ADDRESSING ACCUSATION OF SYSTEMATIC DISCRIMINATION OF PALESTINIANS IN THE WEST BANK REGION

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Introduction

The territorial conflict between Israel and Palestine is a deep-rooted issue that stretches back decades. Throughout many wars, proposals, and attempted solutions, the governance over the West Bank has shifted a lot, which has created a lot of uncertainty and hate within the Palestinian population. The Israeli presence in their daily lives is being exponentially accused of systemic discrimination against Palestinian communities. Allegations of systematic discrimination and apartheid in the West Bank focus on Palestinian experiences of restricted movement, unequal access to land, resources, medical care, and the existence of two separate legal systems for settlers and Palestinians. Human rights organizations argue that these structures produce entrenched inequalities that exceed legitimate security needs. Settlement expansion, home demolitions, permit denials, and recurring settler violence with limited accountability are frequently cited as evidence of discriminatory practices, with critics claiming that Israeli authorities treat Palestinians as an inferior racial group and that this inequality is embedded in laws affecting Palestinians across Israel and the occupied territories

Israel argues that many of the policies described as systematic discrimination are instead security measures to contain the violent reality of Palestinian-based terroristic groups, including the October 7th, 2023, attack, suicide bombings, and ongoing aggression. Since the creation of Hamas and other militant groups, they have conducted numerous bombings, rocket attacks, and shootings, killing civilians and soldiers in Israel. Both sides, Palestinians and Israel, have committed war crimes, making the solution towards causality a difficult one, as both sides argue their actions are just and only for the sake of their civilians. The question of "who is responsible?" has no definitive answer.

In this committee, delegates must understand how governance, security policy, and territorial control interact to create an unequal outcome. They must assess this issue objectively and consider accountability and equity to work towards a long-term solution. Consequently, delegates should consider the humanitarian impact on men, women, and children for informed decision-making and revising policies.

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Key Terms

Occupation

Overall, an occupation can be described as the action in which an army or group of people moves into and takes control of a place. In this issue specifically, it refers to Israel's control over the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which is illegal under International Law, including military authority, administrative governance, and restrictions on Palestinian self-determination.

Apartheid

A term originating from South Africa, defining the institutional regime of oppression and domination by one racial group over another. It is a serious human rights violation that is prohibited under International Law. In this context, it refers to the oppression of Palestinians.

Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT)

The West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza are considered OPT under international law. These areas are subject to Israeli occupation, with different levels of Palestinian self-rule.

Settlements

This term refers to Israeli homes established on Palestinian land in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and there were also some in Gaza, which were evacuated. Settlements are illegal under International law, as an occupying power cannot move its population to the occupied land. There are now around 600,000 Israelis living in the West Bank and East Jerusalem

Dispossession

The process of Palestinians losing access to land, homes, and resources with two main mechanisms. Firstly, home demolitions, where Israeli officials, under the agency of security or settlement expansion, destroy Palestinian homes. Secondly, restrictive permit systems that actively control building, movement, or access to land, limiting development and daily life.

Fatah and the Palestinian Authority (PA)

Fatah is the ruling party of the Palestinian Authority (PA) that was formed under the Oslo II accords in the West Bank. It administers the civil affairs in Areas A and B under the Oslo Accords. It is internationally recognized as the representative body of the Palestinian people.

It is key to note that Fatah and Hamas are major political rivals. Despite mainly focusing on coordinating security with Israel and supporting a negotiated two-state solution, it has also been historically linked with armed groups that carried out terrorist attacks, such as the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades.

Israeli security forces (ISF)

Refer to both the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and the Israeli police forces

Oslo II Accords

The 1995 Oslo II accords were a complex and crucial agreement in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, which created three administrative areas in the West Bank, granting the newly formed Palestinian Authority (PA) varying administrative power in each area. This solution was supposed to be a temporary one, but until today it still stands.

Separation Barrier

The physical barrier constructed by the state of Israel greatly limits the movement of Palestinian civilians. Israel argues it is due to security reasons, critics argue it contributes to segregation and restricted access to resources.

Dual Legal System

In the West Bank Area C, Israeli settlers are under Israeli civil law, while Palestinians are under military law. This creates different rights, protections, and penalties.

International Humanitarian Law

A set of rules that seeks to limit the effects of armed conflicts on civilians, medics, aid workers, the wounded, sick, and prisoners of war.

Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)

A major militant group with a strong operational presence in the West Bank. Frequently involved in armed attacks and clashes, historically more active than Hamas in the West Bank.

General Overview

Historical Context

The West Bank is a highly holy site, with some of the holiest sites in the world's Abrahamic religions. Throughout history, Palestine was a part of many empires, including the Ottoman Empire. After the First World War, though, Great Britain took control over Palestinian territory, yet the Arab people who lived in that area believed they would soon be able to govern themselves, as many other former areas of the Ottoman Empire were. They believed that their participation in the fight against the Ottoman Turks and agreements with the Allies granted them control over Palestine. However, from the late nineteenth century, many Jewish people migrated to Palestine from Europe, and Great Britain designated Palestine a "national home for the Jewish people" in the Balfour Declaration.

Tensions grew as Arab and Jewish communities realized their goals conflicted. Many Arab residents feared cultural displacement, while Jewish communities feared threats to their holy sites and emerging national aspirations. Clashes escalated into riots directed at each other and at the British authorities. Throughout the Second World War, both Palestinian Jews and Arabs attacked the British, attempting to drive out their seemingly oppressive, occupational government. This brought fear that, without an international presence in that area, a war between Jews and Arabs might break out.

After the events of the Holocaust and the creation of the United Nations, the West's ideas about how to govern Palestine changed. The UN proposed a two-state solution, Israel and an Arab state. Immediately after this proposal, Palestine and other Arab states launched an offensive against Israel. Israel defeated the attackers, forcing an armistice agreement to be signed by the Arab state, which granted Jordan control of the West Bank.

The Six-Day War 1967

The Six-Day War was a brief war between Israel and a coalition of Arab states. With a clear and decisive victory of Israel, the Arab countries' losses in the conflict were disastrous. This war has proved that Israel is the region's surpassing military power. Not only did this war demoralize the Arab public and the political state, but it also marked a new phase in the Israel-Palestine conflict. As the war ended, Israel managed to seize total control of the West Bank, which it was expected to cede control of back to the Palestinians. Instead, Israeli forces remained in the area, issuing martial law.

Since then, thousands of refugees were created, and more than one million Palestinians in the occupied territories were put under Israeli direct military rule. This area is internationally recognized as the Occupied Palestinian Territories and forms the foundation for the current debate about governance, security, and alleged discrimination.

Intifadas

The First Intifada occurred in the years 1987-1993. Overall, it was a large civil resistance movement against Israeli military rule in the West Bank and Gaza. It involved widespread civil disobedience, including strikes, boycotts, demonstrations, and multiple clashes with Israeli forces. The movement was driven by frustration over two decades of occupation, settlement expansion, and economic inequality. Israel responded to this with mass arrests and forceful policing. Thousands of Palestinians were injured with 1087 being killed. As a result, the Oslo peace process began and established the Palestinian Authority. Thus, it was a success for the Palestinian side as international attention was shifted to the Palestinian cause.

The Second Intifada, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, began in the year 2000 and ended in 2005. It started as a result of failed peace talks and Israel's prime minister's candidate visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which Palestinians saw as a major provocation. Unlike the first Intifada, this uprising quickly began to be militarized, involving multiple armed groups, suicide bombings, that targeted Israeli military and civilians alike. The Israeli military responded with extensive force, including the reoccupation of West Bank cities, targeted killings, major arrests, and construction of the separation barrier. This Intifada led to many more casualties on both sides and created significant political damage. It also weakened the PA, deepened Israeli control over the occupied territories, and divided Palestinian leadership.

Governance and Administrative Divisions

The West Bank is governed through a layered and fragmented system created by the Oslo II accords. East Jerusalem is administered only by Israel under annexation.

AREA A

The Palestinian Authority, with Fatah as its leading party, has full civil control, which includes education, health, municipal services, and internal security control. As of 2013, Area A makes up roughly 18% percent of the West Bank and is the most densely populated. In this area, Israel does not administer anything, however, it is still considered occupied territory by Israel. Therefore, quite often Israel conducts military operations when it chooses to. Other than that, there are no Israeli settlers, and entry into this area is forbidden to all Israeli citizens.

AREA B

With the same PA having control over education, economic, and health sectors, Area B differentiates from Area A in having joint Israeli-Palestinian security control. This area makes up around 22% of the West Bank, the majority of Palestinians in the West Bank live in either area A or B. Area C divides Area B into hundreds of separate segments, which can be seen on the map in the previous section.

