Displacement
And
Dispossession

A dossier prepared as a resource for use during the
World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel

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Palestine-Israel Ecumenical Forum/World Council of Churches

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Perspective

The yearly World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel (WWPPI) brings member churches, faith-based communities, and civil society organizations together for a week of prayer, education, advocacy, and action in support of an end to the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and a just peace for all in Palestine and Israel. Churches and ecumenical partners around the world who are committed to justice will unite during the week to take actions for a common international witness.

In its call to this year’s WWPPI, the World Council of Churches (WCC), through its Palestine-Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF), is focusing on displacement and dispossession. PIEF is asking churches and partners to pray, educate, and advocate for the millions of Palestinians who are victims of house demolitions, denial of residency rights, forced evictions, and multiple counts of displacement close to settlements and the wall.

Since 1948, two contradictory commemorations take place in Palestine and Israel. Again, this year, Palestinians will observe 64 years of the collapse of Palestinian society and dispersal of some 750,000 Palestinians as refugees. They will mark six-plus decades of continuing displacement and dispossession. On the other hand, Israelis will celebrate the 64th anniversary of their state. For Israelis it will be a celebration of their state; while for the Palestinians the year will be punctuated by memories of a narrative that is marked by suffering, deprivation, denial of rights, dislocation, and imprisonment of a sister, brother, father, son, a neighbour or a relative.

Israel’s punitive and discriminating actions have resulted in massive deprivation of human rights and in failing humanitarian standards. Food security and livelihood access for Palestinians are in sharp decline. Palestinians in East Jerusalem whose residency rights have been revoked have reached unprecedented numbers. Fourth generation refugees are gloomy about their prospects of ever returning to their homes.

An OCHA report suggests how “almost 1,100 Palestinians, over half children, were displaced due to home demolitions by Israeli forces in 2011, over 80% more than in 2010. The forced displacement of Palestinian families and the destruction of civilian homes and other property by Israeli forces in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have a serious humanitarian impact. Israel, as the occupying power in the West Bank, has the obligation to protect Palestinian civilians and to administer the territory for their benefit. International law prohibits the forced displacement or transfer of civilians as well as the destruction of private property, unless absolutely necessary for military operations.”1

Much of the indifference to the Palestinian situation is also rooted in the paucity of information out in the public arena about the real facts.

PIEF has put together this dossier – Displacement and Dispossession – as a resource for all those who will observe the week. The dossier contains facts-analysis on the questions before us as we observe the week. Our sources are multiple – Palestinian,

Israeli, and international. We have drawn short excerpts from selected articles, reports, statements, and reviews, and attached a web link, which you can open should you be interested in the specific write up we have offered. There are also some videos and a few books we have reviewed for your possible use.

For 2012, we have planned the WWPPI with some degree of flexibility. Churches and individuals in some countries have expressed their inability to conform to the specific dates we have suggested (May 28-June 3). Each community will choose the dates that best suit its circumstances. So, these materials are not meant to be used only for the week. They can, if found useful, be used and shared for use during the entire year.

We hope the dossier is helpful to the work of those who will lead and participate in the WWPPI. In the ultimate analysis, our task is to do what we have done in previous years: send a clear message about the urgent need for a just peace settlement that ends the illegal occupation and secures the legitimate rights and future of both peoples.

Ranjan Solomon
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Love is seeing the face of God in every human being. Every person is my brother or my sister. However, seeing the face of God in everyone does not mean accepting evil or aggression on their part. Rather, this love seeks to correct the evil and stop the aggression.

-Kairos document- (Section 4.2 and 4.2.1)
From Arab land to `Israel Lands': the legal dispossessions of the Palestinians displaced by Israel in the wake of 1948

This paper, written by Geremy Forman from the Department of Land of Israel Studies at the University of Haifa, and Alexandre (Sandy) Kedar from the Faculty of Law at the same University, examines “the Israeli government's use of law to institutionalize the dispossessions of Palestinian Arabs displaced by the 1948 war and traces the legal transformation of their land during the formative years of Israel's land regime. This legal transformation facilitated the expropriation and reallocation of formerly Arab land to primarily Jewish hands and was therefore a central component of the legal reordering of space within Israel after 1948.”

