



STATE OF PALESTINE
PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION
NEGOTIATIONS AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT
NEGOTIATIONS AND SUPPORT UNIT

JORDAN VALLEY IN 2026

**LOST OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE
STATE OF PALESTINE**

Introduction

The [Jordan Valley comprises approximately 28.5% of the West Bank](#) and serves as the State of Palestine's primary agricultural hub and its breadbasket. Situated between the Jordan River and the Dead Sea to the east, and the eastern escarpments of the West Bank to the west, it has a unique microclimate that allows year-round cultivation. However, [restrictive Israeli land-use policies have limited Palestinian cultivation to a mere 4.7% of the Jordan Valley's total area](#).

Since the beginning of its occupation in 1967, Israel has employed a series of expansive policies to consolidate exclusive control over the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), with the Jordan Valley a primary target to carry out these policies. Through forced displacement, movement restrictions, and the systematic expansion of colonial settlements, the occupying Power has fundamentally altered the landscape of the Jordan Valley in violation of international law.

Strategic control of the Jordan River has been – and remains – a central Israeli objective since before 1967. This intent was evident in 1964, when Israel's plan to divert the river's waters prompted the first Arab summit in Cairo to form a unified front. Today, this Israeli control is maintained through a sophisticated web of legal and military tools, including the arbitrary designation of closed military zones, the imposition of military checkpoints, the denial of Palestinian access to water resources, and the weaponization of military orders to seize Palestinian-owned land. These policies affect Palestinians' rights to economic and development opportunities and deny them access to the natural resources that the Jordan Valley offers.

These mechanisms work in tandem to entrench a permanent Israeli settler presence and create difficult living conditions for the indigenous Palestinians, with the aim of forcibly displacing them from their lands. Data from the [Colonization & Wall Resistance Commission](#) (CWRC) indicate that the settler population in the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem, has reached 726,427, distributed across 176 Israeli settlements and 179 other colonial installations (outposts). While the majority are concentrated in the central West Bank, the Jordan Valley alone is dotted with over 38 settlements housing approximately 11,315 settlers. (See Figure 1)

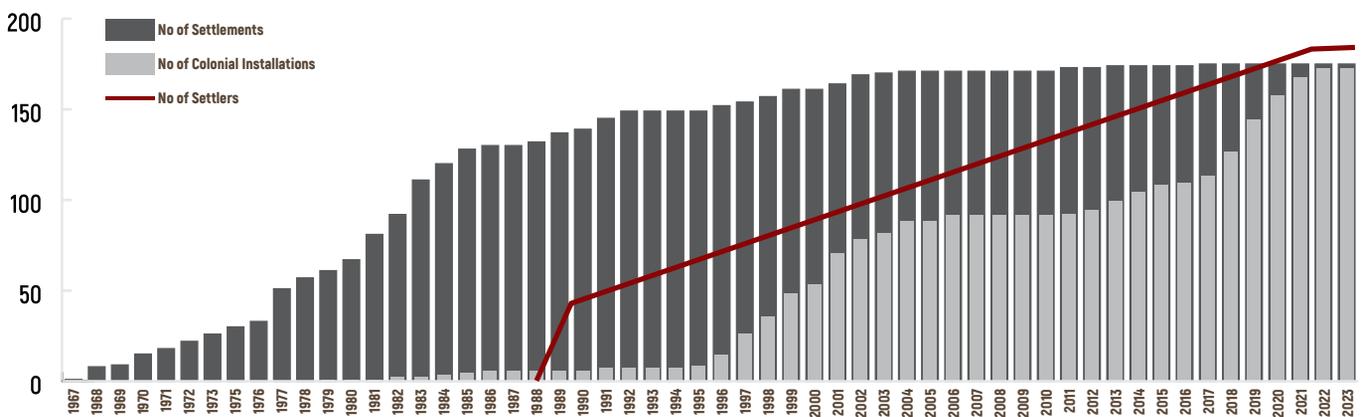


Figure 1: Number of Settlements, Colonial Installations, and Settlers in the West Bank, including occupied Jerusalem © CWRC
(Data on settlers prior to 1988 is not included in this figure)

Recent Israeli policy shifts signal a "[strategic revolution](#)" in land annexation. In the past 30 months, the Israeli government has moved to establish 50 new colonial installations with immediate official recognition. In 2025 alone, tenders for settlement housing units reached an unprecedented 5,667. Statements by Israeli leaders, along with facts on the ground, consistently confirm Israel's intention to perpetuate its control over the Jordan Valley. Through

these policies, Israel has created de facto annexation and physical fragmentation that have increasingly detached the Jordan Valley from the rest of the West Bank.

According to relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and international law, all the Israeli settlements in occupied Palestine violate international law. The Fourth Geneva Convention and the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC) prohibit the transfer of nationals of the occupying Power into the territory it occupies. According to the [International Court of Justice](#) (ICJ), the Israeli presence in the oPt is unlawful and should end.

This fact sheet analyzes Israeli practices, including settlement construction, land confiscation, closure policies, and the destruction of Palestinian property. It illustrates how, under the guise of security, Israel has extended its colonization of the Jordan Valley by consistently shrinking the space available to Palestinian localities, creating conditions that lead to displacement and establishing more illegal “facts on the ground” that hinder the achievement of an independent, sovereign, and contiguous State of Palestine.



I. Background: The “Alon Plan” and Beyond

Israel’s definition of the “Jordan Valley” is shaped not by geographical accuracy but by what its leaders have long designated as strategic and military considerations dating back to 1967. These considerations expand the definition of the Jordan Valley far beyond its natural geographic boundaries, encompassing a much larger area under Israeli control. At the heart of these considerations is the “Alon plan.” In 1967, Yigal Alon, Israel’s then deputy prime minister and later its foreign minister, proposed the creation of “defensible borders” for Israel by inter alia annexing the Jordan Valley, or what he specified as an area covering some 700 square miles (1,813.5 km² or 32% of the West Bank). Alon publicly articulated his plan in a 1976 Foreign Affairs magazine article.¹

The first annexation plan was to take over the Jordan Valley from the Jordan River to the Alon Road². The area in question is between 17-22% of the West Bank, and most of it falls within the Oslo-defined Area “C”. Indeed, it was the Alon Plan that laid the foundational blueprint for Israel’s illegal settlement construction and expansion in the Jordan Valley, particularly in the 10 years that followed the 1967 war. Its impact on Israeli policy towards the Jordan Valley is evident to this day. On 28 January 2020, US President Donald Trump formally unveiled a plan purporting to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian “conflict.” The plan allows for Israel’s annexation of the major settlements in the West Bank as well as the Jordan Valley. This effectively served as a green light for Israel to proceed with extending the annexation over those areas as a de facto reality. More recently, following public announcements by several European states to recognize the State of Palestine during the September 2025 session of the UN General Assembly, Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich introduced a renewed annexation plan. This plan seeks to place 88% of the West Bank under complete Israeli control, excluding only six major Palestinian cities, which collectively amount to merely 12% of the West Bank’s total area.



