Israel's Crimes in the West Bank: The Nineteenth Newsletter (2025)



Malak Mattar (Palestine), *If the Olive Tree Knew*, 2025.

Dear friends,

Greetings from the desk of **Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research**.

In 1948, the newly proclaimed Israeli government seized **78**% of Palestinian land and expelled more than half of the population (750,000 people) from their villages and towns. This act disregarded United Nations General Assembly **Resolution 181** (1947), which called for the termination of the colonial British Mandate and the partition of Palestine into a Palestinian and a Jewish state. This process came to be known as the *Nakba* (Catastrophe).

The Palestinians gathered in Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the neighbouring Arab states in the hope that they would soon be able to return to their homes. Indeed, UN General Assembly **Resolution 194** (1948) noted that 'refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be

permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid'. Nothing of the sort ever happened – Palestinians are still waiting for that 'earliest practicable date'.

In September 1948, Palestinians hastily **organised** the All-Palestine Government in Gaza, a largely nominal attempt to exercise sovereignty over their stolen lands. Many of its officials, including Prime Minister Ahmed Hilmi Pasha Abd al-Baqi (1882–1963) and Foreign Minister Jamal al-Husseini (1894–1982), came from elite Palestinian families, their political vision shaped by the distress of their great ruin. Following the 1949 Armistice Agreements – signed between Israel and its neighbouring states Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria after the 1948 war – most of the territory that was not occupied by Israel came under the control of Jordan and Egypt: Jordan controlled what is now the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip was administered by Egypt.

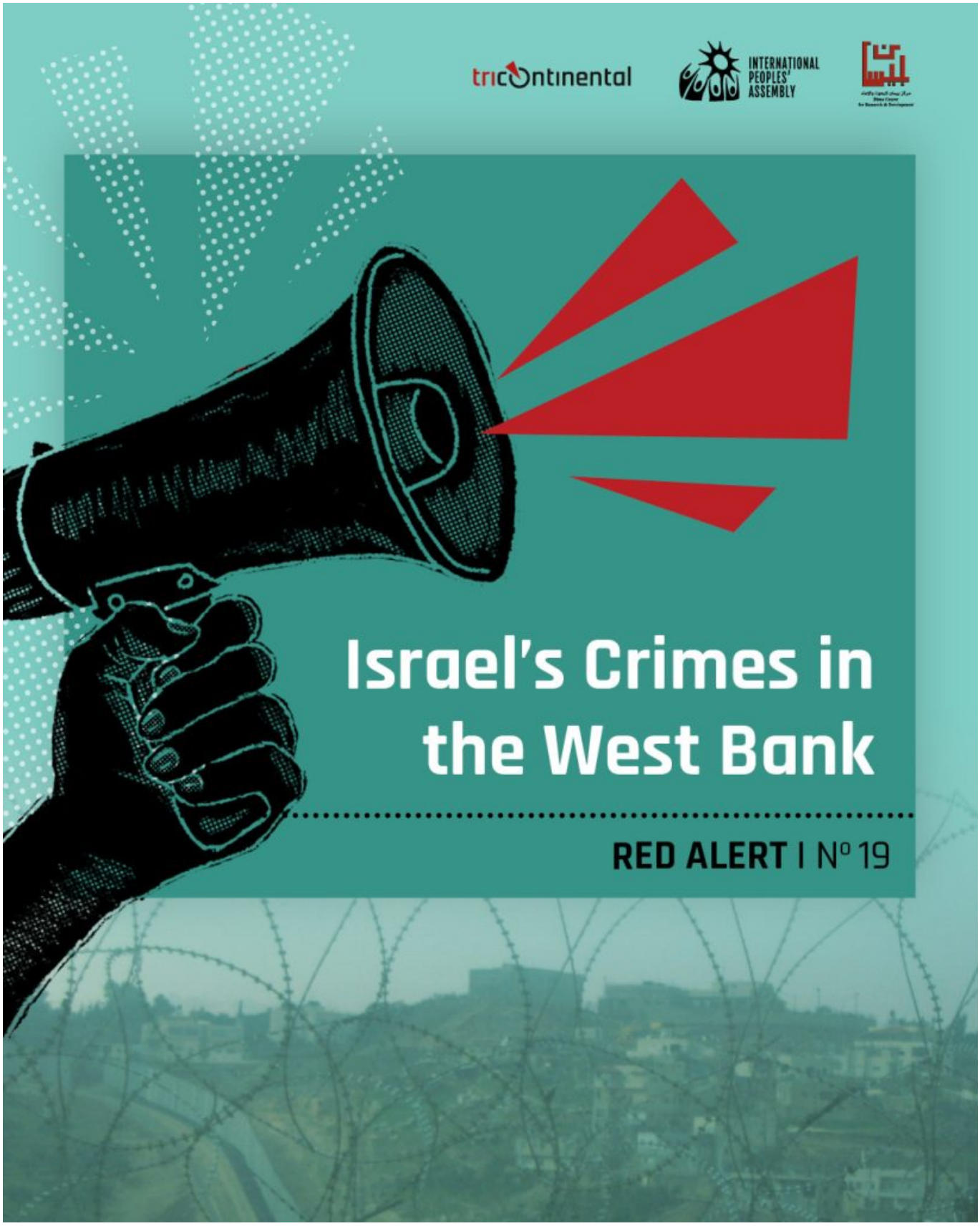


Samah Shihadi (Palestine), *Harvest Break no. 1*, 2017.

