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NEGOTIATIONS AND SUPPORT UNIT

ISRAELI ANNEXATION POLICIES IN OCCUPIED PALESTINE 2025



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Introduction

Israel's annexation policies in occupied Palestine have entered an accelerated phase under the current Israeli government. A comprehensive strategy that aims to consolidate permanent Israeli military control over the occupied West Bank, through the expansion and legalization of Israeli settlements and colonial installations (outposts), the transfer of administrative powers from the military-responsible for managing the occupation since 1967 - to the central government's bodies with a civilian mandate, and the integration of the Oslo-defined "Area C" into Israel's national planning and governance structures. Together, these actions reveal a deliberate policy to transform de facto control into de jure annexation, fundamentally undermining the independence, sovereignty, and territorial contiguity of the State of Palestine.

Across the West Bank, settlement expansion and infrastructure projects have accelerated at unprecedented rates. As of 2025, approximately [737,332 Israeli settlers reside in settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem](#). Since the formation of the current Israeli government in December 2022, the Israeli occupation authorities have approved or advanced over 50,000 settlement housing units in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem according to Palestinian Colonization & Wall Resistance Commission (CWRC).

These developments are part of a broader Israeli strategy openly expressed by Israel's far-right Finance Minister, [Bezalel Smotrich, who explicitly stated his active effort to annex "Area C" to Israel](#), which covers 60% of the West Bank

and is currently under full Israeli administrative and security control. Beyond territorial seizure, Israel's annexation strategy extends to controlling and appropriating critical natural and economic resources. Domination over land, water, energy, and cultural heritage has become a key instrument for deepening dependency and eroding Palestinian development prospects. By systematically restricting Palestinian access to these resources, Israel not only consolidates its de facto annexation but also undermines the foundations necessary for the achievement of the two-State solution and the independence of the State of Palestine.

From a legal standpoint, these measures constitute a grave breach of international law. [The International Court of Justice's 2024 Advisory Opinion](#) reaffirmed that Israel's continued occupation, settlement enterprise, and annexation measures in the Occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, are unlawful and must cease immediately. The Court further confirmed that all States and international organizations are under an obligation not to recognize or assist in maintaining this illegal situation. Similarly, UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016) reiterates that Israel's settlement activities have "no legal validity" and constitute a "flagrant violation under international law." These instruments leave no ambiguity: annexation, whether de jure or de facto, violates the UN Charter, the Fourth Geneva Convention, and fundamental principles of self-determination and the prohibition on the acquisition of territory by force.



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I. Settlement Expansion and Colonial Installations

The establishment of colonial installations has become the central tool for annexation. These installations, initially unauthorized, are increasingly being legalized and funded by the government through a gradual approach. Alongside this, Israeli settler terrorism, road closures, and seizures of Palestinian land have sharply increased.

The Israeli government has also transferred administrative powers from the Civil Administration, a military body, to the newly created Settlement Administration, a civil and political authority under the direct control of Israel's far-right Finance Minister, Bezalel Smotrich.

Key Developments:

- On 23 July 2025, the Israeli Knesset lawmakers voted 71-13 in favor of a non-binding motion declaring the occupied West Bank an ["inseparable part of the historic Jewish homeland"](#) and calling on the government to explore extending sovereignty over the area.
- The "One Million Settlers" Vision (2040 to 2050). An effort that lays out a coordinated agenda to establish irreversible facts on the ground through infrastructure development and population growth. [Key elements include](#) industrial zones, public transportation, and a proposed light rail in the northern West Bank.
- In 2025, the Israeli cabinet [approved 22 new settlements](#), and two years earlier, granted retroactive approval to [22 unauthorized colonial installations](#).
- Since the formation of the current Israeli government, Israeli settlers established more than [121 additional colonial installations](#), around 40 percent of the total 298 created since 1996, including colonial farm installations, displacing 47 Palestinian pastoral and Bedouin communities.

In Focus: The Rapid Expansion of Colonial Farm Installations

This particular form of colonial installations has as its principal focus the Jordan Valley, which comprises more than one-third of the West Bank surface area. The new policy aims to entrench irreversible facts on the ground. The rapid proliferation of this type of colonial installations has emerged as a central mechanism to expand settler presence, advancing Israel's stated objective of reaching [one million settlers by 2040](#). They represent a new approach to expanding Israeli settlements, whereby settlers use livestock herds to delineate the initial borders of colonial installations, with the ultimate goal of seizing Palestinian land and a tool for de facto annexation.