Figure 2: Alon Plan

II. Palestinian Localities in the Jordan Valley

According to the [Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics](#) (PCBS), there were 23 main Palestinian communities and other small nomadic localities in the Jordan Valley, with an estimated population of 65,000 in 2024 (See Figure 3). However, Israeli policies, including settlement construction, forced displacement, home demolitions, land confiscation, movement restrictions, and the designation of large areas as closed military zones, have severely restricted Palestinian access to their lands and impeded the development of Palestinian communities. (See Figure 4)

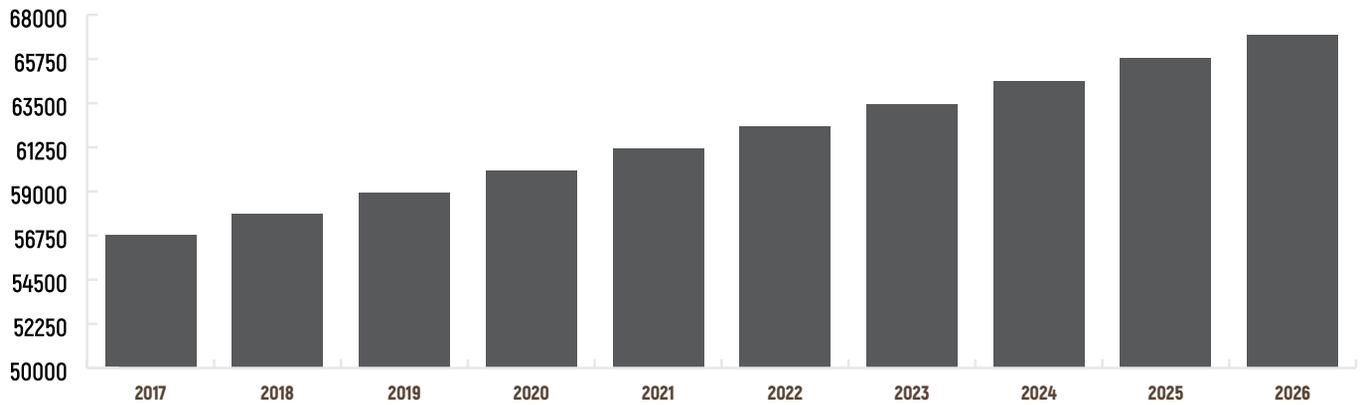


Figure 3: Annual Average Palestinian Population in the Jordan Valley © PCBS

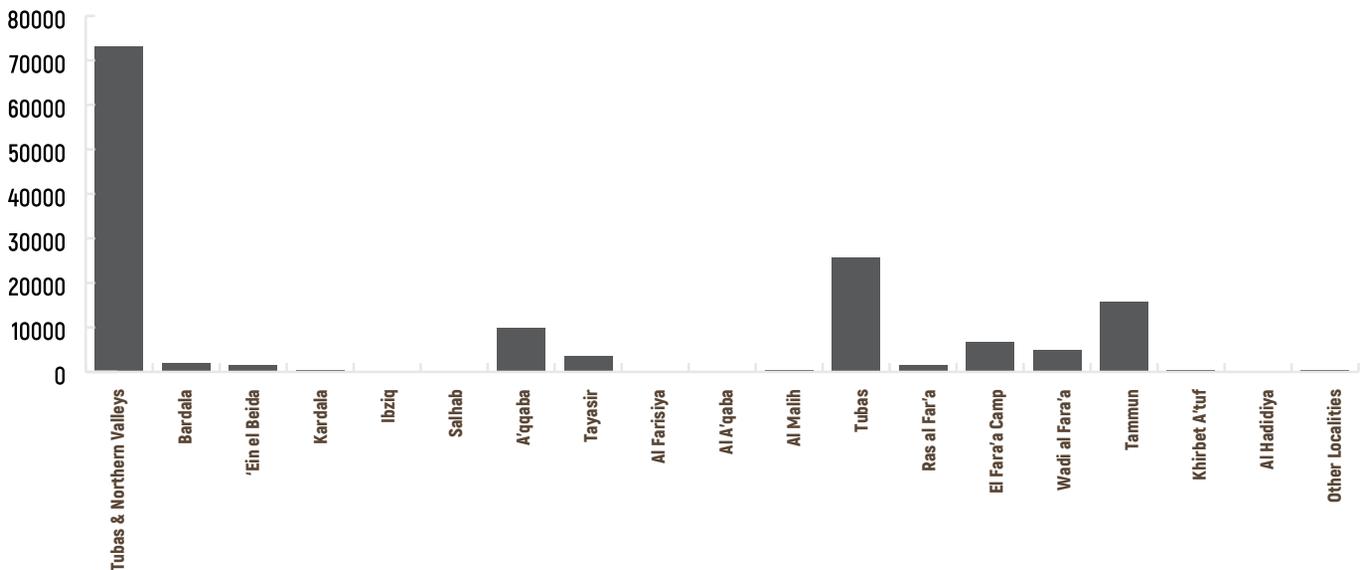


Figure 4: Distribution of the Palestinian Population of the 23 Main Communities and others in the Jordan Valley in 2024 (Estimated Population of the Jordan Valley by Locality (2017-2026) © [PCBS](#)

Between 1967 and 1999, more than 80–95% of Palestinian inhabitants of the Jordan Valley were displaced due to Israeli-imposed closures and military restrictions. Areas bordering the Jordan River were declared closed military zones in 1967. Although most of the restrictions were lifted in 1994 (particularly in Jericho) as part of the Oslo negotiations, the Israeli military maintained control over the Jordan Valley's border areas and facilities such as Al-Karameh Bridge (Allenby). In 2002, following the Second Intifada, the area was closed once again. Palestinians' access to the Jordan Valley was almost entirely blocked due to the closure of seven permanent checkpoints. The Israeli occupation authorities declared the northern Jordan Valley a closed military zone and carried out a series of demolitions and forced displacements. They also distributed evacuation orders to Palestinian communities in Ras Al-Ahmar, Al-Aqaba, Khirbet Al-Farisiya, and others, declaring these areas closed military zones.

The closure of the Jordan Valley and the proliferation of settlements have prevented Palestinians from cultivating their agricultural lands, especially those located between the Palestinian communities of al-Jiftlik and the settlements of Masua and Hamra. Additional lands extending from the areas of these settlements have also been subjected to Israeli closures. As a result, the area of Jordan Valley land cultivated by Palestinians has sharply declined.

The latest statistics indicate that only 4.7% of the land in the Jordan Valley is being cultivated by Palestinians, 3.8% are Palestinian-built-up areas, compared to 91.5% of the Valley controlled by the Israeli settlers—either through formal settlement jurisdiction, military seizure orders, or administrative restrictions imposed by the [Israeli Civil Administration](#).

