

Israeli Settler Colonialism and Occupation Fact Sheet

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[Israeli Settler-Colonialism](#)

“For eight years now, they sit in their refugee camps in Gaza, and before their eyes we turn into our homestead the land and villages in which they and their forefathers have lived.”

“We are a generation of settlers, and without the steel helmet and gun barrel, we shall not be able to plant a tree or build a house.”

– [Moshe Dayan](#), Israeli settler-colonial militant and politician

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- Every government in the world, except Israel, considers Israel’s colonial settlement building since 1967 to be illegal. (1)
- Like the former South African settler-colonial Apartheid regime, Israel rejects virtually all well-established and reviewed official legal and moral opinion and continues its illegal activities in violation of legal and moral consensus. It continues to build settlements on Palestinian land.
- The consensus view of the international community is that Israeli settlements are illegal and constitute a violation of international law. (2)
- The majority of legal scholars hold the settlements to violate international law: “the establishment of the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has been considered illegal by the international community and by the majority of legal scholars.” (3)
- The international community considers the establishment of Israeli settlements in the Israeli-occupied territories illegal under international law in part because the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 prohibits countries from moving their population into territories they occupy through war. (4)
- The applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention to “all the territories occupied by Israel in 1967” is held with “a remarkable degree of unanimity” among international actors. (5)

- The United Nations Security Council, the United Nations General Assembly, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Court of Justice and the High Contracting Parties to the Convention have all affirmed that the Fourth Geneva Convention does apply. (6)
- In a 2004 advisory opinion to the UN General Assembly, the International Court of Justice stated that Article 2 of the Convention applied to the case of Israel's presence in the territories captured during the 1967 war.
- Numerous UN resolutions have stated that the building and existence of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights are a violation of international law, including UN Security Council resolutions in 1979, 1980, (7) and 2016. (8) UN Security Council Resolution 446 refers to the Fourth Geneva Convention as the applicable international legal instrument, and calls upon Israel to desist from transferring its own population into the territories or changing their demographic makeup. The reconvened Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions has declared the settlements illegal (9) as has the primary judicial organ of the UN, the International Court of Justice (10) and the International Committee of the Red Cross.
- Article 49 (6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention states:
 - The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies. (11)
 - According to **Jean Pictet** of the International Committee of the Red Cross, this clause intended to prevent the World War II practice of an occupying power transferring "portions of its own population to occupied territory for political and racial reasons or in order, as they claimed, to colonize those territories", which in turn "worsened the economic situation of the native population and endangered their separate existence as a race". (12)
 - There is a vote in the UN General Assembly every year on the Question of Palestine. Every year, the vote is essentially the same: the vast majority of the world supports the resolution, and the US, Israel, and some small, US-occupied islands and sometimes a handful of other countries oppose the resolution. The most recent vote was 153 in favor, 7 against. The seven against were Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, United States. Muslim people are a minority in the vast majority of the countries that support the resolution.

Thus, the resolution is adopted and affirmed every year.

The resolution states, in part,

"Reaffirming the illegality of the Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem,

Expressing grave concern about the extremely detrimental impact of Israeli settlement policies, decisions and activities in the Occupied Palestinian

Territory, including East Jerusalem, including on the contiguity, integrity and viability of the Territory, the viability of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders and the efforts to advance a peaceful settlement in the Middle East,

Expressing grave concern also about all acts of violence, intimidation and provocation by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians, including children, and properties, including homes, mosques, churches and agricultural lands, condemning acts of terror by several extremist Israeli settlers, and calling for accountability for the illegal actions perpetrated in this regard,

Reaffirming the illegality of Israeli actions aimed at changing the status of Jerusalem, including settlement construction and expansion, home demolitions, evictions of Palestinian residents, excavations in and around religious and historic sites, and all other unilateral measures aimed at altering the character, status and demographic composition of the city and of the Territory as a whole, and demanding their immediate cessation”.

- Examples of other, related resolutions that are adopted:
- **UNGA Res. 194, adopted 1948:** Palestinian refugees may return “at the earliest practicable date,” and “compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property”.
- **UNGA Res. 3236, adopted 1974:** “Reaffirms also the inalienable right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and property from which they have been displaced and uprooted, and calls for their return”.

