

# Monitor of Israeli Imperialism and the Policies of Apartheid

A monthly newsletter prepared by a specialized team at the Institute for Palestine Studies. It monitors the most important apartheid policies, positions and steps taken by the Israeli occupation in Palestine.

At the end of December, the UN issued a report describing 2024 as the most difficult year for Palestinians in decades, on various levels. In addition to Israel's genocidal war campaign in Gaza, Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people continued throughout the year without interruption. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported at the end of 2024 that the number of Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip decreased by 6 percent as a result of the genocide. Addameer, a Palestinian prisoner support and human rights association, notes that 2024 has been the bloodiest year in the history of the prisoners' movement.

With regard to settlement building and control over territory/land, 2024 witnessed a radical change in the Israeli government's process of deliberation/announcement of contracts for building new settlements in the West Bank. Instead of the former bureaucratic system in which the Ministry of Defense had the final say as the de facto military government, the process now involves monthly deliberations that do not require any approval or authentication from the military, and are instead subject to the authority of the Minister of Finance and Minister of Defense Bezalel Smotrich. This dramatically increases the pace at which settlement construction plans can be approved, which means that during any given one-month period, plans to build around 1,800 settlement units could be approved. This could make 2025 the most prolific year for settlement building.

On the subject of laws and bill proposals, a proposal was approved for a set of laws targeting Palestinians from the 1948 territory and East Jerusalem, who are subject to Israeli law. These laws include restrictions on freedom of expression and political identification, and criminalizing ties to the Palestinian Authority and cooperation/collaboration with it.

This month, six Palestinians were martyred inside Israeli prisons as a result of extreme torture, starvation, and medical neglect. Many lawyers and human rights organizations have documented the intense suffering that Palestinians endure in Israeli prisons. This harsh reality is clearly visible in the mental and physical condition of freed prisoners upon their release. Nevertheless, Israeli Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir considers this a source of pride, and boasted that the terrible conditions of the prisons are another achievement on his record.

From October 7, 2023, until the end of 2024, 54 prisoners were martyred, with 43 martyred in 2024 alone. It is important to note that these numbers only reflect prisoners whose identities are known—Israel refuses to release the identities of thousands of prisoners detained in the Gaza Strip.

### Genocidal War in the Gaza Strip

At the end of the year 2024, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported that the number of people living in the Gaza Strip decreased by 6 percent due to Israel's genocidal assault in Gaza over the past 15 months. According to the head of the bureau, there are 160,000 fewer people living in the Strip. Roughly 100,000 people were forced to evacuate and are unable to return due to the continuing genocide and siege of Gaza. The number of people martyred in Gaza since October 7, 2023 has surpassed 45,484, with more than 100,000 injured and over 11,000 people missing.

One of the most horrific crimes committed by the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) this month was the burning of the last major healthcare facility in the north, the Kamal Adwan Hospital. This came after the IOF massacred dozens of people, including patients, healthcare staff, and medical workers, and arrested dozens of patients and medical workers, among them the director of the hospital, Dr. Hossam Abu Safiya. The IOF only officially announced the kidnapping of Dr. Abu Safiya days after burning the hospital. According to a report issued by UNRWA, after they completely destroyed the hospital, the IOF detained patients, medical staff, and displaced people who were sheltering within its facilities, separated the men from the women, and forcibly stripped them of their clothes.

According to medical reports in the Gaza Strip, at the closing of the year 2024, over 4,500 cases of amputations had been recorded. This is a direct result of Israeli violence and assault on Gaza. About 18 percent of the recorded amputees are children. One report states that Gaza now has the largest population of child amputees in modern history. It must be noted again that the actual numbers are expected to be much higher, since the IOF refuses to disclose the total number of detainees in the Gaza Strip or information about their conditions.

This month, reports emerged that five Palestinian detainees from Gaza were murdered in Israeli prisons, and further testimonies are still emerging on the severe torture, starvation, and humiliation that Palestinians are enduring inside these prisons. According to UNRWA, the occupation forces are still imposing a tight siege on northern Gaza as part of a military campaign that began on October 3, 2024.

