



Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling (WCLAC)

Joint Submission with

***The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH),
Al-Haq Organization, The Center for Defense of Liberties and Civil Rights (Hurriyat),
Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, Al Mezan Center for
Human Rights, Community Action Center (CAC)/Al-Quds University, The Civic
Coalition for Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem (CCPRJ)***

For the 4th Cycle of Israel's UPR

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I. Introduction:

1. This joint submission addresses Israel's discriminatory policies and practices from a gender perspective between 2018 and 2022. The submission examines the following key areas that have an immense impact on women's lives in the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT): the impact of Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law on women in occupied East Jerusalem; the impact of the denial of Palestinian natural recourse for the benefit of settler colonialism, including illegal allocation of water resources, and the repercussions of environmental violations all over the OPT—including the Gaza Strip on women; lastly, the impact of settler violence and Israeli occupying forces (IOF) violence on women in H2 Area, particularly in Hebron.
2. The evidence-based data and analysis made in this submission reflect Israel's persistent failure to fulfil its obligation under international law, and its persistent failure to comply with States' recommendations submitted in the previous Universal Periodic Review (UPR), adopted by the Human Rights Council during its 38th session.

II. The Impact of Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law on Women in Occupied East Jerusalem- Family Unification.

3. Thousands of Palestinian families in Jerusalem live under sweeping restrictions due to Israel's systematic policy of denial of family rights, and laws that aim to reduce the number of Palestinian families in Jerusalem, namely, the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law. This law, which was re-enacted in March 2022 for 17 consecutive times, discriminates against one racial group over another, affecting all Palestinian, but specifically women. Critically, the aforementioned law denies thousands of Palestinian residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from applying for family unification with their spouses who are residents of Jerusalem or Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, unless the male spouse is over the age of 35 and the female spouse is over the age of 25.¹
4. Palestinian women from the West Bank and other parts of the OPT are often denied temporary residency permits and family reunification despite being married for decades to Palestinian Jerusalemites or Palestinians with Israeli citizenship holders. In recent testimonies to WCLAC, these affected women explained that after the Israeli occupying authorities suspended their temporary residency permit, they stopped going out of the home except for urgent needs as their presence is considered "illegal" and they are terrified of being caught by the police.
5. In cases of divorce or disputes between spouses holding different identity documents, family reunification procedure is often denied for women with Palestinian Identity

¹ <https://m.knesset.gov.il/en/news/pressreleases/pages/press10322w.aspx>

Documents. Hence, women face difficulties in accessing courts to follow up on their child custody cases due to the restriction of movement, as well as denial of other basic services that are obtained once Palestinians have the residency permit, such as access to healthcare services, health insurance, and other services. Many women endure domestic violence to stay with their children in Jerusalem being heavily dependent on their husbands for obtaining annual residency permits from the Israeli Ministry of Interior (MOI). They also cannot secure custody of their children due to conflicting legal systems, lack of access to justice, and difficulties in implementing court rulings under two different legal jurisdictions. For instance, women live in fear of being separated from their children in case they are forcibly transferred. Palestinian women who live in occupied Jerusalem lose their temporary residency permits through a family unification procedure if the husband decides to divorce. If the children have Jerusalem ID and remain with the father, women will no longer be able to live in the same city as their children, or even visit them. If a woman is a victim of violence in the household, she will be reluctant to go to the Israeli occupying authorities for fear of being forcibly transferred outside occupied Jerusalem and losing her children's custody. Hence, divorced women will have to remain locked in the family home without any legal status, and they will be stripped of their fundamental rights such as the right to movement or work, in addition to the psychological impact of the social stigma of being a divorcee.

