

Emergency statement on the health and human rights crisis in the West Bank JVP Health Advisory Council

June 22, 2024

Over the past few months, the Israeli military assault in Gaza has killed and injured more than 100,000 people and has decimated health care, education and housing infrastructure. While international attention has been focused on the catastrophe in Gaza, another crisis is unfolding in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Since October 7, 2023, more than 544 Palestinians have been killed (including 126 children) and over 5,200 injured (including 800 children) by Israeli military and Jewish settlers in Jerusalem and the West Bank (6/16/24). The UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner decries “day-after-day of unprecedented bloodshed...The killing, destruction and widespread human rights violations are unacceptable, and must cease immediately. Israel must not only adopt but enforce rules of engagement that are fully in line with applicable human rights norms and standards.”

The Jewish Voice for Peace Health Advisory Council would like to highlight the following urgent concerns:

1. **Israeli military has intensified land incursions since October, especially targeting refugee camps.** Before the Hamas attack, the Israeli military launched an average of 600 raids per month. Since then, the number has risen to over 1,000 monthly, with increased closures and blockades, including in Area A, ostensibly under the civil and security control of the Palestinian Authority.
2. **Israeli armored vehicles deploy unprovoked lethal force against Palestinian protesters** who pose no imminent threat. These attacks have been accompanied by a systematic denial of medical assistance to the injured.
3. **Israeli forces have carried out airstrikes in blatant disregard for “collateral damage.”** Over 29 attacks on refugee camps and densely populated areas by unmanned aerial vehicles, planes and the firing of ground-to-ground missiles have occurred since October 2023. An Intercept investigation documented at least 37 air, drone, and helicopter strikes since June 2023. Of the 55 Palestinians killed by airstrikes, 24 were children, ranging in ages from 11 to 17. Drone attacks in residential areas result in high levels of physical displacement and physical and psychological trauma.
4. **A campaign of targeted assassination by air** has also killed many civilians, a violation of international law.
5. **Jewish settlers have repeatedly vandalized and destroyed** more than 43,600 Palestinian-owned trees, as well as buildings, fencing and solar equipment. Armed and supported by Israeli military and police, settlers create a coercive environment designed to dispossess local inhabitants and take their land. Since October 2023, 968 settler attacks have been documented.
6. **The demolition of 991 structures**, 34% of them homes, due to lack of Israeli-issued permits, as punishment, or as part of military activities, has displaced 2,155 Palestinians in the West Bank since October. In East Jerusalem, many Palestinian-owned structures have been demolished for lacking impossible-to-obtain Israeli-issued building permits, displacing 183 people since January 2024.
7. **Serious economic hardship** has been caused by the military actions, restrictions on mobility, and the denial since October of permits for Palestinians to work in Israel.

8. **The withholding of Palestinian Authority tax revenue** has resulted in 50% pay cuts to monthly salaries of civil servants.
9. **Attacks on health care facilities in the West Bank** have killed 16 people and injured 95, and affected 319 ambulances, 54 health facilities and 20 mobile clinics between October 7 and May 28, in 480 instances documented by WHO.
10. **Water supply was** restricted to only two days over the past week in East Jerusalem's Kafr Aqab. The local water company says Israel diminished the area's supply.

There has been no response from the US government to the increased number and lethality of Israeli attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank. These attacks violate international law and the Geneva Conventions. The UN special rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights stated that the obligations of humanitarian law and international human rights law apply to the West Bank.

The Jewish Voice for Peace Health Advisory Council, as a U.S.-based organization of health care workers, calls on the U.S. State Department and the Biden Administration to hold Israel accountable for violations of International Law and International Humanitarian Law in the West Bank, as documented above.

We call for:

- An impartial investigation into Israel's use of lethal force, collective punishment, violations of the right of movement, demolitions of homes, villages, farming land, olive groves, etc. Such an investigation cannot be carried out by the perpetrator of these actions, but rather by an international body such as an international human rights NGO or the appropriate body of the United Nations;
- An end to U.S. funding of Israel's military as long as any weapons or technology are being used in violation of human rights and international law;
- An immediate halt to Israeli military assaults on health care facilities (including attacks on ambulances and health care workers), as these are internationally protected sites;
- An immediate ceasefire in Gaza and a return to the negotiating table to implement a path to Palestinian self-determination and a just and sustainable peace.

We urge all health care workers to urgently speak out and contact their elected members of Congress and the Biden Administration about the health and human crisis faced by Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

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