The Israeli Settler-Colonial State’s Occupation of Gaza

- The international community regards all of the Palestinian territories including Gaza as occupied. (13)
- The United Nations, international human rights organizations, and the majority of governments and legal commentators consider Gaza to be currently occupied by Israel. (14)
- Amnesty International, the World Health Organization, Oxfam, the International Committee of the Red Cross, The United Nations, the United Nations General Assembly, the UN Fact Finding Mission to Gaza, international human rights organizations, US government websites, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the majority of legal commentators (eg **Geoffrey Aronson, Meron Benvenisti, Claude Bruderlein, Sari Bashi and Kenneth Mann, Shane Darcy and John Reynolds, Yoram Dinstein, John Dugard, Marc S. Kaliser, Mustafa Mari, Iain Scobbie, and Yuval Shany**) maintain that Israel’s extensive direct external control over Gaza, and indirect control over the lives of its internal population mean that Gaza remains occupied. (15)
- Israel imposes an illegal **blockade** on Gaza: international aid groups, including Amnesty International, CARE International UK, and Oxfam call on Israel to lift the blockade, calling it collective punishment against the 1.5 million residents of the territory. (16)

- According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, “The hardship faced by Gaza’s 1.5 million people cannot be addressed by providing humanitarian aid. The only sustainable solution is to lift the closure.” (17) The ICRC has also referred to the blockade as “a collective punishment imposed in clear violation of Israel’s obligations under international humanitarian law”. (18)
- On 24 January 2008, the United Nations Human Rights Council released a statement calling for Israel to lift its siege on the Gaza Strip and therefore drop its restrictions on the supply of food, fuel, and medicine, and reopen border crossings.(19)
- In August 2009, U.N. human rights chief **Navi Pillay** criticized Israel for the blockade in a 34-page report, calling it a violation of the rules of war.(20)
- A UN Fact Finding mission in September 2009 led by South African **Judge Richard Goldstone** (the Goldstone report) concluded that the blockade was possibly a crime against humanity, and recommended that the matter be referred to the International Criminal Court if the situation has not improved in six months.
- In May 2010, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs stated that the formal economy in Gaza has collapsed since the imposition of the blockade.(21) They also stated that the “restrictions imposed on the civilian population by the continuing blockade of the Gaza Strip amount to collective punishment, a violation of international humanitarian law.”(22)
- **Tony Blair**, as UN Envoy to the Mid East, stated that “The blockade of the Gaza Strip needs to come to an end. There is now a welcome international consensus on Gaza.”(23)
- In May 2011, EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid **Kristalina Georgieva** said the European Union and the United Nations were “calling for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons.” She then said in an interview with Israel’s Ynet that she believes that the “humanitarian crisis...was artificially created because of the blockade”.
- After visiting Gaza in March 2010, Irish foreign minister **Micheál Martin** described the Israeli blockade of Palestinian-ruled Gaza as “inhumane and unacceptable” and called on the European Union and other countries to increase pressure on Israel to lift the blockade.
- **William Hague**, the Foreign Secretary, said in a speech to the House of Commons that the blockade of Gaza was “unacceptable and unsustainable”, and that it was “the view of the British government, including the previous government, that restrictions on Gaza should be lifted – a view confirmed in United Nations security council resolution 1860 which called for sustained delivery of humanitarian aid and which called on states to alleviate the

humanitarian and economic situation”.

- **UK Prime Minister David Cameron:** “We should do everything we can through the UN, where resolution 1860 is absolutely clear about the need to end the blockade and to open up Gaza.” “Gaza cannot and must not be allowed to remain a prison camp.”
- The World Bank estimated in 2015 that the GDP losses caused by the blockade since 2007 was above 50%, and entailed large welfare losses. Gaza’s manufacturing sector, once significant, shrunk by as much as 60 percent in real terms, due to the wars in the past 20 years and the blockade. Gaza’s exports virtually disappeared since the imposition of the 2007 blockade.(24)
- Israeli human rights group B’tselem has referred to the blockade as a tactic of “collective punishment” of Palestinian civilians and called it a “serious violation” of international law. (Cited in Finkelstein, 2018, University of California Press, 15)
- In March 2010, United Nations **Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon** stated that the blockade of Gaza is causing “unacceptable suffering” and that families were living in “unacceptable, unsustainable conditions”.(25)

Public opinion

- May, 2018: (26)
- Israel is “extremely unpopular worldwide.” It consistently polls as, and today remains, in the bottom four most unpopular countries in the world.
- While opinion of Israel stayed the same in Europe and North America in recent world polling, and in some countries worsened, opinion grew more favorable in Russia and Turkey.
- “It’s clear that West Bank settlements are a key cause of Israel’s poor global standing. Most of the world believes that Israel’s continued control of the West Bank is an unlawful military occupation, and that settlements violate the Fourth Geneva Convention.”