The Jordan Valley covers parts of the following three governorates:

1. The Northern Jordan Valley, which is part of the Tubas Governorate and includes 11 communities, including the villages of Bardala, Tayaseer, Ein Al-Bayda, Kardala, and the Al-Malih area.
2. The Central Jordan Valley, which is part of the Nablus Governorate and includes the villages of Al-Jiftlik, Marj Al-Na'ja, Al-Zubeidat, Marj Al-Ghazal, and Furush Beit Dajan.
3. The Southern Jordan Valley, which is part of the Jericho Governorate and includes 12 communities, including the Al-Fasayel and Al-Auja areas, the city of Jericho, the villages of D'yuk and Nuwei'meh, the Khan Al-Ahmar area, and Nabi Musa.

Locality Name	Locality Code	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Tubas & Northern Valleys		60399	61745	63114	64507	65915	67340	68779	70225	71682	73143
Bardala	50420	1593	1629	1665	1701	1739	1776	1814	1852	1891	1929
'Ein el Beida	50450	1128	1153	1179	1205	1231	1258	1285	1312	1339	1366
Kardala	50455	201	206	210	215	220	224	229	234	239	244
Ibziq	50490	128	131	134	137	140	143	146	149	152	155
Salhab	50525	25	25	26	26	27	28	28	29	29	30
A'qqaba	50535	8168	8350	8535	8723	8914	9106	9301	9496	9693	9891
Tayasir	50550	2853	2917	2981	3047	3114	3181	3249	3317	3386	3455
Al Farisiya	50551	117	120	122	125	128	130	133	136	139	142
Al A'qaba	50560	167	170	174	178	182	186	190	194	198	202
Al Malih	50580	351	359	367	375	383	391	400	408	416	425
Tubas	50610	21245	21719	22200	22690	23186	23687	24193	24702	25214	25728
Ras al Far'a	50670	1239	1267	1295	1323	1352	1382	1411	1441	1471	1501
El Fara'a Camp	50700	5576	5701	5827	5956	6086	6217	6350	6483	6618	6753
Wadi al Fara'a	50740	3963	4052	4142	4233	4325	4419	4513	4608	4704	4800
Tammun	50755	13003	13293	13588	13888	14191	14498	14807	15119	15432	15747
Khirbet A'tuf	50790	214	219	224	229	234	239	244	249	254	259
Al Hadidiya	50871	181	185	190	194	198	202	207	211	215	220
Other Localities		246	251	257	263	268	274	280	286	292	298

Figure 5: Projected Mid -Year Population for Tubas & Northern Valleys Governorate by Locality 2017-2026. © [PCBS](#)

III. Colonizing and Controlling the Jordan Valley

Under the pretext of “security necessity,” around [91.5% of the Jordan Valley is currently under the Israeli occupation’s control](#). The tools Israel uses to maintain control are:

A. Colonial Settlement Enterprise

The Israeli occupation authorities have consistently sought to expand settlements within the West Bank through an incremental approach, aiming to mitigate public and international criticism. Their strategy involved a gradual increase in settlements, justified by various reasons including agricultural interests. Following the 1967 occupation of the West Bank, Israel concentrated on developing the agrarian sector to establish full control over the Jordan Valley.

The establishment of Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley occurred in [three phases](#): from 1967 to 1970, when six settlements were established along the main highway; from 1971 to 1974, along the Valley’s western border; and from 1975 to 1990, more than 17 settlements were established across the area.

There are [24 settlements and 14 colonial installations \(38 in total\) in the Jordan Valley](#), arranged in a north-south line (Figure 7), with a population of approximately 11,315 and a built-up area exceeding 400 km².

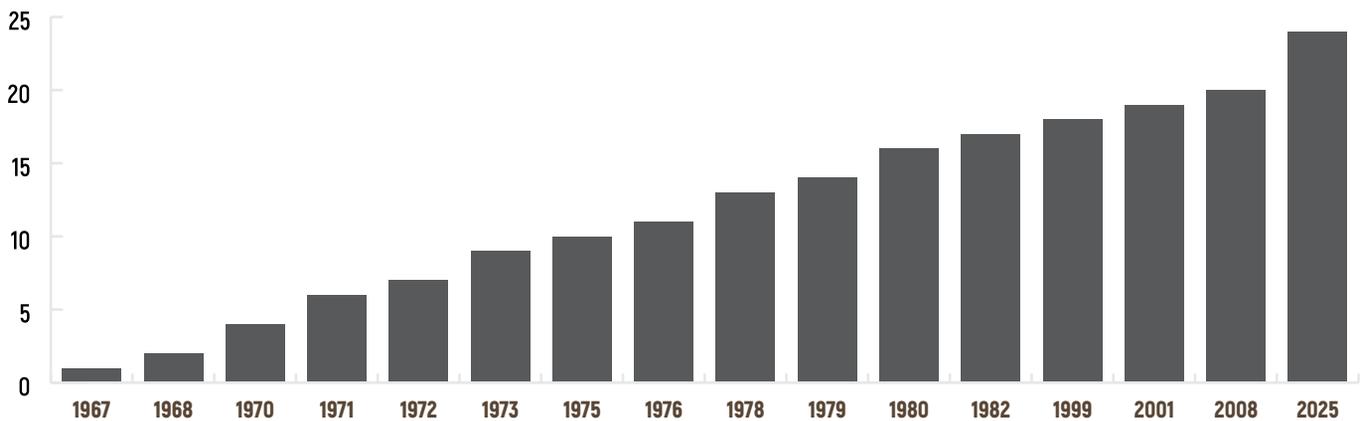
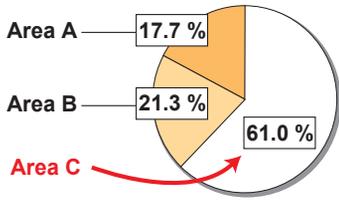


Figure 6: The Pace of Settlement Construction in the Jordan Valley/ Excluding Israeli Colonial Installations (Outposts)

The average incremental pace of settlement construction in the Jordan Valley over the last 59 years was approximately 27% (Figure 6). This rate indicates how Israel worked methodically to create facts on the ground that tighten its control over the Jordan Valley.

Israeli Colonial Farm Installations

Palestinian West Bank
Area A, B and C

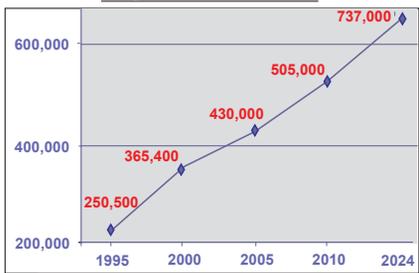


793,909 Dunums (~14%) of the West Bank Area Controlled by 156 Colonial Farm Installations

