

# Constrains on movement in occupied territories at root of Palestinian hardship – UN reports

31 May 2017 – Israeli constraints on movement and economics, along with the blockade on the Gaza Strip and internal political strife, are at the root of Palestinian suffering in the occupied territories, according to two separate United Nations reports released as the Israeli occupation enters its fiftieth year.

“Occupation policies and practices remain the key cause of humanitarian needs in the oPt [occupied Palestinian territory],” the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) said in its annual report.

David Carden, the head of OCHA in the occupied territories, attributed the hardship to a “pervasive” lack of protection and accountability for international law.

“At its heart, the crisis in the oPt [Occupied Palestinian Territory] is one of a [lack of protection for Palestinian civilians](#) – from violence, from displacement, from restrictions on access to services and livelihoods, and from other rights violations – with a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable, children in particular,” he said in the 2016 humanitarian overview, [Fragmented Lives](#).

Among the issues raised in the report were the restriction on Palestinian movement and access to basic services. Despite some easing of measures, OCHA noted that the number of Palestinians who Israeli officials allowed to leave Gaza had declined in the second half of 2016. The Rafah crossing – the sole crossing between Gaza and Egypt – was only opened for 44 days last year. While in the West Bank, OCHA recorded 572 movement obstacles, with an additional 110 obstacles in the Israeli-controlled Hebron city.

In addition, Israeli authorities in 2016 demolished or seized some 300 donor-funded structures provided as humanitarian aid to Palestinians, with a value estimated at more than \$730,000.

The report also noted the impact from the internal conflict among Palestinian politicians, with division between President Mahmud Abbas in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza.

## ***“Suffocating” economic and labour market – ILO***

The “stringent” restrictions on movement and economic activities are also cited by the International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)), where the Director-General each year reviews the situation for workers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza, Israel and the occupied Syrian Golan.

The 2017 edition of [The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories](#) will be presented to the International Labour Conference in June.

The report noted that while economic growth is taking place in West Bank and Gaza, it “is not enough to improve livelihoods, and it barely translates into employment gains.”

“The harsh reality facing all efforts to strengthen the Palestinian labour market is the [control that the occupation exercises over the Palestinian borders](#) and the access to land, water and natural resources,” ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder, says in his foreword to the report.

“The space for opportunities to work, farm, produce and create jobs in the occupied territories remains severely constrained,” added Mr. Ryder.

According to the report, more than one-quarter of the Palestinian labour force is unemployed, rising to 40 per cent among young people.

The situation is “particularly dire” for the two million Palestinians living in Gaza, where 60 per cent of youth with school degrees are jobless, and where movement for work is next to impossible – further hampered by long waiting times and overcrowding at check points.

The report warns that as work prospects bleaken for Palestinian youth, the frustrations can fuel radicalization and violence.

#### ***Obstacles to state-building***

The report calls for the reanimation of the peace process with a view to achieving the two-state solution.

“One of the aims of the Oslo agreements was to establish well-functioning labour markets for both Israel and the Palestinians. This remains little more than a distant aspiration,” Mr. Ryder said.

He called for the promotion and application of social justice and decent work as “vital cornerstones of the peace effort.”

In the report, the head of ILO also urged the international community to stay engaged in the Middle East, with a view to fostering peace and full statehood for the Palestinians.

---

## **[Key trends for infrastructure development and industrialization in](#)**

## spotlight at special UN meeting

31 May 2017 – The President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) told the body's special meeting today that infrastructure, industrialization and innovation are essential in global efforts to eradicate poverty as they enable growth and sustainable development.

"The [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development – and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) and targets – recognizes the importance of infrastructure, industrialization and innovation for eradicating poverty and expanding opportunities for people, especially the poorest," said ECOSOC President Frederick Shava, citing the 15-year development framework adopted by 193 UN Member States in 2015.

Addressing the Council's [special meeting](#) on 'Innovations for Infrastructure Development and Promoting Sustainable Industrialization,' Mr. Shava said that the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 9 on infrastructure, industrialization and innovation will need to be prioritized in national, regional and global policy making.

The [one-day meeting](#) aims, among others, to highlight the challenges to building, maintaining and upgrading infrastructure and promoting industrialization, and related innovations, in developing countries, particularly in Africa and the countries in special situations; and to share knowledge, experiences and innovative approaches for the promotion and development of infrastructure and industrialization in all countries.