Settler-Colonialism and Genocide

- **Raphael Lemkin**, who coined the term ‘genocide’ to ‘denote an old practice in its modern development’, used it to describe the goals and effects of ‘occupation policies’:
- A “policy of genocide” is carried out when the occupier takes actions to “destroy [in whole or in part], disintegrate, or weaken”, “in different degrees” and possibly over “decades”, the “enemy nation within the control” of the settler-colonial occupier.

- “Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups. Genocide is directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group.”

- “the occupant also endeavors to bring about such changes as may weaken the national, spiritual resources.”

- “The destruction of the foundations of the economic existence of a national group necessarily brings about a crippling of its development, even a retrogression. The lowering of the standards of living creates difficulties in fulfilling cultural-spiritual requirements. Furthermore, a daily fight literally for bread and for physical survival may handicap thinking in both general and national terms.

- “It was the purpose of the occupant to create such conditions as these among the peoples of the occupied countries...”

- The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs notes that Israel’s blockade of Gaza has created “a profound human dignity crisis leading to a widespread erosion of livelihoods and a significant deterioration in infrastructure and essential services.” There is a sense of being “trapped, physically, intellectually, and emotionally.” (Cited in Finkelstein, 2018, University of California Press, 15-16)

- Policies are undertaken to weaken the occupied group and strengthen the occupier.

- “The occupant” tries to disrupt “national and religious influences”: For example, Israel “systematic[ally] target[s] minarets, which being too narrow for snipers to ascend, possess no apparent military value. The Dugard Report concluded that ‘mosques, and more particularly the minarets, had been deliberately targeted’ by Israeli occupation forces “on the grounds that they symbolized Islam.” (27)

- Full inclusion in economic life is “made dependent upon one’s being” a member of the occupying, dominant group, “or being devoted to the cause of” the occupier. Consequently, promoting a national ideology other than” that of the occupier “is made difficult and dangerous.”

- “The undesired national groups ... are deprived of elemental necessities for

preserving health and life.” (Almost all water in Gaza, the supply of which is dictated by Israel, is poisonous. Electricity, also dictated by Israel, is only available for part of the day.)

- “The technique of mass killings”, termed by other genocide scholars as ‘genocidal massacres’, “is employed mainly against” the occupied national group, “as well as against leading personalities from among the non-collaborationist groups in all the occupied countries.” (28)
- Ratio of Palestinian to Israeli children killed in Israel’s settler-colonial occupation enforcement action, “Operation Cast Lead”, 2008-9: 300-1
- Ratio of Palestinian to Israeli children killed in Israel’s settler-colonial occupation enforcement action, “Operation Solid Cliff”, 2014: 550 to 1.
- If one reads primary-source-based historical documentation on how Israel was established and what it continues to do in its illegal occupations, blockades, land theft, ethnic and historical cleansing, settlement building, and construction of settlements created for the dominant ethnic regime, the charge of genocide becomes a little difficult for objective observers to deny.
- Contemporary scholars have also noted that settler-colonialism is inherently genocidal:
 - “...deliberate destruction and restriction of water resources as a means of expelling Palestinians from land allocated to Israeli settlements also arguably paints a picture of a genocidal relationship. ...many of Lemkin’s techniques may be in evidence” in Israeli occupation.(29)
- Statements from Israelis and independent observers offer additional evidence:
 - “This is ... not a war against terror, and not a war against extremists... Who is the enemy? The Palestinian people. ...the entire Palestinian people is the enemy... ...in wars the enemy is usually an entire people, including its elderly and its women, its cities and its villages, its property and its infrastructure. ...in our war this is sevenfold more correct... Every brave Um-Jihad [mother of a ‘little snake terrorist’] who sends her son to hell should know she’s going with him, along with the house and everything inside it. [Their] houses should be bombed from the air, with intention to destroy and to kill. And it should be announced that we will do this from now on to every home of every martyr.

There is nothing more just, and probably nothing more efficient.” – Israeli Settler-State “Justice” Minister [Ayelet Shaked](#), 2015

- The “un-livability threshold has been passed in Gaza quite a long time ago” (**Robert Piper**, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the West Bank and Gaza).
- “Innocent human beings in Gaza, most of them young, are slowly being poisoned

by the water they drink” (**Sara Roy**, Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies)

