

Impact of Israel's Actions on Palestine Refugees in the OPT, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria

Through its military and other hostile actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) and other Arab States, Israel is not only committing genocide in Gaza and ethnic cleansing in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, it is also harming Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Despite all of the challenges it is facing, UNRWA continues to fulfill its mandate to assist and protect Palestine refugees.

The Genocide in Gaza

1. The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry as well as the Lemkin Institute and various Israeli genocide scholars have concluded that Israel has committed genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Between October 2023 and January 2025, more than 75,000 Palestinians were killed in Gaza at least a third of them children according to the highly respected [Lancet Journal](#); it estimated that another 8,000 have died due to starvation and 12,000 missing likely dead under the rubble. Between March 2025 and October 2025, yet another 25,000 more Palestinian were killed. In the six months since the so-called “ceasefire” agreement between Israel and Hamas entered into force in October 2025, at least 700 Palestinians have been killed and 2,000 injured in Gaza [according](#) to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.
2. UNRWA [reports](#) that more than 170,000 Palestinians have been injured in the last 2.5 years. The World Health Organization [estimates](#) that nearly a third of those injured including more than 10,000 children have life-changing injuries. The UNRWA Commissioner-General has [declared](#) that “Gaza now hosts the largest group of child amputees in modern history”. These numbers do not account for the thousands buried under the rubble or the non-trauma-related deaths resulting from health service disruption, food insecurity, and inadequate water and sanitation.
3. In light of Israel's decimation of Gaza's hospitals, universities, schools, bakeries and other civilian infrastructure, the United Nations [estimates](#) that it will take decades and cost \$70 billion for the recovery and reconstruction of Gaza. The impact on current and future generations is impossible to quantify.

The Ethnic Cleansing in the West Bank and East Jerusalem

4. Eighteen UN Special Rapporteurs and other UN experts have recently [condemned](#) Israel's accelerating campaign of ethnic cleansing and annexation in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, marked by the forced displacement of Palestinians and escalating violence by Israeli security forces and settlers terrorising Palestinian communities. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [confirms](#) that at least 1000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 10,000 injured in the West Bank since October 2023.
5. The United Nations has [indicated](#) that “coordinated settler violence and military actions, particularly in Area C, are methodically displacing Palestinian communities and shifting the demographic balance in favor of settlements”. The UN has also announced that 2025 recorded the highest level of Israeli settler violence in the occupied West Bank since documentation began in 2006 including more than 1,800 incidents of assault, property damage, and the burning of homes. The Guardian [reports](#) that dozens of families have been forced to leave their villages due to such violence.

Impact on Palestine refugees in Jordan

6. UNRWA has [observed](#) that ‘the ongoing war in Gaza has significantly exacerbated the vulnerabilities of Palestine refugees in Jordan’. Approximately 70,000 Palestine refugees fled to Jordan in 1948, an additional 320,000 fled from the West Bank in 1967 and yet another 180,000 Palestine refugees fled from Gaza since 1967. As Jordan already hosts the second-highest number of refugees per capita, this wave of new refugees placed an immense pressure on its infrastructure and economy. The disruption of UNRWA funding has also “created severe economic distress, and fueled uncertainty for stateless Palestinians facing, restricted access to employment, healthcare, and education”

Devastation in Lebanon

7. The Israeli aggression against Lebanon has, according to UNRWA, “severely [impacted](#) Palestine refugees in Lebanon, driving fresh displacement, intensifying extreme poverty, and restricting access to essential services”. Israeli airstrikes have forced thousands of Palestinians to flee refugee camps and to seek shelter in crowded and unsafe areas, particularly in southern Lebanon. This has created a “second displacement” for families with a history of displacement.

8. UNRWA also [reports](#) that existing vulnerabilities are amplified by severe economic hardship, marginalization, limited employment opportunities and shrinking humanitarian support resulting in increased food insecurity and inability to afford medical treatment.

9. Like in Gaza, Israel’s incessant bombing causes constant fear, mental health issues, and immense distress, particularly among children. A study by the European Union [warns](#) that the overall insecurity in Lebanon and the defunding of UNRWA increases the risks of exploitation and recruitment of youth by extremists. The likelihood of devastation and radicalization is even greater as Israel’s [intention](#) to occupy and settle southern Lebanon becomes increasingly clear.

The Conflict in Syria

10. Since 2011, the civil war in Syria has been catastrophic not only for the Syrian people but also for Palestine refugees in Syria (PRS) who have faced death and multiple displacements as a result of the destruction of camps, severe poverty and economic hardship as well as the severe humanitarian crisis. During the civil war, over 120,000 Palestinians fled Syria, while around 270,000 were internally displaced (that is 60% of the 450,000 Palestinians remaining in Syria).

11. The situation has only gotten worse since the fall of the Assad regime and Israel’s attacks on and expanded occupation Syrian territory. According to [European sources](#), no cash assistance has been distributed since the fall of the Assad regime. The vulnerability of Palestine refugees has worsened due to a significant UNRWA funding shortfall. Food insecurity has increased sharply leading to malnutrition, especially among children, pregnant women, and the elderly.

12. Nearly all Palestine refugees in Syria [rely on UNRWA](#) assistance to cover basic needs. Despite severe funding challenges, UNRWA [continues](#) to provide cash assistance, education, and health services to 124,000 vulnerable Palestinian families. The crisis has left the Palestine refugee community, which has existed in Syria since 1948, facing what many have called an ongoing struggle for survival”.

UNRWA issues regular [reports](#) on its work in the OPT as well as in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

The Palestine Refugee Policy Forum is an ad hoc group of independent analysts who seek to generate informed discussion on the future of UNRWA. Participants include Kjersti Berg, Mick Dumper, Mona Ali Khalil, Mezna Qato, Lex Takkenberg and Andrew Whitley.