6. According to WCLAC, 70% of the legal and social services provided to women victims of gender-based violence (GBV) were to women from the West Bank married to Jerusalemites. Israeli policies of family reunification and permits leave Palestinian women vulnerable to both the patriarchal system and Israel's colonial occupation policies, thereby exacerbating women's suffering.
7. As of March 7, 2021, the Israeli Ministry of Interior (MoI) indicated it had revoked the permanent residency status of 18 Palestinians from East Jerusalem, including 10 women, in 2020. According to the MoI, Israel revoked the status of 14,701 Palestinians from East Jerusalem between 1967 and 2020 on the pretext that their status "expired by itself".²

Recommendations:

- An immediate stop to Israel's discriminatory practices and policies that deny and restrict Palestinians' family rights, as such this is a clear manifestation of an apartheid regime and systematic fragmentation of the Palestinians.
- Repeal all legislations that restrict family unification, hence, depriving Palestinian women of their basic human rights simply because of their nationality as Palestinians, such as custody rights.

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<https://hamoked.org/document.php?dID=Updates2224#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Ministry%20of,status%20%E2%80%9Cexpired%20of%20itself%E2%80%9D.>

- Grant Palestinian women the right to see their children without enforcing the Center of Life policy, and to facilitate the process of registration of children who were born in Jerusalem.
- Reinstatement of the residencies of all Palestinians who wish to reinstate their Jerusalem residency status and give all current residents of Jerusalem indefinite right-to-remain.

III. The Pillage of Palestinian Natural Resources and its Impact on Women: Water and Sanitation

8. Palestinians of the Northern Jordan Valley (NJV), including Bedouin communities, suffer greatly from lack of water due to Israeli discriminatory water allocation practices and policies. These policies are part of the annexation plan Israel is systematically seeking to execute.
9. Around 90% of the NJV is designated as Area C. It has the largest water basin, along with a number of springs and wells. However, Mekorot, the government water company that has claimed ownership of the water supply in the OPT since 1982, abstracts water inside the OPT through wells, pipelines, and reservoirs, and provides services to the Israeli colonial settlements in the West Bank.³
10. Palestinians have to buy their own available natural water for high prices, have no control over infrastructure, are banned from digging wells, and are denied the use of natural resources, even for their livestock. The average settler consumes 487 liters per person per day, while most Palestinians in the Jordan Valley receive 15-30 liters per person per day, which is less than the WHO recommended minimum of 100 liters per day.⁴
11. Since 2020 and amid a global pandemic, Israel has applied a discriminatory policy of confiscating water tanks and trucks intended for Bedouin communities. Almost any attempt by the humanitarian community, people of the NJV, or private vendors to provide water tanks ends in confiscation. This policy is a clear violation of international humanitarian law (IHL) which prohibits the occupying power from confiscating or exploiting private property from the protected inhabitants.⁵ The acute water shortage is causing health issues, especially among women and children. In other cases, water unavailability is prompting internal forced displacement.
12. A clear manifestation of the culture of impunity is the alarming fact that 45% of the Jordan Valley is controlled by the Israeli military and 50% is directly controlled by illegal settlers.⁶

³ The allocation of water resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, P5, Advance Unedited Version, 23 September 2021.

⁴ <http://www.miftah.org/Display.cfm?DocId=26418&CategoryId=4>

⁵ Rule 51 (Customary IHL)

⁶ MIFTAH <http://www.miftah.org/Display.cfm?DocId=26418&CategoryId=4>

The latter make systematic, and often violent, attempts to take over and confiscate natural water resources such as the Ein Al-Hilwa water source. Settlers also destroy agricultural land and water pipelines used for irrigation by local Palestinian farmers.⁷

13. In the Gaza Strip, 2.1 million Palestinians are confined in a territory with an alarming water shortage. Their only resource of water, a coastal aquifer, is overexploited and polluted. Israel imposes a “dual-item” policy on Gaza, thus materials such as cement and iron are banned despite the fact that they are crucial for constructing and rehabilitating Gaza’s water and sanitation infrastructure.
14. Hence, Israel’s subsequent hegemony over Palestinian vital resources is a violation of the Palestinian people’s right to permanent sovereignty over their natural resources. These practices and restrictions constitute violations of international law, including IHL, particularly Articles 1, 33(2), 53, and 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Articles 54 and 85 of the Additional Protocol 1 as well as Articles 46, 47, and 55 of The Hague Convention. They also constitute a violation by Israel of its obligations as an Occupying Power, including the peremptory norm of self-determination.

