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Advocacy Brief

Escalating Displacement Crisis in the West Bank

July 2026

Executive Summary

The West Bank is experiencing an escalating displacement crisis, which has sharply intensified in the past two years due to the war and its hostilities including demolitions, settlement expansion, and systemic restrictions on Palestinian communities. According to OCHA, over 3,200 Palestinians have been displaced from 33 communities that have been effectively emptied of residents across the West Bank, including areas emptied in 2023, 2024, and early 2025 (OCHA Humanitarian Situation Report, 10 July 2026). The assessment reveals that 96% remain displaced, with repeated displacement cycles, loss of homes and livelihoods, and deteriorating living conditions¹. Families are unable to secure safe and adequate shelter, while children, women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities face disproportionate risks. This crisis is not only a humanitarian emergency; it undermines social stability, deepens poverty, and threatens the viability of a future Palestinian state, and it raises serious concerns under international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention's protections against forcible transfer, collective punishment, and the destruction of civilian property.

Immediate donor and policy-maker action is critical to safeguard housing, land, and property (HLP) rights, prevent irreversible dispossession, and protect the foundations of peace and stability.

Context and Drivers of Displacement

The recent military escalations in the West Bank, especially in refugee camps like Jenin and Tulkarem, have sharply increased internal displacement, destroying homes, schools, and vital infrastructure. These attacks compound long-standing pressures from settlement expansion, demolitions, and land confiscations, while legal and administrative restrictions prevent families from rebuilding. Ongoing settlement-expansion policies – including the 22 announced illegal settlement plans and the annexation plans for E1 – and Israeli-led land-registration efforts in Area C further compound the crisis, eroding tenure security and threatening Palestinians' long-term presence.² Combined with escalating settler violence and military-imposed restrictions, these dynamics are driving a cycle of repeated and protracted displacement, leaving refugee camps at the epicenter of the crisis.

¹ Results are based on an assessment conducted by the Shelter Cluster with a sample of 2,960 households in the West Bank, including residents of refugee camps and villages that were affected by forcible displacement. (Analysis of Shelter Needs of Displaced Families in the Northern West Bank).

² United Nations Palestinian Rights Committee Bureau Denounces E1 Settlement Plan, Demands Immediate Halt of All Illegal Settlement Activity, 28 August 2025, United Nations Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General.

Key Figures: West Bank

Demolitions & Hostilities



2,420 homes Damaged or Destroyed

Over 2,420 homes (82%) damaged or destroyed, leaving families without permanent shelter.

Repeated Displacement



2.5 Times Displaced

Families have been displaced on average 2.5 times, since the start of the war.

Concentration of Displacement



2,766 Households Displaced

Tulkarem (1,561 households) and Jenin (1,205 households) are the epicenters of displacement.

Vulnerable Households



25% Vulnerable Households

Are headed by women, elderly, or children, heightening protection concerns.

Sustained international support and engagement is needed to protect vulnerable communities, uphold international law, and safeguard Palestinian right to housing and development in these areas.