Source: [http://weblaw.haifa.ac.il/he/Faculty/Kedar/lecdb/landregime/14.pdf](http://weblaw.haifa.ac.il/he/Faculty/Kedar/lecdb/landregime/14.pdf)

Brief History of the Palestinian Refugee and IDP Case

According to Badil, a resource centre for Palestinian residency and refugee rights, “Palestinian refugees and internally displaced Palestinians (IDPs) represent the largest and longest-standing case of forced displacement in the world today. The destruction of Palestine and the massive displacement of Palestinians by Israel in 1948 meant that two out of every five refugees in the world are Palestinian. At the beginning of 2007, there were approximately seven million Palestinian refugees and 450,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), representing 70% of the entire Palestinian population worldwide (9.8 million). Badil resource centre has numerous ably researched and substantiated documents on the issue of dispossession and displacement.”

Sources:


Key Concerns: Dispossession and Forcible Displacement of Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Badil reports that “according to Israeli government figures, by the end of 2008 there were 133 settlements in the occupied West Bank, including 12 large settlements in occupied East Jerusalem, and other smaller settlements throughout the city. Additionally there are 105 settlement ‘outposts’ throughout the West Bank - that is, informal structures, which serve as a prelude to a new settlement, and are nominally ‘unauthorized’ but still funded by the Israeli government.” Badil Resource Centre for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights has researched and protested these activities mainly with the European Union. Their well-researched and effectively substantiated arguments can be found in a variety of documents in the link below.


Separate and Unequal: Israel’s Discriminatory Treatment of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories
This report, published by Human Rights Watch in 2010, compares Israel’s different treatment of Jewish settlements to nearby Palestinian communities throughout the West Bank and shows how “different treatment, on the basis of race, ethnicity, and national origin…violates the fundamental prohibition against discrimination under human rights law.”
Source: http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/iopt1210webwcover_0.pdf

Dispossession and Exploitation: Israel's Policy in the Jordan Valley and Northern Dead Sea
This study by B’Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, highlights the situation in the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea area, which contains the largest land reserves in the West Bank. “Sixty-five thousand Palestinians live in 29 communities, and an estimated additional 15,000 Palestinians reside in dozens of small Beduin communities. Some 9,400 settlers live in the 37 settlements (including seven outposts) in the area. Israel has instituted in this area a regime that intensively exploits its resources, to an extent greater than elsewhere in the West Bank, and which demonstrates its intention: de facto annexation of the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea area to the State of Israel.”

Administrative detention as a tool for displacement
B’Tselem reports about Israel's use of administrative detention “is carried out under the thick cover of privilege, which denies detainees the possibility of mounting a proper defense. Over the years, Israel has administratively detained thousands of Palestinians for prolonged periods of time, without prosecuting them, without informing them of the charges against them, and without allowing them or their attorneys to study the evidence, making a mockery of the protections specified in Israeli and international law to protect the right to liberty and due process, the right of defendants to state their case, and the presumption of innocence.”
Source: http://www.btselem.org/administrative_detention

Dispossession, Soil, and Identity in Palestinian and Native American Literature
Ben White narrates how “both Palestinian and Native American literature focus on the theme of dispossession but from different perspectives.”
Source: www.pij.org/details.php?id=364

Israel’s restrictive zoning rules force Palestinians out of West Bank area
According to this report which is prepared by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), “Restrictive planning measures applied by Israeli authorities in the zone of the West Bank known as Area C are forcing Palestinian residents out of the area, mainly because the zoning rules make it virtually impossible for them to obtain building permits. The territory known as ‘Area C’ represents over 60 per cent of the West Bank where Israel retains control over security, planning and building. Other factors also force Palestinians to abandon their homes in this area according to ‘Displacement and Insecurity in Area C of the West Bank’.”

Displacement and Insecurity in Area C of the West Bank
This report (also from OCHA) examines the issue of displacement in Area C of the West Bank, where Israel retains full control over security, planning and zoning. It is based on field visits to 13 Palestinian communities in Area C, designed to assess whether Palestinians are being forced out of their communities because Israeli policies and practices in Area C have created conditions that leave them with no other choice but to move. OCHA’s interviews, along with field observations, highlight worrying displacement trends and demonstrate the manner in which Palestinian livelihoods are being undermined. They also show the way in which Israeli settlement activity is central to the hardships facing Palestinian communities in Area C.