The practice of colonial farm installations has been documented for more than two decades. However, it has particularly accelerated since 7 October 2023. With the support and encouragement of the Israeli government, [settlers attack Bedouin communities and villages, assault Palestinians](#) and their property through arson, destruction, and theft, and force them to abandon their lands under the threat of arms. Subsequently, settlers seized thousands of dunams of Palestinian pastureland and water springs, establishing colonial installations under the pretext of agricultural grazing.

As a result of the land seizures, the humanitarian crisis facing Palestinians has reached alarming levels, significantly impacting the lives and futures of countless individuals and communities. Efforts to defend Palestinian land are constrained by the occupying Power's domestic judiciary system, which systematically alters laws to enable land seizures in coordination with Israel's political and security apparatus.

The hotspots where these installations are located: Jordan Valley and the eastern slopes of the West Bank; the South Hebron Hills/ Masafer Yatta; and the central highlands of the West Bank.

Generally, Israeli settlers adopt a gradual approach in creating this type of colonial installations; first bringing herds near Palestinian water sources and agricultural land, then escalating to daily harassment, violent assaults, arson, destruction, theft, and eventually the forced abandonment of land under armed threat.

In parallel, the Israeli occupation authorities move quickly to provide protection to the settlers and grant them financial resources, including funding and infrastructure services. This policy of continued daily harassment, roadblocks, and fencing severely limits Palestinians' access to lands and water resources. Eventually, [the Settlement Division of the World Zionist Organization awards "grazing contracts"](#) to Israeli settlers without oversight or restrictions, enabling them to seize land and expel Palestinians.

Agricultural land surrounding these colonial installations is frequently declared "closed military zones" or subjected to future annexation wall expansion, including the destruction of crops and the uprooting of olive trees.

In the Nablus and Ramallah governorates, for instance, farmers face regular harassment during the olive harvest season, limiting their ability to cultivate or harvest lands. Such restrictions not only reduce agricultural output but also threaten rural livelihoods and deepen Palestinian dependence on external food and water supplies.

[Israeli settlers have repeatedly attacked the Ein Samia well-field](#), northeast of Ramallah Governorate. These assaults caused power outages that shut down the pumping equipment, surveillance cameras, and communication and control systems, ultimately disrupting water supplies to many towns and villages across Ramallah's northern and eastern areas.

The attacks also targeted several springs used for irrigation, cutting and damaging hundreds of irrigation networks in the northern Jordan Valley and other areas in the West Bank. Additionally, they chased Palestinian shepherds in the Bedouin community of Ain Al-Auja, preventing them from grazing near the spring.

The occupying Power supports the expansion of colonial farm installations settlement through a [structured policy composed of three main levels](#):

- **First Level:** Backed by settlement councils, whereby all agricultural settlements are formally supervised by a particular settlement council and receive support and sponsorship from it.
- **Second Level:** Settler (civil society) organizations, whereby numerous settler associations support colonial farm installations, including organizations established specifically for this purpose. The most important of these are the extremist "Amana movement", "Guardians of Judea and Samaria", "Nahala", "Im Tirtzu", "Kedma", and "In Our Land."
- **Third level:** The occupying Power's ministries directly sponsor and fund colonial farm installations. The most important are the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Education (some are classified as "rehabilitation" programs for "Torah youth", deemed "youth at risk"), and the Ministry of Defense (through the Settlement Division).

According to [Peace Now's](#) research, approximately 786,000 dunams of Palestinian land have been appropriated by colonial installations. This seized land represents roughly 14% of the West Bank's total area.

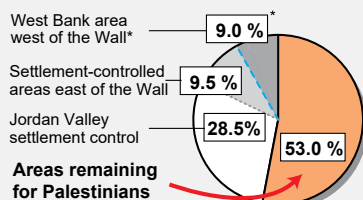
Land Seized by Israeli Settlers' Colonial Farm Installations mostly in "Area C"	Area in Dunum	Percentage of Total Seized Land
Private Palestinian Lands	161,379	20.53%
Private Registered Palestinian Lands	120,122	15.28%
PNA Areas (A, B, Nature Reserve)	34,365	4.37%
Palestinian Waqf Lands	15,147	1.93%
Israeli Declared as "State Land"	121,950	15.52%
State lands registered in the Israeli Land registry	198,910	25.31%
Confiscated Lands with unspecified ownership according to the Israeli Civil Administration	134,127	17.06%
Total	786,000	100.00%

Land classification according to the Israeli Civil Administration

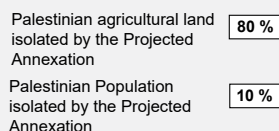
The [\(CWRC\) reports](#) a significant increase in settler colonial installations, documenting over 158 colonial farm installations, 58 of which were established after October 2023, and approximately 47 Palestinian shepherding and Bedouin communities were forcibly displaced due to this unlawful practice.

