



State of Palestine
Ministry of Interior
Risk and Crisis Management Unit
National Sendai Focal Point



Toward an Integrated Response:

**Assessing the Impact of Israeli Checkpoints on Fragile
Contexts in Palestine within the Sendai Framework for
Disaster Risk Reduction**

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Introduction

Since the events of October 7, 2023, the West Bank has witnessed an unprecedented escalation in Israeli measures affecting all aspects of daily life. While this escalation coincides with the ongoing genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, it has rapidly taken on a structural nature in the West Bank. This is manifested in the expansion of closures, the intensification of military checkpoints, roadblocks, and the isolation of entire communities from essential services—whether educational, health-related, security, or administrative. In parallel, repeated settler attacks—carried out under the protection of Israeli forces—have further exacerbated the situation.

Field data, as documented by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), shows that the number of physical barriers and obstacles in the West Bank reached approximately 849 by March 2025¹, including 288 road gates, many of which are permanently closed or opened intermittently. This renders movement and mobility nearly impossible in many areas, especially in the southern West Bank and the vicinity of Jerusalem.

This situation not only represents a logistical challenge in movement but forcibly reshapes the Palestinian geography and imposes a new pattern of forced life that directly affects the Palestinian social and economic fabric, increasing the vulnerability of marginalized social groups such as women, people with disabilities, and the elderly. This escalation is part of an ongoing Israeli policy that seeks to impose a permanent reality of "spatial fragmentation" through a form of collective punishment, which violates the principles of international humanitarian law, particularly Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. This collective punishment imposed by Israel, the occupying power, in turn leads to the dismantling of the Palestinian social structure and undermines the prospects for sustainable development.

This escalation has resulted in a clear deterioration in development indicators in the West Bank. Public transportation costs have increased on most routes due to road diversions and closures. For example, the average travel time from Nablus to any area has increased by 300% compared to normal times, which in turn caused fuel consumption to rise by 100% above normal levels². Transportation fares for citizens have also increased by 30–40% due to the barriers, with varying impacts on other cities. Access to medical services has been significantly affected, leading to critical delays in receiving care, as well as a decline in higher education enrollment rates in areas classified as Area C.

Overall, the West Bank has experienced severe economic shocks due to tightened movement restrictions, loss of access to the Israeli labor market, and Israeli military operations, especially in the northern West Bank. These crises have been exacerbated by increased Israeli deductions from clearance revenues, deepening the financial crisis and causing a 17% contraction in GDP. World Bank reports indicate a worsening economic and financial crisis in Palestine since October 2023, due to the decline in clearance transfers from the Israeli side and a sharp contraction in economic activity, particularly because of increasing movement restrictions and loss of access to the Israeli

¹ Humanitarian Situation Update #291 | West Bank <https://www.ochaopt.org/ar/content/humanitarian-situation-update-291-west-bank>

² Anadol Agency

³ World Bank report • https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/65cf93926fdb3ea23b72f277fc249a72-0500042021/related/mpo-pse.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

labor market. The Palestinian economy has lost nearly half a million jobs, including 144,000 in the West Bank and 148,000 workers inside the Green Line. This deterioration has led to a widening public financing gap and an increase in the poverty rate to 32.8%, with sharp disparities between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.⁴

All these changes impose a scientific and national necessity to analyze the new reality, monitor its social and economic impacts, and assess its risks in the short and long term, including threats to civil peace, the rise of violence and crime indicators, and the imbalance of power relations within Palestinian society. Hence, this paper is presented as a preliminary general framework for a comprehensive study on the social and economic effects of Israeli measures in the West Bank. The paper aims to clarify the overall picture of the changes that have occurred on the ground and within Palestinian society since the escalation of Israeli measures in October 2023, through a simplified descriptive and analytical presentation based on reliable data and reports, with a focus on social, economic, and security aspects within the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