Recommendations:

- Ensure equitable and safe access to water and natural resources for Palestinian communities living in the Northern Jordan Valley, and halt the practice of confiscating water tanks and the vehicles transporting them.
- Put an end to the humanitarian water crisis in the Gaza Strip caused by severe water pollution, repeated aggressions, and restrictions on the movement of goods, including the material needed for sanitation infrastructure.
- Put an end to the land appropriation and the exploitation of Palestinian natural resources for the benefit of illegal Israeli settler colonialism.

IV. The Impact of Settler Violence and Israeli Occupying Forces’ Violence on Women in H2 Area, Hebron

15. Settler colonialism, being dependent on the acquisition of land by force, displacing Palestinians, and replacing them with settlers, is violent by its nature. The violent nature of settler colonialism is accompanied by harassment campaigns, intimidation acts, hate crimes, and violent attacks committed by settlers themselves while supported and protected by the IOF.
16. Hebron is the second largest Palestinian city in the West Bank, with a population of over 200,000, and the only Palestinian city where substantial settlement activity is in the heart of the city, the so-called H2 Area, where the city’s commercial center once resided.

⁷ <https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/130407>

17. The steady colonization process is accompanied by a cycle of violent attacks and retribution by the Israeli settlers and in contrast, resistance efforts by local Palestinians.
18. Under the pretense of 'preventing tension,' Israeli officials have steadily divided Hebron's center from the rest of the city, cutting the city's southern and northern neighborhoods off from each other. This policy has been guided by what the Israeli occupying authorities referred to as the 'principle of separation'.
19. In Hebron, the military has constructed 21 permanent checkpoints. Palestinians passing through these checkpoints are subjected to long and humiliating inspections.
20. Approximately 6,791 girls and 4,538 boys attend 29 schools in H2, with almost 37% of these children suffering from access restrictions to their schools.⁸ Girls and their parents have reported that "...checkpoints and soldiers, public transport, and co-ed travel" were the main reasons for girls dropping out of schools.⁹
21. This fragmentation of the physical space is one pillar of the apartheid regime practiced by Israel. The other three pillars¹⁰ are segregation through laws and policies, deprivation of ownership, and deprivation of one's economic, social, and cultural rights. All of which are applied in the whole of Hebron, yet more evident and harsher in H2 Area.
22. Violence practiced by both the IOF and Israeli settlers reinforces insecurity, and, by extension, conservative, patriarchal values such as male protectionism, while at the same time the occupation limits mobility and freedom of movement, cripples service infrastructure and access to basic life services, all which disproportionately impact Palestinian women and girls.
23. The prospect of being searched by Israeli male occupying soldiers and the humiliation and harassment accompanying this, is enough to discourage some women and girls from leaving their homes and participating in public life, including pursuing education, exercising their right to work, or enjoying a simple outing to the market. The IOF frequently closes checkpoints without warning, citing security concerns. Residents are therefore forced to take detours, some of which are hardly accessible, in order to reach their destinations. In addition to the heavy presence of the IOF, frequent use of violence, night raids, verbal harassment, checkpoint delays, and restrictions over the operation of Palestinians' businesses, are all commonplace in H2 Area. As a result, thousands of Palestinians have been forced to flee the area. Overall, the coercive environment deprives Palestinians of a number of basic human rights and services that are necessary to ensure a decent living condition and aligns with the occupying power's legal responsibilities.