Israeli Projected Annexation Plan

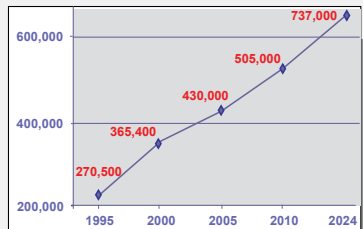
Palestinian Land Restricted by Israeli Annexation



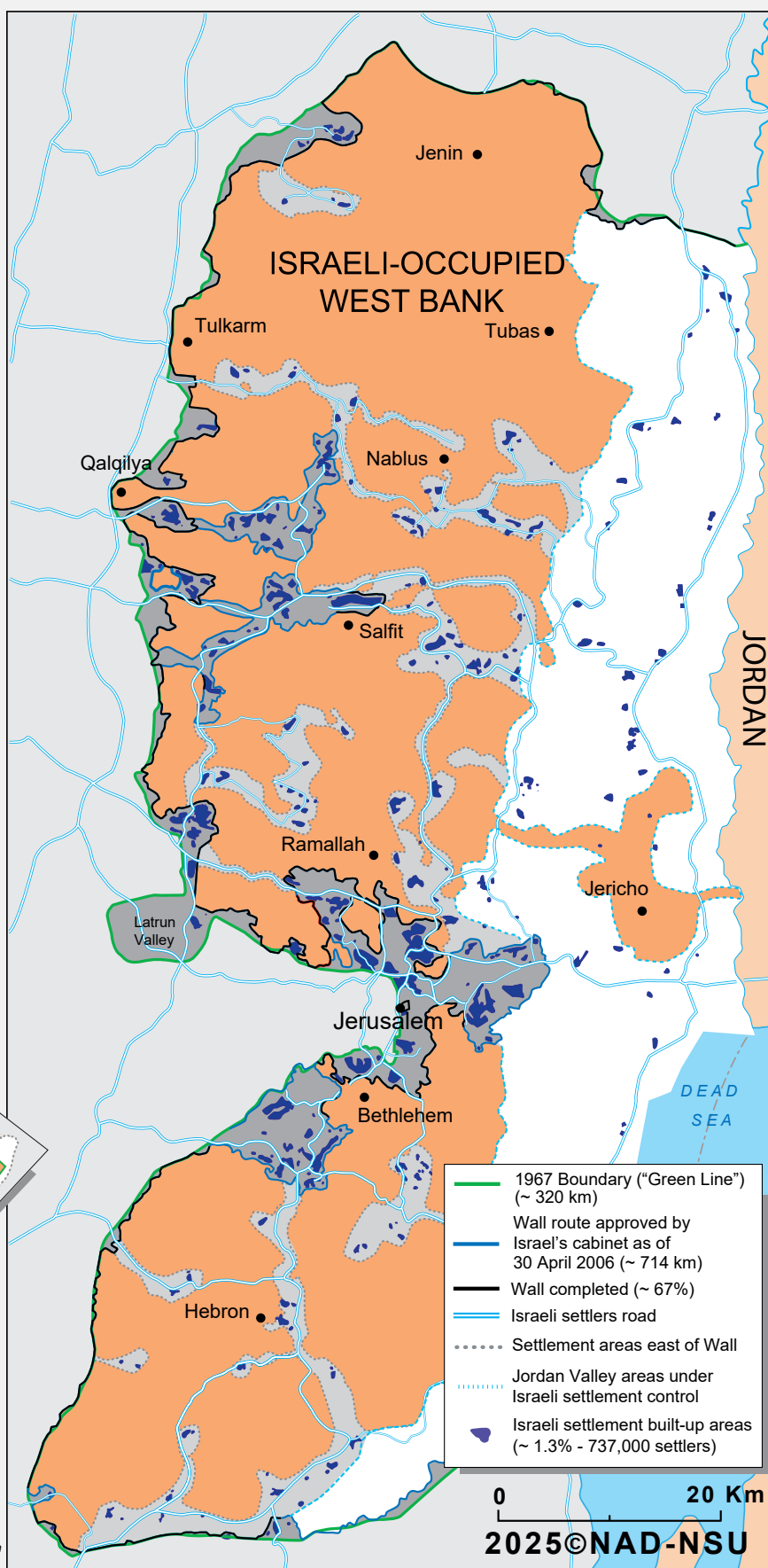
West Bank Areas Impacted by the Projected Annexation