This paper represents a preliminary first step, to be followed by a detailed study that will address all the themes in greater depth and breadth, including precise field and statistical analyses, aimed at providing accurate data for decision-makers and relevant institutions. This paper analyzes a set of topics related to the impact of Israeli measures on the Palestinian reality in the West Bank, focusing on the geographical transformations resulting from the escalation of barriers, gates, and movement restrictions, and the resulting social, economic, and security effects. The paper also offers an initial analysis of indicators of civil peace and structural violence under closure and escalation, highlighting a representative case study that illustrates the impact of barriers on emergency medical response through a study model of Beit Ula – Hebron. The analytical framework adopted in this paper is based on the priorities of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as an international reference for understanding and measuring structural societal risks, linking this framework to the dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially those related to health, education, equality, peace, and justice. The paper aims to contribute to building a deeper understanding of the increasing vulnerability in the Palestinian context, as a precursor to conducting the expanded study.

Theoretical Analytical Framework

The structural restrictions imposed by Israel in the West Bank — most notably the widespread presence of checkpoints, movement barriers, and geographical fragmentation — constitute a form of compounded and chronic risk that aligns with what the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction defines as underlying disaster risk factors⁵. These factors include poverty and inequality, poor urban management, and weak governance. In the Palestinian context, these factors are not attributed to internal shortcomings but rather to a entrenched colonial occupation system

⁴ World Bank report <https://www.albankaldawli.org/ar/news/press-release/2024/05/23/world-bank-issues-new-update-on-the-palestinian-economy>

⁵ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). 2017. The Sendai Framework Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction. "Underlying disaster risk drivers". Accessed 25 May 2025. <https://www.undrr.org/terminology/underlying-disaster-risk-drivers>.

that systematically obstructs access to services, restricts civilian space, and undermines the capacity of public institutions to plan and respond.

The second priority of the Sendai Framework focuses on "strengthening disaster risk governance" for effective disaster risk management. This priority is severely undermined in the West Bank, where local governments and civil institutions suffer from increasing incapacity due to Israeli control over Area C and other fragmented areas. Additionally, the erosion of social cohesion and the inability to invest in infrastructure (health, education, and access to justice) highlight the urgent need for Sendai-based risk assessments in fragile and occupied contexts like Palestine.

On the other hand, the ongoing escalation of Israeli restrictions on movement since October 2023 has severely hindered the Palestinian people's ability to achieve many of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to health (Goal 3), education (Goal 4), gender equality (Goal 5), and access to justice and peace (Goal 16). This cumulative impact of restricted access to healthcare, disrupted education, and increased vulnerability of women and marginalized groups reflects a pattern of systematic deprivation of development. According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the gap between Palestine and global averages in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals has worsened due to the structural restrictions of the occupation, including land fragmentation, deprivation of access to natural resources, and economic dependency. This calls for urgent examination of the necessary ⁶ interventions to address this risk.

Realistic Framework: The New Geographic Reality Resulting from Barriers, Gates, and Movement Restrictions

The widespread presence of Israeli barriers and gates in the West Bank forms a new geographic reality that redefines the spatial relationships between Palestinian villages and cities, transforming the natural geography into a politically imposed geography by force. Distance is no longer measured solely in kilometers but also by the number of barriers that must be crossed, their degree of openness or closure, and the risk involved in passing through them. These measures place Palestinians' lives in a state of "permanent exception," where their movement is controlled by a military system aimed at weakening and dismantling the social fabric and deliberately constricting daily life as a means of silently forcing displacement. According to the OCHA report issued in March 2025, the number of permanent obstacles (checkpoints, barriers, concrete blocks, gates) has risen to 849 obstacles. The documented obstacles include:

- 94 checkpoints staffed by occupation officers around the clock, seven days a week,
- 153 partial checkpoints (staffed intermittently by occupation officers), of which 45 have gates that frequently close,
- 205 road gates, of which 127 frequently close,
- 101 linear barriers (such as earth walls and trenches),
- 180 earthen embankments,

⁶ Report reveals the "almost impossibility" of achieving sustainable development in the occupied Palestinian territory due to Israeli policies. <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2022/07/1107982>

- and 116 roadblocks.