⁸ UN Women, *"In-depth Gender Needs Assessment in Area C and Hebron 2"* (2018) P.65

⁹ WCLAC evidence-based data 2019

¹⁰ As established by Amnesty's thorough report based on evidence and legal analysis <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2022/02/israels-system-of-apartheid/>

24. There is very little possibility of recourse to any remedy following violence by settlers or occupation soldiers in H2 Area, as there is no formal government institution willing and able to protect Palestinians. As highlighted by Human Rights Watch, the difficulties women who are victims of crime face in Hebron are exacerbated by the fact the Palestinian police cannot enter H2 Area, and that Palestinians have difficulty reaching the Palestinian police station in H1 Area. Women are also subjected to attacks by settlers upon leaving their homes, especially those who are forced to take the same routes to their homes as settlers.¹¹

Recommendations:

- End the culture of impunity that fosters violence by the IOF and Israeli settlers.
- Refrain from committing human rights abuses and prevent Israeli settlers from committing such acts in H2 Area.
- Cease discrimination subjected on Palestinians living in H2 Area, such as violence, abuse, and harassment by the IOF, also constituting a form of racial discrimination.
- Investigate, prosecute and apply appropriate legal or disciplinary sanctions as well as provide reparation in all cases of settlers' and soldiers' gender-based violence against women.
- Take concrete and effective measures and actions to bring an end to the continued construction of Israeli colonial settlements in the OPT.
- Hold accountable Israeli settlers and entities engaged in harmful and violent acts against Palestinians.

V. Building Restrictions and House Demolition: Occupied East Jerusalem and Masafer Yatta

25. In East Jerusalem, the Kaminitz Law - Amendment 116 to the Planning and Building Law has significantly increased the rate of house demolitions. Although the law was enacted in 2017, it went into full effect in 2019. The aforementioned law effectively enabled a partial shift in power over planning decisions to a national body, with limited judicial intervention in demolition cases and increased imposition of high financial penalties.¹²
26. In 2020, a total of 144 housing units were demolished in occupied Jerusalem, 75% higher than the annual average prior to the enactment of the law,¹³ while 2021 marked the second-

¹¹ Human Rights Watch: "A Question of Security: Violence against Palestinian Women and Girls" (2006) available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2006/11/06/question-security/violence-against-palestinian-women-and-girls>

¹² <https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9074>

¹³ <https://www.ir-amim.org.il/en/node/2672#:~:text=Also%20known%20as%20the%20Kaminitz,fully%20into%20effect%20in%202019.>

highest year of demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures since 2009.¹⁴ Israel, the Occupying Power, clearly contributes to house demolitions through repeatedly declining building proposals of outline plans for the development of Palestinian neighborhoods while validating building plans for settlers.

27. WCLAC documented demolitions under the Kaminitz Law in three main neighborhoods: Silwan (Batn al-Hawa); Jabal al-Mukaber; and al-Essawyeh. In May 2022 alone, 29 structures were demolished on the orders of the Jerusalem Municipality, the Israeli Civil Administration, and the Israeli Ministry of Interior.¹⁵ Twenty of these structures were houses, of which 12 were inhabited, resulting in the displacement of 59 Palestinians, including 30 children. The other nine were non-residential structures, including five businesses that supported at least 45 Palestinian employees.¹⁶ Thus, these demolitions affect the right to the economic well-being of hundreds of Palestinians.
28. Considering that demolitions in occupied Jerusalem is inevitable, many Palestinians in East Jerusalem choose to self-demolish, to escape paying a large fine. Self-demolition is a phenomenon that emerged after the enactment of Amendment 116 of the Planning and Building Law (Kaminitz law) in 2017, which, *inter alia*, increased the use of financial penalties in cases of administrative construction offenses. In light of the pandemic situation (2020 - 2022), many men have lost their jobs, which forced their wives to sell or give up on their share of inheritance to support the household's finances and/or with the expenses of the demolition.
29. House demolitions are usually carried out early in the morning or late at night. This is especially traumatizing for women and children who would be present during the time of the demolition. After the execution of the arbitrary measures, oftentimes, the IOF would usually conduct a number of arrests amongst family members, including children and women. Another key negative impact of these arbitrary measures is the heavy financial burdens they impose on women and their families.
30. The number of demolitions carried out is very concerning and represents one of the most grievous and damaging IHL violations by the occupying power. For Palestinian women, home demolitions are particularly detrimental. Due to traditional structures, the home is most often seen as the women's sphere and women are expected to continue caring for the family's practical and emotional needs with or without shelter. As such, Palestinian mothers are left to care for their children and heal the trauma incurred by having the family home destroyed. It is common for displaced families to move in with the husband's relatives, a factor that can reduce women's decision-making power and agency. Women supported by WCLAC have described how the little authority they enjoyed previously had been stripped away when they moved in with in-laws. Psychological distress is also a