Settler Population Growth Tripled Since 1995



* Figure includes the Israeli-occupied areas of East Jerusalem and the Latrun Valley



II. Infrastructure and Roads

- The Israeli government has approved the construction of [two major roads](#), the “Fabric of Life” between Al Ezariya and A-Zaim and an alternative route to Highway 80 running from Bethlehem to Jericho. These projects are designed to segregate Israeli and Palestinian traffic, enabling Israel to restrict Palestinian access to central areas of the West Bank, advance the annexation of “Ma’ale Adumim,” and facilitate implementation of the E1 colonial plan. While the “Fabric of Life” is advancing toward implementation, the alternative route to Highway 80 remains in the early planning stage.
- Settlement-related road infrastructure has accelerated at an unprecedented pace, with around 1.1 billion USD allocated for settlement road projects, such as the expansion of Route 60, 505, and bypass roads like Huwara and Lubban, the completion of Apartheid Road 4370 near Zaim in East Jerusalem, and Route 45 to connect the “Kokhav Yaakov” settlement with the “Atarot” settlement through the Qalandiya tunnel.
- A five-year plan (2023–2027) to develop infrastructure (roads, water, electricity, and internet) intended to support the [increase of settlers to one million within a decade](#) (excluding occupied Jerusalem).
- Between mid-2023 and mid-2024, Israeli settlers constructed around [139 new roads, totaling 116.4 km in the occupied West Bank](#), excluding numerous additional kilometers of upgraded dirt roads. Many of these roads, built with state support, enhance settler access, entrench Israeli control over “Area C”, and further fragment Palestinian land.



III. Administrative and Legal Measures

The Israeli occupation authorities unveiled a series of administrative measures that have effectively advanced the de facto annexation of the West Bank:

- The [transfer of planning and construction powers](#) from the military Civil Administration to civilian officials within Israeli ministries. By shifting settlement management from military to civilian hands, these measures bypass international legal constraints and constitute a clear breach of international law.
- In [2024](#) alone, the Israeli government approved the creation of five new settlements. It also introduced a “bypass legalization mechanism” that enables 70 unauthorized colonial installations to receive government funding and infrastructure without going through the official legalization process. During the same period, Israeli occupation authorities declared 24,258 dunams as “State Land,” representing approximately half of all such designations made since the signing of the Oslo Accords.
- Cancellation of the military order prohibiting Israeli settlers from entering areas in the northern West Bank, which Israel withdrew from after the 2005 disengagement. This paves the way for the [return of settlements in these areas](#), as Israeli settlers are now permitted to enter, stay, and even begin construction.
- The Israeli Knesset seeks to pass a law that would apply Israeli law to territories outside Israeli sovereignty (i.e.; the land of occupied Palestine). The [proposed bill](#) provides: “Any person is permitted to acquire rights to real estate in the ‘Judea and Samaria area’.” Israel uses the term “Judea and Samaria” to describe the occupied West Bank. Such terminology and policy reflect a direct violation of international law.
- Israeli enforcement powers in parts of “Area B” in direct breach of the Oslo Accords and later agreements. Most recently, the Israeli military commander signed [two orders](#) transferring enforcement, planning, and building authorities, originally designated for the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), into Israeli de facto control, thereby empowering Israeli officials to order the demolition of Palestinian structures in areas defined as the “Agreed-Up Reserve.”
 - The 1998 Wye River Agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) identified an “Agreed-Up Reserve” of about 167,000 dunums (41,300 acres) in “Area B”, representing nearly 3% of the West Bank. Israel's unilateral control [over this land](#) in “Area B” violates the commitments, outlined in the accord and advances its annexation agenda into areas formally allocated to the PNA, further diminishing Palestinian rights.
 - The Israeli government has unilaterally initiated [its own land registration process](#) in “Area C” of the West Bank, a move aimed at tightening control and facilitating further settlement growth. In doing so, it has moved to block the PNA from pursuing land registration in the same territory, stripping Palestinians of their ability to safeguard their property. This policy functions as an instrument of dispossession and opens the way for a systematic takeover of Palestinian land.



IV. Control over Resources

1. Annexation of Water Resources

The Israeli annexation policies would effectively confiscate about 32% (1803 km² of 5643 km²) of the total area of the three shared groundwater aquifer basins within the West Bank border lines, namely the Eastern Aquifer Basin, Western Aquifer Basin, and Northeastern Aquifer Basin. This confiscation is targeting the most productive zones in these shared groundwater aquifers to restrict Palestinians from future development in these aquifers.