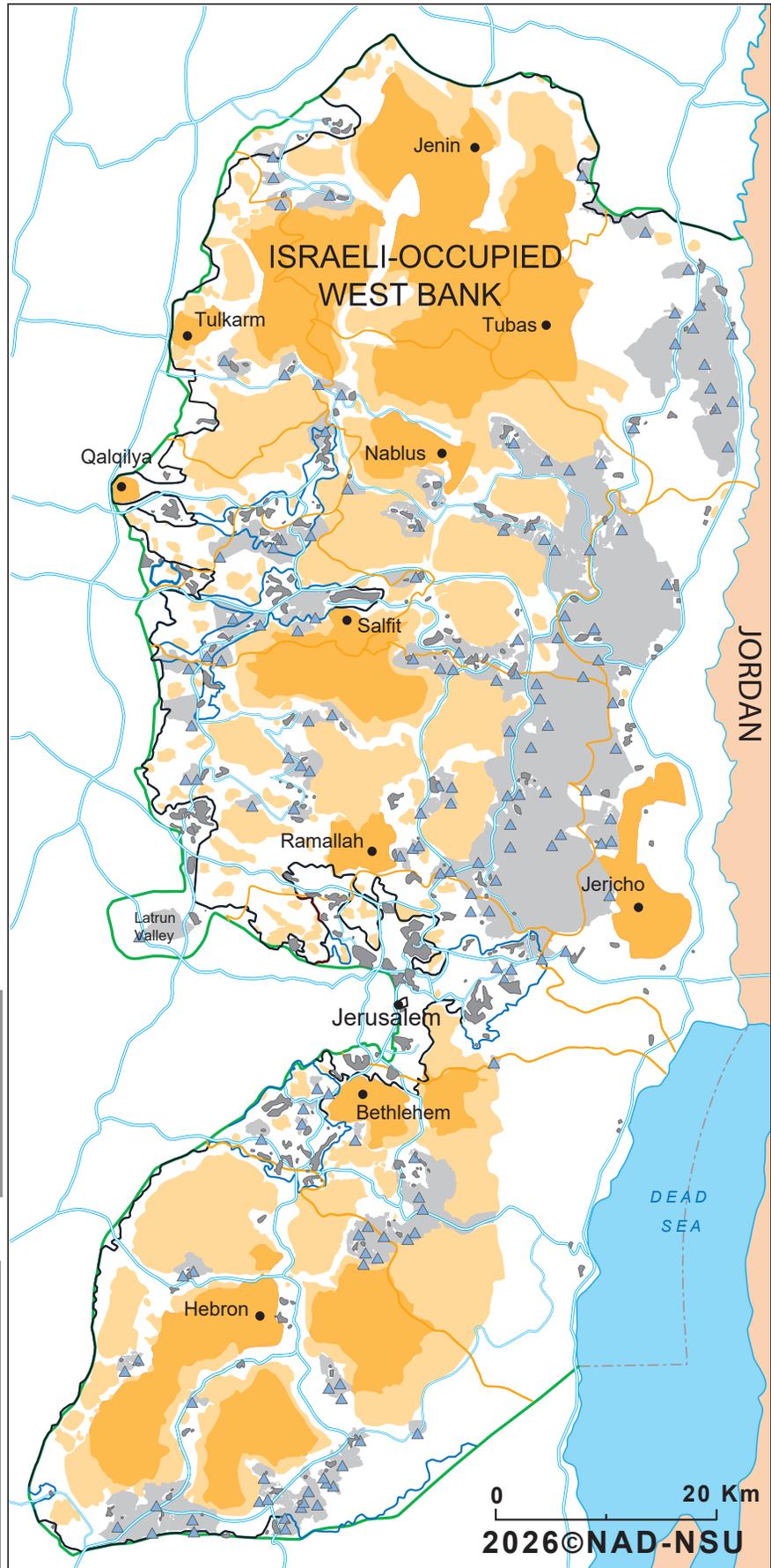
Area A: 7,600 dunums - 0 Installation	0.9 %
Area B: 11,000 dunums - 1 Installation	1.4 %
Area C: 758,800 dunums - 151 Installations	95.6 %
Nature Reserves: 16,500 dunums - 4 Installations	2.1 %

Governorate	Area (Dunums)
Ramallah & al-Bireh	245,949
Jericho	139,102
Nablus	106,073
Tubas	88,623
Hebron	86,120
Salfit	43,747
Bethlehem	39,095
Jenin	15,327
Jerusalem	13,975
Tulkarm	9,560
Qalqilya	6,338
Total	793,909

Settler Population Growth Tripled Since 1995



- 1967 Boundary ("Green Line") (~ 320 km)
- Area A
- Area B
- Governorate Line
- ▲ Colonial Farm Installation
- Colonial Farm Installations Areas
- Wall route approved by Israel's cabinet as of 30 April 2006 (~ 714 km)
- Wall Completed (~ 67%)
- Israeli Settlers Road
- Israeli Settlement Built-up Areas (~ 1.3% - 737,000 settlers)



0 20 Km
2026©NAD-NSU

Figure 7: Israeli Colonial Farm Installations (Outposts)

B. “Closed Military Zones” & “State Land”

Under the pretext of “security,” Israel has declared more than 400 km² of the Jordan Valley – [18% of the West Bank as closed military zones](#), and more than half of the Jordan Valley is designated as “state land.” These areas, which include open-fire zones and military training sites, are inaccessible to Palestinians. A portion of this area contains dozens of minefields located east of Road 90, behind a 20-meter-wide fenced structure that Israel set up along the Jordan River after the 1967 war³. By closing off such a large amount of land, Israel has drastically reduced the territory available to Palestinians for agriculture and grazing, the primary livelihoods for Jordan Valley communities. Israel also denied or obstructed Palestinian access to water resources, demolished Palestinian Bedouins’ tents, or handed evacuation orders to livestock owners, making it harder or impossible to make ends meet in the Jordan Valley.

Additionally, the Israeli occupation authorities justify land confiscation as being for “military purposes,” with most orders offering additional details on these justifications. Issuing military orders for land seizure is merely one of the methods Israel uses to effectively steal Palestinian land. These orders do not encompass land within the closed military zone situated between the annexation wall and the 1967 borders, to which Palestinians have limited or no access. Nor do they include land previously designated as “state land” over which the Israeli military has not yet exercised direct control.

C. Closures & Movement Restrictions

Israeli restrictions on Palestinian movement into and within the Jordan Valley have intensified considerably since 7 October 2023, with the erection of more military checkpoints, earth mounds, roadblocks, gates, and trenches at road intersections and community entrances. Combined, these measures separate the Jordan Valley from the rest of the West Bank. These obstruct Palestinian pedestrian and vehicular traffic and prohibit it entirely at times of total closure. At times, the Palestinian’s age, place of residence, and profession are among the criteria used by the Israeli occupation forces (IOF) to allow for travel to and from the Jordan Valley.



Al-Hamra Military Checkpoint in the Northern Jordan Valley

Some checkpoints and gates have specific opening and closing times, usually between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm (e.g., the Hamra checkpoint in the northern Jordan Valley), thereby further restricting access to Palestinian areas and limiting movement. [UNOCHA's interactive map](#) shows the locations of different types of access restriction points in the northern and southern parts of the Jordan Valley.

Closures of Palestinian communities across the Jordan Valley make accessing essential services increasingly difficult. In the health sector, checkpoint delays obstruct emergency responses, limit access to specialized care, and impede the functioning of mobile clinics. In education, most communities have only primary schools, forcing students and teachers to travel through checkpoints daily, disrupting attendance, reducing academic performance, and increasing the risk of dropout. Infrastructure upgrades, such as improving electricity networks, water systems, roads, and sanitation facilities, are often hindered or restricted, preventing communities from meeting basic development needs.