These figures do not include checkpoints established along the Green Line or other restrictions, such as the closure of Jenin camp to returning residents or the designation of certain areas as “closed military zones.” These restrictions do not always involve physical barriers on the ground

These obstacles create a state of "spatial fragmentation," where Palestinian areas are transformed into isolated cantons connected by narrow corridors under military control. In some cases, such as in the southern Hebron governorate, entire villages have become surrounded by barriers on all sides, effectively turning the residents into what resembles an "open prison," with no independent ability to move freely. It is not only movement between cities that has been affected but also internal movement within the cities themselves, as checkpoints are used as tools to control and restrict residents' movements even within their neighborhoods⁷. For example, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) documented more than 1,400 access restriction incidents between October 7, 2023, and July 31, 2024, characterized by prevention or delays imposed by the Israeli military, due to: Temporary closures of checkpoints and road gates:

- More than 300 incidents
- Deployment of “flying” (mobile) checkpoints: 380 incidents
- Activation of partial checkpoints staffed by Israeli occupation military personnel: 760 incidents

Systematic detention of Palestinians at these checkpoints is also documented. Since October 7, at least 580 arrests at checkpoints have been recorded. Emergency services, including ambulances and fire trucks, have been impeded due to increasing restrictions. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), incidents related to restricted access to health services between October 2023 and July 2024 have more than doubled compared to the previous nine months, rising from 138 to 387 incidents. Violations also included the arrest of paramedics and patients, as well as the military-style inspection of ambulances.⁸

This geographical change results in compounded effects, most notably:

- Increased and exhausting travel times, leading to reduced productivity and delays in accessing medical and educational services.
- Escalation of transportation costs, as public taxis have doubled their fares to compensate for longer detours.
- Disruption of social and family ties due to difficulties in visits and social mobility.

⁷ Humanitarian Situation Update #291 | West Bank <https://www.ochaopt.org/ar/content/humanitarian-situation-update-291-west-bank>

⁸ OCHA, Fact Sheet: Movement and Access in the West Bank, September 2024, [https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/fact-sheet-movement-and-access-west-bank-august-2024#:~:text=In%20Tulkarm%20governorate%2C%20Deir%20al,at%20around%20US\\$1.4%20million.](https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/fact-sheet-movement-and-access-west-bank-august-2024#:~:text=In%20Tulkarm%20governorate%2C%20Deir%20al,at%20around%20US$1.4%20million.)

Descriptive Analysis of Social and Economic Indicators: General Impacts of the Israeli Escalation

The Israeli escalation after October 2023, followed by tightened movement restrictions and increased checkpoints, has led to a structural deterioration in social and economic indicators in the West Bank. Several fundamental shifts affecting vital and essential sectors in the lives of Palestinians can be observed, most notably:

First: Social Impacts

1. Threat to the Social Fabric

Movement restrictions weaken social ties between population centers, especially those that relied on extended relations between cities and villages (such as family visits, participation in events, and community activities). This fragmentation creates feelings of isolation and increases marginalization and anger, particularly among the youth.

2. Rising Psychological and Social Pressures

Mental health organizations operating in the West Bank, such as Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), have documented a significant increase in anxiety and depression indicators, especially among young people and women in besieged areas or near contact points.⁹

3. Decline in Educational Opportunities

The inability to access schools and universities in several areas has led to partial or complete dropout for some students. This is mainly due to Israeli attacks on various components of the educational process, with 152 attacks on schools in the West Bank documented since October 7 until the time of writing this paper¹⁰. The increasing violence and movement restrictions since October have created new educational barriers for approximately 782,000 students. According to the Ministry of Education data, between 8% and 20% of West Bank schools have been closed since October 2023. Even in cases where schools remain open, fear of violence, movement restrictions, and mental health issues have led many students to skip school, resulting in further learning loss. On the other¹¹ hand, UNICEF has also documented restrictions on movement and access to health facilities, increasing children's exposure to severe violations and other harms affecting their physical and psychological safety.

The impact of closures and violence is not limited to depriving students of actual access to schools and universities; it also extends to the broader community environment that forms the fundamental

⁹ Doctors of the World, No Peace of Mind – Palestinian Mental Health Under Occupation <https://doctorsoftheworld.org/blog/no-peace-of-mind/?utm>

¹⁰ Ministry of Education and Higher Education moe.edu

¹¹ UNICEF Humanitarian Situation Report No. 30. <https://www.unicef.org/media/161911/file/SOP-Humanitarian-SitRep-31-August-2024.pdf>

support for the educational process. During prolonged crises or disasters such as occupation, the community's educational role diminishes due to the economic pressures faced by families and local communities. This leads to a decline in the priority given to education within households, alongside a rise in phenomena such as school dropout and child labor.