Between December 6 and 30, UNRWA's humanitarian mission made 164 attempts to deliver aid: Israel rejected 148 of these attempts and obstructed 16 others.

In December, *Haaretz* published a report based on the testimonies of soldiers who took part in the war on Gaza. The testimonies deal mainly with the Netzarim Corridor, which is 7 kilometers wide and divides the Gaza Strip into two parts. In the report, soldiers describe a "death zone"—an imaginary line that changes location and does not exist on the ground. Anyone who approaches this zone is killed. The boundaries of this zone are so foggy that one officer claimed that "the death zone is the range that a sniper's lens can reach."

*Haaretz* also reports that the commander of the 252nd Division, Yehuda Vach, attempted to expel the population of Gaza to the south, and wanted to prevent aid from entering Gaza in its totality. He called this the "Generals' Plan."

The report indicates that the occupation has turned Gaza into a lawless area where Palestinians are killed and humiliated at whim, without any oversight or consequence, to the point that one report labeled it the "Wild West."

### Laws/Bills Drafted

In the month of December, several bills and laws were drafted that have yet to be implemented, but which indicate a general trend toward the institutionalization and ratification of Israeli policies already practiced on the ground. These are the continued processes of land annexation, the cutting off of funds to Palestinians, and the demolition of Palestinian homes.

The most notable of these emerging laws and bills include the following:

- On Wednesday, December 11, in its preliminary hearing, the Knesset—with the majority of the coalition votes and a section of the Zionist bloc, and with support from the government—approved a bill prohibiting the transfer of the bodies of deceased Palestinian resistance fighters to Palestinian territories, claiming instead that they will be buried in special cemeteries under the army's jurisdiction. This law allows the prime minister to transfer the bodies back to their families/territories only under specific circumstances which remain unspecified in the law. The only people opposing this law in parliament were the Arab representatives from the political parties United Arab List and the Arab Movement for Renewal.
- On Wednesday, December 25, 2024, in a preliminary reading, the Knesset approved by a majority vote two bills that prohibit graduates of Palestinian education centers/universities in the West Bank from working in any level of Israeli education institutes. The intended targets here are Palestinians living in the 1948 territories ... however, according to the drafters, the bill actually targets Palestinians in East Jerusalem who enroll in universities in the West Bank more frequently than do Palestinians of '48.

According to the law's explication, Palestinian institutions and education systems promote "antisemitic and ideologically indoctrinated content that aims to deny the existence of Israel and to incite against it ... ." The law targets Palestinian narratives presented in Palestinian universities in the West Bank, and prohibits Palestinians from '48 or East Jerusalem from identifying with or being a part of a Palestinian narrative...

- On Wednesday, November 27, 2024, the Knesset plenum approved, by a majority of the votes of the coalition and Zionist blocs, and with the support of the government, two similar bills that aim to impose restrictions on participation in local elections (municipal and village council). The bills prohibit a person or party from running in the elections if they express support for armed struggle against Israel, or if they support an organization that Israel considers to be on the terrorist list. It is important to note that this law falls within the framework of restrictions on freedom of expression among Palestinians in the territories of 1948, where local authorities are subject to the jurisdiction of the Israeli Ministry of Interior.
- Shlomo Danino, a member of the Knesset and of the ruling Likud Party, along with his colleague David Bitan, submitted a bill that would make the family unification ban between Palestinians—in cases where one parent is from the West Bank or the Gaza Strip—a permanent law, rather than a temporary one as it stands today. This law is one of the most impactful impediments to Palestinian life, as it effectively prohibits families from living together in the '48 territories, forcing them instead to live in specified areas inside the West Bank or in areas outside the wall that are under the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem Municipality. It is worth noting that the pretext used to justify this law was "security," but the pretext to renew the law was the "Nation-State Law," and with this, the law will be made permanent.

## Settlements and Land Control

In 2024, the Israeli government approved the construction of 9,884 new settlement units in the West Bank. Although this is a lower number than in 2023, when the government announced the construction of 12,349 new settlements, the pace of plan approvals for construction increased dramatically from monthly to weekly deliberations. This signifies a complete overhaul in the system of settlement proposals and construction. Proposed plans for settlements no longer require the approval of the Minister of Defense but are under the control of the Finance Minister and Minister of Defense Bezalel Smotrich. To illustrate the magnitude of this change: Since the start of the weekly deliberation system, 1,164 new settlement units in the West Bank were approved during the month of September alone. In 2024, Peace Now documented at least seven settlement outposts established in Area B for the first time since the signing of the Oslo Accords: five of these are located in the Bethlehem area, and two in the Ramallah area. According to the Oslo Accords, Area B, which covers 32.8 percent of the West Bank, is to be under Palestinian civil control and Israeli security control, and constitutes an envelope for Area A, which is inhabited by Palestinians and comprises 17.2 percent of the West Bank. The settlement advance in Area B is a move toward constricting Palestinians into isolated enclaves of Area A that do not connect to each other, further dividing the West Bank. Previously, the settlements were concentrated in Area C, which constitutes 63 percent of the West Bank and is its largest area. According to Peace Now, if construction proceeds at the current rate, 2025 will be the biggest year for settlement construction in history, with an average of 1,800 settlement units approved per month.

- On December 10, the Israeli occupation forces confiscated portions of land belonging to residents of the village of Joust al Sham'a in Bethlehem, in order to build a bypass road that extends from the settlement of Gush Etzion to the Mazmoria checkpoint east of Bethlehem.
- On December 12, the occupation forces seized 54.79 dunams of land belonging to residents of the villages of Qattana and Biddu, northwest of Jerusalem. The confiscation was carried out under the pretense that they are "state lands" and will be used to expand the settlement Har Adar. The lands that were confiscated are located behind the separation wall, and the landowners have been prevented from reaching them for 20 years.
- On December 16, occupation forces seized 47 dunams of land belonging to the residents of southern Qalqiliya and the village of Habla. The land will be used to expand a settlement road, effectively preventing Palestinians from accessing it.

## Crimes and Violations

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OCHA) reported that 2024 was the most devastating year for Palestinians since the establishment of their office over 20 years ago. They reported that "some 4,250 Palestinians were displaced, 1,760 buildings destroyed, and about 1,400 incidents related to Israeli settler violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem."

Since October 7, residents of the parts of Hebron under Israeli control have had their freedom of movement severely restricted.

Throughout December, Israeli occupation forces carried out approximately 1,371 raids on villages, cities, and camps in the West Bank. These raids took place in various governates as follows: Jerusalem, 77 raids; Ramallah, 254; Jenin, 126; Tubas, 15; Tulkarem, 100; Qalqiliya, 118; Nablus, 31; Salfit, 86; Jericho, 37;

Bethlehem, 104; Hebron, 153. The occupation forces demolished 44 homes in the West Bank, 28 of which were in Jerusalem. Additionally, 437 surprise checkpoints were implemented throughout the West Bank.

The most outstanding violations and crimes committed this month include the following:

- On December 3, the occupation forces demolished seven homes and three greenhouses in the village of Nabi Samwil, claiming that they were built without a permit. This led to the displacement of four families, which comprise 20 people, and the cancellation of their entry permits for the al-Jib checkpoint. The owners of the demolished houses hold West Bank identity cards and were living in their houses when the wall was constructed around it. The Israeli occupation plans for their demolished village to become part of an Israeli national park.
- On December 12, the occupation forces stormed Balata camp in Nablus, killing a young man and injuring several others. On that same day, they stormed the village of Madama with gunfire and toxic gas bombs, injuring dozens, and closed all the entrances and exits to the village. They also stormed the town of Abu Qash in the central West Bank.
- On December 16, the occupation forces displaced 78 Palestinians in one day, destroying homes in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Bedouin communities in Area C.
- On December 19, an Israeli drone bombed a vehicle in Tulkarem refugee camp, killing four Palestinians and wounding three children with shrapnel. The occupation forces raided Tulkarem city and the refugee camp and bulldozed its infrastructure.
- On December 24, the occupation forces launched a military operation in Tulkarem refugee camp, extending to the Nour al-Shams camp in the Tulkarem Governorate. The operation lasted over 40 hours, on December 24 and 25, and included drone strikes, gunfire, and military bulldozers destroying part of the infrastructure in the two camps and the surrounding areas. Twelve Palestinian families in Tulkarem camp, comprising 61 people, were displaced due to this operation. In Nour al-Shams camp, 9 families comprising 33 people were displaced due to severe damage to their homes.

### Statements of Racism to Note

The statement made by National Security Minister Itamar Bin-Gvir, after he forcibly stormed the Aqsa Mosque on December 26, that he had gone in to “pray for the safety of the soldiers and the return of the hostages and for a total victory in the war,” was one of the most egregious remarks made this month. Although ambushing the mosque was not the first but rather one of a series of transgressions committed over the past year, his claim to have prayed in the mosque is a complete departure from the status quo, as it is still illegal for Jews to pray at the mosque. Netanyahu quickly declared that the “status quo” had not changed, maintaining that it was still prohibited for Jews to pray at al-Aqsa.

In addition to Ben-Gvir’s statement, on December 19, MK Zvi Sukkot of the Religious Zionism Party and MK Limor Son Har-Melech of the Jewish Power Party, who operate a division within the Knesset called the “Gaza Settlement Renewal Division,” organized a tour called “Seeing the Face of Gaza.” During this tour, which was attended by MKs and government ministers, Sukkot said that “Jewish settlement in Gaza is necessary and realistic” and that one of their goals was to establish a legal basis that would allow Jewish settlement inside Gaza and to encourage voluntary immigration there. Minister Ben-Gvir, who participated

in the tour, agreed that “Jewish settlement must take place in all the areas of the strip and voluntary immigration must be encouraged. This is a required step, and it is the logical and moral thing to do.”

### Settler Attacks

Throughout December, Israeli settlers carried out around 136 attacks in the West Banks, including throwing stones, attacking homes, beatings, raids, shootings, uprooting trees, and vandalizing crops. OCHA reported that 2024 witnessed the largest number of violent acts committed by settlers in the Palestinian territories in about 20 years—the date when the office began its documentation work. According to the office, about 1,400 attacks by settlers on Palestinians were carried out this year, with the average being 4 attacks per day during 2024. Such attacks are intimidation tactics intended to displace Palestinians from their homes, and they are often successful.

Some recorded instances of the attacks this month include the following:

- On December 10, an Israeli settler ran over a 12-year-old Palestinian boy in the village of al-Lubban al-Sharqiya, south of Nablus, fracturing his bones. The settler also tried to run over three girls but they were able to escape.
- On December 21, Israeli settlers attacked the village of Burqa, east of Ramallah, destroying a residential unit and a tent, and attempted to seize livestock. They also attacked a house and destroyed its contents. On the same day, roughly 17 settlers attacked residents of the Bedouin community of Khirbet Susiya, south of the Hebron Hills, forcing residents of two houses in the village to leave their homes and flee to a nearby hill to protect their children. They watched from the hill as the settlers smashed the contents of the houses, threw stones at them, and broke their windows.
- On December 28, armed settlers stormed the lands of Palestinians in the northeastern area of the village of Ni’lin, west of Ramallah. They burned an agricultural building, damaged the fence, and destroyed 70 olive seedlings. They also stormed the shelter of Bedouin families living in that area.
- On December 29, Israelis from a settlement outpost west of the village of Silwad in the Ramallah Governorate attacked a number of farmers while they were working in their fields. Four Palestinians were injured as a result of the physical assault by the settlers.