"Making progress on SDG 9 will have positive ripple effects on other [SDGs](#), such as SDG 1 to end poverty; SDG 2 on zero hunger; SDG 3 on health, SDG 4 on education, SDG 6 on water and sanitation, SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy, SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth; and SDG 11 for sustainable cities and communities, among others," he said.

As someone who hails from Africa, Mr. Shava said he knows the potential the continent holds and the challenges it faces. Citing an estimate by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UN-ECA), he said that about \$93 billion is needed to bring the continent's infrastructure up to speed over the next three years.

Also addressing the special meeting was Wu Hongbo, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, who highlighted "a catalytic and cross-cutting role" of infrastructure development and sustainable industrialization to implement the 2030 Agenda.

"Access to infrastructure and the promotion of sustainable industrialization is essential for inclusiveness. It is essential so that no one is left behind and that there truly is sustainable development for all," he said.

Mr. Wu went on to underscore some critical challenges, including the global infrastructure gap. The infrastructure financing gap in developing countries

is estimated to be between \$1 trillion and \$1.5 trillion annually.

A second challenge is urbanization, he said, noting that the number of people living in cities in emerging markets is expected to double by 2030, adding another two billion people to urban areas.

And a third challenge is the importance of building and applying effective technology for resilient infrastructure and industrialization in rural areas, he said.

“The international community has committed to supporting efforts to ensure infrastructure development and sustainable industrialization. Now is the time to take action,” he said, citing four particular areas: integrated policy advice; capacity building; partnerships; and information and data on infrastructure for follow-up and review.

---

## [Kabul terrorist attack ‘morally reprehensible and an outrage,’ underscores UN envoy](#)

31 May 2017 – Condemning today’s terrorist attack in the Afghan capital, Kabul, the United Nations mission there called on all parties to the conflict to “strictly adhere” to their obligations under international humanitarian law and to take all feasible measures to protect civilians from harm.

“Beyond the [immeasurable human suffering](#) caused by today’s attack, the deliberate detonation of a massive truck bomb in a civilian area, particularly during the peaceful month of Ramadan, is morally reprehensible and an outrage,” Tadamichi Yamamoto, the head of the UN Assistance Mission, known as UNAMA, said in a news release.

Hundreds of people – mostly civilians – have been killed and more than 300 injured when a suicide attacker detonated a vehicle-borne explosive device in downtown Kabul’s Wazir Akhbar Khan area, which also houses a number of diplomatic missions, this morning (local time).

Casualty numbers are expected to rise.

In addition to the loss of lives and injuries, the explosion also resulted in considerable damage to the immediate and surrounding, with some embassies being seriously affected.

Further in the news release, Mr. Yamamoto, who is the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, underscored that today’s terrorist attack is a serious violation of humanitarian law.

“There can be no exceptions: the use of explosive weapons in civilian-populated areas must stop.”

---

## [UN Standing Police Capacity: 10 years of rapid assistance to peace operations](#)

31 May 2017 – Ten years on, the United Nations Standing Police Capacity (SPC) continues to bolster peacekeeping operations by providing immediate start-up capability and strengthening police components with timely support, advice and assistance.

“The Standing Police Capacity [SPC] is a vital tool of UN peacekeeping across the entire spectrum from conflict prevention to peace sustainment,” said Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, calling current SPC staff members “to continue to invest in peace by deploying and developing the capacity of national police services each time you deploy.”

Established in 2007, the SPC filled a critical need in global peace operations by providing them with readily available police expertise. When deployed, the unit has made a positive contribution to missions’ police-related work and tasks, delivering a versatile range of products and services.

“The SPC was established to provide the United Nations with a small corps of senior police officers and managers prepared to undertake urgent mission assessments and to organize the start-up of police components of peace operations” said Walter Wolf, the first SPC Chief.

SPC has established police components in five peacekeeping operations, assisted 15 ongoing operations and supported five operations during reconfiguration, closures or transition.