Israel introduced the biggest dispossession plan of Palestinians since 1948

In 2011, “the Israeli government approved a new plan to displace 30,000 native Bedouin Arabs of the Negev/Naqab from their homes. ‘The Program for Regulating Bedouin Settlement in the Negev’ is the biggest dispossession plan of Palestinians issued by Israel since 1948. It would forcibly relocate about half of the Bedouin population from their existing villages, which are older than the state of Israel itself, into existing small towns or townships, designated specifically for the Bedouins by the state. Historically, there have been only two other Israeli plans of forced-migration of Palestinians on a mass scale since 1948: the banishment of refugees fleeing during the 1967 war, and the ongoing revocation of residency status and civic rights from native Palestinians of ‘East Jerusalem’.”


Dispossession of the Naqab’s Bedouin

Palestine Monitor, established in December 2000, aims to cover the conflict and occupation from within Palestine. Co-founder of the Palestinian National Initiative Dr. Mustafa Barghouthi is its Executive Editor. In this report, Palestine Monitor reports how “Palestine’s Naqab (Negev) desert region, covering 55 percent of the entire country, is one of the most worrisome for the Israeli government, which is eyeing it with particular concern. The danger, perceived by authorities, lies in the Naqab’s population - one third of which is Palestinian Bedouin. Since 1948, Israeli authorities have worried about how to entrench Israel’s control over both the Naqab and the Galilee; areas where significant indigenous communities remained after about 750,000 Palestinians were expelled or fled during the Zionist army’s ethnic cleansing campaign.”

Source: [http://www.palestinemonitor.org/?p=4461](http://www.palestinemonitor.org/?p=4461)

Palestinian Refugees, Updated May 2011

(From the PLO Negotiations Affairs Department)

“No Settlement can be just and complete if recognition is not accorded to the right of the Arab refugee to return to the home from which he has been dislodged… It would be an offence against the principles of elemental justice if these innocent victims of the conflict were denied the right to return to their homes while Jewish immigrants flow into Palestine, and indeed, offer the threat of permanent replacement of the Arab refugees who have been rooted in the land for centuries” (Count Folk Bernadotte, U.N. Mediator for Palestine, September 16th, 1948). The attached document provides answers to the most frequently asked questions on the issue of Palestinian refugees.

Israel's Moral Responsibility towards the Palestinian Refugees
Nur Masalha, University of Surrey, presents a historical perspective for the right to return. “For decades the Palestinian 'right of return' (haq al-awda) has been central to the Palestinians' struggle against dispossession and expulsion from their ancestral homeland and for national reconstitution. Only by understanding the centrality of the Nakba and expulsion that befell the Palestinian people in 1948 is it possible to understand the Palestinians' sense of the right of return. Israel has propagated the myth that the Palestinian refugee exodus was a tactic of war on the part of the Arabs who initiated the war against the Jewish Yishuv (settlement) in Palestine. The wrong done to the Palestinians can only be righted, and the disasters ended, through a return to their homeland and a restitution of their property.”
Source: http://www.mefacts.com/cached.asp?x_id=10965

2011: A Record Year for House Demolitions and Displacement in the West Bank
“According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs’ (OCHA) latest report, approximately 1,100 Palestinians, half of which were children, were displaced due to home demolitions by the Israeli Occupation Force (IOF) in 2011, signaling an 80% rise from 2010 figures. Israeli officials argue that structures are only demolished when they lack the required building permits. OCHA observers state, ‘In reality, it is almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain permits. The zoning and planning regime restricts Palestinian growth and development, while providing preferential treatment for unlawful Israeli settlements.’ Israel’s colonial settlers are given blatant preferential treatment when it comes to construction in the occupied West Bank.”
Source: http://www.palestinemonitor.org/?p=3852

Land Day 2012 - Special Focus: Jerusalem
(From the Palestine Liberation Organization, Negotiations Affairs Department)
“Land Day formally commemorates the killing of six Palestinian citizens of Israel and the injury of a further 96 by the Israeli army during a peaceful protest in March 1976. The protest was held in reaction to the announcement of plans to confiscate 5500 acres of land from Palestinian villages in the Galilee area. In the three and a half decades since this bloody protest, the Israeli government has expanded its policy of confiscating Palestinian land to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (OPT). The problem is particularly prominent in occupied East Jerusalem, where land is being expropriated in order to provide space for the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements.”