Furthermore, the restriction of civic spaces and youth and cultural initiatives, coupled with the weakening of civil society institutions, dismantles the protective framework for education as a social act, not merely a service provided inside classrooms. Children and youth, especially in marginalized areas, lose the motivation and engagement essential for learning and suffer from educational and psychological isolation, resulting in a collapse of the desire to learn and participate socially.

Second: Economic Impacts

1. Decline in Productivity and Damage to Labor Sectors

Movement restrictions have directly affected the agricultural sector, which relies on the daily movement of workers and farmers, as well as the ability to transport products to markets. Farmers have also been unable to harvest their lands due to checkpoints. According to data from the Ministry of Agriculture, since October 7, 2023, a total of 8,218 farmers in the West Bank have been affected¹², with direct agricultural damages estimated at around 76 million USD¹³. The occupation has established 29 new settler grazing outposts extending over thousands of dunams of agricultural and grazing lands, 70% of which are located in the eastern West Bank..¹⁴ Additionally, road networks have been destroyed; for example, occupation forces have damaged over 30 kilometers of main road networks in the city of Jenin, with estimated costs around 5 million USD. More than 5 kilometers of main roads in Tulkarm city and its camps have also been destroyed.

2. Increase in Transportation and Service Costs

Transportation costs have risen by between 25% and 45% in several areas, negatively impacting the prices of essential goods and families' ability to access basic services, especially health and education. Additionally, attacks by settlers on communities, citizens' property, and their means of transport have exacerbated the situation. For example, during occupation and settler attacks in Tulkarm and Jenin, the number of damaged vehicles in Tulkarm reached 364 vehicles valued at 2,265,950 shekels, and 241 vehicles in Jenin valued at 1,452,250 shekels. In other parts of the West Bank—reported cases—71 vehicles¹⁵ were damaged with an estimated value of around one million shekels.

¹² The destruction of the agricultural sector in Palestine is an Israeli war of a different kind.

<https://www.aljazeera.net/ebusiness2%D8%A9>

¹³ Al-Quds newspaper

¹⁴ Al-Hayat newspaper

¹⁵ Licensing Directorates in Tulkarm and Jenin

Shrinking Job Opportunities and Rising Unemployment Rates

Due to difficulties accessing workplaces, especially in industrial areas or those located behind the barrier wall, unemployment rates have increased, particularly among youth. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported a 22% economic decline in the West Bank¹⁶ caused by ongoing restrictions, closures, repeated incursions into governorates, and the prevention of Palestinian workers from entering Israel. The unemployment rate among the labor force aged 15 and above in the West Bank reached about 31% in the second quarter of 2024¹⁷, meaning one-third of the labor force participants are classified as unemployed. The overall labor underutilization rate reached approximately 34%. The unemployment rate for males was around 31% compared to about 30% for females. Among youth aged 19–29 with at least a diploma-level education, unemployment stood at about 39%—23% for males and 55% for females. Consequently, the overall unemployment rate in Palestine reached 51%.¹⁸

Third: Social Cohesion and Structural Violence

The structural Israeli restrictions reshape power relations within Palestinian society. The disruption of civic spaces and the weakening of opportunities for expression and community participation, due to restrictions on movement and gatherings, undermine the foundations of social cohesion and fuel manifestations of extremism and community anger, especially among frustrated youth.

In the first half of 2024, documented cases of violence against women increased compared to previous years, with 533 cases recorded in the West Bank¹⁹. In this regard, the Ministry of Social Development indicated that available statistics show that the rate of violence against women in Palestine is high and alarming. These statistics confirm that psychological violence is the most common form of violence faced by women, and that social, economic, and political factors contribute to exacerbating this problem.