AREA C

This zone is the largest, covering over 60% of the West Bank. There are around 300,000 Palestinians and around 400,000 Israeli settlers. This area is under Israeli administration, with control over both the civil and military sectors, including building permits, planning, land administration, road networks, security checkpoints, and movement rules. A significant number of Palestinians in this area lack a primary school, struggle to obtain land permits for housing and farming, are not connected to a functional water network and rely on tankered water at a high cost, and have limited access to emergency and basic healthcare.

Around 99% of this area is excluded from Palestinian use. Yet, it contains most of the West Bank's natural resources and open spaces, access to which would enable the Palestinians to grow their economy by a third as according to experts. According to a 2013 EU report, Israeli policies have undermined the Palestinian presence in Area C, with a deterioration in basic services.

Settlements system

In Area C, settlements fall under Israeli domestic civilian law, funded and legislated through Israeli institutions, while Palestinian communities living in the same area of the occupied West Bank are subject to military governance and often cannot access similar planning authorities or services.

This means that these settlers vote in Israeli national elections, receive services from the following Israeli ministries: education, health, transportation, and welfare. Further on, infrastructure inside settlements is integrated into national Israeli systems. This creates a parallel governance environment, entirely separate from the system applied to Palestinians who are essentially "next door".

Systematic Inequalities and Dispossession

This segment provides an overview of the major systemic inequalities that Palestinian communities and individuals face in the West Bank. While many of these issues were mentioned earlier, it is essential to review them and explain how they contribute to the unequal environment.

Dispossession

In the West Bank, Palestinians experience loss of access to land through several administrative mechanisms. Large areas are designated as Israeli state land, firing zones, nature reserves, or settlement jurisdictions, which greatly limit Palestinian use or development. In many cases, families are unable to return to their once-owned land if military orders suddenly restrict access. Over time, this creates a system where Palestinians still have their legal claims, but lack access, agricultural continuity, or the ability to build. This greatly

affects the relationship between the Palestinians and the Israelis, as sometimes, with no seeming cause, they take away their land. Decades of this system are creating rising tensions.

Home demolitions

Demolitions of Palestinian homes occur for several reasons: lack of permits, construction in designated security areas, or proximity to settlements or military zones. The impact of this goes beyond physical loss of housing as it disrupts family life, freezes community growth, and discourages investment in infrastructure. In some communities, schools, clinics, water tanks, and solar panels also face demolition orders, which limit development even when funded by humanitarian agencies.

Separation Barrier

This barrier creates a geographic and administrative divide between parts of the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Israel. Parts of it cut into the territory of the West Bank, creating areas where Palestinians need special permits to reach farmland, relatives, or workplaces located between the barrier and the Green Line. This creates major fragmentation of communities near Jerusalem, long travel times for work, education, and medical care. Israel presents this as a security measure, yet the barrier has significant civilian consequences, particularly in areas where it does not follow the main line.

Movement and Access Restrictions

Throughout their daily life, Palestinians face a system of checkpoints, roadblocks, military zones, and Israeli-only or Israeli-priority roads that actively regulate where and when they can travel. These checkpoints can be found multiple times between West Bank cities, so movement for Palestinians is greatly slowed down due to these roads leading to key establishments such as hospitals, workplaces, universities, agricultural land, and family connections. Settlers use a separate road network with unrestricted movement.

Unequal Legal System

In the same territory, Palestinians and Israeli settlers are governed under two different legal regimes. Palestinians are under Israeli military law, which allows practices such as military courts, administrative detention, and different arrest procedures. At the same time, settlers fall under Israeli civilian law, with full legal rights. The dual system concerns other states, especially within the UN, as it is flagged as a structural inequality.

Violence and Security Concerns

With the dual legal framework in place and different levels of governance within the West Bank it creates an insatiable environment. This instability often produces military raids, periodic armed clashes, and inconsistent law enforcement.

Settler violence

There is a documented pattern of attacks by certain Israeli settlers against Palestinian communities, including vandalism, arson of agricultural fields, property damage, and physical

assaults. These incidents often take place in rural areas near settlements or outposts, where land disputes and restricted access zones create friction. This creates an insecure climate where Palestinians in rural zones face risks that undermine their ability to work the land or move freely.

Palestinian violence

Violence from Palestinian actors in the West Bank has been a persistent feature of the conflict, encompassing a range of actions from protests and stone-throwing to shootings, stabbings, and rocket attacks. Several groups have been involved, including Hamas, which often claims responsibility for armed operations as part of its broader resistance strategy; Fatah's armed factions, which have historically engaged in clashes with Israeli forces and occasionally with rival Palestinian groups; and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which has carried out attacks targeting both Israeli military and civilian sites. These acts are often framed by the perpetrators as resistance to occupation and settler expansion, as well as responses to political developments or Israeli military actions. While these attacks vary in frequency and scale, they contribute significantly to the cycle of violence in the region, prompting Israeli security measures and counter-operations that affect both Palestinian and Israeli civilians. This ongoing dynamic underscores the security challenges faced in the West Bank and the difficulty of separating political, ideological, and retaliatory motivations in the context of the conflict.

Current Situation

Recent developments

In recent years, the situation in the West Bank has greatly deteriorated with escalating Israeli settlement expansion, settler violence, and increased restrictions. The tensions between ISF and Palestinian armed groups are higher than ever, and the risk of conflict with even bordering countries is high. Multiple countries are condemning Israel's actions, warning them that they must stop the settlement expansion.

Human rights organizations monitor and report on these conditions

Human rights organizations continue to closely monitor and report on the situation in the West Bank, documenting increasing levels of violence, land confiscation, and restrictions imposed on Palestinians. In recent years, especially since the escalation of conflict in Gaza, these groups have reported a sharp rise in settler attacks, intensified Israeli military raids, and widespread displacement of Palestinian communities, particularly in Area C. Both international and local organizations collect testimonies, analyze legal violations, and publish regular updates showing how movement restrictions, home demolitions, and unequal legal systems affect daily life. Their findings consistently indicate a worsening human rights environment, with declining accountability and expanding settlement activity, which many now describe as part of a broader system of structural discrimination.

Major Parties and Their Views

State of Israel

The state of Israel, which is in control of most of the West Bank, rejects all claims of any apartheid or systemic discrimination. They justify their actions as security measures against militant threats from radical Palestinian terrorist groups. Israel also defends its dual legal system as a result of military rule and believes that giving different rights to their population in an occupied area is justified. They strongly support settlement presence as they do not see it as illegal. Israel believes that it must create their own approach to this issue, as international law does not allow it to fully face and solve this issue with a highly violent opposition.

Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)

The PLO views Israeli policies in the West Bank as a clear display of an illegal occupation that creates structural discrimination through settlement expansion, dual legal systems, restrictions on movement, and home demolitions. Decades of trying to push and create their own country linger within the community and motivate them to act. It argues that these practices violate international humanitarian law and are as serious as apartheid. The PLO believes the way forward is through a negotiated two-state solution along the 1967 borders. The delegate of the PLO should consider the oppression the people are facing in the West Bank to push for mechanisms that end discriminatory structures.

United States of America

The United States of America has a long-standing strong relationship with Israel, they were one of the first countries to recognize Israel and provide billions of dollars in military aid annually. Overall, the USA supports Israel and its actions to a large extent. However, as of late, the USA is facing a major public opinion division on this matter, with a significant portion of the population expressing negative views of Israel. While they do not use language such as "apartheid" or "systematic discrimination" and do not push for sanctions or strong enforcement tools, they oppose settlement expansion.

Jordan

As a bordering country of Israel and a country grappling with domestic problems, such as inflation, unemployment, and high illegal activity, Jordan has a complex relationship with Israel. Historically, Jordan and Israel have faced multiple conflicts, such as in 1948 and the Six-Day War in 1967. Despite having signed a peace treaty that stands till this day, today's

views on Israel have shifted to the more negative side. Jordan strongly condemns Israel's war on Gaza and approach to the West Bank, accusing the country of an "unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe." Moreover, Jordan is actively participating in efforts to secure the safe passage of humanitarian aid, which also fuels illegal arms transfers into the West Bank.

Human Rights Watch

The HRW is an international non-governmental organization that investigates and reports on human rights abuses worldwide. They classified Israeli policies in the West Bank as apartheid and systematic discrimination. Rather than focusing on political negotiation frameworks, HRW prioritizes rights-based solutions, primarily calling for accountability, sanctions, arms restrictions, and international investigations. The representative of the HRW could push for strong accountability mechanisms and ensure rights protections rather than negotiating borders.

Timeline of Key Events

- 1948- Nakba: over 700,000 Palestinians displaced during the creation of Israel
- 1950- Jordan formally annexes the West Bank
- 1967- Six-Day War: Israel occupies the West Bank, and military rule begins
- 1971- Civil Administration was established under Israeli military rule to manage the occupied areas
- 1977- State land policy used to declare large portions of the West Bank off-limits to Palestinians
- 1979- UN Security Council resolution 446 declares Israeli settlements illegal under international law
- 1980- Jerusalem Law: Israel declares "complete and united Jerusalem"
- 1981- Civil administration was formally created to govern Palestinians in the occupied territories under military command
- 1987- First Intifada Uprising: Widespread Palestinian Protest and civil disobedience
- 1993- Oslo I Accords: PLO and Israel mutual recognition
- 1995- Oslo II accords: divide the West Bank
- 1996- PA takes control of major Palestinian cities
- 2000- Second Intifada: violent escalation of Palestinian militant groups led to harsh Israeli security restrictions
- 2002- Operation Defensive Shield: Israel re-occupies most PA-controlled areas, destroying much of the PA infrastructure
- 2011- Palestine gains UNESCO membership
- 2012- Palestine gains "observer state" status from the UN GA
- 2014- Settlement expansion accelerates
- 2020- Trump "Peace Plan" proposes annexation of large parts of the West Bank
- 2021- International organizations begin describing Israeli practices as apartheid
- 2024- UN reports rising settler violence and restrictions

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The Oslo Accords

For almost 30 years, Palestinians in the West Bank lived entirely under direct Israeli military administration, with no self-governance and no control over civil life. This brought many protests, attacks, and other ways militant groups were trying to get hold of their own territory. The Oslo II Accords, in the year 1995, aimed to create some form of Palestinian governance to reduce the growing tension between Palestinians and Israeli forces while negotiations toward a final peace agreement continued. They gave way to the new Palestinian Authority (PA), that was to take control of the civil and military law of some areas in the West Bank. Despite this agreement being temporary, it stands to this day.



The solution was to divide the West Bank into three areas, with varying levels of governance assigned to the PA. The areas are as follows: Area A, B, and C. Area A was given full civil and security control by the PA. Area B gave the PA full civil control, but security control is shared between the PA and Israel. Area C comprises all Israeli settlements, strategic areas, and uninhabited lands where Israel has full civil and security control. The original intention was that governance over Area C would be gradually transferred to the PA, however, that never occurred, as a final agreement has never been reached.

The Roadmap for Peace

In response to the Second Intifada and the following events of Operation Defensive Shield, the USA, EU, UN, and Russia formed the Quartet on the Middle East and attempted to save the situation and ease tensions between Israel and Palestine. In short, the overall plan was to immediately end the violence, halt settlement activity, reform Palestinian institutions, accept Israel's right to exist, and establish a viable sovereign Palestinian state. While the Palestinian side accepted the Roadmap, the Israeli government rejected it, deeming it impossible. The plan stalled in the first phase and was never implemented.

UN Security Council Resolution 2334

This resolution was adopted on 23rd December 2016, reaffirming that Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem are illegal under international law, declaring them a violation and demanding that Israel immediately cease all settlement activity. The resolution also called on all states to distinguish between Israel's recognized territory and the occupied territories. However, the resolution had no practical impact as there are still no enforcement mechanisms. Since then, Israel has continued expanding settlements at a record pace. Overall, resolution 2334 stands as a clear legal condemnation but a political failure.

Questions a Resolution Should Answer

- How can the international community ensure equal legal rights and protection for Palestinians and Israeli settlers living in the West Bank?
- How can freedom of movement for Palestinians be improved while still addressing Israel's stated security concerns?
- Should there be an international body monitoring alleged discrimination?
- How should perpetrators of settler violence and unlawful property confiscation be held accountable?
- How can the expansion of Israeli settlements be halted, regulated, or reversed?
- What steps can be taken to ensure equitable access to land, water, and natural resources for Palestinians in Area C?
- Should there be consequences for violations of international law in the West Bank, and who would enforce them?
- How can a resolution balance Israel's claims of necessary security measures with Palestinian claims of systemic discrimination?

APPENDIX

History of the West Bank

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