Beyond groundwater, annexation policies would cement Israel's longstanding deprivation of Palestinian rights to surface water, particularly from the Jordan River, from which Palestinians have been denied use and access since 1967 despite the fact that Palestine is a riparian state. The plan would also result in the loss of significant volumes of surface runoff from the eastern slopes, where flash floods represent an important natural source of water harvesting.

In parallel, annexation policies will further undermine Palestinian efforts to ensure reliable environmental management, enabling additional Israeli settlements to discharge untreated or poorly treated wastewater into the environment, thereby contaminating soils and destroying fragile ecosystems across the West Bank.

The Israeli policy also undermines Palestinian claims to key natural water sources, such as the Fashkha Springs Group (the Dead Sea Springs Group), one of the largest springs of the Eastern Basin located along the Dead Sea, with a discharge rate of 80-100 million cubic meters per year.

Moreover, in the agricultural sector, annexation would consolidate Israeli control over 612,000 dunums of irrigable land in the West Bank, most of which are located in the Jordan Valley.

Additionally, the establishment of Israeli colonial installations significantly restricts Palestinian access to water resources and agricultural lands. [They are often established near springs, wells, and fertile farmlands](#). This enables the settlers to monopolize resources and entrench their presence.

For example, Palestinian communities near the Jordan Valley and South Hebron Hills report being denied access to local water sources once [settlers fence off springs or divert water pipelines](#) for their exclusive use. This forces farmers to rely on expensive water tankers, pushing many to abandon their agricultural lands, undermining agricultural productivity.

These violations illustrate how Israel's annexation agenda in the water sector seeks not only to reconfigure territorial control but also to monopolize natural resources, entrench dependency, and erode the economic and environmental foundations of an independent State of Palestine.

2. Cultural Heritage and Tourism

Israel's cultural heritage and tourism and legal frameworks form a core component of its de facto annexation strategy in occupied Palestine. [By exploiting archaeology, religious tourism, and heritage management](#), Israel seeks to consolidate territorial control, reshape historical narratives, and erase Palestinian historical presence.

Since 1967, the occupying Power has reclassified more than [2,400 Palestinian archaeological sites as "Israeli archaeological sites."](#) Many of these areas were subsequently converted into Israeli settlements, colonial installations, and military sites, or exclusive tourist destinations under the management of the Israeli Nature and Parks Authority (INPA). Through exclusive administrative control, revenue collection, and rebranding, these sites, such as Qumran and the Baptism Site, are marketed as part of Israel's national heritage network. These actions divert revenues from Palestinian communities and integrate occupied sites into Israel's tourism economy.

Moreover, the Israeli Knesset has advanced a [draft amendment](#) to the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) Law to transfer archaeological oversight in the West Bank from the Civil Administration to the IAA. This would extend Israeli antiquities law into the West Bank, amounting to de jure annexation in violation of international law and the Oslo Accords.

Archaeology has been systematically weaponized as a tool of territorial and cultural domination [threatening approximately 6,000 Palestinian archaeological sites in the West Bank](#), erasing the deep-rooted Palestinian historical existence and narrative connected to this land. Sites like [Sebastia](#) are often presented as a purely “biblical” or “Roman” ruin, deliberately ignoring the modern Palestinian village that sits atop it.

In August 2025, [Israel designated 63 Palestinian sites as “Israeli heritage sites,”](#) further integrating them into Israeli Jewish tourism narratives while excluding Palestinians from their management and access. Parallel control over Christian pilgrimage routes and Islamic heritage sites, including Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound, the Ibrahimi Mosque, the Old City of Jerusalem, and Silwan, Israel uses tourism infrastructure to normalize its occupation and deepen its presence in occupied East Jerusalem and Hebron.

Collectively, these measures transform cultural heritage into a mechanism of colonization, economic appropriation, and narrative control, consolidating Israel's annexation of the land of occupied Palestine.

3. Israel's Economic Policies of Control: The Deliberate Weakening of the PNA

Beyond the control over monetary issues, the impact of Israeli economic policies targets all Palestinian economic activities including restrictions over the use of natural resources, inhibition of business activities by an imposed regulatory regime, severance of the Palestinian economy from its natural environment and markets, [tying the institutionalize Palestinian labour reliance on the Israeli economy, fragmentation of the Palestinian market, and raising transaction cost.](#)

The annexation of land and the impeding Israeli policies have de-developed the productive capacity of the Palestinian economy which has led to contraction of agriculture and manufacturing, [with the share of services increasing from 55 percent in 1972 to 71.6 percent in 2019.](#) Moreover, annexation policies of land, especially in “Area C”, caused a rapid decline of agriculture value added and activities. Persistent restrictions on movement and access to water resources, land, and fishery spaces have caused the sector to be extremely fragile, which has a significant impact on livelihoods and food security of the Palestinian population. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), [11.6 percent of Palestinians in the West Bank and 68.5 percent of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are food insecure.](#)

Israeli control over natural resources in occupied Palestine serves not only to confiscate them in favour of the Israeli economy, but also to deprive the Palestinian economy of a driver of development. [The World Bank \(2014\) estimated that the expected benefit from exploitation of “Area C” would amount to 35 percent of Palestinian GDP](#) if Palestine was given the access to “Area C” including the Jordan Valley.

