishment as a tool to suppress Palestinian resistance is well documented. Collective punishment refers to penalising or punishing civilians for acts that they did not personally commit. Specifically, the term is defined as 'a punitive sanction inflicted on a group of persons without regard to individual responsibility for the deed or event which provokes the penalty.'<sup>[1]</sup> Collective punishment is not limited to criminal penalties, but also includes other types of sanctions, harassment or administrative action. Historically used as a deterrence tool by occupying powers to prevent attacks from resistance movements, collective punishments for acts committed by individuals during an armed conflict are prohibited under International Humanitarian Law, both against prisoners of war and other protected persons, including civilians.<sup>[2]</sup>

Israel's settler colonial policy refers to Israeli strategies and practices that seek to maximise acquisition of Palestinian land with the least percentage of Palestinians on it. To this end, Israel's settler colonial policy employs three mutually reinforcing strategies: i) land confiscation and denial of use, ii) increasing the number of Israelis through settlement expansion, and iii) decreasing the number of Palestinians through forced displacement, including the imposition of a coercive environment.<sup>[3]</sup>

The tool of collective punishment to suppress Palestinian resistance is utilised both systematically and on a widespread scale; it is operationalised in different ways against various Palestinian communities. For example, the punitive revocations of permits, imposition of curfews, deliberate damage to properties, and the restriction on movement are common forms of collective punishment used by Israeli occupation against Palestinians for the purpose of retaliation. The systematic nature of the policy can be seen in statements by an uncountable number of Israeli officials, including previous Mayor of Jerusalem Nir Barakat, who justified the punishment of relatives of those suspected of carrying out resistance acts, riots, or even the punishment of all residents of Jerusalem, as well as justifying the use of concrete barriers around Palestinian neighbourhoods or villages to restrict freedom of movement. Regarding these restrictions, Barakat states that these restrictions would 'pressure the residents to act against terror'<sup>[4]</sup>, demonstrating the mainstreaming of collective punishment into Israeli rhetoric and discourse.

The testimonies are collected by MIFTAH and Psychosocial Counseling Center for Women across the West Bank, covering human rights violations against Palestinian women. Specifically, the testimonies, taken primarily in 2024, cover urban areas, rural areas, and refugee camps, across the West Bank. Governorates covered include but are not necessarily limited to Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarem, Hebron, and Bethlehem.

The 31 testimonies focus on two key areas. First, home raids and associated destruction of possessions, desecration of property, psychological and physical abuse, and arrests, with a total of 23 testimonies. Second, home demolitions and associated forced displacement and psychological and economic implications, with a total of 8 testimonies.

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[1] Shane Darcy 'Collective Punishment' in *Collective Responsibility and Accountability under International Law* (Brill, 2007) 7-80.

[2] International Committee of the Red Cross, *Collective Punishments* <[\[3\] Osama Rishq, Tamara Tamimi, Raghad Adwan 'Where Have the Youth Disappeared? The Visible Invisibility of Youth Political Activism in the E-1 Bedouin Communities' \(2024\) \*Cambridge Journal on Law, Politics, and Art Special Edition The Human Agenda\*, 228.](https://casebook.icrc.org/a_to_z/glossary/collective-punishments#:~:text=The%20term%20refers%20not%20only,form%20part%20of%20the%20group.></a>>.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

[4] Ben White, Jerusalem mayor boasts of collective punishment of city's Palestinians (Middle East Monitor, 15 September 2016) <

The testimonies on home raids will demonstrate various Israeli methods that constitute collective punishment with the view of suppressing Palestinian resistance. These testimonies reveal prevalent patterns, including turning homes into military sites, use of drones, use of human shields, desecration of property, destruction of possessions, strip search, deprivation of food, deprivation of medicine, arrests, physical abuse, and psychological abuse. The testimonies will also elaborate some of the consequences of these practices, including trauma and economic implications.

The testimonies on home demolitions and displacement, will also demonstrate Israeli policy of demolishing Palestinian homes and forcibly displacing Palestinians, as another key dimension of collective punishment that seeks to suppress Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation and its settler colonial policy. These testimonies will present prevalent patterns, including damage to cropland, physical abuse, home demolitions including punitive demolitions, extrajudicial killings, damage to possessions, displacement, and insufficient time for evacuation. The testimonies will also elaborate some of the consequences of these practices, including displacement, psychological trauma, and economic hardship.

The research team analysed the testimonies through thematic analysis, determining codes (raids and home demolitions) and subcodes associated with each code, as elaborated above. This report seeks to present these findings and provide an analysis of the international law provisions that prohibit collective punishment and associated human rights violations under international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and international criminal law, in addition to highlighting gaps in the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, as relevant.

Following this introduction, the report commences with two substantive sections, each divided into two subsections. The first section covers home raids and the second home demolitions across the West Bank, presenting i) primary data collected through testimonies, and then ii) situating these testimonies within the wider framework of facts extracted from secondary sources. These substantive sections are followed by a section on legal analysis of violations associated with home raids and home demolitions under relevant branches of international law. Based on the primary data analysis, secondary data presentation, and the legal analysis, the report provides evidence-based recommendations to national and international duty bearers, as relevant. The last section is the conclusion, which provides a summary of the substantive parts of the report.



## Home Raids

This section on home raids is based on 23 testimonies, and it demonstrates how home raids are used as a tactic to suppress resistance in Palestinian communities. As will be demonstrated, home raids are associated with arrests, psychological trauma, and damage to properties. The following paragraphs will clarify the overarching practices used in home raids, highlighting the excessive use of force.

As clarified earlier home raids are one of the tactics used in collective punishment of Palestinians with the view of suppressing resistance. In this sense, one Israeli soldier explains that home raids are intended to produce fear and terror, in addition to making the presence of the soldiers felt, which they are required to do not just to be there, but to be seen to be there. He adds that the Israeli soldiers raid homes every night, every other night, or every week, even families that didn't do anything and have nothing to do with anything are forced to endure this. Testimonies by soldiers elaborate that home raids and invasions seek to create deterrence and intimidation, and to increase military control over the population. Specifically, home raids and invasions seek to, according to the soldier 'create a sense of persecution' by disrupting Palestinians' daily lives and sense of safety in order to instil in them the sense that the military is on the ground and in control, thereby suppressing any attempts at resistance or protest before they happen.[5] In this sense, home raids and invasions contribute to creating a coercive environment to drive out Palestinians, in service of the Israeli occupation's settler colonial policy.