The extensive system of Israeli closures, movement restrictions, land-use prohibitions, military zones, settlement expansion, and infrastructure control has produced widespread humanitarian vulnerability, economic decline, population displacement, and environmental degradation. Most Palestinian communities are restricted to small, fragmented enclaves, with limited access to land, water, services, and markets. Closure policies have resulted in a de facto isolation of the Valley from the rest of the West Bank, undermining Palestinian development and contributing to forcible displacement.

D. Home Demolitions & Destruction of Property

With building permits rarely granted, Palestinians in the Jordan Valley face frequent demolitions of homes, schools, water systems, and agricultural structures essential to daily life. Communities are regularly evicted from areas designated as “state land”, nature reserves, or military fire zones, leaving residents with few options to remain on their land. Herding communities in high-risk firing zones—such as Al Farisiya, Al Malih, Khirbet Humsa, and Al Hadidiya—are repeatedly displaced and struggle to maintain stable living conditions amid ongoing threats of confiscation and demolition. These pressures create chronic insecurity of tenure, erode community resilience, and contribute to a gradual depopulation of Palestinians in the Jordan Valley.

Palestinian citizens of the Jordan Valley are constantly under threat of having their houses and livestock barracks demolished by the Israeli occupation authorities under the guise of a lack of required building permits. On par with occupied Jerusalem, since 1967, the occupation authorities have denied building permits to Palestinians in certain Jordan Valley localities. With the signing of the Oslo Accords, Israeli demolition practices were slightly altered; they apply primarily to Palestinian localities in Area “C”, which falls under Israeli security and urban planning control, and wherein the Israeli military must grant building permits. However, about 91.5% of the Jordan Valley is designated as Area “C,” so the demolition of Palestinian property is always a reality.

Since 7 October 2023, Israel has stepped up the pace and severity of its violations of Palestinian rights in occupied Palestine. The Israeli military machine was mobilized for this purpose, utilizing its existing settler population, which it had supported and armed, to achieve its goals. The Israeli governing coalition used all its resources to carry out settlement expansion and displace Palestinians to facilitate the broader annexation of Palestinian lands, especially those classified as Area “C”. Israeli policies, including military orders for land confiscation and the demolition of residential structures in the Jordan Valley, prove that the end goal is to ethnically cleanse the area of its indigenous Palestinian population.

According to the Palestinian Monitoring Group in the Negotiations and Support Unit, these acts include, but are not limited to, the following during the past two years:

- Distributing demolition notices for residential structures in Area "C" under the pretext of a lack of permits.
- These demolitions are carried out in conjunction with acts of vandalism, physical assaults on Palestinians, and the destruction of their property.
- The demolitions have been concentrated in the towns of Jericho, Al-Auja, the villages of Marj Al-Ghazal and Marj Na'ja, Ein Ad-D'yuk Al-Tahta, Jiftlik, N'weimeh, Zubaydat, Ein Ad-D'yuk Al-Tahta, and Fasayel, as well as in residential areas, such as the Arab Al-Malihah community, and in many places around the city of Jericho.
- Israeli Settlers carried out more than 455 attacks (including poisoning animals, burning houses, and stealing livestock). At the same time, settlement activity concentrated in the Bedouin communities of Arab Al-Malihah, the Al-Auja area, Bedouin communities near the Mu'arrajah west of Jericho, the Bedouin community at the Wadi Qelt overlook west of Jericho, the Arab Al-Ka'abneh community, the Arab Al-Rashaydeh and Al-Zayed communities, and the Abu Kabash Bedouin community near the village of Ein Shibli.

Settlers have not only attacked and set fire to homes; they also regularly raid Bedouin communities, vandalizing property, stealing livestock, poisoning water tanks, terrorizing residents, grazing their own livestock in and around Palestinian homes as a form of harassment, and carrying out shootings and other attacks. They have also taken part in the abduction and arrest of citizens, home demolitions, the sabotage of water lines supplying Bedouin communities with the vital resource, and the fencing off of areas of land to seize them and displace their owners. Settlers have also established colonial installations near these communities.

For example, on 6 May 2024, a group of settlers established a colonial installation near the spring of the town of Al-Auja, 700 meters from the Bedouin community of Ras Ain Al-Auja, placing sheep and fodder there to ultimately gain control of the land and water. On 19 March 2024, settlers seized 20 residential structures (barracks) near the Al-Mu'arrajah road northwest of Jericho, which had housed Bedouin families from the Ka'abneh tribe, who the IOF had forcibly displaced in November 2023. These colonial installations are considered military and security installations. They are the nuclei of other Israeli settlements.



Al-Farsiyah in the Northern Jordan Valley ©REUTERS-Abed Omar Qusini

IV. The Strategic Importance of the Jordan Valley to the State of Palestine

The Jordan Valley is of particular importance to the State of Palestine with respect to security, water, agriculture, archaeology, culture, and tourism.

1. Security

The Jordan Valley is the eastern gate of the State of Palestine and an essential component of its national security. Being that it shares a border with Jordan, the Jordan Valley provides a passageway for West Bank Palestinians to the rest of the world, but especially Arab countries to the east, while the Gaza Strip is the western gate towards Egypt and beyond. Without full control over the Jordan Valley and the crossing points into Jordan, the State of Palestine loses its ability to exercise sovereignty. Furthermore, full control of the Jordan Valley and its crossing points to the east enables the State of Palestine to collaborate with Jordanian authorities in combating smuggling and the illegal movement of people.

Maintaining full Palestinian and or joint Palestinian-Jordanian control of the crossings, without an Israeli occupying power, is essential to halting individual or collective migration out of Palestine, as it creates the necessary environment to improve their economic conditions and raise their standard of living. Without the full exercise of Palestinian sovereignty over the Jordan Valley, the independence of the State of Palestine remains merely nominal.

2. Water

Two primary water resources are available in this area. One is surface water, including the Jordan River, the Dead Sea, and ephemeral flood water in the wadis. The second is groundwater resources, including wells and springs. Since 1967, Palestinians have not had access to those resources, nor the right to utilize the Jordan River.

Due to diversion projects (mainly by the Israeli National Carrier-NWC) and the construction of dams in the upper part of the Jordan River basin, the historical flow of the Jordan River has decreased from 1300-1500 million cubic meters per year (MCM/y) to around 200 MCM/y, most of it untreated wastewater.⁴ Palestinians have the right to a fair and internationally recognized share of the Jordan River, estimated at approximately 215 MCM/y, under the 1955 Johnston Plan⁵. Before the Israeli occupation, Palestinians used the Jordan River extensively to irrigate their agricultural lands on the western bank of the river. After 1967, this land was confiscated and declared a closed military zone by the Israeli occupation authorities, and Palestinians have been deprived of the river's water ever since.