In 1967, Israel seized the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza. UN peacekeepers fled the region. At least 750,000 Palestinians **fled** their lands in this second exodus, later called the *Naksa* (Setback). That same year, the UN Security Council passed **Resolution 242**, calling for Israel to end its occupation of these three regions. From that point on, the UN started to formally refer to these areas as 'territories occupied by Israel since 1967'. In October 1999 – following the establishment of the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs the previous year – the UN **adopted** the term Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) as its official designation to refer to Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, directly referencing the

language of 'occupied territories' used in the 1949 **Fourth Geneva Convention**. This designation makes Israel's continued occupation of the OPT illegal under international law, including its settlements in the West Bank, its **wall** around the West Bank, its annexation of East Jerusalem, and its **incarceration** of Gaza.

Since October 2023, Israel has heightened its **genocide** against Palestinians in Gaza. Israel's actions have also intensified in the other parts of the OPT – the West Bank and East Jerusalem – though they have not received the attention they deserve due to the horrific violence in Gaza. Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research partnered with the Bisan Center for Research and Development (Ramallah, Palestine) to produce **red alert no. 19** , 'Israel's Crimes in the West Bank', on the situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Since its foundation in 1989, the Bisan Center, which has a special focus on women's rights, has been one of the leading institutes for social research in Palestine (their 2011 **report**, for instance, is a landmark text on gender-based violence in the OPT). In this red alert, we will simply lay out the facts – as documented by the United Nations – about the assault on Palestinian society in these sectors of the OPT.



Oslo II and the Occupied Palestinian Territory

In September 1995, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the Israeli government **signed** the

Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Oslo II), which initiated a process aimed at eventually creating a Palestinian state adjacent to Israel in parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). The OPT only **accounts** for 22% of historic Palestine (defined as the territory that was under the British Mandate). In other words, Palestinians were left less than a quarter of their historic land, and even on that land, they have little to no authority. Following the interim agreement, the West Bank was divided into **three areas**:

1. Area A, which is technically under full Palestinian civil and security control through the Palestinian Authority and constitutes approximately 18% of the West Bank, or 3.96% of historic Palestine.
2. Area B, which is under Palestinian civil control through the Palestinian Authority but effectively with Israeli security control and makes up around 22% of the West Bank, or 4.62% of historic Palestine.
3. Area C, which is fully controlled by Israel and comprises over 60% of the West Bank, or 13.42% of historic Palestine.

Effectively, according to the logic of Oslo II – and after the annexation of East Jerusalem and occupation of Gaza – Israel controls 97% of historic Palestine.



Rahaf Haj (Palestine), *Ali Choking no. 2*, 2024.

The Suffocation of Palestinians in the West Bank

Israel's operations in the West Bank have been designed to make life unbearable for Palestinians. The controls and restrictions on **movement** have made it virtually impossible for Palestinians to educate their youth and employ their adults. Before October 2023, Israel operated **590** roadblocks and checkpoints in the West Bank, which has risen to nearly **900** since then and resulted in a near-complete stoppage of basic human activity. It has become impossible for Palestinians to **access** water and land for agricultural production as well as the potable **water** necessary for a decent life. Israel's **criminalisation** of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has severely disrupted the organisation's operations, preventing Palestinian refugees (roughly a **quarter** of the Palestinians who live in the West Bank) from accessing basic education, health, and employment services.

Displacement and Confiscation

Israel is carrying out ethnic cleansing in the West Bank, using tactics such as shootings, pogroms, sexual violence, and the destruction of homes and farms to expel people from their lands even more rapidly. Since the start of Operation Iron Wall in January 2025, the Israeli military has forcibly displaced 8,255 Palestinian families from their homes in the refugee camps of Jenin (3,840 families displaced), Nur Shams (1,910 families displaced), and Tulkarm (2,505 families displaced). These families are the direct descendants of the Palestinian refugees who were ethnically cleansed from their homes during the 1948 Nakba and have been denied their right of return ever since. In addition to these refugee camps, Israel's occupation forces – which include both the formal Israeli army and armed Israeli settlers – **drove** 28 Palestinian communities off their lands between January 2022 and September 2023 and destroyed over 3,500 built structures, including homes, livestock sheds, and water cisterns in the West Bank between October 2023 and April 2025.