- “When a place becomes unlivable, people move Yet this last resort is denied to the people of Gaza” (United Nations Relief and Works Agency-UNRWA)
- “Gaza is an open-air prison” (Former UK prime minister **David Cameron**).
- “There are no innocents in Gaza” (Israeli Defence Minister **Avigdor Lieberman**)
- “The closure constitutes a collective punishment imposed in clear violation of Israel’s obligations under international humanitarian law” (International Committee of the Red Cross)
- Israel is “shooting at children” (**Nikolai E. Mladenov**, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process)
- “Calls for an immediate and unconditional end to the blockade and closure of the Gaza Strip, which has resulted in a deteriorating, unprecedented humanitarian crisis” (European Parliament)
- Likud MP **Avi Dichter**, the chair of the defense committee, went on to dismiss concerns in an interview of his own. Dichter insisted that protests in Gaza pose no danger, because [“the IDF has enough bullets for anyone,”](#) and open-fire regulations to shoot people allowing the military to deal with it. (30)
- Oppressive regimes almost always portray and think of themselves as the victim of the group(s) they are oppressing. Israel and Apartheid South African both “said that their own peoples faced annihilation from external forces – in South Africa by black African governments and communism; in Israel, by Arab states and Islam.” (31)
- The Nazis also made these claims, cultivating a feeling that Germans were being victimized by Jewish Bolshevik Communists: Nazi propaganda portrayed Jews as “destroying the Nazi regime and murdering the German people”, which meant the Nazis were merely engaged in self-defense, a “war of retaliation’ against European Jewry” (32).
- As in the case of South African Apartheid, the Israeli regime claims that the reason it is so unpopular is not because of its unpalatable and oppressive policies and practices, but because people are biased against it. A small international fringe continued to defend South African Apartheid on this basis until the illegal aspects of that system collapsed under international pressure.

Human Shields

- UN and human rights groups find that Israeli settler colonial occupation forces use Palestinians, including children, as human shields.(33)

- E.g., in Operation Cast Lead: “Contrary to repeated allegations by Israeli officials of the use of ‘human shields,’ Amnesty found no evidence that Hamas or other Palestinian fighters directed the movement of civilians to shield military objectives from attacks.” - Amnesty International
- “If it found no evidence that Hamas used human shields, Amnesty did, however, find ample evidence that Israel used them.”
- “Israeli soldiers ‘used civilians, including children, as ‘human shields’... forcing them to remain in or near houses which they took over and used as military positions.”
- Israeli occupation forces “took position and launched attacks from and around inhabited houses” in Gaza, “exposing local residents to the danger of attacks”.
- Israeli occupation forces used Gaza civilians as human shields for “inspecting properties or objects suspected of being booby-trapped.”
- The Goldstone Report and other human rights investigations “and the post invasion testimony of Israeli soldiers corroborated the IDF’s use of human shields.”
- Israeli occupiers place “men, women and children... close to artillery and tank positions, where constant shelling and firing was taking place”. - Goldstone Report
- Israeli occupiers subject Palestinian detainees to “torture”, and use them “as human shields.” - Goldstone Report
- The Goldstone Report found repeated “use of human shields” by Israeli occupiers in Gaza.
- Two Israeli occupation soldiers who were convicted of using a nine year old child as a human shield received three month suspended sentences. (34)

Trivia:

- Israel supports Nazi sympathizers, such as the South African Apartheid terrorist regime, which Israel helped nuclearize. (35)
- How the Israel Lobby Protected Ukrainian Neo-Nazis (Nov. 2014)(36)
- For reference: Us Lifts Ban on Funding ‘Neo-Nazi’ Ukrainian Militia (Jan. 2016)(37)
- Israel [uses](#) chemical weapons on civilians.

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Note that this article is not put forth as original work, but as research assembled largely from easily accessible [sources in the public domain](#).

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Notes

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- (10) <https://web.archive.org/web/20100706021237/http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/131/1671.pdf>
- (11) [Convention \(IV\) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War](#). Geneva, 12 August 1949.
- (12) [Pictet, Jean](#) (ed.) [Commentary on the Fourth Geneva Convention](#)
- (13) [Reality Check: Gaza is still occupied](#)
- (14) Sanger, Andrew (2011). M.N. Schmitt, Louise Arimatsu, Tim McCormack, eds. [“The Contemporary Law of Blockade and the Gaza Freedom Flotilla”](#). Yearbook of International Humanitarian Law 2010. Springer Science & Business Media. 13: 429; [Scobbie, Iain](#) (2012). Elizabeth Wilmshurst, ed. [International Law and the Classification of Conflicts](#). Oxford University Press. p. 295; Gawerc, Michelle (2012). [Prefiguring Peace: Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding Partnerships](#). Lexington Books. p. 44.
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(36) <https://www.alternet.org/world/how-israel-lobby-protected-ukrainian-neo-nazis>

(37) <https://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/US-lifts-ban-on-funding-neo-Nazi-Ukrainian-militia-441884>

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