Indicators of Social Cohesion and Violence in the Context of Escalation and Closure

Field developments in the West Bank since October 2023 show a troubling rise in indicators of social cohesion breakdown and increasing manifestations of structural and community violence, as a direct result of occupation policies related to closure and restriction, the diminished ability of

¹⁶ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. 2024. Main Results of the Quarterly National Accounts for the Second Quarter of 2024. Press Release. Ramallah, Palestine

¹⁷ Vision Center for Political Development, Palestinian Economic Performance, Second Quarter of 2024
<https://vision-pd.org8>

<https://www.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/105081>¹⁸

¹⁹ Ministry of Social Development: The rate of violence against women in Palestine is high and alarming.
[https://almuharer.gou.edu85 /](https://almuharer.gou.edu85/)

Palestinians to access justice and public services, and the worsening social and economic pressure on individuals and local communities.

Manifestations of Social Cohesion Breakdown

1. Weakening Trust in Official Institutions

Local institutions (municipalities, security forces, judiciary) fail to meet urgent needs in isolated or besieged areas, creating a gap between citizens and governance institutions, and fueling a general feeling of exclusion and lack of protection.

2. Shrinking Civic Spaces and Community Expression

Restrictions on movement and gatherings have disrupted public life (such as civil meetings, youth activities, and community initiatives), reducing the role of civil society in containing tensions and rebuilding social cohesion.

Rising Indicators of Community Violence

Under the exceptional conditions experienced in the occupied Palestinian territories, strengthening social cohesion is no longer a social choice or political luxury but a strategic necessity to build community resilience and ensure rapid response during crises and disasters. In any emergency scenario—whether caused by military aggression, structural collapse, or natural disaster—the initial community response serves as the first line of defense unless there is an effective community security system that preserves cohesion and prevents chaos. However, the current reality shows an increase in threats to social cohesion, due to the accumulation of political, economic, and social pressures, the breakdown of civil structures, and the targeting of justice system components by the occupation. Alarming signs have emerged in this context; for example, in Gaza following the recent Israeli aggression, where the complete collapse of the justice and governance system led to the rise of organized armed gangs that exploited the security vacuum and general fragmentation to impose a dangerous criminal reality threatening the very survival of the society.

In the West Bank, since October 2023, the occupation has accelerated a systematic policy of isolating entire areas from security and justice components by restricting police and court activities and preventing relevant agencies from performing their duties in certain communities. This isolation has led to a clear rise in crime manifestations and the emergence of serious incidents such as attempted bank robberies in some areas, amid a lack of sufficient security deterrence. These indicators are not merely immediate threats; their continuation signals that any forthcoming disaster—whether natural or man-made—will face a fragmented community unable to protect itself, thereby amplifying the impact and accelerating the collapse of the social system. Due to the absence of community security and the inability of security forces to reach some areas in time, crimes related to armed robbery and property disputes, especially in peripheral regions, have increased. The first half of 2024 witnessed a sharp rise in armed robbery crimes by 116% compared to the same period in 2023, with a total of 13 crimes recorded, 9 of which (70%) were solved, while 4 cases remain under investigation.

This increase — according to the police force — is attributed to the deterioration of security conditions due to the intensification of Israeli incursions in the West Bank, and the worsening economic situation caused by its suffocating measures, which, according to the World Bank report,

led to the loss of nearly half a million Palestinian jobs since October 2023, including 144,000 jobs in the West Bank, and 148,000 workers prevented from working inside Israel. These combined factors have created a crime-driving environment, especially with the economy losing about 3 billion dollars annually, which had been supported by mobile labor constituting 15% of the national income..²⁰

Additionally, the most vulnerable groups in society — such as women, people with disabilities, and the elderly — have become more exposed to exclusion due to geographical and institutional restrictions that have made access to basic services complicated or sometimes impossible. Residents of rural areas, particularly in Area C, have faced a dual deterioration in protection and services due to the absence of alternatives and weak infrastructure. If these indicators continue to rise without systematic intervention to restore social roles and strengthen local support networks, the risk of slipping into acute social fragmentation in the event of any major disaster or security crisis becomes likely, which weakens the community's resilience and multiplies post-crisis chaos.