Recent studies (PWA, 2024) estimate that 65 MCM/y is generated in the eastern wadis of the Jordan River, with Palestinian utilization of only 0.5 MCM/y due to restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation authorities, which deny Palestinians the necessary permits to construct water-collection and storage structures. Similar restrictions apply to the Dead Sea, where Israel prohibits Palestinians from accessing the area and exploring its mineral resources. The Jordan Valley lies within the Eastern Aquifer basin (See Figure 8), one of the main groundwater aquifer basins in the West Bank, with a capacity of 175-195 million cubic meters.⁶ This is considered the primary water source for Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley for various uses.

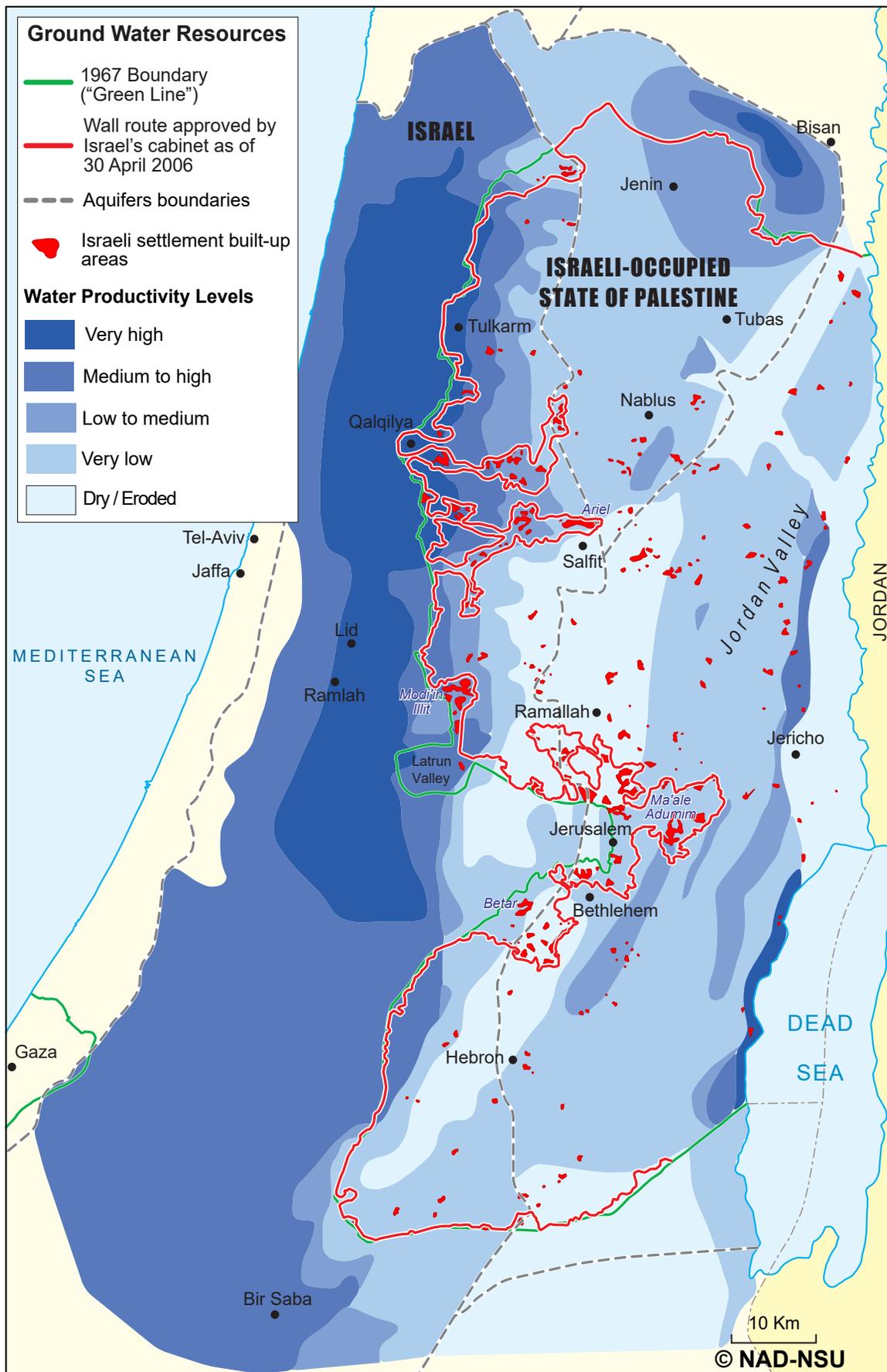


Figure 8: Groundwater Productivity Map

The Israeli occupation authorities do not grant Palestinians permits to improve their water infrastructure or to drill groundwater wells, regardless of depth. In contrast, the Israeli water company Mekorot has drilled several wells to depths exceeding 800 meters, ensuring a continuous water supply to Israeli settlements and their farms throughout the year.

Generally, Palestinians have more than 100 wells in the Jordan Valley; these wells produce no more than 11 MCM/y, while Israel owns and operates around 20 wells with an extraction capacity of about 30 MCM/y.⁷ This discrepancy in the amount of water yielded from the wells can be attributed to the following reasons:

1. All Israeli wells are drilled in high-potential locations characterized by excellent groundwater storage along the mountain escarpment of the Eastern Basin to capture the deep-seated groundwater flow. Unlike Israeli wells, most Palestinian wells were drilled before 1967, during the Jordanian Mandate, and have low pumping capacity due to their relatively shallow depths.
2. Similarly, Israel controls and utilizes the largest springs along the Dead Sea shoreline, known as the Fashkha Group Springs, with an average annual discharge of 80-100 MCM/y.⁸ Moreover, Israel uses other major springs in the Jordan Valley, such as Ein Sakot, Ein Farah, Ein El-Fawwar, Ein El-Maleh, and Ein Helwa, for recreational and agricultural purposes. These springs yield an average of 30 MCM/y.⁹ Meanwhile, Palestinians only utilize a limited number of springs in the Jordan Valley, such as Ein Sultan Spring, Auja Spring, Ein D'yuk, Nuwei'meh, Shusa Springs, and Fasayel Springs, with an average annual discharge of 20 MCM/y.

3. Agriculture

The [Jordan Valley](#) is a relatively flat area covering around [757,000 dunums](#), of which 280,000 are classified as arable land. Palestinians cultivate about [50,000 dunums](#) of this arable land. In contrast, Israel controls more than 400,000 dunums of the Jordan Valley, designating them as closed military zones, while [Israeli settlers control 27,000 dunums for various agricultural industries](#). (See Figure 9)

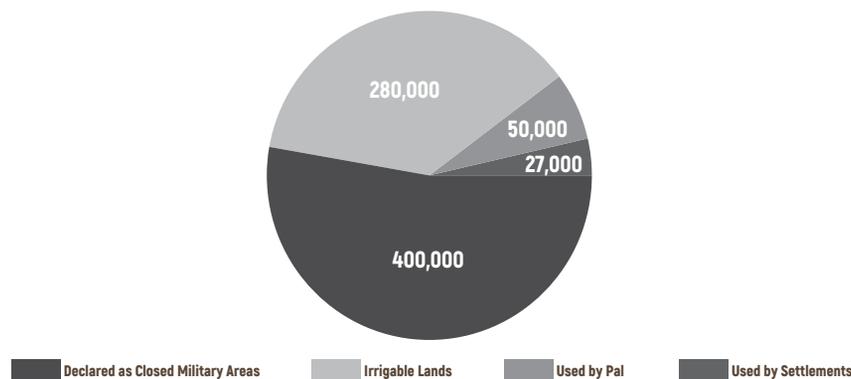


Figure 9: Land Utilization in the Jordan Valley-Dunums

Therefore, the Jordan Valley is strategically vital for Palestinians from an agricultural perspective, evident in the following aspects:

- The Jordan Valley has some of the most fertile soil in the West Bank, with climatic conditions that support the cultivation of a variety of crops. The area has abundant surface water (Jordan River and ephemeral wadis) and groundwater resources (wells and springs) for animal farms and land irrigation.

- The Jordan Valley offers a wide range of land for Palestinian agricultural expansion, rural livelihoods, and potential industrial/agro-industrial development. The region's viability for a future Palestinian economy is essential for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.
- Agriculture in the Jordan Valley is a lifeline for many Palestinian families, providing income and stability. Beyond its economic value, farming strengthens the Palestinians' deep-rooted connection to their land.

4. Archeology, Culture, and Tourism

The Jordan Valley is among the world's most extraordinary cultural landscapes, reflecting human existence from prehistoric times through the Biblical, early Christian, and Islamic eras. To Palestinians, the Valley is not merely a source of cultural heritage; it is a foundation for national identity, ecotourism potential, community empowerment, and interregional cultural dialogue. The area's natural resources and religious significance, including monastic traditions, pilgrimage routes, and landscapes associated with early Christianity, make it ideal for community-based tourism and local economic development. Archaeologically, it contains some of the world's oldest continuously inhabited sites, including Tel Al-Sultan, which dates to about 10,500 BC and is recognized by UNESCO as the world's oldest fortified city.

The Valley's resources are both tangible (archeological sites, springs, the Dead Sea coastline) and intangible (scriptural references, living traditions, and landscape narratives). These assets can support global tourism and cultural engagement. Yet despite this potential, the management of significant archaeological and tourism sites in the Jordan Valley remains outside of Palestinian control. The Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA) administers several key heritage and tourism sites in the Jordan Valley and along the northern Dead Sea, integrating them into Israel's tourism system. This includes the [Qasr Al-Yahud](#) baptismal site and [Qumran National Park](#). The designation and administration of "national parks" in the occupied Palestinian territory is often used as a political tool to serve Israeli interests at the expense of Palestinians. [These parks privilege Israeli historical narratives and restrict Palestinian building, development, and access, effectively erasing Palestinian cultural presence.](#)

Independent human rights and heritage organizations note that Israel's administrative control over these sites excludes Palestinians from decision-making on site development, access rules, revenue distribution, and tourism planning, depriving surrounding communities of natural economic benefits.¹⁰ Under International Humanitarian Law (IHL), International Human Rights Law (IHRL), and International Cultural Heritage Law (ICHL), an occupying power must protect and must not exploit the cultural heritage of occupied territory. Israel is obligated, under the 1954 Hague Convention, to refrain from illegal excavation, appropriation, or exploitation of archaeological sites. Therefore, the Israeli measures currently being implemented in the Jordan Valley not only conflict with the [Paris Protocol](#) but also with the broader legal framework governing the fair management of the occupied territory. For Palestinians, equitable control over tourism and cultural resources is essential not only for economic reasons but also for cultural rights, political recognition, and heritage protection.

V. Lost Opportunities

Since the onset of the occupation in 1967, Israel has pursued a sustained policy of establishing and expanding settlements in Area “C” of the West Bank, including occupied Jerusalem. To enable this expansion, the occupying Power imposed stringent restrictions on economic activity in Area “C” – exceeding those applied in Areas “A” and “B”. Today, approximately 70% of Area “C” falls within the jurisdictional boundaries of Israeli settlement regional councils, effectively rendering these areas inaccessible to Palestinians for development.¹¹

The Jordan Valley has long been recognized as one of the most economically strategic regions of the West Bank, its potential spanning agriculture, agro-industry, tourism, mineral extraction, and cross-border trade. Yet over several decades, the Valley has experienced a widening gap between its economic capacity and its actual performance. Israel exploits almost all the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea for its own needs and [bars Palestinians from entering or using about 85% of the area](#), be it for construction, infrastructure, shepherding, or farming.

A defining characteristic of this trend is the underutilization of land and natural resources by Palestinians due to the illegal regulatory environment governing Area “C”. The [World Bank](#) notes that the vast majority of high-potential agricultural land in Area “C”, including large tracts of the Jordan Valley, remains inaccessible or underutilized by Palestinians because of restrictions on land use, water extraction, and construction of agricultural infrastructure. These constraints inhibit investment in irrigation networks, greenhouses, cold storage, farm roads, and agro-processing facilities, suppressing productivity and limiting the expansion of high-value crops.

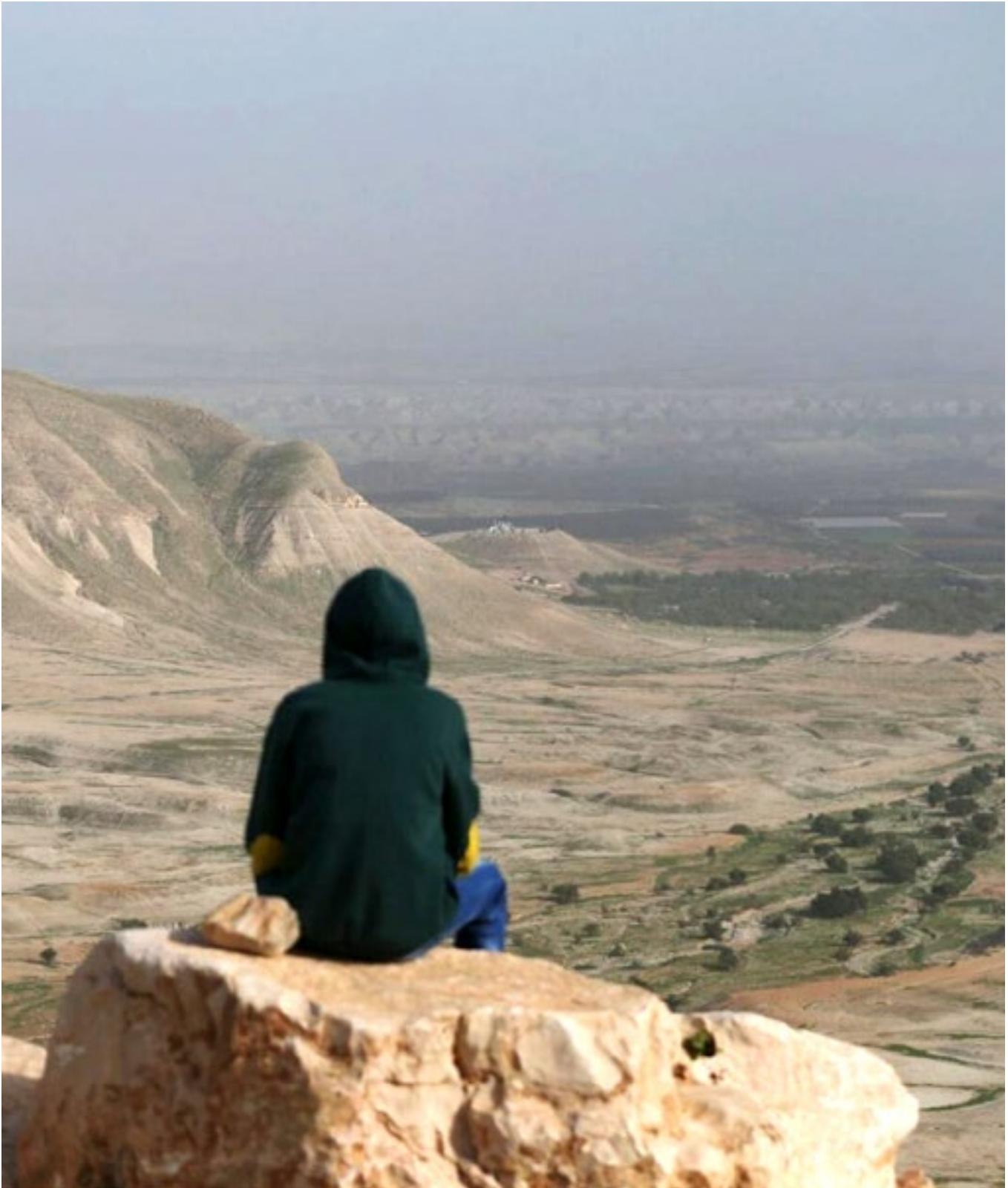
Macroeconomic assessments reinforce the significance of this lost opportunity. According to the World Bank, easing movement, access, and resource restrictions across Area “C” could increase Palestinian GDP by up to 35%, largely through gains in agriculture, minerals, and associated value chains. It estimates that agricultural development in Area “C” could generate an additional US\$700 million per year, while Palestinian participation in Dead Sea mineral industries, which are entirely inaccessible under current conditions, could produce US\$918 million annually.¹² These figures underscore the centrality of the Jordan Valley to Palestinian economic expansion.

This micro-level underdevelopment aligns with broader structural economic trends. UNCTAD’s modelling shows that restrictions in Area “C” impose persistent annual losses equivalent to roughly 25% of West Bank GDP, with cumulative losses reaching US\$50 billion between 2000 and 2020, and rising to US\$170.8 billion when extended to 2024.¹³ Because the Jordan Valley contains one of the largest contiguous areas of agricultural land and natural resources within Area “C”, it likely accounts for a substantial portion of these unrealized gains.

The economic importance of the Jordan Valley extends well beyond agriculture. Its geographic location makes it the natural Palestinian gateway for overland trade with Jordan and the wider Arab region. Developing a functional trade corridor through the Valley would diversify export routes and reduce dependence on Israeli-controlled crossings, a structural vulnerability that has repeatedly disrupted trade flows. Modest estimations suggest that this could yield an additional US\$1 billion to the public treasury.

Its ecological and geological assets also offer significant opportunities in tourism, eco-tourism, wellness, and the production of cosmetic and medicinal products derived from Dead Sea minerals. While no authoritative institution has quantified the economic value of these sectors for Palestine, regional comparators and industry benchmarks suggest that the untapped potential is significant, reaching up to US\$1.5 billion. Furthermore, limited access to Area “C” is responsible for the [unemployment of 110,000 Palestinians](#).

The economic trajectory of the Jordan Valley reflects a broader pattern of constrained growth within Area "C". The region possesses the natural attributes and geographic advantages to become a central driver of Palestinian economic development, generating jobs, exports, fiscal revenue, and deeper regional integration. Instead, its performance remains well below its potential, illustrating how structural limitations in land, water, and resource governance shape not only local economic outcomes but also the national growth path.



Conclusion

Israeli policy in the Jordan Valley has systematically impeded Palestinians' ability to exercise their fundamental right not just to survive but to flourish and earn a livelihood. Restrictions are imposed on their daily movement, livestock production, agricultural cultivation and marketing, home construction, and access to their property.

Decades of Israeli occupation and military and administrative measures have systematically restricted Palestinian development, primarily through land confiscation, designation of closed military zones, settlement expansion, and severe movement restrictions. These measures have forced the displacement of Palestinian communities and weakened the social and economic fabric of the Valley. Palestinian existence in the Jordan Valley is constantly under threat, as Israeli policies continue to encourage colonial expansion and consolidate Israel's occupation over the area.

Based on the facts on the ground and the measures implemented in the past two years, it is evident that the Israeli government intends to ensure complete control over the Jordan Valley, as part of its de facto annexation plan. Israeli justifications for controlling the Jordan Valley, grounded in alleged military necessity, are pretexts for colonial expansion, demographic reshaping, and the systematic expulsion of the people of Palestine from their land.

Denying Palestine its only international border with Jordan aims to replace the two-State solution with annexation as the final status reality. Israel's illegal policies in the Jordan Valley clearly promote the establishment of a permanent apartheid regime, characterized by a single state with two segregated systems. This Israeli government, composed of settlers and representing settler interests, appears committed only to violating international and humanitarian laws, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, thereby destroying any chance of ending Israel's 59-year-long occupation and moving toward peace and stability in Palestine, Israel, and the broader region.

Endnotes

- 1 The plan was first presented by Alon in 1967 to then Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol and was finalized in 1970.
- 2 What is called Alon Road is in the Jordan Valley, running roughly south-north along the eastern escarpments of the West Bank.
- 3 Palestinian Ministry of Civil Affairs, Jericho (District Coordinating Liaison–DCL).
- 4 Palestine Water Authority (PWA) Database.
- 5 This was developed by US Special Representative Eric Johnston, aiming to promote cooperative water resource management in the Jordan Valley among Israel, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, but ultimately faced rejection from the Arab League.
- 6 Water Status Report, PWA, 2019.
- 7 PWA database.
- 8 Ibid
- 9 Ibid
- 10 [Al-Haq](#) (2013). *Pillage of the Dead Sea: Israel's unlawful exploitation of Palestinian natural resources in the occupied Palestinian territory*; [B'Tselem](#) (2011). *Dispossession and exploitation: Israel's policy in the Jordan Valley and northern Dead Sea*. Retrieved from; [Emek Shaveh](#) (2018). *National parks in Israel and the West Bank: The "green" cover for dispossession*.
- 11 [UNCTAD](#). *The Economic Costs of the Israeli Occupation for the Palestinian People: The Cost of Restrictions in Area C Viewed from Above*.
- 12 Ibid
- 13 Ibid



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