

## Food Security And Food Sovereignty Occupied In Palestine Territories

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## Introduction

Food insecurity is defined as a situation in which a state or household does not have access to the proper amount of “sufficient, safe, [and] nutritious food [required] to maintain a healthy and active life”(1) .

It is a global phenomenon that affected 925 million people world-wide in 2010, 98% of whom were in developing countries(2). In Arab countries, 31 million people, or 10% of the population, are classified as food insecure(3).

Food insecurity is a major issue facing Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territory . Over 20% of the population of the West Bank and over 50% of the population of the Gaza Strip live in food insecurity (4).

While it is also affected by global phenomena such as environmental degradation and rising food prices, food security in the occupied Palestinian territory is largely dependent on the lack of Palestinian food sovereignty. Though closely linked to food insecurity, food sovereignty involves the right of a state to be food self-sufficient based on their own democratically determined policies. Unlike food security, which measures the type and amount of food people receive, food sovereignty measures the extent of control a state has over its own food resources.

Food insecurity in the occupied Palestinian territory is caused by unemployment, poverty, as well as high food prices. Therefore, issues of food insecurity are compounded by a lack of food sovereignty.

Since the Occupation began in 1967, Israel has confiscated thousands of dunums of land from Palestinian farmers and has used this land to build illegal Israeli settlements, settler-only roads, and the Separation Wall that runs through the West Bank. The 519 checkpoints, roadblocks, and other closures throughout the West Bank create extreme challenges for farmers attempting to reach their land and their markets(5). Farmers in the West Bank are also subject to repeated destruction and vandalism of their land and crops by the Israeli military and settlers. In Gaza, farmers have lost 25% of their most fertile agricultural land to the “buffer zone” that borders Israel. Israeli patrol boats further limit fishermen to only three nautical miles off the coast, just 15 % of Gaza’s legal territorial waters promised under the Oslo Accords (6) . The Israeli blockade of Gaza continues to impede agricultural production and access to food and has rendered 80% of Gaza’s population dependent on international emergency food aid. Therefore, due to the effects of Israeli land and resource confiscation and destruction, Israeli imposed limitations on trade, environmental issues, and a growing global food crisis, Palestine is unable to achieve the food sovereignty that could enable the economic and social conditions necessary to reduce the levels of food insecurity.

### [Food Sovereignty and Food Security in the occupied Palestinian territories](#)

”Food Sovereignty is the right of the peoples, communities, and countries to define their own agricultural, labour, fishing, food, and land policies which are ecologically, socially, economically, and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances. It includes the true right to food and to produce food, which means that all people have the right to

safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food and to food-producing resources and the ability to sustain themselves and their societies. Food Sovereignty means the primacy of the people's and community's rights to food and food production, over trade concerns." (7)

The occupied Palestinian territories lacks this sovereign ability to define its own food policies. Palestinians locally produce only 60% of the consumed food items, including rice, flour, bread, meat, and fish, and only 5% of the total cereals and pulses(8) .

Palestinian local production is only able to meet its local demand in the categories of vegetable production (tomato, cucumber, eggplant, squash, beans, cabbage, and cauliflower), grapes, plums, citrus, poultry, eggs, and olive oil. For almost all other products, the occupied Palestinian territories depends on foreign imports, primarily from Israel. This is also the case for agricultural inputs as the occupied Palestinian territories only produces 20% of the required fertilizers and animal foodstuffs,(9) . while the rest are imported, mainly from Israel ( 10).

However, this dependence on imports from Israel does not stem from a fundamental inability to produce food, but rather from an inability to access the resources necessary to do so.

### [Effects of Food Insecurity in the occupied Palestinian territories](#)

As Palestinians lack food sovereignty due to a lack of control over natural resources, agricultural production, and borders, they are unable to create the economic and social conditions necessary to alleviate the effects of food insecurity. Families in food insecure households often reduce the quantity and nutritional quality of consumer goods.

Therefore, food insecurity results in negative health effects, decreased economic output, and long-term environmental damage.

For the occupied Palestinian territories, malnutrition resulting from food insecurity has increased dramatically under occupation(11). This leading to micronutrient deficiencies and other adverse medical conditions. like anemia among children anemia can lead to problems with concentration and thinking, and in severe cases, heart attacks (12). And As a result of nutrient deficiency in mother's milk, almost 76% of Palestinian children are now deficient in vitamin A, a leading cause of blindness in children that can later result in death(13). Although poverty is a primary cause of food insecurity, food insecurity can also exacerbate poverty and economic problems for a country. Despite a lack of direct studies on the economic effects of food insecurity in the occupied Palestinian territories, studies conducted in other countries can serve to illuminate general effects of food insecurity in the region. First, the adverse effects of mal-nourishment on the cognitive development of children result in lower academic achievement, increased social and behavioural problems, and a lack of physical, mental, or emotional development. Food-insecurity related health problems also lead to more hospitalization and medical treatment leading to inefficiencies in the economy(14) .

coping mechanisms adopted by individuals and households to alleviate their food insecurity can damage the long-term environmental sustainability of the occupied Palestinian territories. For example,if farmers lack the water necessary to supply their agriculture, their lands

will produce lower yields. This leads to lower income, which decreases their ability to replant fields. Any fields that lie unused due to insufficient water or funds will suffer from decreased soil quality(15).This process is intensified if farmers do not use proper crop rotation methods to replenish the nutrients in the soil, or if they overharvest their crops. This vicious cycle means increased soil degradation or soil erosion, which can damage the long-term environmental and agricultural .



## Israel's Policies of Land and Resource Confiscation as a Cause of Food Insecurity



Israel's policies of land and resource confiscation are a major obstacle to Palestinian food sovereignty and therefore facilitate Palestinian food insecurity. Since 1967, Israeli policies have taken on different forms of structural violence,

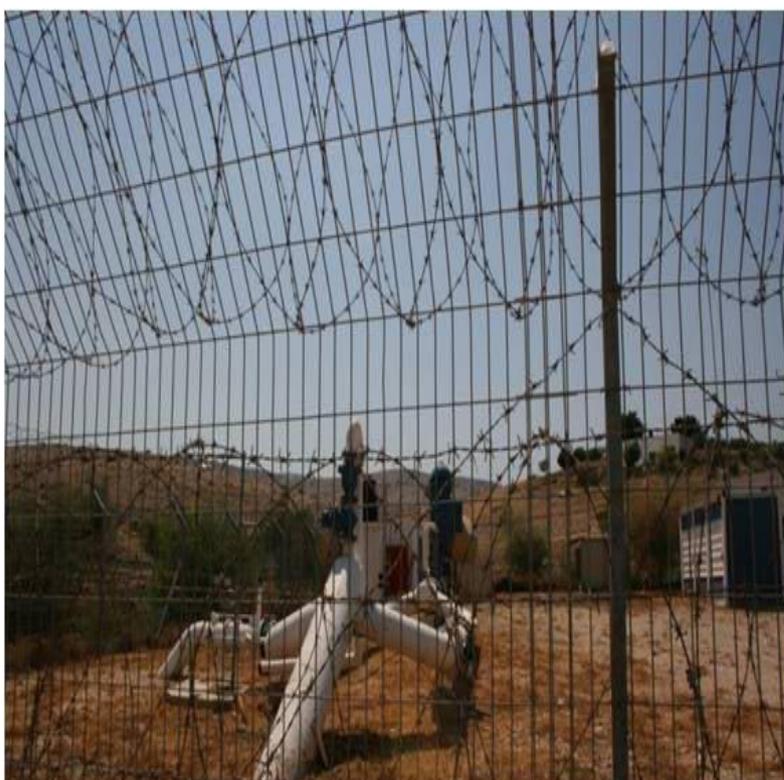
including land acquisition for settlement and military purposes and the confiscation of water and agricultural resources. These policies also entail direct physical violence as Israeli soldiers and settlers often destroy Palestinian resources and/or endanger Palestinians attempting to access them. Although these policies vary between different areas of the occupied Palestinian territories, many use a veneer of security to provide preferential treatment to Israeli settlers at the cost of Palestinian food security.

The **West Bank** and **Gaza Strip** suffer from many violations on **land, water and Fishing industry**

So that the land is violated by building settlements and the **land** has been divided after the Oslo Accords. Some areas are under full Israeli control and the Palestinians living in these areas are in difficult and difficult conditions, especially with regard to food security and struggling to maintain sustainable livelihoods because of Israeli policies(16).

**Water** , While access to water is vital for food security, control of water resources is a key component of food sovereignty. Since the beginning of the Occupation in 1967, however, Palestinians have been denied both access to and control of Palestinian water sources , so Palestinian suffering from food insecurity (17) .

**Fishing industry** Since January 2009, Israel has also imposed a three nautical mile limit on Palestinian fisher-men off the coast of Gaza. However, according to the Oslo Accords, Palestinian fishermen are legally permitted to fish up to 20 nautical miles out. Consequently, sea access for Palestinians is reduced by 85%. Fishermen who attempt to travel beyond this three nautical mile zone face violent repercussions by the Israeli navy(18)



## The Effect of Operation Cast Lead on Food Security in the Gaza Strip in 2008

Operation Cast Lead o continued high rates of food insecurity. Before the offensive, 56% of the Gazan population was food insecure, primarily due to the limitations of the Israeli blockade and restrictions on possible aid.<sup>94</sup> However, by the end of the offensive, due to the destruction of the agricultural capacity of Gaza, an estimated 75% of the population was food insecure<sup>(19)</sup>.

By mid 2009, 46% of agricultural land in the Gaza Strip was deemed inaccessible , and Israel reduced the permissible fishing area of Gaza to three nautical miles, further curtailing the industry and harming the ability of fisher-men to sustain their livelihoods.<sup>(20)</sup>

Heavy bombing of 80% of the estimated 1,000 underground smuggling tunnels between Egypt and Gaza, which were used to circumvent the blockade and bring in 90% of all Gaza's imports, further reduced the ability of Palestinians to acquire necessary foodstuffs. These bombings thus eliminated a primary means to reduce food insecurity <sup>(21)</sup>.

Overall, Operation Cast Lead caused a loss of USD 268 million <sup>(22)</sup> .

These actions have limited Gazans' ability to be self-reliant and have in fact made them even more dependent on restricted Israeli imports and international food aid.

## **Effect of Israeli Policies on the Palestinian Economy**

### **Employment**

the destruction of land and property during the second Intifada, combined with the closure system and the construction of the Separation Wall further devastated the Palestinian economy (23). The unemployment rate increased by 80% at the beginning of the second Intifada and, (24) the effects of the second Intifada and subsequent Israeli policies continue to reduce the potential for sustainable, inclusive economic growth and job creation that could reduce food insecurity levels in the occupied Palestinian territories (25).

### **Decreased Income**

In addition to a sharp increase in unemployment, Israeli policies of restriction have also contributed to a decreased level of income.

According to a 2004 World Bank study, real per capita income declined by nearly 40% during the first two years of the second Intifada(26) .

### Poverty

As a result of both the increased unemployment and the corresponding decrease in income, one in four Palestinians lives in poverty. These individuals fall below the poverty line and do not have the financial ability to meet their healthcare, education, transportation, personal care, and household needs in addition to basic food, clothing, and housing requirements. In addition, 12.9% of Palestinians live in deep poverty (7.8% in the West Bank and 21.1% in the Gaza Strip.) Due to Israeli land and resource policies, Palestinians have seen decreased levels of income and employment, leading to higher poverty and consequently high levels of food insecurity(27) .

### Israel's Movement and Business Restrictions

Israeli control over the Palestinian economy limits movement within the oPt and restricts imports and exports. In addition, Israel's complicated procedures for obtaining permits for building and investment limit Palestinians' ability to develop the necessary infrastructure for its economy. Thus, similar to Israel's policies of land and resource confiscation and destruction, these limitations on movement, trade, and

investment act as obstacles to Palestinian food sovereignty and encourage food insecurity.



The Separation Barrier also greatly inhibits agricultural trade and food security (28).

The Israeli-imposed siege of Gaza greatly restricts movement and business(29).



### **Environmental Factors :**

In addition to Israeli policies of land and resource confiscation and the limitations on movement and trade, the Palestinian agricultural sector is also hampered by environmental challenges that include deforestation, water shortages, desertification, and risks to natural biodiversity. While these environmental issues are universal in nature, their consequences greatly impact the local Palestinian environment and food security levels (30).

### **The Impact of Global Food Prices**

The continued increase in global and local food prices limits Palestinians' ability to meet their nutritional requirements and decreases food security levels(31).

### **Creating Food Sovereignty in the occupied Palestinian territories: Overcoming Food Insecurity**

Palestinian food insecurity is caused by the restrictions placed on Palestinian food policy by Israel. In other words, it is the lack of food sovereignty the lack of independent control of food policy that has caused such a consistently high level of insecurity.

In this way, efforts by the PNA or the international community to maximize production of available resources or to provide food to those in poverty, while commendable, have a minimal and unsustainable effect on food insecurity in the occupied Palestinian territories. In order to sustainably reduce food insecurity, it is imperative to solve the political problems that are at the base of Palestinian food insecurity.



## Conclusion :

This report outlines both the multiple causes of Palestine's lack of food sovereignty and highlights broad policy and development options from the local to the national levels to alleviate this crisis. The report will first define the concepts of food sovereignty and food security and explain the effects of food insecurity on the Palestinian population. It will then analyse how Israel's land policies limit Palestine's ability to create a self-sufficient food sector, thus increasing dependency and unemployment. Related to Palestinian food dependency, Israeli limitations imports to the occupied Palestinian territory , thereby increasing local food costs for Palestinians, will be detailed. The report will then show how environmental issues including climate change, water shortages, desertification, and biodiversity compound these food shortages. Finally, this report will connect growing food insecurity in the occupied Palestinian territory to the global food crisis.

(32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40)

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