The occupation does not limit itself to military and economic pressure but seeks to re-engineer the Palestinian social fabric by dismantling tools of self-organization such as education, municipalities, and justice, reshaping a weakened, fragmented, controllable society with limited responsiveness. Here lies the importance of fortifying social cohesion not only as a moral value but as part of the national resilience structure and effective disaster response.

Any national plan for disaster management or risk analysis must start with a central question: How can an effective community response be built in the absence of social cohesion? The answer begins now, through preemptive restoration of the social fabric, protecting justice systems and local governance, and ensuring the continuity of education, culture, and social awareness as early preventive tools no less important than rescue and relief.

The risks facing the West Bank are not limited to restrictions and closures imposed by the occupation but also extend to the possibilities of natural disasters, such as earthquakes or epidemics, which could cause a complete paralysis of the Palestinian context if they occur amid this fragile structure. The danger lies not only in weak infrastructure or equipment shortages but in the erosion of the social fabric itself, which has become incapable of organizing its response or maintaining control during critical moments.

Current data indicate that the social context is extremely fragile, not only at the institutional level but also in terms of community relations, public trust, and self-protection mechanisms. The emergence of signs of cohesion breakdown — such as escalating violence, local lawlessness, and loss of trust in formal frameworks — warns that any natural disaster could produce a far more severe scenario, not because of the disaster itself, but due to the inability to manage it socially.

The recent experience in the Gaza Strip serves as an early warning for this scenario. After the latest Israeli aggression and the near-total collapse of official institutions, a gang of more than 100 individuals emerged, forcibly taking humanitarian aid and distributing it at gunpoint amid the absence of authority and weakened protection institutions. This model is not an exception but an

²⁰ Almoharrer: Armed robberies of banks and gold shops threaten the West Bank economy
<https://almuharrer.gou.edu%D9%8A%D9%8F%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%AF-%D8%A7/>

inevitable result of social fragmentation and institutional vacuum, which could recur in any marginalized area in the West Bank if faced with a natural disaster without proper preparedness.

Community preparedness in Palestine is not only linked to infrastructure or official plans but fundamentally depends on the state of social cohesion and internal peace. Given the gradual deterioration of this peace, rapid recovery becomes nearly impossible, turning any disaster from a temporary event into a prolonged societal crisis that may generate new patterns of violence, domination, and injustice.

Gender, Age, and Disability-Based Discrimination

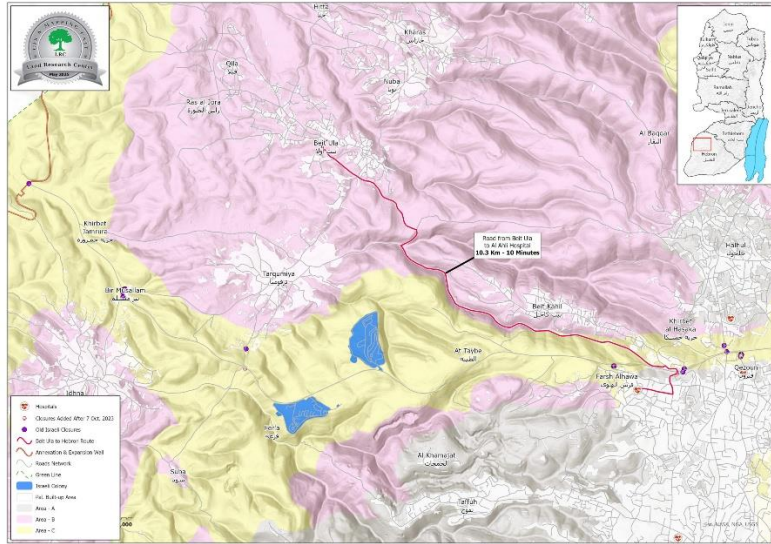
Structural discrimination has worsened due to Israeli-imposed obstacles, as follows:

- Women are unable to travel alone in closed-off areas because of checkpoints and security fears. For example, the ongoing operations in refugee camps in northern West Bank have severely disrupted sexual and reproductive health services and maternal and newborn care, depriving over 161,400 women of reproductive age and more than 71,000 adolescent girls in Jenin, Tulkarm, and Tubas of access to these services, according to a briefing by UNFPA and the Palestinian Ministry of Health²¹.
- Elderly people and persons with disabilities are isolated in their homes due to lack of alternative infrastructure (such as unpaved roads or absence of suitable transportation)
- Youth are excluded from their role in community work, which exacerbates their political and social alienation.