## Research Facts

1. The following is a testimony from a documented case from Tulkarem refugee camp, covering a wide array of the aspects that are prevalent in-home raids, covered below. The testimony provider says 'Every time the army invades Tulkarem refugee camp, they raid our home and turn it into a military site, placing snipers on it, as it is in a strategic location in which they can see all of the refugee camp from. As usual, the army occupied our home and locked me, my daughters, husband, and son in our bedroom. On that day, my husband unlocked the door so that when the army enters, they do not break it down, because he was tired of constantly having to fix it. We heard the sound of a bomb and knew that the army was coming. We went and brought a mattress into the room that we are usually locked in, but this time, the army entered and searched the house and ordered us to leave the room. When we left they interrogated us, and then the soldiers took my husband to the upper floor, where they used him as a human shield, while the soldiers that remained in the lower floor started urinating on the carpet. Then they took me and my daughters and strip searched us violently, and when we returned to the room we found the children terrified from the scary dogs that they brought with them. After 12 hours of being locked up without food or drink, the children started to cry from hunger. The soldier told me "come and make them sandwiches", but when I stood in the door, I saw 20 soldiers sleeping in the living room and using our blanket. The soldier told me to "come and jump", indicating to jump from over the soldiers. I refused because I was scared to fall on one of the soldiers and he would kill me, so I returned to the room. After another 12 hours, the soldiers left the house, and I found my phone on the sofa. When I looked at my phone I found many missed calls from my relatives and neighbours who wanted to check in on us. While I was calling back family and neighbours, the army raided our home again and told me to hand over my phone. My husband told them "you just left the house, let us breath", and the soldier responded "shut up".

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[5] Yesh Din, Breaking the Silence, Physicians for Human Rights, A Life Exposed: Military Invasions of Palestinian Homes in the West Bank- Executive Summary (Yesh Din, November 2020) <[https://www.eapaediatrics.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Exposed\\_Life\\_Short\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.eapaediatrics.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Exposed_Life_Short_ENG.pdf)> 5.

This time they took our phones from us and returned us to the same room. I did not even get to finish cooking some Mlukhiyeh for my family, and we had to eat some without it being ready. The soldiers wanted to watch TV and asked me to put batteries in it; I went to my room, where I had hid NIS 5,000 (approximately USD 1,360), in a concealed compartment in our bed, but when I entered the room I found the envelop that I hid the money in thrown to the floor and knew that they had stolen the money. This time, they locked us for approximately 36 hours and destroyed the house. They used dogs to search the house and broke the windows and doors, and the entirety of the kitchen furniture. They deprived us of food and water for the entire period. They did not even let us wash up and pray. When my husband told them that I have hypertension and that he wants to get me my medication, the soldier told him that they are leaving soon. After the army left, I was surprised to find all the windows and doors broken. The soldiers had urinated and defecated all over the house, including on blankets and carpets. Even the glasses were broken, and my daughter's accessories, which I bought for her, were broken. The floor was also damaged from the equipment they had brought into the house. The smell of the house was so bad that I escaped to my married daughter's house for 3 days. They had used and taken my son's blouses, his perfumes, and two fans I had recently brought.'

**2. Strip searching women:** the humiliating practice of strip-searching women is well documented. The practice is undertaken by female soldiers. In one case, when the army stormed in, a female soldier took the women to another room and ordered them to take off their clothes to search them, while they were fully naked.

**3.** In another case, in Tulkarem refugee camp, the female soldiers took the group of women to another room and strip searched them, using both physical and verbal violence against them in the process.

**4.** In a third case, a female soldier took the testimony provider and her daughter to another room, and asked them to take off their clothes. The testimony provider says 'the female soldier took me and my daughter to a separate room and ordered us to take our clothes off in the presence of a menacing police dog. We refused and yelled, and the soldier threatened us to unleash the dog on us if we refuse. We got afraid and my daughter submitted to her request, while I tried to defend her and calm her. During these moments, a male soldier opened the door of the room and saw us in an inappropriate position. Even though we yelled at him to leave and shut the door, he remained standing there, staring at us, until we dressed and left the room.'

**5.** In a fourth case, the female soldier took the testimony provider, who was pregnant, to another room and yelled at her to take her clothes off to strip search her. The testimony provider shares 'I was pregnant and felt afraid. The next day after the incursion and strip searching me, I went to the hospital to make sure that the baby was okay, but they told me that I miscarried my baby due to the emotional trauma sustained.'

**6. Deprivation of food and medicine:** deprivation of food and medicine is a common practice in home raids, with severe consequences in cases of prolonged raids and/or where Palestinians suffer from chronic diseases, which require them to take medication regularly.

**7.** In one case in Balata refugee camp in Nablus, in a raid that persisted for several hours, the residents of the house were deprived of food, water, and going to the bathroom. One resident was deprived of her medication despite telling them that she suffered from lung cancer. After hours of lack of responsiveness, and concerted insistence and crying, the soldiers relented and allowed her to take her medication.

**8.** In the case mentioned earlier in Tulkarem refugee camp, the whole family was deprived of food, water, and sanitation for over 36 hours. The children of the testimony provider 'cried themselves to sleep'. After more than 12 hours, a soldier called the mother and told her to come and make sandwiches. When she left the room to make her way to the kitchen, she found the soldiers sleeping on the floor stacked next to one another. One of the soldiers told her to jump, but she feared that she'll stomp on one of them and he'll shoot and kill her, so she returned to the room. Only after 36 hours, when the soldiers left, she was able to make food for her children and the remainder of the family. The soldiers returned and repeated the same practices 36 hours later.

**9. Desecration of property:** home raids are continuously associated with desecration of property, such that this was witnessed in 6 out of the 23 testimonies provided, noting that the sensitivity of this topic may give rise to hesitation among testimony providers to share these details.

**10.** Desecration of homes takes many different shapes and practices. In one case the testimony provider said 'they covered my home possessions with unethical phrases and drawings of male organs.' In another case the soldiers used the family's bathroom; the testimony provider said 'they used our bathroom in an unclean and filthy way, leaving it in an unusable state, and in need of significant cleaning and fixing.'

**11.** In a highly extreme case, the soldiers turned the house into a military site. During their stay, the soldiers urinated and defecated on the carpets and furniture, including mattresses. The smell was so intolerable that the neighbours could not help them, and the family had to move to their married daughter's house for 3 days until the smell decreased and they were able to clean up.

**12.** Destruction of possessions: destruction of possessions is also widely associated with raids, such that in 18 out of 23 testimonies, the testimony provider elaborated on the destruction and carnage inflicted on their families during the occupation army's raids or settler violence.

**13.** Destruction of possessions includes breaking doors and smashing the glass in them, many times using bombs; breaking windows; tearing down curtains; breaking the furniture; including the sofas and tables; breaking beds and closets; breaking the floor tiles, breaking kitchen utilities and serving utensils; and destroying bathrooms to a degree that they are rendered useless and require fixing. In one case in Bethlehem, the testimony provider said 'the army stormed into my house and asked about my son, who was staying with his uncle in a rural area. The soldier told me to call my son and tell him to come back home. I said that the signal is weak in the village and it would not work. The soldiers then destroyed the living room, then went to the bathroom and destroyed everything there, and then told her that if her son does not come back they are going to destroy the whole house and arrest her instead of him.' In another case in Nur Shams refugee camp, the testimony provider said 'We stayed locked in a room for hours but the soldiers had broken the window of the room, so we were locked in a room without a window to protect us from the rain and cold.'

**14.** Destruction of possessions also involves throwing everything out of cupboards and wardrobes; breaking pictures of family members, including martyrs; turning the furniture upside down; and in essence tarnishing all the house possessions. In the cases of clothes, the soldiers usually stomp on them with their military boots, making them extremely dirty. One testimony provider from Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem says 'after the soldiers stormed into the house, they went to the upper floor and deliberately started destroying the possessions there; they broke the furniture and closets and messed up all of the things inside them, turning the rooms into chaos. They tore and turned the furniture upside down and threw everything out of the closets. Even our memories were not spared, and they destroyed the pictures and plackets of my martyr son.'