Despite the fact that approximately twenty-five KM of the Dead Sea coastline lie within the West Bank, Palestinians are denied access by Israel to this area as an economic resource. This restriction prevents the utilization of a significant source of salt and other valuable minerals including asphalt, magnesium, and potash, which could otherwise serve as key inputs for multiple productive sectors, such as asphalt for cement manufacturing and other minerals for the pharmaceutical and cosmetics industries. In 2015, Jordan's sales from the Dead Sea amounted to 4 per cent of GDP (\$1.2 billion) and Israel's to 1 per cent of GDP (\$3 billion). [The potential incremental value-added of minerals exploitation, should it become possible, would constitute around 9 per cent of the Palestinian GDP, equivalent to almost \\$1.7 billion.](#)

However, Palestinian mining and quarrying activities in the whole of “Area C” continued to be restricted. In a recent UNCTAD report (2025), the report concludes that had the [Palestinian economy not been disrupted by Israeli policies, and had Palestinians been permitted to develop 30 percent of “Area C” under conditions similar to those in “Areas A and B\),](#) economic output would have been substantially higher. The report highlights that the cost of Israeli occupation and imposed limitations to access to “Area C” amounts to \$170 billion in the last 24 years.

Moreover, annexation-related policies and restrictions denying Palestinians access to their lawful resources in “Area C” adversely affect both foreign and domestic Palestinian trade, further entrenching the isolation of the Palestinian economy. Israeli control over land, natural resources, and critical infrastructure has weakened the manufacturing, agricultural, and livestock sectors, [thereby contributing to the persistently low level of exports from the occupied Palestinian territory.](#) Domestically, these restrictive policies further erode Palestinian value and supply chains, undermining their competitiveness and constraining sustainable growth.

In conclusion, the mutually reinforcing components of Israel's matrix of control and domination, coupled with measures that specifically target the Palestinian economy, have eviscerated that economy and resulted in its de-development and asymmetric economic dependency on Israel.

4. Energy Policies as a Mechanism of Control

In the energy sector, Israel deploys a parallel set of policies aimed at consolidating control over land, infrastructure, and natural resources, key levers of statehood and sovereignty. [More than 87 percent of Palestine's electricity is imported from Israel](#), a dependency maintained through the obstruction of development of Palestinian energy infrastructure by restrictions on Oslo-defined "Area C" land use, and the withholding of approvals for critical grid and generation projects.

Israeli occupation authorities routinely block permits for transmission lines and renewable energy installations in the West Bank while [advancing large-scale solar concessions for Israeli developers on "state land"](#) in the same areas, integrating them into Israel's national grid. At the same time, Palestinian-led strategic projects such as the Jenin Power Plant, Gaza Marine gas field, and the [Gas-for-Gaza initiative remain frozen under political pretexts](#), denying Palestinians access to energy sources that could support fiscal and energy independence.

This asymmetric policy framework transforms energy from a developmental sector into a tool of coercive control—using electricity supply, land access, and resource rights to fragment Palestinian territorial contiguity and entrench the de facto annexation of the West Bank. By preventing the establishment of a unified and sovereign Palestinian energy backbone, Israel ensures that both the economy and the PNA remain structurally subordinate and politically constrained.



The Palestinian Natural Gas Field- Gaza Marine Project © PIF

V. Triangular Israeli Settlements around Occupied East Jerusalem

A clear example of Israel's annexation strategy is the development of a triangular settlement expansion around occupied East Jerusalem, aimed at cutting off the city from the rest of the West Bank. Extensive settlement planning is underway in three main areas: to the south, separating East Jerusalem from Bethlehem; to the east, separating East Jerusalem from the Jordan Valley and Jericho; and to the north, separating East Jerusalem from Ramallah. This separation is further reinforced by the annexation wall, a "ring road" system, and tunnels. Currently, these settlement plans are in advanced stages of approval and/or implementation:

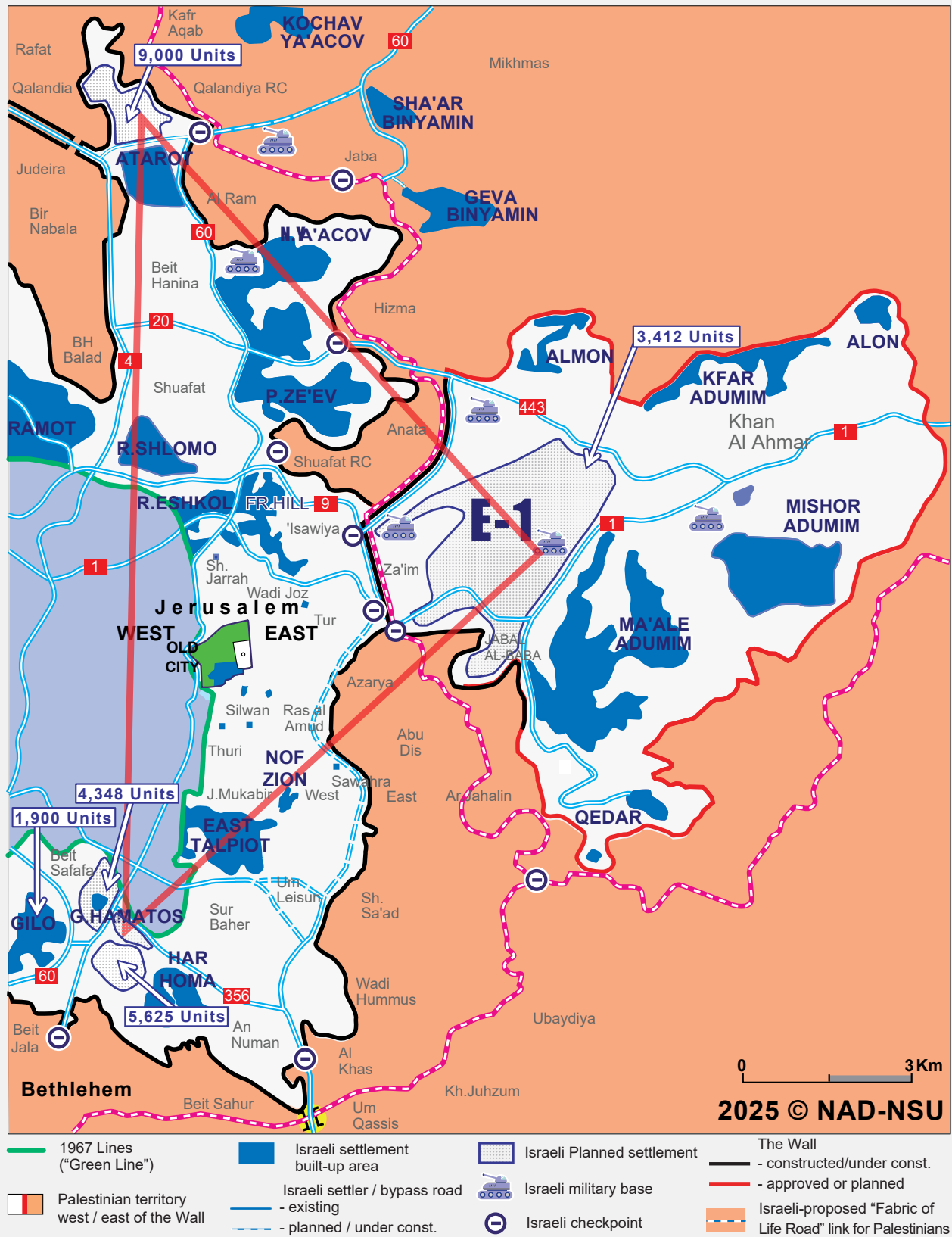
- **South:** Several settlements are expanding the "Gilo-Har Homa" axis south of occupied East Jerusalem. This includes "Gilo" (~1,900 units), "Har Homa" East (~660 units), "Givat Hamatos" (~2,610 units), Hebron Road "Strip" Plan (~3,500 units), "Givat Hashaked" (~1,738 units), and the Lower Aqueduct plan (~1,465 units). Once [these projects](#) are completed, Israel will secure full territorial contiguity across the southern part of the occupied city, effectively isolating East Jerusalem from Bethlehem.
- **East:** The "E1 colonial plan" (~3,412 units), along with the "Maale Adumim" settlements, consolidates Israeli control over critical junctions linking the northern and southern West Bank. These areas are among the most economically and residentially significant for Palestinians. If the plan is carried out, it would disrupt Palestinian territorial continuity, place these areas under Israeli authority, and severely undermine the prospects of East Jerusalem functioning as a viable Palestinian capital. ([Peace Now](#))
- **North:** A development plan for (~9,000 units) in the "Atarot" settlement, located between Kafr Aqab, Qalandia, and Al-Ram north of East Jerusalem, would establish full Israeli territorial contiguity in the northern occupied city, further isolating East Jerusalem from Ramallah. ([Ir-Amim](#))