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ https://www.btselem.org/video/20220623_demolitions_in_jm_area_may_2022#full

¹⁶ Ibid.

common consequence of house demolition for women and girls since they witness the violent intrusions carried out early in the morning or late at night, and/or the arrests of family members which can also occur.

31. In 1980, the then Israeli Minister of Agriculture Ariel Sharon openly declared Masafer Yatta, a collective of eight Palestinian villages in the southern hills of Hebron, to be a military firing zone as a solution to stop “the spread of Arab villagers on the mountainside towards the desert.”¹⁷
32. On May 4, 2022, the Israeli High Court ruled the mass expulsion of some 1000 Palestinians from their villages. The decision, penned by Justice David Mintz who resides in the illegally constructed settlement of Dolev, was based on the 1980 designation of 30,000 dunums of the area as “firing zone 198”. The ruling deems the Palestinian population of Masafer Yatta to be “non-permanent residents” and rejected any Jordanian papers or UN records proving their existence prior to 1980 living in stone houses rather than tents.¹⁸
33. Masafer Yatta is surrounded by a number of illegal Israeli settlements and lies to the north of the Negev desert where a large number of “Jewish suburbs” and “Bedouin cities” are already established. The success of Israel, the Occupying Power, in evicting Palestinians from the area will enable it to maintain and expand its *de facto* annexation; a scheme proposed publicly in 2020 by former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.
34. The living conditions of Palestinians, particularly women and girls, in these villages have deteriorated continuously and residents live in constant fear. From May to July 2022, WCLAC documented nine demolitions in the following villages: Khirbet um-Al-Khair, Khirbet Al-Fkhiet, Mijaz, Khirbet Jnba, Wadi Al-Samen, Khirbet Qalqas, and Beit Al-Dahyeh. For some families, the demolitions conducted on June 1st represented the third time that they had lost their homes in less than a year.
35. “The presence of the occupation army on a daily basis and around the clock hinders our daily life as Bedouins,” said one of the Palestinian residents of Khirbet Al-Bkhit in her testimony. “In addition, the IOF has built barracks for settlers to raise cows and poultry. They throw waste on the land of Palestinian citizens who own the land, which has resulted in the destruction and pollution of wells,” she added.
36. According to UN OCHA, the Palestinian population of Masafer Yatta is one of the most vulnerable in the OPT and relies on humanitarian aid due to the discriminatory building and zoning policies.¹⁹ Restrictions on the development of adequate housing, infrastructure and overall living conditions is a violation of Article 11 and other rights granted by the

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2092936>

¹⁹ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/masafer-yatta-communities-risk-forcible-transfer-june-2022>

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Right (ICESCR). The main violations monitored and documented by WCLAC, and which have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, include: house and tent demolitions, night raids, arrests, water-poisoning, restricted access to health and education services due to the occupation power preventing the establishment of permanent health centers, not providing means of transportation, school demolition orders,²⁰ and unlawful control over water and its resources, including wells.