**15.** Cases involving settlers not only involve all the above but also include stealing of money and possessions. In one case in a village near Bethlehem, the testimony provider said 'settlers from the Ma'ale Amos settlement, who are just a few meters away from our home stormed into our home, broke the furniture and doors, and stole our personal possessions and clothes.'

**16. Use of human shields:** the use of human shields by the Israeli occupation army is well documented. In one of the testimonies, demonstrating a highly extreme case, the husband of the testimony provider was used as a human shield by a group of Israeli soldiers, who have invaded their home and turned it into a military site, when going up to the second floor in the house to check its contents.

**17. Arrests:** raids, particularly night raids, are intrinsically connected to arresting and incarcerating Palestinians, particularly youth. This includes both family members and youth in the neighbourhood or refugee camp.

- 18.** In one case, the military rounded up a number of youth in the refugee camp and locked them up in the house of the testimony provider, who elaborated ‘they kept the youth in our house until they transferred them to prison.’ In that same case, the cousin of the testimony provider was also arrested from inside their home.
- 19.** Arrests also involve physical abuse with both women and men having their hands tied using plastic handcuffs, which are usually extremely tightened, giving rise to pain and discomfort. In one case, the testimony provider said ‘they tied my hands using plastic handcuffs, blindfolded me and arrested me. They asked me to get into a military jeep, which was difficult with my eyes covered and my hands tied. Midway through the road in very late hours, the soldiers stopped the car and told me to leave, which was extremely difficult and challenging due to the blindfold. Luckily a group of youth were in the area, they untied my hands and removed the blindfold and helped me get back home.’
- 20.** Arrests are sometimes made randomly, seen in that many of those imprisoned receive administrative detention sentences due to the absence of any charges to press against them, or are released the next day in exchange for a fine, noting that Palestinians are not released in exchange for a fine if they are charged with ‘criminal’ activity.
- 21.** Arrests also involve physical abuse against the family of the person incarcerated. In cases where mothers want to check-in on their children who are being rounded up or when they want to get them warm clothes to put on because they are being arrested in their underwear, soldiers usually physically and verbally abuse them. In one case in Bethlehem, the testimony provider said ‘I wanted to check-in on my son who was being rounded, and I saw that the soldiers were taking him in the cold in his underwear. I wanted to get him warm clothes, but the soldier yelled at me and refused to give him the clothes.’
- 22. Turning homes into military sites and use of drones:** testimonies collected demonstrate the turning of raided homes into military sites, and the use of drones in undertaking raids, noting that these raids take place in very late hours or in the early hours of the morning.
- 23.** Homes turned into military sites are strategically located in refugee camps and rural areas that give the Israeli occupation army a wide view of the surroundings. In one testimony from Jenin, the testimony provider said ‘my house was raided more than three times over the span of a few months. In each time, the Israeli army turned my home into a military site because the house oversees the refugee camp. On one occasion, I was sitting with my children in the living room when a drone entered through the window before the army stormed in. After that, the army stormed in with dogs attacking my home.’ Several testimonies show that drones are used to expose the insides of the homes before the occupation army storms in.
- 24.** In another testimony on the use of drones, a drone that was full of explosives entered into the room, and spoke to the testimony provider, where the soldiers demanded that they leave the house within one minute, threatening to bomb the house if they refuse. They were then body searched and interrogated about youth in the area.
- 25.** In a highly extreme case, which is not unusual, a family in Tulkarem refugee camp was trapped in one room for over 36 hours, where their house was turned into a military site. In this process, the family was deprived of food and medicine, their possessions were destroyed, and their home desecrated. All these aspects are further elaborated below.

### ***Consequences of Home Raids***

- 26. Psychological Distress and Physical Abuse:** home raids are continuously associated with firing bullets, explosion of bombs, and sounds of nearby destructions. It also involves breaking open home doors, where soldiers seldom wait for home owners to open the door, which is increasingly taking place through detonation of bombs. These practices instill fear in children, who often react with screams and yells.

- 27.** The continuous raids taking place and aggressive practices by soldiers, including destruction of possessions, yelling, and physical abuse of parents have a disproportionate impact on children. In one case, the child of the testimony provider experiences involuntary urination when he senses fear.
- 28.** Physical abuse is also rampant, particularly among males, where soldiers beat up the sons, husbands, and brothers of the testimony providers for no apparent reason, then lock them up in the designated room with the rest of the family, while the soldiers wreak havoc in all of the house.
- 29.** In an increasing number of cases, soldiers use their own guns and gun barrels to hit both men and women, giving rise to increased risk of internal organ damage and damage to muscles or bones.
- 30.** Physical violence is also perpetrated against the women members of the household by the army dog. In one case, under the direction of a female soldier, the dog, at the beginning, attacked the 54 year-old mother even though the women explained to the soldiers that the mother recently underwent a surgery in her cornea, which made her very sensitive. Then the dog attacked the sister of the testimony provider who was aged 25, and it started pulling at her pants and pulling her around the room, risking her falling and dragging her around. Due to this, the sister screamed at the top of her lungs, and then the soldier intervened, but not to remove the dog from her. Instead, he took her to a separate room with his rifle pointed at her. After the sister, the dog attacked the testimony provider as she tried to jump on the sofa. In retaliation, the testimony provider's brother kicked the dog in its stomach, which led to four soldiers lunging at him and beating him aggressively and brutally. During the excessive use of force the mother's eye was injured, leading to the oozing of blood and fluids. Even though her husband begged the soldiers to allow him to get her the eye drops they refused and stayed for several hours.
- 31.** The increasing aggression of Israeli occupation soldiers is well documented. In one extreme case the soldiers fired at the eyes of the testimony provider. In another case, the husband and son of the testimony provider were left in the cold outside the house in the winter season in their underwear. Also, in another case, despite explaining to the soldiers that her son has asthma, this did not stop the soldier from beating up the child, particularly targeting his chest and neck.
- 32.** In other cases, it is clearly seen that the soldiers purposefully break the glass. In one case, the glass of the door shattered all over the house, including the shoes of the husband of the testimony provider. When they wanted him to go up with them to the upper floor, possibly to use him as a human shield, they did not allow the man to clean the glass from his shoes, and he was forced to put the shoes on while there was glass in them, leading to physically injuring his feet.
- 33.** Psychological trauma is evident in children and youth arrested and incarcerated. Several testimonies reveal the psychological distress among these groups, with some diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. The extreme violence has often led to children to have seizures or fainting and losing consciousness, with soldiers preventing the family from taking them to nearby clinics. The psychological trauma is further exacerbated in the cases of persons with disabilities, who are excessively abused by the soldiers.
- 34. Economic implications:** the destruction of possessions requires fixing household furniture in some aspects and buying new utensils and equipment in other cases. This has a financial toll on families. In one case, the testimony provider's son was incarcerated for one night and released in exchange for a hefty fine that the family could not afford.
- 35.** In an extreme case, the family's economic situation prevented them from fixing the massive destruction in the house due to its high cost, leading them to live in the house for a period of two months without electricity, water and other basic life necessities.