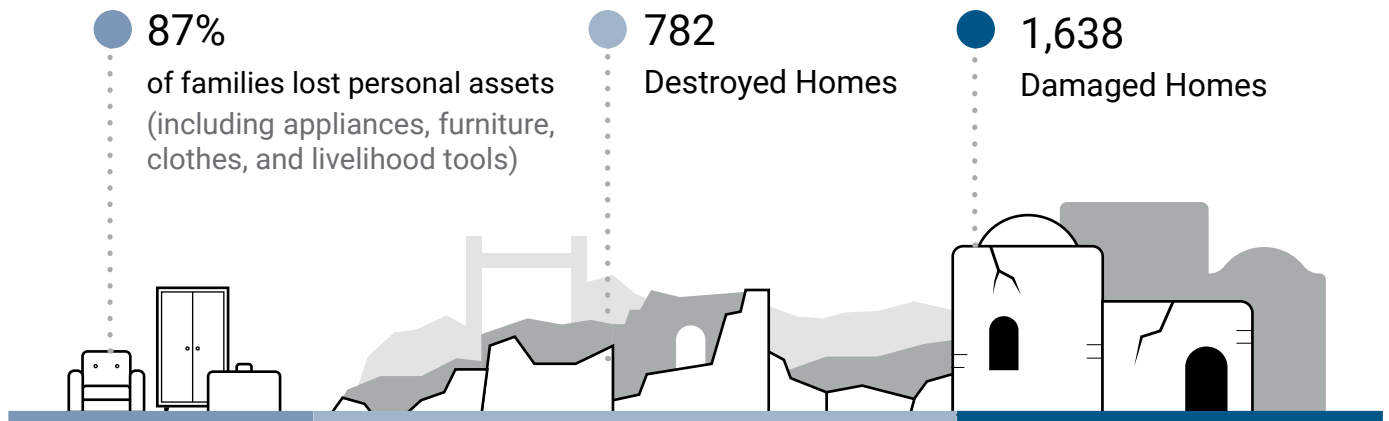
Humanitarian Impact

The humanitarian toll of displacement in the West Bank is devastating, with children, women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities bearing the heaviest burden. Families are uprooted repeatedly, often forced into overcrowded shelters where privacy and dignity are lost, while community safety nets are stretched beyond capacity. These conditions heighten exposure to gender-based violence (GBV), particularly for women and girls who face increased risks in unsafe, overcrowded, and unprotected environments. Beyond the loss of homes, the escalation in refugee camps has also severely damaged essential infrastructure, placing additional strain on nearby communities that serve as refuge for the displaced.

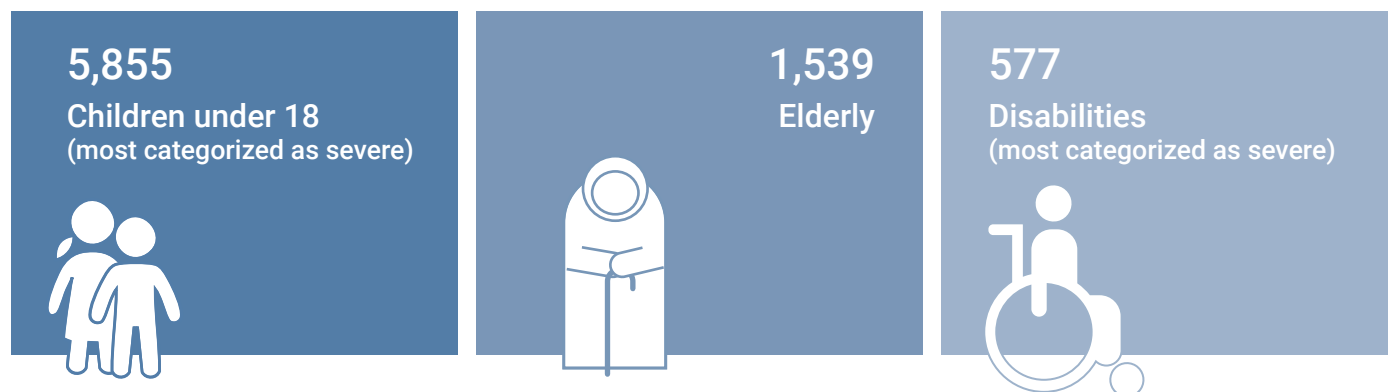
At the same time, the collapse of livelihoods once sustained through farming, wage labor, or access to markets has stripped families of reliable income, leaving them unable to meet even their most basic needs for rent, food, water, and electricity. With private rentals unaffordable for most, families are increasingly pushed into temporary shelters, unfinished buildings, or prefabricated units as fallback options. Hosting by relatives, though common, is becoming unsustainable due to overcrowding, lack of privacy, and poor sanitation. This dual crisis of protection and economic survival has left households trapped in precarious, short-term living arrangements that fail to meet basic standards of safety and dignity. For children especially, displacement means not only the loss of home but the disruption of education, stability, and a sense of security. Without urgent support, the gap between needs and available resources will only grow wider, pushing families deeper into precarity and making recovery nearly impossible.

Key Figures

Loss of homes and assets

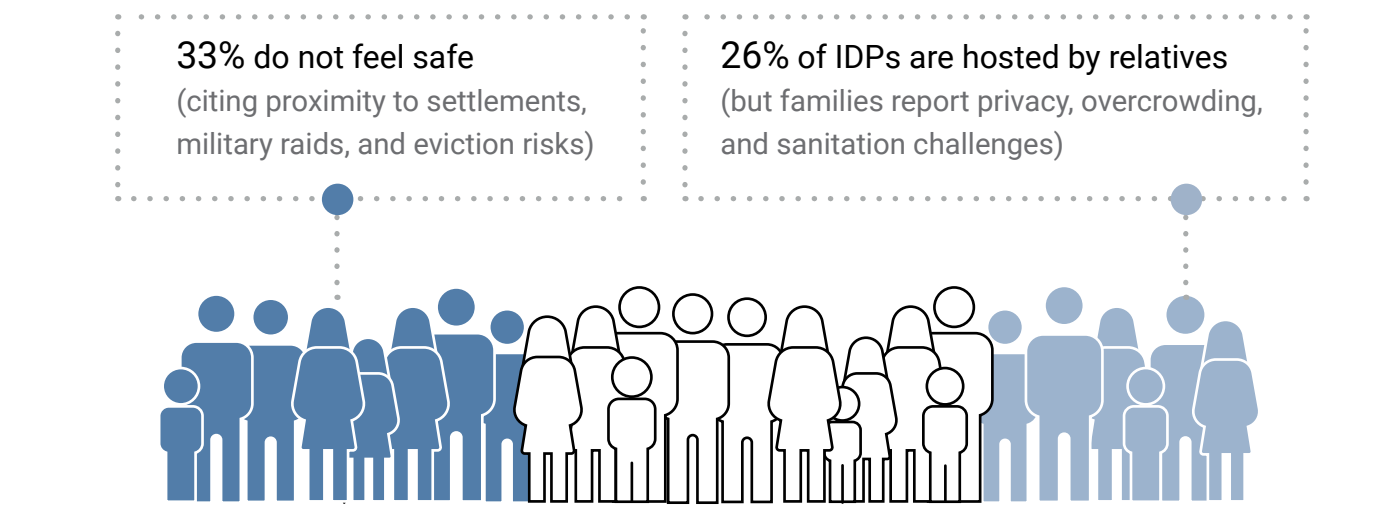


Demographics & Vulnerabilities



Household Size: Average of 6.27 persons per household, with 39% sharing shelters with other families

Living Conditions



Living Conditions



2,038 families
face difficulties in accessing **transportation**



1,973 families
face difficulties in accessing **healthcare**



1,662 families
face difficulties in accessing **education**

Economic Devastation



17% families report regular income
(averaging 2,160 ILS/month)



2,200 households saw income decrease
(largely due to displacement and job loss)



7.8% families can pay rent sustainably
(forcing 21% into unfinished buildings or 24% into collective temporary housing)

Immediate action is critical to safeguard lives, protect rights, and ensure that displaced families are not trapped in unsafe, undignified shelter conditions that risk turning displacement into a permanent reality for thousands of Palestinians.

Policy & Legal Dimensions

Forced displacement and demolitions in the West Bank constitute clear violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including the prohibition on forcible transfer. At the same time, accelerated settlement expansion and the pervasive military presence are fragmenting Palestinian land, eroding territorial contiguity, and undermining the viability of a two-state solution. Palestinian institutions, meanwhile, face severe restrictions on planning and land governance, leaving communities in a state of legal limbo where they are unable to build, recover, or secure their HLP rights.

Key Messages

The displacement crisis in the West Bank is worsening and risks becoming permanent.

Evidence is clear: nearly every surveyed family remains displaced, with repeated uprooting, economic collapse, and unsafe living conditions.

Addressing displacement is central to humanitarian protection, development resilience, and the political horizon for peace.

The international community must act now. Through funding, advocacy, and political leverage to prevent the permanent forced displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank.

These policies not only perpetuate displacement but also entrench instability, making urgent international engagement essential to protect rights and uphold the foundations for a just and sustainable peace.

Advocacy Priorities for Donors & Policy-Makers

Protect At-Risk Communities: Scale up legal aid, protective presence, and rapid response to prevent further demolitions and evictions. **Safeguard HLP Rights:** Support the registration of land and property rights and ensure their formal recognition through secure documentation and digitized records that protect Palestinian claims.

Invest in Shelter & Resilience: Provide rental subsidies, reconstruction support, and prefabricated housing for displaced families; and integrate shelter support with WASH, health, and education access.

Restore Livelihoods & Income: Expand cash assistance, employment schemes, and market access to prevent aid dependency.

Diplomatic Engagement: Exert diplomatic pressure to halt demolitions, settlement expansion, and forced displacement; and elevate displacement as a systemic barrier to recovery, peace, and statehood.

If immediate action is not taken, the surge in displacement witnessed in recent months risks becoming a permanent condition for thousands of Palestinians, with irreversible humanitarian and political consequences.



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