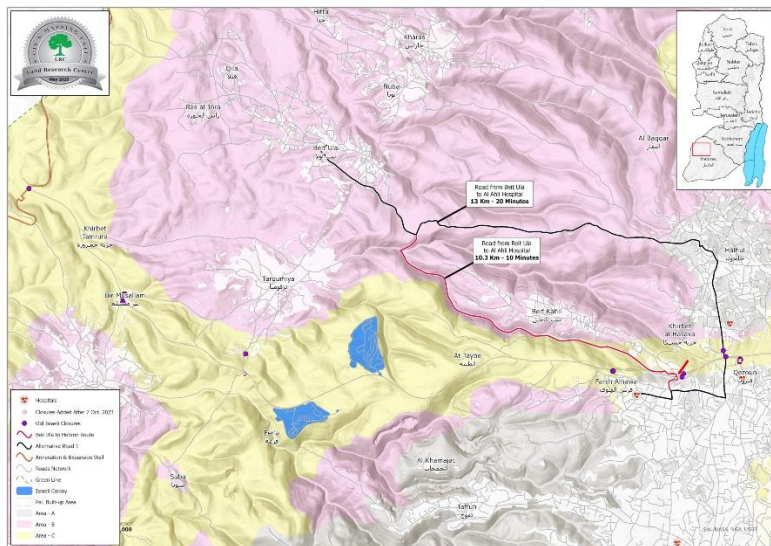
Case Study: Risk Analysis of the Impact of Israeli Checkpoints on Emergency Response – The Route from Beit Ula to Al-Ahli Hospital in Hebron

The four attached maps below illustrate several potential scenarios for ambulance movement from the town of Beit Ula to Al-Ahli Hospital in Hebron, serving as a case that can be generalized to other sectors. They reflect a highly complex field reality imposed by Israeli policies, particularly regarding movement restrictions and the geographic isolation enforced on Palestinian communities. The maps show that travel time varies significantly—from 10 minutes up to 30 minutes—or in some cases, access may be completely blocked, depending on the type of closure imposed on certain roads. This is despite the fact that the distance is no more than 10 km, which constitutes a serious risk indicator for patient safety and the responsiveness of the health system.

²¹ Humanitarian Situation Update #291 | West Bank <https://www.ochaopt.org/ar/content/humanitarian-situation-update-291-west-bank>



Route 1:
Distance: 10 km
Time: 10 minutes
From: Beit Ula
To: Al-Ahli Hospital – Hebron



Route 2:
Distance: 13 km
Time: 20 minutes
From: Beit Ula
To: Al-Ahli Hospital – Hebron

“possibilities” rather than “guaranteed access,” the entire system becomes highly exposed to disruption. In the Palestinian context, multiple route options do not indicate resilience but rather structural fragility, where first responders are often forced to make improvised decisions without real-time situational awareness—compromising their capacity to act swiftly and safely.

3. Impact on Social Cohesion and Public Trust

When ambulances are delayed or held at checkpoints, the resulting deterioration in health outcomes gradually erodes trust in health and national institutions. In highly fragile areas such as Area C, emergency medical care becomes more than a health issue—it becomes a test of collective dignity and institutional presence. These disruptions exacerbate social tensions, potentially triggering unrest in vulnerable communities.

4. Indicators of Inequitable Service Distribution

The heavy reliance on urban-based hospitals underscores the inequality in access to life-saving services, especially for rural and marginalized communities that lack local health infrastructure. The absence of primary emergency care facilities in these areas increases system centralization, creating accessibility gaps that can become critical in disaster scenarios.