36. In a third case, after turning their home into a military site, the testimony provider found out that the soldiers stole NIS 5,000 and other valuable possessions such as a gold necklace that she bought for her daughter. Similarly, it is not unusual for house possessions, including vases and frames, to be stolen during settler attacks.

## Home Raids: An Israeli Routine for Collective Punishment

37. Since October 2023, the Israeli occupation forces have been carrying out raids on towns and villages throughout the West Bank on an almost daily basis, with reporting indicating that the frequency of these raids has more than tripled since the onset of Israel's genocide in Gaza.[7] Estimations indicate that between October 7, 2023 and end of September 2024, the Israeli occupation forces have carried out more than 5,505 raids, with the northern West Bank subject to particularly severe military violence, including but not limited to raids.[8] In the H2 area in Hebron, since October 7, 2023, at least 290 Palestinians, including 37 children, have been arrested at checkpoints, during raids, or through ad-hoc detention by Israeli forces. This figure is more than double the weekly average of arrest recorded between January 1, 2023 and October 6, 2023.[9]

38. While home raids have significantly increased since October 2023, they are not considered a new phenomenon, with documentations by civil society organisations dating back to at least 2006.[10] Home raids are a primary tool, alongside settler violence, destruction and pillage of property and resources, humiliation, arrest and detention, that the Israeli occupation utilises in order to consolidate its occupation.[11] These raids subject Palestinian civilian residents, including women, children and the elderly to confinement in one room, leading to severe overcrowding for prolonged periods of time, ranging between several hours and in some instances days.[12]

39. Most of the time, home raids take place during night-time or during the early morning hours, usually between midnight and 5:00 AM.[13] Other documentations indicate that the majority of the raids take place between 2:00 AM and 4:00 AM.[14] Testimonies collected from residents show that they were woken up by sudden heavy banging on their doors,[15] while in other cases doors are simply kicked in or blown off its hinges.[16]

40. Testimonies also demonstrate reported physical aggression including the use of stun grenades and tear gas bombs.[17] Additionally, the stealing of possessions, such as phones and cash, is commonplace.[12]

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[7] Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (General Assembly, 1 October 2024) <<https://docs.un.org/en/A/79/384>> 11-12.

[8] UN OCHA, Humanitarian Situation Update #213 West Bank (OCHA, 4 September 2024) <[\[9\] Al-Haq and DCI, Israeli Forces holding Palestinian Captive during House Raids \(Al-Haq, 2006\) <<https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/7347.html>>.](https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/humanitarian-situation-update-213-west-bank-enarhe#:~:text=Since%20%20October%2C%20at%20least,January%20and%206%20October%202023.></a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

[10] Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (General Assembly, 20 October 2023) <<https://docs.un.org/en/A/78/545>> 4.

[11] A-Haq and DCI (n 9).

[12] Ibid.

[13] Community Action Center, The Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms, Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Palestinian Women under Prolonged Israeli Occupation (WILPF, January 2018) <[https://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Palestine-UPR\\_web-2-5.pdf](https://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Palestine-UPR_web-2-5.pdf)> 11.

[14] Al-Haq and DCI (n 9).

[15] Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling, Fear and Intimidation: Israeli Night Raids on Palestinian Homes (WCLAC) <<https://www.wclac.org/english/userfiles/Fear%20and%20Intimidation-Final.pdf>> 2.

[16] CAC, MADA, WCLAC, WILPF (n 13).

[17] WCLAC (n 15).

**41.** In most cases, the raid involves a large number of Israeli soldiers in intimidating gear. The soldiers, prior to their departure, consistently destroy household property, including furniture, windows and floor tiles.[18] Documentations also demonstrate that in raids, homes are taken over by the Israeli forces, which are turned into military sites that are used, among other matters, in sniper attacks against Palestinians. [19]

**42.** In many cases, the raids purpose is to 'map' the village in question, a process whereby every young male above the age of 12 is photographed for future identification. These 'mapping' exercises generally occur in villages that organise weekly protests against the Wall and settlements. Relatedly, home raids often take place in areas that are in close proximity to illegal Israeli settlements and military checkpoints, occurring on average within 2 kilometres from the nearest settlement or checkpoint. In many cases, the nearest road used by settlers is even closer.[20]

**43.** In this sense, the following is a non-exhaustive list, based on UN Maps, of the distance between Palestinian towns/ villages that frequently experience night raids and the nearest Israeli settlement/ checkpoint. Tulkarem, Bruqin, Kafr Al-Deek, Beit Ummar, Ya'bad, Nabi Saleh, Al-Aroub Refugee Camp Beit Fajjar, Qalandiya Refugee Camp, Al-Shwaikeh, Huwwara, and Al-Khader are all 1 km away or less from the nearest Israeli settlement or checkpoint. Balata Refugee Camp, Kafr Ni'meh, Nablus, Rujeib, Beit Rima, and Dheisheh Refugee Camp are all between 1.5-2 km away from the nearest Israeli settlement or checkpoint.[21]

**44.** Home raids are designed to instill fear and subjugation among Palestinians. In this sense, 88% of raids conducted take place in the very late evening or very early in the morning, between midnight and 5:00 PM. Also, these raids, include anything between 5 and 30 soldiers, with 74% of the cases documented, the families estimated that ten or more soldiers invaded their home.[22]

**45.** Home raids have a detrimental impact on Palestinian communities and on women in particular. Specifically, women experience psychological violence, such that some of the consequences include but are not limited to severe sleeping disorders, stress and depression.[23] Given that the vast majority of these raids take place during very late hours or the early hours of the morning, women are forced to wear the hijab all the time, including during their sleep, in case she was woken up in the middle of the night.[24]

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[18] CAC, MADA, WCLAC, WILPF (n 13);

Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on her mission to Israel (General Assembly, 9 January 2020) <<https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/35/30/ADD.1>> 11.

[19] Al-Haq and DCI (n 9).

[20] WCLAC (n 15).

[21] Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling, Israeli military night-raids on Palestinian residencies in the West Bank and East Jerusalem Submission Update (WCLAC, June 2016) <<https://www.wclac.org/english/userfiles/NIGHT%20RAIDS%20-%20UPDATE%20-%20JUNE%202016.pdf>> 13-14.

[22] Yesh Din, Breaking the Silence, Physicians for Human Rights, A Life Exposed: Military Invasions of Palestinian Homes in the West Bank (Yesh Din, November 2020) <[https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/files.yesh-din.org/Exposed\\_Life\\_2020/Exposed\\_Life\\_ENG.pdf](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/files.yesh-din.org/Exposed_Life_2020/Exposed_Life_ENG.pdf)> 12.

[23] Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (n 18) 13.

[24] Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling, WCLAC's Shadow Report for the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 66<sup>th</sup> Session- Israel Review (WCLAC, 2019) <<https://www.wclac.org/files/library/19/10/yekz3kqu2vf4q0o3xolozc.pdf>> 6.