### Martyrs and Wounded

In December, approximately 1,169 people were martyred in Palestine: more than 1,130 martyrs were killed in the Gaza Strip, and 39 in the West Bank. The number of martyrs since the beginning of the war of extermination on Palestine has risen to more than 45,553.

Throughout the month of December, more than 3,129 people were wounded in the Gaza Strip, approximately 110 in the West Bank. The number of people wounded during the genocide in Palestine rose to over 108,379. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the number of people killed in Palestine between October 7 and the end of 2024 exceeded 45,000: 98 percent of them killed in the Gaza Strip, while the number of people martyred in the West Bank reached 835, with 6,450 people wounded.

According to media reports, in 2024 alone, Israel killed 512 Palestinians in the West Bank, including 43 prisoners in Israeli prisons, while around 3,900 Palestinians were injured.

- On December 1, an Israeli sent two drone bombs to the village of Sayr in Jenin, killing 4 Palestinians.
- On December 3, an Israeli drone bombed a vehicle near the entrance to the town of Aqaba in Tubas, killing two Palestinians and wounding two others.
- On December 9, a drone bomb killed two Palestinians in the al-Safah area north of Tubas and the occupation forces detained their bodies. Their names are Adi Radwan Mustafa Daraghmeh (32 years old) and Khalil Majdi Hikmat Al-Masry (26 years old).
- On December 19, an Israeli drone bombed a vehicle carrying a group of young men in Tulkarem camp, killing four of them and wounding six others. The martyrs' names are: Tariq Mahmoud Muhammad al-Dash (30 years old), Dossam Sufyan Ahmad al-Awfi (19 years old), Muhammad Nafez Ahmad Rahaymeh (31 years old), and Muhammad Issa al-Awfi (26 years old).

### Prisoners and Detainees

In December, the occupation forces arrested 728 Palestinians from various areas in the West Bank, as follows: "32 from Jerusalem, 119 from Ramallah, 42 from Jenin, 24 from Tubas, 67 from Tulkarem, 56 from Qalqiliya, 112 from Nablus, 45 from Salfit, 37 from Jericho, 46 from Bethlehem, 148 from Hebron." This is in addition to thousands of detainees in the Gaza Strip, whose numbers, names, and identities the occupation authorities refuse to disclose.

The number of Israeli arrest campaigns during 2024 exceeded 8,800, and the number of arrests since the beginning of the genocide reached about 14,300 in the West Bank, including in Jerusalem.

- On December 4, the Palestinian prisoner Muhammad Walid Hussein Ali, from Tulkarem, was martyred in an Israeli hospital. He was 45 years old. He was arrested on November 28, 2024 and detained by Israeli forces in al-Jalameh prison before being transferred to Rambam Hospital in Haifa. According to media sources, Ali was killed during interrogation shortly after his arrest. He was a freed prisoner who had previously spent around 20 years in prison.
- On December 3, the occupation forces arrested five medical personnel at Tubas Governmental Hospital, including the hospital's director general, and assaulted the head of the emergency department.
- An investigation conducted by the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* revealed that four Palestinian prisoners were killed during interrogation by the General Security Service (Shabak) between October 7 and December 31, 2024. According to the investigation, marks and bruises were found on the bodies of two of the prisoners, and in the other cases there is evidence of medical negligence or violence. *Haaretz* reports that the public prosecution decided not to open a criminal investigation into two of the cases, while the other two cases are still under examination.
- On December 29, Ashraf Muhammad Fakhri Abu Warda (51 years old), from Gaza, was killed after being transferred from the Negev prison to Soroka Hospital.
- On December 30, four people detained from Gaza were killed: Muhammad Rashid Akka (44 years old), Samir Mahmoud al-Kahlout (52 years old), Zuhair Omar al-Sharif (58 years old), and Muhammad Anwar Labad (57 years old).

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