Conclusion: Risk Summary for the Case Study

What the maps reveal is not merely a change in geography, but a transformation in the temporal dimension of survival. A 10- to 20-minute delay in ambulance access is not an administrative lapse; it is a risk indicator with existential implications for the healthcare system and the protection of life. This micro-level case—from Beit Ula to Hebron—illustrates a broader systemic dilemma in the West Bank under conditions of imposed movement restrictions: the erosion of emergency preparedness, and the growing inability of communities to respond effectively in their most vulnerable moments.

Conclusion

One of the most serious consequences of the structural reality imposed by the occupation’s policies in the West Bank is the weakening of Palestinian society’s ability to build an effective national system for disaster preparedness and response. Disasters—whether resulting from human interventions or natural causes—require a coherent institutional framework in which pre-planning integrates with community preparedness, and in which roles are coordinated between state institutions, civil society, and local authorities.

However, the absence of this integrated framework, the restrictions on the work of municipalities and institutions in Area C, and the erosion of civic spaces all render public preparedness a mere theoretical slogan that clashes with a reality marked by lack of capabilities, information disruption, and the absence of supply lines. Community preparedness cannot be meaningfully discussed in the absence of the fundamental infrastructure that sustains it—such as early warning systems, community evacuation plans, and awareness-raising around emergency risks.

Amid this institutional vacuum and mounting pressure on citizens, disasters shift from being circumstantial events to becoming a sustained structure of fragility. Communities lose their adaptive capacity and are re-engineered into a state of incapacity and fragmentation, unable to protect themselves or regain balance after crises.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) form the cornerstone of any national effort to build community resilience in the Palestinian context. However, the intensification of occupation-related restrictions since October 2023—including closures, movement restrictions, and geographic isolation—has deepened developmental gaps and eroded the possibility of achieving even the minimum thresholds of protection, justice, and dignity.

In the health sector, access to medical services—particularly in rural and marginalized areas—has become a matter of daily survival, reflecting a lack of comprehensive understanding of the risks facing individuals and society. This dysfunction reveals weaknesses in overall preparedness and a lack of institutional and community capacity for rapid emergency response, at a time when the health system requires flexibility and anticipatory planning.

In the education sector, forms of marginalization have been entrenched through difficulties in accessing schools, increased school dropouts, and attacks on educational infrastructure. These realities undermine investment in human capital and produce an environment unable to transmit knowledge or protect rising generations from the consequences of violence and closures. This regression not only undermines education quality but also limits societal recovery opportunities during crises.

Meanwhile, ongoing pressures have deepened gender inequalities, as women face further restrictions and increased caregiving burdens, while their opportunities for social and economic participation diminish. This marginalization accelerates in the absence of protection mechanisms and community support, especially in closed and service-poor areas. These conditions also reflect on the justice sector, where limited access to courts and police stations has weakened law enforcement and increased reliance on informal solutions that do not always guarantee fairness. This further entrenches legal ambiguity and undermines institutional credibility in the eyes of citizens.

This entire reality illustrates a failure to implement the priorities of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction—whether in understanding the nature of the risks facing Palestinian society (Priority 1), strengthening governance capable of addressing these risks (Priority 2), investing in the foundations of civil and service-based resilience (Priority 3), or achieving effective preparedness and response during emergencies (Priority 4).

In light of these conditions, it is not possible to speak of sustainable development or community protection without acknowledging that the occupation has created a continuous risk environment—one that hinders progress, reproduces fragility, and drains developmental efforts of their substance. Confronting this reality begins with restoring the value of a comprehensive protection system and ensuring the activation of national frameworks within an integrated vision that combines development, prevention, and community peacebuilding.

In conclusion, this paper presents a preliminary general framework aimed at providing an initial analytical reading of the structural transformations taking place in the West Bank amid the intensifying occupation measures since October 2023. It has sought to shed light on the most prominent indicators linked to social and economic deterioration, the erosion of civil peace, and the increasing severity of isolation imposed on Palestinian communities.

However, this framework does not replace the need for an expanded and comprehensive study that will be conducted later. That study will examine the realities and needs of each area separately, based on the degree of closure, the nature of the threats it faces, and the level of infrastructure and basic services degradation. The expanded study will be dedicated to detailing the spatial and social specificities of each location and identifying priority vulnerabilities and needs in a manner that contributes to building context-sensitive, evidence-based strategic interventions.