**46.** The consequences of home raids, a systematic policy, on children can be seen in multiple dimensions. Based on 150 testimonies collected annually by Defence for Children International, home raids are designed in a way to cause psychological harm to Palestinian children. Even if they are not incarcerated, witnessing their family members getting assaulted and detained forms mental images that children will not be able to forget or move on from.[25] Documentation also indicates that the trauma children are subjected to has long-term effects, including wetting themselves.[26] Also, children are subjected to psychological and physical torture from the moment the soldiers storm their homes until they are transferred to prison. Psychological torture in this regard is much more dangerous than physical torture, because the trauma remains, especially in children, particularly if the children do not receive the necessary treatment. Furthermore, the use of military dogs to search and attack during home raids leads to Palestinians getting injured. Lastly, economic losses are substantial, with many families not bothering to repair their broken front doors due to the frequency of the raids, with losses estimated at figures around USD 3,000 per family.[27]

### **International Humanitarian and Human Rights Protection Against Home Raids**

**47.** Under Israeli civil law, it is required to have a warrant issued by the judiciary for home searches and arrest. In contrast, under Israeli military law, which applies to Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, it gives Israeli soldiers and officials large broad and vague powers without any restriction or any requirement for judicial authorisation.

**48.** Home raids and the way they are conducted violate the right to human dignity and privacy, as contained in International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law. Specifically, Article 46 of the Hague Regulations of 1907 states 'Family honour and rights, the lives of persons, and private property, as well as religious convictions and practice, must be respected'. This is further reinforced in Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which provides for 'protected persons are entitled, in all circumstances to respect for their persons, their honour, their family rights, their religious convictions and practices, and their manners and customs. They shall at all times be humanely treated, and shall be protected especially against all acts of violence or threats thereof and against insult and public curiosity'.

**49.** The right to privacy, which is violated by the military raids, is also guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states in Article 17 '1. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation. 2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.'

**50.** Specifically on women, Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention elaborates 'women shall be especially protected against any attack on their honour, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault.'

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[25] Fayha Shalash, Night terror: The Israeli raids of Palestinian homes in the West Bank (Middle East Eye, 5 March 2023) <<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-raids-palestinian-homes-west-bank>>.

[26] WCLAC (n 15).

[27] Fayha Shalash (n 25).



**51.** Furthermore, protection of women from violence in armed conflict is a key pillar of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, that has been codified from its first resolution 1325 in 2000, and has persisted in all subsequent resolutions. UN Security Council Resolution 1325, states in Article 9 ‘Calls upon all parties to armed conflict to respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls, especially as civilians, in particular the obligations applicable to them under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, the Refugee Convention of 1951 and the Protocol thereto of 1967, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 and the Optional Protocol thereto of 1999 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and two Optional Protocols thereto of 25 May 2000, and to bear in mind the relevant provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.’ It goes further in Article 10, which states ‘Calls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict.’

**52.** CEDAW General Recommendation Number 35 on violence against women, acknowledges in paragraph 14 the exacerbation of gender-based violence against women by a number of factors, including but not limited to foreign occupation and armed conflict. It goes in paragraph 31(c) and requires states to ‘Address factors that heighten the risk to women of exposure to serious forms of gender-based violence, such as the ready accessibility and availability of firearms, including their export, a high crime rate and pervasive impunity, which may increase in situation of armed conflict or heightened insecurity.’

**53.** CEDAW General Recommendation Number 30 on conflict prevention, conflict, and post-conflict situations, recognises in paragraphs 34-37 the disproportionate risk and impact of violence against women in times of armed conflict. In paragraph 38, it recommends ‘(a) Prohibit all forms of gender-based violence by State and non-State actors, including through legislation, policies, and protocols, (b) Prevent, investigate and punish all forms of gender-based violence...and implement a policy of zero tolerance, (c) Ensure women’s and girls’ access to justice; adopt gender-sensitive investigative procedures to address gender-based violence...’.

**54.** Israel continuously cites security measures and maintenance of public order as a rationale for home raids and invasions, claiming that home raids are utilised to search arms and fugitives, and prevent potential attacks, thus serving to deter Palestinians. However, the broad legal framework that home raids is based on, the lack of judicial authorisation, the frequency of home raids, and the broad harm incurred on Palestinians render Israeli arguments as neither proportionate nor necessary.[28]

## Home Demolitions and Displacement

This section on home demolitions and displacement is based on 8 testimonies, it demonstrates how home demolitions are utilised as another tactic to suppress resistance in Palestinian communities and comes in services of Israel's settler colonial policy. As will be demonstrated, home demolitions, both administrative and punitive, are associated with forced displacement, physical abuse, damage to possessions, and insufficient time for evacuation. The following paragraphs will clarify the overarching practices used in home demolitions, displacement and associated implications.

### Research Facts

**55. Demolitions, including punitive demolitions:** demolitions of Palestinian homes in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, take place on both an administrative and punitive basis, with houses demolished in Area "C" of the West Bank and in Jerusalem due to lacking the necessary permits, and punitively that the occupation claims have perpetrated attacks against them.

**56. Displacement:** home demolition is a key tool of forced displacement, and this leads persons to change their place of residency, moving to tents, relatives' houses, or rented homes, with severe economic, psychological, and social consequences. In one documented case, the family had to move temporarily to a rented house provided by the Jenin municipality until their house is rebuilt. In another case, the family moved to a rented house, costing them NIS 1,500 monthly (approximately USD 415), in addition to that, the house does not have any furniture or utensils, except the very little that the neighbours helped them with and what they were able to get out of the house before it was demolished. One case clarified that 'we were given half an hour to empty the contents of the house, and we didn't manage to take anything except removing the windows and some electrical appliances.'

**57. Extrajudicial killings:** in a case in Qabatya town in Jenin governorate, the military demolished the home of the testimony provider before she was able to arrive home. Her son was in the house. The testimony provider, said 'while I was in my brother's home that morning, I read on social media groups about the presence of Israeli army in our town. I felt worried and anxious, and was overall uncomfortable, and remembered that I left my son Ahmad sleeping in the morning with his friends. I tried to call my son but he did not answer, and my fear increased. I asked my brother to take me back home immediately, and at that time news started to arrive that the army invaded Qabatya, and particularly the area that I live in. I experienced shortness of breath because I was sure they were heading to our house, and that my son and his friends are in danger. I could not reach the house as it was completely besieged by the soldiers, who also used snipers and bulldozers. I heard the sound of gunfire and clashes. I went to my sister's house and we went up to her rooftop to see what was happening. I saw the soldiers at our rooftop and news coming through social media groups reported clashes and martyrs. Even though I was very worried, I tried to lie to myself and refused to believe that my son was one of the martyrs. At that moment, one of the bulldozers started demolishing our home. It was a painful scene. First, they demolished the store, then the kitchen, and then the remainder of the walls and house, until it was rendered uninhabitable. We were not allowed to take anything out of the house, including clothes, furniture, and objects of sentimental value to us. After the army withdrew and took the body of my son and his friend, I remained in shock. I was digging through the rubble trying to find something that belongs to my son. At the time, I did not know what to feel sadder about: my martyred son who we were deprived from saying goodbye to, or the house that was completely destroyed, including valuables and precious memories.'