The effects of these triangular settlements on the prospects for a viable Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem cannot be undermined. Their implementation would severely restrict Palestinian population growth, access to Ramallah, Bethlehem, the Jordan Valley, and Jericho, and reduce the space available for economic and social development. These illegal settlements will further fragment trade and commerce in and around Jerusalem, the city's traditional Palestinian economic hub. These settlements maximize Israeli contiguous territory while minimizing Palestinian presence within the city's boundaries. The result is a dramatic reduction in Palestinian control and the effective elimination of East Jerusalem's viability as a Palestinian capital.



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Triangular Israeli Settlements around Occupied East Jerusalem



VI. International Legal Context

On 19 July 2024, the [International Court of Justice](#) (ICJ) reaffirmed Palestinians' right to self-determination, asserting that Israeli settlements on the occupied land must be dismantled. The Court ruled that the occupied Palestinian territory constitutes a "single territorial unit" to be protected and respected. The ICJ also concluded that the State of Israel is under an obligation to bring to an end its unlawful presence in the occupied Palestinian territory as rapidly as possible and; to make reparation for the damage caused to all the natural or legal persons concerned in the occupied Palestinian territory. In addition, the international community considers Israel's actions to be illegal and has strongly condemned them through several [UN resolutions](#).

A few days before the ICJ's ruling, Israeli far-right finance Minister [Bezalel Smotrich](#) vowed to thwart the establishment of a Palestinian State by advancing the construction of more illegal settlements, calling on PM Netanyahu to annex the West Bank if the ICJ rules that settlements are illegal "I hereby call on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu - if the International Court of Justice in The Hague does decide that the settlement enterprise is illegal - respond to them with a historic decision of applying sovereignty to the territories of the homeland." Right after the ruling came out, Smotrich slammed the ICJ, labelling it an 'anti-Semitic body' and wrote on platform X: "The answer to The Hague - Sovereignty now".

On 18 September 2024, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a resolution demanding that Israel end its "unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory" and do so within the next 12 months. The UNGA resolution comes a few weeks after the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) of 19 July 2024, on the "Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem."

Both UN bodies asserted that the: "[Israeli settlements and their associated regime, including the transfer by Israel of settlers to the West Bank, including East Jerusalem](#) [...] have been established and are being maintained in violation of international law." This was further reiterated by [the UNGA resolution on the endorsement of the New York Declaration on 10 September 2025](#). [A/80/L.1/Rev.1] Where States committed to "[adopting restrictive measures, against violent extremist settlers and entities and individuals supporting illegal settlements, in accordance with international law](#)."



Conclusion

Israel's systematic annexation policies in occupied Palestine represent a coordinated strategy to entrench permanent control, fragment Palestinian territorial contiguity, and undermine the viability of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine. Settlement expansion, legalization of colonial installations, including farms, infrastructure development, and the transfer of administrative and enforcement powers to civilian Israeli authorities, are transforming de facto control into de jure annexation. These measures, combined with the appropriation of critical Palestinian resources, entrench dependency and restrict Palestinian development.

The current and planned construction of settlements further erodes the prospects for a negotiated two-State solution. Options for achieving a durable resolution can only be preserved if the international community enforces a comprehensive and immediate ceasing of settlement activities and to evacuate all settlers from the lands of occupied Palestine as per the findings of the 2024 ICJ opinion. Third, States have clear obligations under international law, including UNSC Resolution 2334, the ICJ opinion, and the UNGA resolution endorsing the New York Declaration of September 2025, to ensure that Israel's annexationist policies are neither legitimized nor supported. States must distinguish between Israel and the territories occupied since 1967 in all official dealings, actively oppose measures that entrench Israeli control over Palestinian resources, apply diplomatic pressure, including taking restrictive measures in line with international law, to hold the State of Israel and involved private actors accountable for complicity in grave breaches of international law.

Israel's deepening settlement entrenchment creates a structural imbalance that advances its objectives while systematically undermining Palestinian independence and self-determination. In the absence of decisive international action, settlements could expand up to five times their current scale on expropriated Palestinian land. This trajectory underscores the urgent need for the international community to safeguard territorial integrity, protect communities, and preserve the conditions for an independent, sovereign, and contiguous State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