37. These policies purposely and unlawfully aim to create what Ariel Sharon referred to as “ethnic borders”, and to annex Palestinian land at the expense of basic Palestinian economic, social and cultural rights, including the inalienable right to self-determination, sovereignty over land, adequate housing, access to water and sanitation, among others.
38. Due to restricted access to education, many Palestinian girls and women do not finish their studies, and those who do, find themselves unable to take on a job that requires traveling long distances. Therefore, most women in Masafer Yatta villages rely on knitting sheep wool, grazing, and producing dairy products, despite their agricultural land being destroyed. The women of Masafer Yatta have to safeguard their children and property from attacks during night raids or sudden attacks by nearby settlers. These leave women and children in a constant state of fear and inflict high levels of distress.

Recommendations:

- Expose Israeli policies and practices and crimes against women in occupied East Jerusalem, including home demolition and its disproportionate impact on Palestinian women.
- Exert pressure on the Israeli High Court to annul its decision to expel just over 1000 Palestinians from Masafer Yatta, and to compensate those who have suffered property damage due to IOF’ training and settler violence.
- Demand Israel to halt its practices that disrupt the safety and dignity of Palestinians as part of the unlawful demolition of houses/tents and other private immovable property, and provide services that are intrinsic to the overall enjoyment of the right to adequate housing.

VI. The Impact of Environmental Violations on Agricultural Lands, and on Women’s Health in the OPT, Particularly in Northern WB, and the Perimeters of the Gaza Strip

²⁰ This year, two schools in Masafer Yatta received demolition orders. On Sunday August 21, 2022, the occupying power rejected the petition against demolition.
<https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/130526#:~:text=HEBRON%2C%20Sunday%2C%20August%2021%2C,Bank%2C%20according%20to%20local%20sources.>

39. In the West Bank, agricultural land is exploited by Israel, the State Party, as a dumping ground for military, industrial, nuclear, and sewage waste. This causes serious pollution of air, soil, and water, and exposes women and children to many diseases and health risks. Due to the continuous expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank, settler violence on agricultural land is becoming more frequent, especially during periods of harvesting.
40. According to the ARIJ Institute, there are at least seven Israeli settler industrial zones in the West Bank.²¹ They are located illegally on a total area of approximately 302 hectares, mainly on hilltops, and often leak industrial wastewater into Palestinian land. Furthermore, the Israeli occupying authorities reallocated a number of industrial polluting companies from Israel to areas on both sides of the Green Line and in illegal settlements in the West Bank.²²
41. Gishuri, a privately owned Israeli agrochemical company, consists of 12 Israeli chemical factories in Shalom settlement Western Tulkarem, emits and produces chemical waste that causes a detrimental impact on Palestinian agricultural lands adjacent to the factory, on groundwater and on air-purity.²³ Consequently, high rates of diseases, including respiratory diseases, eye infections, and cancer, are found among the Palestinian population. It should be emphasized that the Geshuri factory does not operate during the months when the wind blows in the direction of Israel.²⁴
42. WCLAC documented a number of testimonies of women living in Tulkarem highlighting the dire impact of industrial waste on food security and health. Women and children are disproportionately affected due to the proximity of the factories to their homes and to the agricultural land where women spend much of their time, hence inflicting financial losses on women farmers.
43. The repercussions of the multiple Israeli aggressions and bombardments against the Gaza Strip for over a decade have directly exacerbated the electricity crisis and diminished the effective operation of 130 local water and sanitation facilities. The result is the contamination of the coastal aquifer and deteriorating civilian health. On the northern and eastern parts of the Gaza Strip, also known as ‘access restricted areas’, Palestinian agricultural land is at risk of frequent floods as a result of the systematic opening of Israeli water dams.

²¹<https://www.arij.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/1998-The-Environmental-Impact-of-Jewish-Settlements-in-the-West-Bank.pdf>

²²<https://www.arij.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/1998-The-Environmental-Impact-of-Jewish-Settlements-in-the-West-Bank.pdf>

²³<https://ejatlas.org/conflict/israeli-industries-polluting-palestinian-city-of-tulkarm>

²⁴ Gishuri was originally located in the Israeli coastal city of Netanya but following several complaints by Israeli residents, it was closed by a court order in 1982 and relocated to west of Tulkarem. There were multiple complaints by Israeli residents of Netanya who filed cases against the toxic emissions of these companies and the effects on the area.