The Judaization of Palestine 2011: Displacement trends
This article from the International Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) “provides a political analysis of the root causes and consequences of Israel’s house demolition policy, focusing on the demolition of Palestinian homes and other structures in the Occupied West Bank. All recorded incidents have been verified and documented by partners in the Displacement Working Group. (The DWG is an inter-agency group under the auspices of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Protection Cluster, and chaired by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The DWG includes over one hundred members, such as UN
agencies, international and local Israeli and Palestinian NGOs, and donors. ICAHD, an active member of the group ever since 2008 is a non-violent, direct-action organization established in 1997 to resist Israeli demolition of Palestinian houses in the Occupied Territories.)”
Source: http://www.icahd.org/?p=8096

**Thousands of Palestinians in the Jordan Valley risk forced displacement, says UN body**
“OCHA warns that thousands of Palestinians in the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea area risk forced displacement under the illegal Israeli occupation. However, the Palestinians are determined to resist and stay on their land. The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement should keep Israel under pressure as long as it violates the rights of the Palestinian people. Amnesty International and other respected international bodies have added their voice to the fear that massive displacement is either underway or soon to be initiated.”
Source: http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/1b8fb3d916cda6ca8525799e006727a9?OpenDocument

**Report by the International Displacement Monitoring Centre to the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights**
“Forced displacement in the oPt has manifested itself through Israeli policies of demolitions of civilian property, forced evictions, land expropriation, settlement establishment and expansion, construction of the Wall, restricted access to services, settler violence and military operations in all locations.”
Source: http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/docs/ngos/IDMC_ISRAEL_CESCR47.pdf

**No end to internal displacement**
This report from the Internally Displaced Monitoring Centre of the Norwegian Refugee Council states that “more than 160,000 people are reported to have been internally displaced over the past four decades. Since the second Intifada or uprising in 2000, the number of Palestinians displaced or at risk of displacement has risen sharply. Some 90,000 people are currently reported to be at risk of displacement as a result of Israeli policies such as restrictive and discriminatory planning, the revocation of residency rights, and the expansion of settlements and the construction of the West Bank Separation Wall.”
Source: http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/6501E8A04E7EB9DEC12578C3006B3C2F/$file/opt_overview_June2011.pdf

**Demolition watch**
UNRWA informs how the “Israeli practice of demolishing homes, basic infrastructure and sources of livelihoods continues to devastate Palestinian families and communities in East Jerusalem and the 60 per cent of the West Bank controlled by Israel, known as Area C. Many of the people affected already live in poverty, and demolitions are a leading cause of their ongoing displacement and dispossession in the West Bank.”
Source: http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=1001
Statistics of demolitions in 2011 and 2012 (from UNRWA)
http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=1002

Broken Homes: Addressing the impact of house demolitions on Palestinian children and families
This report from Save the Children “looks at the impact of house demolitions on children and their parents, the cumulative impact on the family unit (in terms of its mental, physical and economic health and access to familial and wider social support), and the responsibilities of duty bearers to protect and assist. Based on its findings, the study recommends that all stakeholders - Israel, the Palestinian Authority, the international community and donor governments - act immediately to respond to house demolitions within the OPT.”
Source: http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/broken-homes-addressing-impact-house-demolitions-palestinian-children-and

Barrier Update (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)
“Because of the extensive humanitarian impact of the Barrier, OCHA has been monitoring and reporting on affected Palestinian communities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since 2003. The current update summarises the main findings of this research, while outlining developments since the last Barrier report, issued on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion in July 2010. This year, the update will focus on the impact of the Barrier in the East Jerusalem area, in particular on those West Bank communities and households which are now isolated on the Jerusalem side of the Barrier.”

How dispossession happens: the takeover of Palestinian water springs by Israeli settlers
From OCHA sources, we are informed that in “recent years, Israeli settler activity in the West Bank has significantly impaired Palestinian access to, and use of, a growing number of water springs. Springs are the single largest source of water for irrigation in the West Bank and an important coping mechanism for communities not connected to a water network, or poorly supplied, to meet domestic and livelihood needs. The main methods used by settlers to that end have been intimidation and threats, and the erection of fences around the targeted areas. This phenomenon comes in the context of Israel’s policy of settling civilian populations in Palestinian territory, in violation of international humanitarian law.”

The humanitarian impact of Gaza’s electricity and fuel crisis
OCHA has documented how “the chronic electricity deficit affecting Gaza over the past few years has disrupted the delivery of basic services and undermined already vulnerable livelihoods and living conditions. Since February 2012, the situation has further deteriorated following a sharp decline in the amount of fuel unofficially brought into Gaza from Egypt, via the tunnels, and used to operate the Gaza Power Plant (GPP).”
Israeli Economic Policies, East Jerusalem’s Separation, Crippling Closures Hamper Growth in Occupied Palestinian Territory
From UN sources come reports that inform us how “Israeli policies towards the Occupied Palestinian Territory not only limited the growth of the Palestinian economy, amid the cost of crippling closures and obstructed passage, but transferred Palestinian resources to the Israeli economy. A UN seminar considered restrictions on movement and access; displacement, dispossession and demolitions in East Jerusalem and area C, as well as the impact of settler violence; the impact of the occupation on recent economic achievements in the West Bank and of the blockade on Gaza; and unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.”
Source: http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/gapal1219.doc.htm

Dispossession and Eviction in Jerusalem - the cases and stories of Sheik Jarrah
“In this incisive report, The Civic Coalition for Defending Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem, an independent, non-governmental, non-profit coalition of organizations, institutions, societies and individuals dedicated to the protection and promotion of Palestinian rights reports on patterns of dispossession and evictions in Sheik Jarrah, a Palestinian neighbourhood in occupied East Jerusalem between the Old City and Mount Scopus.”

Fact sheets from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory:
http://www.ochaopt.org/reports.aspx?id=103

Additional resources

Recommended videos

Bedouin community near settlement faces expulsion, 2012
“Israel's Civil Administration is planning to relocate some 27,000 Bedouins living in Area C in the West Bank. At first, some 2,300 people will be expelled from their homes near the Ma'ale Adummim settlement and relocated to a site next to the Abu Dis garbage dump, east of Jerusalem. Members of the Khan al-Ahmar community explain how the move will affect them.”
Source: http://www.btselem.org/video

The quiet transfer in Hebron, 2007
“Hebron is the only Palestinian city with a Jewish settlement at its heart. To enable a few hundred settlers to move about freely, Israel chose to enforce a formal policy of discrimination against the Palestinian residents of the city. Throughout the years Hebron city centre became a ghost town.”

Settlement wastewater pollutes Palestinian lands, 2009
(Video co-produced by "HaYarkon 70 News" and B'Tselem.)
“The West Bank town of Salfit has suffered for years from wastewater channelled its way from the Ariel settlement, as depicted in the video. This case is not unusual in the West Bank: tens of millions of cubic meters of wastewater flow freely in the West Bank, from settlements, from Jerusalem and from Palestinian communities, greatly damaging the environment. In many settlements, the wastewater treatment plants are outdated and cannot treat the load currently placed on them; other settlements have never built plants. Israel has placed obstacles before efforts made by the Palestinian Authority to build treatment plants in Palestinian communities, including the condition that some plants serve adjacent settlements as well. The PA objects, on the grounds that establishing joint plants would legitimize the existence of the settlements.”


**Recommended books**

(Book reviews are provided by the publishers.)


New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

“In this book, historian Ilan Pappé examines how Israeli Palestinians have fared under Jewish rule and what their lives tell us about both Israel's attitude toward minorities and Palestinians' attitudes toward the Jewish state. Drawing upon significant archival and interview material, Pappé analyzes the Israeli state's policy towards its Palestinian citizens, finding discrimination in matters of housing, education, and civil rights. ‘The Forgotten Palestinians’ brings a new and much-needed perspective to the Israel-Palestine debate.”


“Said’s (pronounced Sayid)--a Palestinian Arab of Christian descent--was that rare voice which informed the world of the Zionist duplicity, in a way that laid bare the untold sufferings of over 4 million of its inhabitants in the most lucid manner possible. Said's pain and melancholy comes through, etched in every page of this book and makes for frightful reading.”

**Displacement and Dispossession in the Modern Middle East**, Dawn Chatty.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

“Anthropologist Dawn Chatty approaches the difficult issue of forced migration from a fresh comparative perspective. Chatty combines a regional history of Middle Eastern involuntary migration with first-person interviews of displaced peoples and their descendants.”

**An Israeli in Palestine: Resisting Dispossession, Redeeming Israel**, Jeff Halper.


“Halper, a Jewish Israeli peace activist, lays out in devastating detail the horrors of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. This book is full of facts and statistics that demonstrate the utter complexity, completeness and cruelty of the 'Matrix of Control' that Israel maintains over the Palestinians.”