**58. Damage to possessions and to cropland:** demolitions are also associated with damage to possessions as the occupation authorities usually give the family very limited time to evacuate the house, ranging between half an hour to an hour, which is insufficient for the residents to pack up the essential and basic things needed. In most cases, the soldiers prevent the neighbours from helping the family take out their possessions. In one case in Qabatya in Jenin, the testimony provider's home was burned to the ground. The house, the furniture and personal possessions were burned down, including necessary identification documents. The testimony provider said 'they burned down my house completely and everything that is in it, including furniture and personal possessions. Even our identification papers were not spared from the fire'. In another case, the woman did not have time to take anything from the house, and the occupation authorities prohibited the family from even clearing the rubble for 5 years from the day of the demolition. The woman said 'even though I obtained a ruling from the court that prevents the demolition of my house, they did not even accept to look at the papers and went forward with demolishing the house. They also prevented us from even clearing the rubble for a period of 5 years'. In a third case, before the demolition, the soldiers destroyed the vast majority of the furniture to prevent the family from taking it, noting that the family's financial situation was already dire.

**59.** Damage to cropland is also not unusual, in one case in Bethlehem, the soldiers attacked a farmer woman harvesting her land, and destroyed the vast majority of the crops. The testimony provider said 'they used wild boars to destroy my land for over an hour'. From there, they went to her cousin's house and proceeded with demolishing it. The women who tried to prevent the demolition were physically attacked, and the testimony provider was stabbed in her arm.

### ***Consequences of Home Demolitions and Displacement***

**60. Physical abuse and psychological distress:** several cases demonstrate that home demolitions are associated with physical abuse and psychological distress. In one case, the soldiers subjected the testimony provider to physical violence and stabbed her in the arm when she tried to prevent the demolition. In another case, the stress of the demolition and loss of sanctuary led the testimony provider to faint. In a third case, when the soldiers stormed into the house to demolish it, they attacked the testimony provider's husband and sons and arrested her husband. He was returned home the next day and was prohibited from crossing the checkpoint for 25 days, severely restricting his freedom of movement.

**61.** Economic implications: families whose homes are demolished and are displaced usually move to rented houses, adding to the financial burden of the family. Additionally, given the very limited time given to evacuate the house and take their possessions, coupled with the prohibition of neighbours from helping them out, the vast majority of the furniture, equipment, and utensils are demolished with the house, adding another economic burden on the family to get new things.

## Home Demolitions: A Key Israeli Policy for Collective Punishment and Forced Displacement of Palestinians

**62.** Similar to home raids, home demolitions are a common practice by the Israeli occupation. According to OCHA, between January 1, 2009 and March 25, 2025, a total of 12,521 Palestinian structures have been demolished across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, leading to the displacement of 20,302 Palestinians. These demolitions are distributed among Area “C”, with 74% of the total demolitions, Jerusalem, with 18% of the total demolitions, in addition to Area “A” and Area “B”, with 8% of the total demolitions. At the regional level, Jerusalem is the governorate with most demolitions, with 3,585 demolitions that led to the displacement of 6,312 Palestinians, constituting 28.6% of all demolitions.[29]

**63.** There are two main types of home demolitions. Administrative demolitions are the most common and are carried out due to ‘unlawful’ construction when families build without Israeli-issued permits, primarily East Jerusalem, area ‘C’ of the West Bank, and H2 area of Hebron. These permits are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain due to the restrictive and discriminatory planning system, such that between 2000 and 2020, the Israeli occupation rejected more than 96% of Palestinian building permit applications. This is not surprising given that the Israeli occupation has allocated only 0.24% of land in area ‘C’ in the West Bank for growth and development, compared to 99.76% for the growth and development of illegal Israeli settlements. [30] This leaves families facing the choice of building and expanding ‘illegally’ or going without adequate housing, public services, and schools, and with under-developed community infrastructure.[31] Due to this, some 10,000 Palestinian homes in the West Bank have demolition orders pending.[32]

**64.** The second type of home demolitions are punitive demolitions, which are retaliatory actions taken by Israeli occupation against Palestinians who have allegedly attacked or are suspected of attacking Israeli soldiers/security forces, settlers, and/or civilians. However, the person who has allegedly conducted the attack is killed or arrested in the vast majority of the cases. Consequently, in most cases the persons adversely affected by such demolitions are the other members of the household; thus, this policy constitutes collective punishment at its core, and which is absolutely prohibited under international law. While the Israeli occupation claims that these demolitions act as a deterrent to others, there is scant evidence supporting this, and in all cases, deterrence does not justify a breach of the absolute prohibition of collective punishment.[33] While courts around the world treat collective punishment as a war crime, Israel’s Supreme Court, has consistently rejected the claim that the Israeli government’s practice of punitive home demolitions amounts to collective punishment.[34] Between 2004 and 2025, a total of 335 homes were punitively demolished completely, and 3 partially, leading to the displacement of 1,591 Palestinians, 250 of whom were minors.[35]

**65.** Home demolitions are a key Israeli practice that involves collective punishment and that advances its settler-colonial agenda. It is predicated on a discriminatory system of zoning and planning that advances land confiscation and settlement expansion, and is further complemented by revocation of residency, denial of family unification, imposition of restrictions on registration of newborns, home evictions, and imposition of a coercive environment to drive out Palestinians.[36]

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[29] OCHA, Data on Demolitions and Displacement in the West Bank <<https://www.ochaopt.org/data/demolition>>.

[30] Special Rapporteur OPT (n 10) 17.

[31] Save the Children, ‘Hope under the Rubble’: The Impact of Israel’s Home Demolition Policy on Palestinian Children and their Families (Save the Children, 2021) <[https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/hope\\_under\\_the\\_rubble\\_final.pdf](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/hope_under_the_rubble_final.pdf)> 8.

[32] Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, Israel’s Demolition of Palestinian Homes: A Fact Sheet (ICAHD, 20 April 2021) <<https://icahd.org/2021/04/20/the-demolition-of-palestinian-homes-by-israel-a-fact-sheet/>>

[33] Ibid 10.

[34] Human Rights Watch, Israel: Stop Punitive Home Demolitions, Policy Amounts to Collective Punishment, Potential War Crime (HRW, 21 November 2014) <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/11/21/israel-stop-punitive-home-demolitions>>.

[35] B’Tselem, Home Demolitions Database- Demolition on Houses as Punishment (B’Tselem) <<https://statistics.btselem.org/en/demolitions/demolition-as-punishment?tab=overview>>.

**66.** Home demolitions and other measures used by Israel to advance its settler colonial goals are a long-standing practice that has been repeatedly condemned by treaty bodies and special procedures at the level of the United Nations. Specifically, the Committee on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women in its last concluding observations to Israel in 2017,[37] Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in its last concluding observations to Israel in 2020,[38] Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its last concluding observations to Israel in 2019,[39] all of which, as well as previous concluding observations, demanded that Israel rescinds these measures and ceases these policies.

**67.** While home demolitions are a longstanding practice, it has significantly increased in the aftermath of October 7, 2023. In this sense, between October 7, 2023 and December 31, 2023, a total of 425 Palestinian structures were demolished, leading to the displacement of 1,110 Palestinians, compared to 753 Palestinian structures demolished from January 1, 2023 until October 6, 2023, leading to the displacement of 1,190 Palestinians. This shows a ratio of 5 homes a day after October 7, 2023, compared to 2.7 homes a day before October 7, 2023. In 2024, a total of 1,768 structures were demolished, displacing 4,265 Palestinians, with an average of 5 demolitions per day. So far in 2025, and up until March 3, 2025, a total of 310 structures have been demolished, leading to the displacement of 490 Palestinians, with an average of 4.9 demolitions per day. Since October 7, 2023, a total of 2,503 Palestinian structures were demolished, leading to the displacement of 5,865 Palestinians, with an average of 5 demolitions per day.[40]

**68.** The demolitions, since October 7, 2023 and up until March 24, 2025 have been concentrated in the northern West Bank, with Tulkarem refugee camp receiving the biggest blow (205 demolitions), followed by Nur Shams refugee camp in Tulkarem (174 demolitions), and Jenin Refugee Camp (144 demolition).[41]

**69.** Home demolitions have an adverse impact on the entirety of the family, but disproportionately impact vulnerable groups, particularly children. Children often witness their parents coerced into self-demolishing their homes to avoid facing steep fines. The accompanying feelings of failure and depression have a direct impact on parenting and on parents' ability to support their children, primarily mothers.[42] Furthermore, children are severely traumatised by this all-encompassing destruction and violence, with testimonies collected reflecting children's feelings of fear and sadness, and their experience of nightmares,[43] in addition to exacerbated levels of anxiety, insecurity, depression, and paranoia.[44] Even if their own home is not demolished, children live with the daily risk that it may be at any time. Witnessing it happening to friends, children live in constant fear. Forced evictions and home demolitions rekindle the trauma endured by the children's parents. This intergenerational impact is likely to continue for future generations.[45]

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[37] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Concluding Observations on the Sixth Periodic Report of Israel (CEDAW, 17 November 2017) <<https://docs.un.org/en/CEDAW/C/ISR/CO/6>> 9-10.

[38] Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Concluding Observations on the Combined Seventeenth to Nineteenth Reports of Israel (ICERD, 27 January 2020) <<https://docs.un.org/en/CERD/C/ISR/CO/17-19>> 8-9.

[39] Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding Observations on the Fourth Periodic Report of Israel (Economic and Social Council, 12 November 2019) <<https://docs.un.org/en/E/C.12/ISR/CO/4>> 8-9.

[40] OCHA, Breakdown of Data on Demolition and Displacement in the West Bank <<https://app.powerbi.com/>

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r=eyJrJjoiY2NjMTVhOTgtNDZiOS00Y2RkLWFkNzAtZjUyYjRlZTZiZTBjliwidCI6IjBmOWUzNWRiLTU0NGYtNGY2MC1iZGNjLTVIYTYQxNmU2ZGM3MCIslmMiOjh9>.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Save the Children (n 31).

[43] Special Rapporteur OPT (n 10) 18.

[44] WCLAC (n 24) 7.

[45] Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel (General Assembly, 2 May 2022) <<https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/50/21>> 13.

**70.** Within the wider framework, home demolitions adversely impact mental health, increase protection risks, diminish prospects for education and livelihoods, impact parents and particularly mothers, compromise on the right to live with dignity and access services, and often have severe economic impacts due to displacement and relocation.[46] Enforced self-demolitions minimise the level of criticism against Israel from the international community and reduce the cost of the demolition for the occupying power. It has an adverse impact on the family as it increases their sense of humiliation and levels of distress experienced.[47]

**71.** Specifically on women, the result of intimidation and possibility of losing their livelihood has profound economic, social, and psychological consequences on women and their families, who are left homeless, or are forced to live in overcrowded dwellings, or in less than adequate conditions. The entirety of the permit application process is very costly, leading to impoverishment, displacement and mental and emotional strain, particularly on wives and mothers, who are responsible for their family's welfare.[48]

**72.** At the economic level, the financial burden suffered by Palestinian women and their families due to house demolitions, which leave women and their families deprived of crucial financial resources, often leaving them destitute. This is caused by a combination of factors, including the high fines imposed on them for lack of building permits, demolition expenses, the high cost of bail, the endless payments to lawyers and legal procedures, as well as the additional financial losses due to loss of personal belongings when a demolition occurs without prior notice, leaving the family with no time to remove belongings from their house. This is further exacerbated when the demolition takes place in the late hours of the night or early hours of the morning, as documented.[49]

## **International Humanitarian and Human Rights Protection Against Home Demolitions**

**73.** Punitive home demolitions find its roots in Article 119 of British Mandate's Emergency Defence Regulations of 1945. In practice, punitive demolitions take place in situations where an occupant of the house has been found to be involved, or is suspected of being involved, in acts of violence committed against Israelis. Punitive demolitions are also carried out when the said occupant is no longer living in the house, either because he/she is detained or dead due to his/her involvement in acts of violence against Israelis.

**74.** In the recent Advisory Opinion by the International Court of Justice, issued in July 19, 2024, entitled 'Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem', the Court noted that since the occupation in 1967, Israel has demolished over 2,000 Palestinian properties as punishment for criminal offences. While thousands of Palestinians were affected by this policy, in contrast, Israel never used this tool against Israeli civilians who committed the same criminal offences.

**75.** The International Court of Justice highlighted that it is not entirely convinced that punitive demolition of property is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations or is otherwise justified. The Court recalled Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states 'Any destruction by the Occupying Power of real or personal property belonging individually or collectively to private persons, or to the State, or to other public authorities, or to social or co-operative organizations, is prohibited, except where such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations.'

**76.** Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention mirrors Article 23(g) of the Hague Regulations of 1899, which prohibits 'To destroy or seize the enemy's property, unless such destruction or seizure be imperatively demanded by the necessities of war.'

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[46] Save the Children (n 31) 12-15.

[47] Ibid 8.

[48] CAC, MADA, WCLAC, WILPF (n 13) 4.

[49] WCLAC (n 24) 8.

77. The Court also found that punitive demolition is an integral part of collective punishment and violates Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Because of the differential treatment, the Court also considered that punitive demolitions amounts to prohibited discrimination under Article 2(1) and Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 2(2) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and Article 2 of Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

78. Destruction of private property, through both administrative and punitive home demolitions, is also prohibited under the Fourth Geneva Convention, unless rendered absolutely necessary in military operations, which does not apply to home demolitions in the West Bank, including Jerusalem. Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states: 'Any destruction by the Occupying Power of real or personal property belonging individually or collectively to private persons, or to the State, or to other public authorities, or to social or co-operative organizations, is prohibited, except where such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations.'

79. Home demolitions, both administrative and punitive, are giving rise to the forced displacement of the local population, which is prohibited under Article 49(1) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, stating: 'Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive.'

## Legal Analysis of Collective Punishment under International Law

All of the practices elaborated in the report constitute violations of international law in their own right and contravene Israel's responsibilities as an occupying power. Furthermore, these policies, within the framework of collective punishment, render Israel in further violation of international law, and subject to war crimes. This section elaborates on the prohibition of collective punishment under different branches of international law.

**80. British Emergency Regulations:** Israel's policy of collective punishment is based on the 1945 Emergency (Defence) Regulations of the British Mandate, specifically Article 119(1), considering it part of the previously applicable laws. However, the British Mandate had revoked these regulations before the termination of their mandate. Furthermore, the Jordanian government, which took over the West Bank, including Jerusalem, from 1949-1967 did not recognise the Emergency Regulations as previously applicable. Hence, the whole premise that Israel relies on is not valid.[50]

**81. International Humanitarian Law:** the prohibition on collective punishment is enshrined into several conventions, including the 1899 Hague Regulations, which states "no general penalty, pecuniary or otherwise, can be inflicted in the population on accounts of the acts of individuals for which it cannot be regarded as collectively responsible." [51] Similarly, the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention states "no protected persons may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited." [52] These prohibitions are further reinforced in the Additional Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions.

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[50] Shane Darcy, Israel's Punitive House Demolition Policy: Collective Punishment in Violation of International Law (Al-Haq 2003) <[https://www.alhaq.org/cached\\_uploads/download/alhaq\\_files/publications/Israels\\_Punitive\\_House\\_Demolition\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.alhaq.org/cached_uploads/download/alhaq_files/publications/Israels_Punitive_House_Demolition_Policy.pdf)> 12.

[51] Convention with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land (1899), Article 50.

[52] Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civillian Persons in Times of War (1949), Article 33.

**82.** The British Emergency Regulations, Article 119(1), contravene Article 64 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states: 'The penal laws of the occupied territory shall remain in force, with the exception that they may be repealed or suspended by the Occupying Power in cases where they constitute a threat to its security or an obstacle to the application of the present Convention. Subject to the latter consideration and to the necessity for ensuring the effective administration of justice, the tribunals of the occupied territory shall continue to function in respect of all offences covered by the said laws.'<sup>[53]</sup>

**83. Customary International Law:** the International Committee of the Red Cross has stated that 'the prohibition against collective punishment has become an accepted norm of customary international humanitarian law and, as such, it would be applicable to all states and combatants in all situations.'<sup>[54]</sup>

**84. International Human Rights Law:** while not clearly mentioned by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the practices that constitute collective punishment amount to violations of rights contained in both Covenants, including the right to fair trial, liberty, and security (article 9 ICCPR), freedom of movement (article 12 ICCPR), and adequate standard of living (article 11 ICESCR).

**85.** The UN Human Rights Committee on the General Comment 29 on article 4 of the ICCPR, stated that State Parties may 'in no circumstances' invoke state of emergency 'as justification for acting in violation of humanitarian law or peremptory norms of international law, for instance [...] by imposing collective punishments'<sup>[55]</sup>

**86.** Under the international human rights law system the prohibition of non-individual punishment is generally found within the sphere of due process guarantees.<sup>[56]</sup> This is seen at the level of regional conventions, including Article 5(3) of the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights, which sets out that 'punishment shall not be extended to any person other than the criminal.'<sup>[57]</sup> Similarly, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights also affirms in Article 7, that 'punishment is personal and can be imposed only on the offender.'<sup>[58]</sup>

**87. International Criminal Law:** while collective punishment is not explicitly codified into the long list of war crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, many actions amounting to collective punishment, such as the demolition of homes may invoke criminal liability before the International Criminal Court.<sup>[59]</sup>

**88.** Additionally, collective punishment was included as a war crime at the international level in several international courts and tribunals, including the International Military Tribunal of Nuremberg, held in 1946, which stated 'that violations of [the prohibition of collective punishment] constituted crimes for which the guilty individuals were punishable is too well settled to admit of argument.'<sup>[60]</sup> Collective punishment was included as a war crime in the Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.<sup>[61]</sup> More recently, the Appeals Chamber of the Special Court for Sierra Leone has usefully established the elements of the crime of collective punishment in 2008 as: (a.) The indiscriminate punishment imposed collectively on persons for omissions or acts for which some or none of them may or may not have been responsible; and (b.) The specific intent of the perpetrator to punish collectively.<sup>[62]</sup>

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[53] Ibid Article 64.

[54] J-M Henckaerts et al, Customary International Humanitarian Law (Cambridge University Press, 2005), Vol. 1, pp. 372-375, 586-7, 602-3.

[55] Human Rights Committee, CCPR General Comment No. 29, CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.11 (31 August 2001) Paragraph 11.

[56] Darcy (n 50) 17.

[57] Inter-American Convention on Human Rights (1978) 1144 UNTS 123.

[58] African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1986), O.A.U Doc. CABL/LEG/67/3 Rev. 5.

[59] Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (adopted 18 July 1998, entered into force 1 July 2002) Article 8(2)(a)(iv).

[60] International Military Tribunal (Nuremberg), Judgment and Sentences, 1 October 1946, reprinted in 41 AJIL (1947), p.248.

[61] Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (Adopted 8 November 1994 with UN Security Council Resolution 955) Article 4.b.

[62] The Prosecutor v. Fofana and Kondewa, Appeal Chamber Judgement, Special Court for Sierra Leone, SCSL-04-14-A 28 May 2008, para. 224



## Recommendations

- 89.** International community: the international community should exert significant pressure on Israel to cease its practices of home raids and home demolitions, both administrative and punitive, given that these give rise to the displacement of Palestinians. This pressure should be within a wider framework for Israel to cease all measures of collective punishment and forced displacement.
- 90.** The international community should move beyond the standard rhetoric and discourse of ‘condemnation’ and ‘deploration’ of Israeli human rights abuses and violations of international law, to support the ongoing investigation at the International Criminal Court, comply with the Court’s decisions, and dedicate their best efforts to explore other avenues for accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- 91.** The “United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel” should be strengthened both politically and financially by the international community, and urged to expand the conceptual framework it employs beyond military occupation to include settler colonialism, apartheid and collective punishment.
- 92.** State of Palestine: the State of Palestine should capitalise on the Advisory Opinion issued by the International Court of Justice in July 2024 and engage friendly nations to support the suspension of Israel in the United Nations, which falls under the purview of the General Assembly, and to expel Israel from key UN institutions. This Opinion can also be used in international fora, including but not limited to the FIFA-International Federation of Association Football, UEFA- Union of European Football Associations, and Euro Vision.
- 93.** Palestinian Civil Society: Palestinian civil society organisations should lobby for the reframing of the discourse around Palestine beyond daily incidents with international duty bearers, namely diplomatic missions, and parliamentarians. For example, home raids, and home demolitions and displacement of Palestinians should be situated within the wider framework of collective punishment, settler colonialism and the elimination of the native population.
- 94.** Palestinian civil society organisations and the State of Palestine should continuously monitor the composition of the United Nations Security Council, and exert pressure on the Security Council in the presence of Palestine-friendly nations among the non-permanent members to adopt another resolution under the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda that appropriately addresses the needs and provides protection to women under armed conflict in cases of prolonged, colonial occupation.
- 95.** Civil society organisations should continue to submit complaints and communications to the International Criminal Court to maintain the pressure on the Court vis-à-vis the Palestine investigation. They should also seek to join the Coalition for the ICC,[63] where civil society organisations have observer status in the Assembly of States Parties, and which would enable them to lobby States Parties to maintain pressure on the Palestine investigation.

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[63] For more information, please see the following link: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/get-involved/ngos>

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