A medical specialist within the Formed Police Unit serving in the UN Mission in Liberia provides free medical care to a local family. Photo: UNMIL/Christopher Herwig



In 2009, officers with the UN Police ([UNPOL](#)) and Chad’s Détachement intégré de sécurité (DIS) interview Sudanese refugees in their camp. Photo: UN Photo/Olivia Grey Pritchard



UNPOL's Maria Silvia introduces safety to children of the Portuguese school in Timor-Leste. Photo: UNMIT/Martine Perret



First Lieutenant Sigit Jatmiko, of the Indonesian Formed Police Unit, interacts with children in Abu Shouk internally displaced persons camp during a morning patrol. Photo: UNAMID/Albert González Farran

[<](#) [>](#)

Haiti, Chad, Central African Republic, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan have been the major beneficiaries of the SPC, which has, in addition to integrating human rights into law enforcement and enhancing protection of civilians, worked in these countries to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, promote the role of women in peace and security and build effective, efficient police institutions.

With 37 experts ready to rapidly deploy to police components of UN peacekeeping operations, special political missions, UN funds and programmes and other partners, SPC stands ready to assist.

SPC Chief Maria Appelblom, one of the most senior police women in the Organization, told UN News about some of the tasks performed by the UN's rapid response unit – from helping to start up missions to assisting with elections.

“The Standing Police Capacity was with the team to start up the mission in Mali in 2013,” she said from Brindisi, Italy, where the unit is based. “And then one year later we started in Central African Republic. We were responsible in MINUSCA [UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic] for the planning of the visit of the Pope, but we were also working with UNDP and UN country teams.”

“We have been involved in Sierra Leone,” she continued. “We have assisted in establishing community policing and this is now a concept that is going to be replicated in several districts in Sierra Leone. Right now, we are assisting in preparation for their elections next year, with all of the security arrangements around that.”

---

**[Do not stand silent while Syrian](#)**

## parties use starvation, fear as 'methods of war,' urges UN aid chief

30 May 2017 – Though there are significantly fewer reports of violence in some parts of Syria, the consequences of the conflict continue to devastate lives, the top United Nations relief official said today, calling for ending attacks and obstacles that prevent humanitarian workers from reaching the hundreds of thousands of civilians still trapped in the war-torn country.

“We must not lose sight of the fact that – all over Syria – millions of people, in locations inside and outside the four de-escalation areas, continue to suffer because they lack the most basic elements to sustain their lives,” [said](#) Stephen O’Brien, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, briefing the Security Council.

“We must not stand silent while violence flares up elsewhere in the country and parties continue to use starvation, fear tactics and the denial of food, water, medical supplies, and other forms of aid as methods of war,” he stated.

The war in Syria, now into its seventh year, has extracted the worst toll on the country’s children. Tens of thousands have been killed and many have been forcibly detained, tortured, subjected to sexual violence, forcibly recruited and in some cases executed.

Just last week, 30 children and women were injured in an attack by Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) on besieged neighbourhoods in Deir ez-Zor as they were lining up to collect water.

Furthermore, in recent weeks, more than a hundred civilians, many of them women and children, have fallen victim to escalating counter-ISIL airstrikes, particularly in the north-eastern governorates of Al-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor.

According to estimates, nearly seven million children are living in poverty and some 1.75 million are out of schools with another 1.35 million at the risk of dropping out. Almost one in three schools have been damaged, destroyed, or otherwise made inaccessible.

“And even if the schools were intact, many would be unable to open, with almost one quarter of the country’s teaching personnel no longer at their posts,” said Mr. O’Brien.

The situation of those outside of the country, living as refugees, remains equally uncertain with many rendered “stateless”.

In his remarks, Mr. O’Brien, also the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the head of the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) recalled the memorandum, agreed to during the recent meetings in Astana, between the three guarantors – Iran, Russia and Turkey – on the creation of four de-escalation areas and that stipulates that

fighting must significantly decrease and unhindered humanitarian access be enabled to these four areas.

He also stressed the need to ensure that all obstacles, including bureaucratic ones, are put to an end, once and for all, and the UN and its humanitarian partners can sustainably reach those who are trapped behind the current front lines.

He also underscored that in many other parts of Syria, humanitarian and protection space continues to shrink, primarily due to increasingly strict limitations by local authorities, non-State armed groups, as well as terrorist organizations.

Speaking particularly on the north-eastern parts of the country, Mr. O'Brien called on all with influence over the parties involved to act now, "further delays or restrictions will only result in the continued suffering and the death of civilians."

"With some 100,000 people displaced due to fighting around Raqqa since April, access is needed now through every possible modality," he said, calling on the Security Council "to take all necessary steps to see that the will to place humanitarian aid delivery in its rightful position – outside of any military or political calculations and totally impartially – is restored."