44. Israel continues its systematic policy of spraying herbicides along the 40-km Israeli separation fence to the east of the Gaza Strip on Palestinian territory. Crops are sprayed deliberately twice a year, especially after the produce is ripe. Agriculture is the key income for the inhabitants of the access restricted areas in the Gaza Strip, especially for women who work the fields daily with their children and husbands to weed, plant, and irrigate the crops. As such, any damage to crops is detrimental to the labor of women and their income. In 2020, 2000 dunums (one dunum equals 1000 square meters) of land were damaged as a result of spraying toxic herbicides, and the financial damage totaled US \$1.25 million.
45. The spraying of chemical herbicides such as the toxic Oxygal and Glyphosate on agricultural land on the eastern perimeter of the Gaza Strip causes adverse health complications. Despite a ban by the Israeli Supreme Court on the use of these toxic substances, the Israeli occupying authorities still use them regularly.
46. In the Jordan Valley, military training is used as a pretext to forcefully evict Palestinians from their houses/tents, destroy villages, bulldoze crops, and put Palestinians' lives on the line. Furthermore, military waste poses a serious health threat to Palestinians because the remnants of training may explode at any time and injure or even kill shepherds and people walking on pasture land. The radioactivity of the equipment used can also cause several illnesses over time.
47. Women living in the Jordan Valley have to adjust and restrict their daily routines according to the IOF' schedule. Management of military waste is almost non-existent and the IOF leave behind hazardous remnants that pose a danger to residents and their livestock. When Palestinians face an event such as the loss of a loved one, there are further repercussions such as mental illness, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and even eating disorders that may develop either immediately after the incident or years later. Continuous military training is only part of Israel's policy of mass expulsion and land theft.
48. Military waste also has negative consequences on the environment, as it pollutes and contaminates the soil and air. This poses a threat to the health of Palestinian residents, and the agricultural lands and their crops. The latter is the main source of income for many families, and women are often found working in the field. For example, "if [military waste] is no longer useful, and rots near where you live, it can spread pollution even after it is sent elsewhere. There are thousands of former defense sites that leave toxic legacies behind when abandoned."²⁵
49. Another significant issue related to military ordnance is the emission of radioactivity. The Environmental Quality Authority's fieldwork team found military components in the OPT which were confirmed by the UNEP to be radioactive. Unexploded ordnance found by

²⁵ WCLAC evidence-based data of women's voices 2020-2022.

shepherds poses grave risks to lives and health. This is further evidence that the Israeli occupation uses the OPT as a dumping ground for polluting materials and chemicals.²⁶

50. It is crucial to note that the Israeli military occupation has disrupted the natural ecosystem of Palestinian land since 1967. In fact, air and noise pollution are constantly on the rise, mainly due to the vehicles of settlers and the IOF, and have a grave impact on the neighboring Palestinian communities. The Israeli military bases in the Jordan Valley damage water resources with fuel and oil leaks, in addition to the leaving behind of military ordnance.²⁷

Recommendations:

- Request Israel, the Occupying Power, to cease settlement expansion and exploitation of Palestinian natural resources for the benefit of its colonial settlement enterprise, and end military training and its immense impact on Palestinians, including Palestinian women and children.
- Enforce measures to hold Israel accountable for its perpetration of environmental violations in the OPT, and to address these policies that are based on practices of racial discrimination against the indigenous Palestinian people.

²⁶ Z. Brophy and J. Isaac, *The environmental impact of Israeli military activities in the occupied Palestinian territory*, Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ)

²⁷ Z. Brophy and J. Isaac, *The environmental impact of Israeli military activities in the occupied Palestinian territory*, Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ)