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Israeli Policies and Practices in the West Bank Including East Jerusalem, After 7 October 2023

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Introduction and Methodology

Since the events of October 7, 2023, Israel's military campaign against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip has become a central global concern, dominating headlines and political discourse. However, alongside this brutal and devastating war, Israel appears to have launched a parallel campaign—albeit through different means—in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

While the war on Gaza has drawn intense media coverage and international political attention, the situation unfolding in the West Bank has been largely overlooked, despite its profound implications. This lack of scrutiny has, in effect, emboldened Israel to escalate its actions in the West Bank with little fear of accountability or restraint.

Palestinians in the West Bank, watching the horrors in Gaza unfold with a deep sense of helplessness, are also experiencing a worsening reality on the ground. They are increasingly raising alarms about the grave and far-reaching consequences of Israeli policies and practices—ranging from increased military raids and settler violence to restrictions on movement, mass arrests, and land confiscations. These developments not only threaten the daily lives of Palestinians but also undermine any remaining prospects for a just and sustainable resolution to the conflict.

This report will describe and analyse the policies and actions of the Israeli occupation in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in an attempt to understand the implications of the ongoing onslaught in Gaza for the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The report is most focused on the manifestations and dimensions of Israel's increasing and accelerating control over these areas.

Following 7 October 2023, and in parallel with its declaration of war on the Gaza Strip, Israel began a campaign in the West Bank, including occupied Jerusalem, that had three dimensions. Israel accelerated settlement expansion and land seizure; increased restrictions on movement and fragmented the territory; and imposed economic sanctions and pressures on citizens and institutions, including the Palestinian Authority.

This report used two main methodologies to inform its analysis. First, desk research is used to compile data published by Palestinian, Israeli, and international sources. Second, it utilizes key informant interviews with ten relevant Palestinian experts from different parts of the West Bank.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, who offered viewpoints based in their professional and personal narratives in the field. Interviews were conducted in person, or via video calls. They included individuals in research and human rights organizations, in addition to activists, journalists and private sector. Participants were from most regions of the West Bank and of different ages. Seven of them were men and three of them were women.

The interview guidelines (see Annex) included questions focused on facts, expectations, and analysis of Israeli policies and practices. It also tries to probe the experts' perspectives on the possible objectives of Israeli policies, and their possible consequences.

The interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the participants. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis.

Accelerating Settlement Expansion and Land Seizure

One of the most striking changes in Israeli occupation behaviour in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, after the outbreak of the war, has been the exploitation of international focus and attention on the ongoing atrocities in the Gaza Strip—and also in Lebanon—to accelerate the pace of settlement expansion and land seizure to an unprecedented degree—one that surprised even the most extreme Israeli settlers.

A male expert and activist stated: “Before 7 October, they [Israeli settlers] were waiting for the residents to leave voluntarily. But after that [event], they began directly attacking the residents—burning their tents, openly confiscating their sheep, loading them on to trucks right before their eyes—all under the protection of the Israeli army. The latest report issued by the organization Peace Now states that from 2022 until the end of 2024, 60 communities were completely displaced. It also notes that nearly 15% of the West Bank—about 870,000 dunams (equivalent to 780 square kilometres)—has been taken over in this way.”

Israeli Minister of Settlements, Orit Strock, described the “current period” as a “miracle in terms of the intensity and speed of settlement.” The minister told Army Radio: “From my point of view, this is like a miracle period. I feel like someone standing at a traffic light, and then it turns green,” she told the settlers.”¹

Her statement came during an announcement in Hebron concerning the legalization of five settlement outposts, in what was described as the largest land confiscation undertaken by Israel since before the 1993 Oslo Accords.

Israel, which is striking Gaza and Lebanon with unprecedented force, simultaneously keeps its eye on its primary objective: Palestinian land, the central aspect of the Palestinian-Israel conflict. All of the observers interviewed indicated that Israel is exploiting the war to achieve its most important and fundamental goal: advancing toward a resolution of the conflict in its favour by seizing more Palestinian land.

A report prepared by the United Nations pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 78/78, covering settlement activity during the period from June 1, 2023 to May 31, 2024, noted that “an unprecedented increase in settlement activity has occurred since October 7, including growing settler control over Area ‘C’ of the West Bank, which has led to the further marginalization of the Palestinian population. All of this has been supported, planned, and promoted by Israeli authorities, including through the funding of agricultural settlement outposts.”²

Land represents the core of the conflict between the Palestinian people—who strive to remain steadfast on their land, guaranteeing their survival and the triumph of their just cause—and the Israeli occupier—who sees the seizure of land, the expulsion of its Palestinian owners, and the establishment of Jewish settlements upon it as the primary means to achieve victory and realize its long-term dream of establishing Greater Israel.

A woman activist and leader of a human rights organization clarified: “The ultimate goal of these policies is complete de facto annexation, followed by its legal formalization. Annexation on the ground has effectively been taking place for years, and now they [Israelis] are seeking to solidify it legally. It can be said that they are hoping to implement a model similar to what they did in Jerusalem after 1967, where legal integration came later [in the form of annexation], after facts were imposed on the ground.”

To put this noticeable acceleration in settlement expansion in a political context, far right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich told the Knesset, or Israeli parliament, that U.S. President-elect Donald Trump’s victory in the U.S. election “brings an important opportunity for the state of Israel.”

The only way to remove the “threat” of a Palestinian state, Smotrich added, “is to apply Israeli sovereignty over the entire settlements in Judea and Samaria,” the biblical term by which Israelis refer to the West Bank.”³

¹ “Far-right minister extols ‘miracle period’ of settlement expansion,” The Times of Israel, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/far-right-minister-extols-miracle-period-of-settlement-expansion/>

² <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2024/10/1135331>

تقرير أممي: زيادة مقلقة في المستوطنات الإسرائيلية في الأرض الفلسطينية المحتلة والجولان السوري | أخبار الأمم المتحدة

³ CNN, “Eyeing Trump support, Israeli minister pushes for West Bank settlement annexation,” <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/11/11/middleeast/israeli-minister-annexation-occupied-west-bank-intl>

At the time of writing this report, Reuters news agency reported that: “Israel’s government has approved 22 new Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank, its finance minister said on Thursday... Israeli media cited the Defense Ministry as saying that among the new settlements, existing “outposts” would be legalized under Israeli law and new settlements would also be built.” ⁴

An important component of Israel’s push to legitimize illegal Israeli settlements is settler terrorism. In the past, these were viewed as isolated incidents or the actions of small groups like the “hilltop youth.” Today, however, settlers are at the heart of the government,

deeply embedded in the police, the army, and the civil administration. If a Palestinian citizen goes to file a complaint against a settler, another settler might be the one to take the complaint.

Moreover, the growing numbers of settlers in the West Bank requires a different infrastructure and life management system. For example, Beit El checkpoint outside Ramallah opens at 9 a.m. and closes at 4 p.m.; basically opening for settlers leaving for work and then coming home.

⁴ Reuters. “Israel announces new West Bank settlements despite sanctions threat,” <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-announces-new-west-bank-settlements-despite-sanctions-threat-2025-05-29/>

Increasing Restrictions on Movement and Further Fragmentation of the Territory

With the outbreak of the war on Gaza, Israel began imposing a large and growing number of additional checkpoints between most population centres in the West Bank and Jerusalem, including cities, villages, and refugee camps inhabited by approximately 3.3 million Palestinians. These restrictions included permanent and mobile checkpoints, as well as gates that completely block roads and inspection points that severely hinder and slow down movement.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as of October 2024, the number of Israeli military checkpoints obstructing movement had reached approximately 793. These checkpoints operate either permanently or intermittently to control, restrict, and monitor the movement of Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

OCHA found that the restrictions include: “89 permanently staffed checkpoints operating 24/7; 149 partial checkpoints that are not always staffed (46 of which have gates); 158 earth mounds (which permanently block movement); 196 road gates (122 of which are usually closed); 104 roadblocks; and 97 linear closures, each of which blocks one or more roads, such as road barriers, earth walls, and trenches.”⁵

To illustrate the severity of these measures, OCHA explained in the same report that at least 40 per cent (316 out of 793) of these barriers permanently prevent direct access between Palestinian towns and villages and eight major roads.

In their 2025 report, OCHA updated their data on Israeli restrictions in West Bank and realized that the number of obstacles reached 849. The report stated that: “A rapid survey conducted by OCHA in January and February 2025 found that there are currently 849 movement obstacles that permanently or intermittently restrict the movement of 3.3 million Palestinians across the West Bank, including

East Jerusalem and the H2 area of Hebron city.”⁶

In addition to its main objectives—to control the West Bank and collectively punish its Palestinian residents—this policy has negatively impacts Palestinian daily life, most notably by disrupting access to education and healthcare services. The World Bank notes that “the many barriers to healthcare access have turned the system of outside medical referrals for treatment in non-Palestinian hospitals into a complex process... often making it very hard to provide adequate or timely life-saving healthcare.”⁷

However, the greatest impact lies in the harsh economic consequences of such restrictions, which directly affect the Palestinian economy and the standard of living of its citizens.

To thoroughly illustrate this impact, the Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ), based in Bethlehem, conducted a study aimed at assessing the economic and environmental effects of the movement restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation on the mobility of Palestinian citizens between cities and villages in the West Bank.

The results of this six-month study showed that “Palestinians lose approximately 60 million working hours annually [...] with an estimated cost of about \$270 million per year, in addition to the consumption of approximately 80 million extra litres of fuel annually, with associated costs estimated at \$135 million. This fuel consumption leads to an increase in carbon dioxide emissions of around 196,000 tons per year.”⁸

Israeli restrictions on movement in the West Bank contribute directly to the “cantonization” of Palestinian territory—a fragmentation of the land into disconnected enclaves—and severely undermine the possibility of establishing a viable, contiguous, and sovereign Palestinian state.

⁵ OCHA, “Movement and Access in the West Bank | September 2024,” <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/movement-and-access-west-bank-september-2024>

⁶ OCHA, “Movement and Access in the West Bank | May 2025,” <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/movement-and-access-update-west-bank-may-2025>

⁷ World Bank, “Palestinian Healthcare Critically Impacted by Weak Economy and Barriers,” September 18, 2023, https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/09/18/palestinian-healthcare-critically-impacted-by-weak-economy-and-barriers?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁸ الفلسطينيين يخسرون حوالي 60 مليون ساعة عمل سنوياً بسبب الحواجز العسكرية الإسرائيلية في الضفة الغربية – معهد الأبحاث التطبيقية – القدس (أريج), <https://www.arj.org/ar/latest-ar/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%AE%D8%B3%D8%B1%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A-60-%D9%85%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%B9/>

In essence, they are de facto system of fragmentation and control, turning Palestinian territories into a series of isolated cantons. This not only blocks Palestinian geographic continuity and political unity, but also renders the idea of a viable, contiguous, and sovereign Palestinian state increasingly unfeasible. These measures not only violate international law but also have severe humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences for the Palestinian population. According to a United Nations report describing this policy: “Movement obstacles control, restrict and disrupt the freedom of movement of Palestinians either permanently or intermittently, further entrenching territorial and social fragmentation, undermining livelihoods, hindering access to basic services, and contributing to worsening humanitarian conditions.”⁹ Same understanding was expressed also by a World Bank report: “These ripple effects manifested through additional

restrictions on movement within and across cities imposed by the Government of Israel”¹⁰

Many Palestinians believe that this policy of restricting movement might have objectives beyond punishment and control. A leading male expert in development from the south of the West Bank warned of possible cantonization when he said, “Israel set up gates and restricted each Palestinian population centre to a single entrance and exit. This caused severe frustration among the people and resulted in a complete fragmentation—serving the plan promoted by Smotrich that creates five regional councils, dividing the West Bank into five areas, each with its own local services council designated only for Palestinians. As for the Israeli settlers, their councils already exist—they have a separate administrative system. So the checkpoints are part of this new division, a plan to reorganize the West Bank according to their interests.”

⁹ West Bank Access Restrictions Map | November 2024 | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory

¹⁰ Palestinian-Econ-Upd-May2024-FINAL-ENGLISH-Only.pdf

Imposing Economic Sanctions

The Israeli campaign of economic sanctions directed against the Palestinian people and their institutions in the West Bank has taken three forms:

1. Preventing Palestinian workers from reaching their workplaces in Israel;
2. Withholding and increasingly seizing amounts of Palestinian tax revenues that Israel collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, in accordance with the interim agreement signed between the two parties in 1994;
3. Preventing Palestinians in Israel from shopping in West Bank cities.

In the first year of the war, these policies have caused severe damage to the Palestinian economy. According to a report issued by the Palestinian Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), the tightened Israeli restrictions in the West Bank—including closures, raids, settler attacks, the piracy of clearance revenues, and the extreme state of uncertainty—have collectively led to a 22% decline in GDP during the first year of the war.¹¹

In an updated report published March 2025, the Palestinian Institute for Economic Policy Research (MAS) wrote that the “trade and industry sector suffered significant damage, with losses due to trade restrictions amounting to approximately \$1.3 billion. Market contraction also led to the loss of around 40,000 jobs.”¹²

Assuming the war continues, MAS estimated total sectoral losses to reach “\$2.6 billion over a period of three years. As for total employment losses, they are estimated at approximately \$3.2 billion across all areas of the West Bank, contributing to a sharp increase in poverty rates—from 12% before the war to 28% by mid-2024.”¹³

The second form of Israeli economic sanctions against Palestinians in the West Bank is the suspension of work in Israel. With the onset of war and the declaration of a state of emergency, Israel closed its crossings and

military checkpoints with the West Bank, preventing around 200,000 Palestinian workers from reaching their workplaces inside the Green Line. This has severely worsened economic hardship, especially since the vast majority of workers have been unable to find alternative employment within the West Bank.

Preventing Palestinian workers from working in Israel has also deprived the Palestinian economy of one of its most important financial resources, which previously amounted to around 1.5 billion shekels per month—approximately 400 million U.S. dollars.¹⁴

According to a United Nations report published towards the end of 2024, “Prior to October 2023, 171,000 West Bank Palestinians worked in Israel and settlements and their incomes accounted for one third of overall demand. Since the start of the confrontation, 90 per cent of these workers have lost their jobs, and additional restrictions and closures have prevented another 67,000 workers from accessing their workplaces outside their governorates of residence. In the fourth quarter of 2023, unemployment in the West Bank rose to 32 per cent, up from 12.9 per cent in the third quarter of 2023. Over 200,000 jobs have been lost, most of them in Israel and settlements.”¹⁵

Such shocks are deeply detrimental to the fragile Palestinian economy. MAS estimates that a one-year suspension of employment in Israel and settlements could reduce the Palestinian GDP by 29 per cent.¹⁶

The third form of economic sanctions is the deduction by Israel of Palestinian taxes from the VAT it collects on Palestinians’ behalf. For background, the Oslo Interim Agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel stipulated that the latter, by virtue of its control over the borders during the interim phase, would be responsible for collecting legally owed taxes from Palestinian importers of goods from abroad, on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, on a monthly and regular basis, in exchange for a two per cent service fee. Israel has

¹¹ نشرة الاقتصاد الفلسطيني - تشرين الأول 2024

¹² نشرة الاقتصاد الفلسطيني - تشرين الأول 2024

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ دون عمل ولا تعويض.. العمال الفلسطينيون بإسرائيل مشردون بالضفة | سياسة | الجزيرة نت

¹⁵ “Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people - Developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (TD/B/71/3) - Question of Palestine,” https://www.un.org/unispal/document/report-on-unctad-assistance-23jul24/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹⁶ MAS, “Palestine Economic Update,” April 2024, available at <https://mas.ps/en/publications/10212.html>.

been doing this since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994. At the beginning of each month, a joint meeting was typically held to conduct a clearance process during which the tax revenue would be transferred. These days, however, Israel arbitrarily and unilaterally deducts amounts it claims are owed by the Authority for various reasons. The monthly tax revenues transferred account for no less than 65 per cent of the Palestinian Authority's monthly payroll obligations to its employees; it is deeply impactful.

In order to maximize the economic pressure on the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Israel has, since the beginning of the war on 7 October 2023, deducted a monthly amount of 275 million shekels (approximately 75 million U.S. dollars) from the tax revenues. This amount is equivalent to what the Palestinian Authority pays monthly in salaries to its approximately 50,000 employees in the Gaza Strip, most of whom work in the education and health sectors. In addition, there is another 53 million shekels deducted monthly by Israel since February 2019, and it continues to do so to this day. This amount corresponds to the monthly payments made by the Palestinian Authority to the families of martyrs and detainees.

In addition to withholding the equivalent of the allocations for the Gaza Strip and the allowances for the families of martyrs and prisoners—which amounted to 6.03 billion shekels, or \$1.07 million—Israel also continues to refuse to transfer the Palestinian Authority's revenue from the exit tax collected at border crossings to Jordan. These funds have accumulated over the years and have exceeded 900 million shekels, bringing the total amount of withheld funds to approximately 6.93 billion shekels.¹⁷

In general, the impact of the ongoing war on the Palestinian economy, noted that the Israeli-imposed movement restrictions within the West Bank—including

access to workplaces inside Israel—as well as Israel's increasing deductions from Palestinian tax revenues, led to a 25 per cent contraction in the West Bank's economy during the first quarter of 2024. The World Bank report of September 2024, on the impact of the conflict on Palestinian economy, concluded that the decline in demand resulted in an overall 28 per cent drop in consumption, as most workers lost their jobs, Palestinian Authority employees received only partial salaries, and most consumption is tied to imported goods. This also led to a 31 per cent decline in imports during the first quarter of 2024.¹⁸

The third form of Israeli economic restrictions against Palestinians in West Bank is the preventing Palestinians living in Israel from traveling and shopping in West Bank markets. The restrictions on the entry of visitors from Palestinian citizens of Israel into West Bank cities—for purposes such as shopping and studying at Palestinian universities in the West Bank—which were strictly imposed immediately after the outbreak of the war, these too had a significant negative impact on the Palestinian economy. It is enough to note that the Palestinian Monetary Authority had estimated that Palestinian citizens of Israel spent around 3 billion shekels annually (approximately 823 million U.S. dollars per year).¹⁹

This particular policy was more harmful in the northern areas of the West Bank. According to a report issued by the Vision Center for Political Development, cities in the northern West Bank—which had been a primary destination for shopping and education for Palestinian citizens of Israel—witnessed a decline in sales and revenues for approximately 81 per cent of economic establishments due to the inability of this population to access the West Bank. Additionally, the West Bank economy lost 306,000 jobs since October 7, 2023, leading to an increase in the unemployment rate from 12.9 per cent to 32 per cent.²⁰

¹⁷ Wafa, "إسرائيل تقتطع نحو 6.93 مليار شيقيل من أموال المقاصة وترفض إعادتها," <https://www.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/101649>

¹⁸ "Impacts of the Conflict in the Middle East," PalestinianEconomicUpdate-Sept2024-FINAL.pdf,

¹⁹ <https://www.pma.ps/Portals/0/Users/002/02/2/Publications/Arabic/%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1%20%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%A8%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%8A/monitor%2055%20arabic.pdf>

²⁰ https://vision-pd.org/%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B6%D9%81%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Different participants in this research had different explanations for the economic sanctions policy. They ranged from punishment to revenge, but most thought that the main objective was destroying Palestinian institutions, especially the Palestinian Authority. A leading private sector personality said in the interview that “the clearest effect, and probably objective of these policies is they indirectly destroy Palestinian institutions and particularly the Palestinian Authority. Israel might find it difficult to directly dismantle the Palestinian Authority and avoid possible objections from allies like European states, so they do it in this indirect way.”

The Effect of the War on Public Opinion in the West Bank

Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, followed with attention and sympathy the events of 7 October and the following war Israel launched against Gaza and Gazans. In the first few weeks and months of October 7, most Palestinians in the West Bank were optimistic towards the outcome of the confrontations in Gaza. Some were even euphoric about it, given the manner in which the events altered the status quo of silent occupation and aggression that preceded the war. Simultaneously, support for Hamas and its allied armed groups was relatively high.

Gradually, however, expectations that the events in Gaza could upturn Israeli power declined, and the public's support for Hamas began to decline as well. The confrontations continued without results, while also bringing great suffering for civilians in Gaza.

The first public opinion poll regarding the views of the Palestinian public in the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem, conducted by the Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre on October 23, 2023, found that a majority of the public (72.6 per cent) believed that the resistance's attack on October 7 represented the best way to confront the Israeli occupation and to achieve the goals of the Palestinian people, while only 18.5 per cent expressed the opposite view. The poll also reflected optimism about the outcome of the war, with 67.1 per cent of respondents expecting that the war between Israel and Hamas would be favour Palestinians, while 16.8 per cent said that no side would win.²¹

A second, later post-war poll, conducted by the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research on December 1, 2023 had very similar findings. The poll found that 72 per cent believe that Hamas was "justified" in launching its attack on Israel on October 7, with 82 per cent of respondents in the West Bank supporting the attack, and 57 per cent in Gaza also in favour.²²

In a poll again conducted by the Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre on the one-year anniversary of the October 7 attack, the public in the West Bank, including

Jerusalem, appeared divided regarding the ongoing war. Less than half of respondents (45 per cent) said that the attack launched by Hamas on Israel on 7 October served the Palestinian interest, while 24.5 per cent believed that the attack harmed the Palestinian national interest, and 20.1 per cent believed it neither benefited nor harmed it.

The same applies to the popularity of Hamas, which is leading the resistance in the Gaza Strip. The percentage of those who believe that the war will end with an improvement in Hamas's standing dropped from 71.6 per cent in October 2024 to 56.5 per cent nearly a year later.

Data published by the Palestinian Centre for Policy Research, which has conducted five polls since October 7, 2023, presented a systematic decline in the percentage of those who justify the 7 October attack, although there was a difference in proportions between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In their last poll published on 25 May 2025, half of the sample said they approved of the attack, compared to 54 per cent in September 2024, and 67 per cent in June 2024, and 71 per cent in March 2024, and 72 per cent in December 2023.²³

The irony lies in the variation (difference) in these numbers between the public in the West Bank and that in Gaza. While 59 per cent in West Bank approved of 7 October, only 37 per cent have the same view in Gaza Strip.

Such results should not be surprising. Due to the heavy price people in Gaza are paying for that attack, their support is declining. In the West Bank, on the other hand, the price paid by the public is much lower, and therefore its effect on attitude is much less.

It is possible that the high support for Hamas in the beginning was an initial emotional reaction by the Palestinian people to the events of October 7. A leading male civil society leader offered the following explanation; "One reason for this is that the Palestinian people are oppressed and are being pushed toward extremism — and Israel contributes to this by finding it easier to deal with

²¹ Jerusalem Media and Communication Center, "Poll no. 101 October 2023 West Bank," October 2023, <https://jmcc.org/en/File/76ey1902Y76e/POLL-NO101-West-Bank-sympathetic-and-supportive-of-surprise-attack-by-Hamas-Optimism-for-a-positive-outcome-of-the-war;-expectations-that-Hezbollah-will-join-Increasing-trust-in-Hamas-and-its-leaders>

²² "Poll conducted by Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research between 22 November and 22 December," <https://pcpsr.org/ar/node/964>

²³ PSR, "Poll 95 press release 6May2025 ENGLISH.pdf," <https://pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/Poll%2095%20press%20release%206May2025%20ENGLISH.pdf>

an extremist population. Similarly, Hamas has contributed to pushing Israeli society toward extremism because this makes it easier for Hamas to promote its own narrative and vision.

Another reason is the role of Arab and politicized Palestinian media, which play a major part in fueling extremism. For example, to be a guest on Al Jazeera, you often have to contribute to promoting illusions of victory.

As for the decline in support for Hamas over time, it can be explained by the heavy toll of this war. Here, there is a paradox: the farther you are from Gaza, the more likely you are to promote illusions, while the closer you are to Gaza, the more realistic you become. That's why Hamas's popularity in Gaza is lower than in the West Bank, and highest among Palestinians abroad. This is not something new that only emerged after October 7 — it existed even before.”

Conclusions

Israel is both intensifying existing policies and starting new ones. As summarized by a male participant in the research from the north of the West Bank, “In my opinion, 7 October marked a moment that pushed the occupation government to openly and directly place the issue of liquidating the Palestinian cause on the table. Starting on October 8, with the launch of the assault on Gaza, we witnessed an unprecedented escalation in the West Bank.”

Occupied East Jerusalem was not excluded from these different new oppressive policies and practices. A Jerusalemite female veteran journalist described the atmosphere there by saying: “As for Jerusalem, the situation there is extremely severe. It’s as if there is a coordinated circle made up of the army, settlers, and politicians—all working together in a single loop. There is no such thing as a settler acting alone or a soldier acting alone; rather, we are talking about an organized political decision aimed at assaulting people, intimidating them, seizing land, expelling as many Palestinians as possible, restricting their movement, making life more difficult for them, reshaping the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and tightening control over it”.

While Israel is intensifying and accelerating its well-known land confiscation, it seems that they found an opportunity to either de facto or de jure annex part or most of the occupied West Bank, as they did in East Jerusalem.

In February 28, 2025 Haaretz reported about a major step towards imposing sovereignty on parts of West Bank: “Israel’s Ministerial Committee for Legislation is expected to approve on Sunday a bill that will enable the annexation of West Bank settlements around Jerusalem. The bill, introduced by Likud MK Dan Illouz, proposes establishing “metropolitan Jerusalem,” which will include settlements around the capital such as Ma’ale Adumim, Givat Ze’ev, Efrat, and Ma’ale Mikhmas.”²⁴

These developments are coinciding with new political configurations in Israel. Within both the public and elite levels, Israel has definitively moved beyond the

former division between two camps: one calling for territorial compromise and regional partition, and another advocating permanent control over all of historic Palestine with functional coordination with the Palestinian Authority.

Now, a Zionist consensus has emerged in support of maintaining direct Israeli control—both militarily and administratively—over all of historic Palestine, alongside accelerating settlement expansion with the aim of repeating the 1948 expulsion. In reality, there is no longer any minority within Israel that supports relinquishing control over any part of the 1967 territories.

Last year, “Israel’s far-right finance minister said he hoped Israel would extend sovereignty into the occupied West Bank in 2025 and that he would push the government to engage the incoming Trump administration to gain Washington’s support.”²⁵ Apparently that was not an isolated voice in the Israeli government. According to BBC, Israel’s Broadcasting Authority reported citing unnamed official sources, that “Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in closed meetings that the issue of annexing the West Bank to Israel ‘must return to the agenda’ with the inauguration of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump at the beginning of next year.”²⁶

While systematic trends of radicalization in Israel, that is leading to a departure from the idea to Two States solution might be the primary cause for deterioration in the relation between Israel and the Palestinians, there is another party to blame.

European states and United States, has long supported the two-state solution as the most viable path to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This vision involves the creation of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, based roughly on pre-1967 borders, with mutually agreed land swaps and Jerusalem as a shared capital. However, despite heavy political and financial investment in this idea, actions on the ground—especially Israeli government policies and settlement expansion—are severely undermining the feasibility of this solution.

²⁴ Foundation for Middle East Peace, “Settlement & Annexation Report: February 28, 2025,” https://fmeop.org/resource/settlement-annexation-report-february-28-2025/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

²⁵ Reuters, “Far-right minister calls for Israeli sovereignty in West Bank in 2025,” <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/far-right-minister-calls-israeli-sovereignty-west-bank-2025-2024-11-11/>

²⁶ عربي - الضفة الغربية: هل تنجح المساعي الإسرائيلية لضمها في 2025؟ - BBC News

International community has been advocating the Two State solution, yet it fails to protect that vision from being eroded by Israeli actions. This inaction, whether due to geopolitical interests, domestic politics, or lack of political will, means that despite vast investments, the prospect of two states is drifting into irrelevance. Without shift in policy that includes accountability measures, such as diplomatic consequences, or conditional aid, that gap between rhetoric and reality will differently widen.

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Israeli Policies and Practices in the West Bank Including East Jerusalem, After 7 October 2023

Since 7 October 2023, alongside the war on Gaza, Israel has intensified a largely under-reported campaign across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Settlement expansion, land confiscation, legalization of outposts, and increased settler violence have accelerated under government backing, reflecting a broader strategy to consolidate permanent control and undermine prospects for Palestinian statehood.

Movement restrictions have expanded to nearly 850 checkpoints and barriers, fragmenting the West Bank into isolated enclaves. These measures disrupt healthcare, education, and commerce, generate an estimated \$270 million in annual economic losses, and reinforce a system that ensures territorial continuity for settlers while restricting Palestinian mobility.

Economic pressure has deepened the crisis. More than 170,000 Palestinians have been barred from jobs in Israel and settlements, unemployment exceeds 30 percent, and nearly 7 billion shekels in withheld tax revenues have weakened the Palestinian Authority. Together, these developments signal a shift toward de facto annexation and increasing erosion of the two-state framework

Further information on this topic can be found here:

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