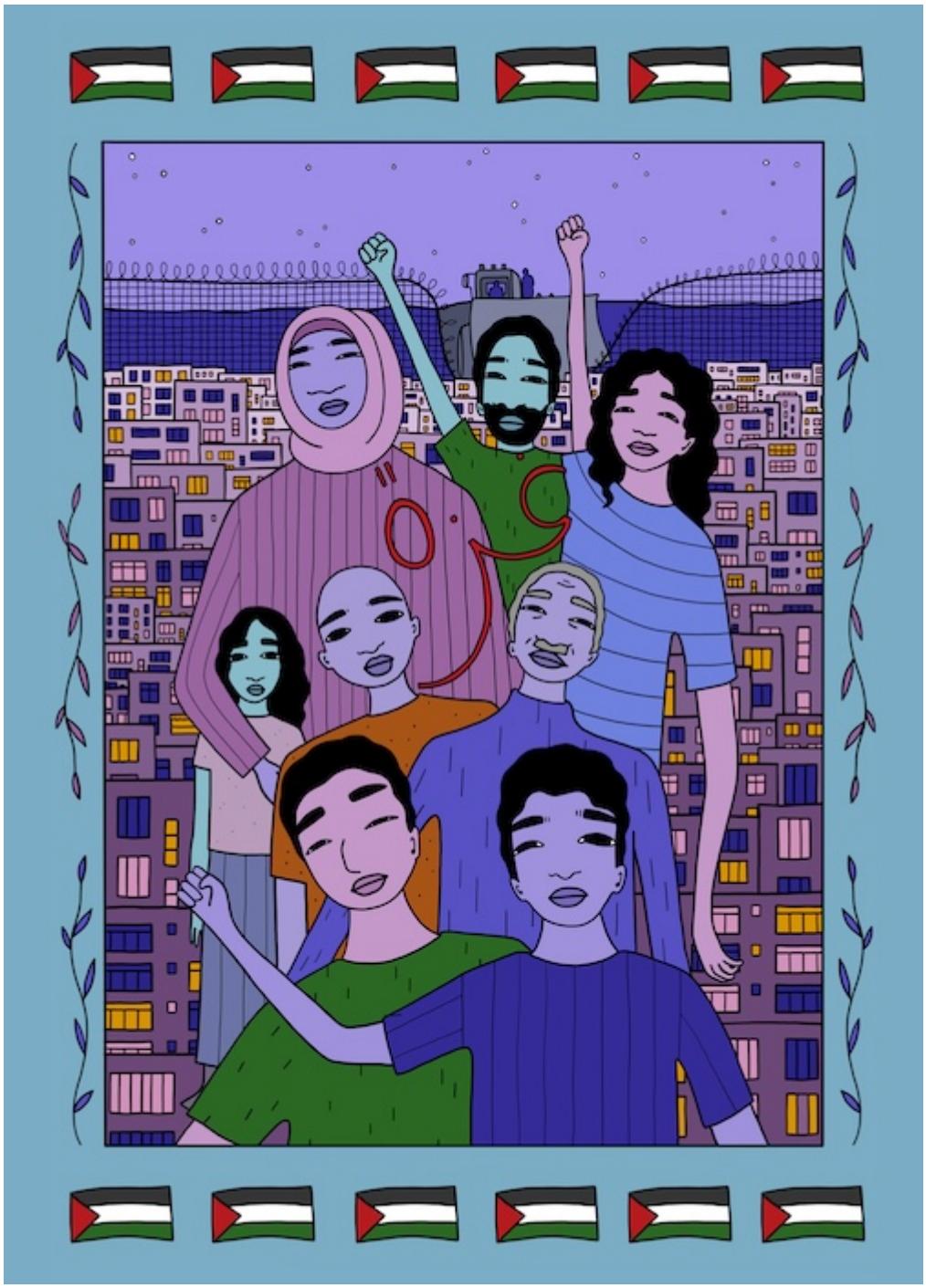
Haneen Nazzal (Palestine), *Against*, 2022.

Death, Arrest, and Torture

Since October 2023, Israel's occupation forces have **killed** approximately 900 Palestinians in the West Bank, including at least 190 children, and injured 8,400 more. These numbers are likely higher given the lack of humanitarian organisations to properly document the violence carried out by Israel in an area whose institutions have been deeply impacted by the genocide and ongoing occupation. Since late 2023, Israel's occupation forces have arrested 15,000 Palestinians, many under the category of 'administrative detention', which does not require a formal charge (these figures are likely deflated due to the severe restrictions on legal

representation). Since 7 October 2023, there have been more than 65 documented cases of Palestinians being murdered in Israeli prisons, detention centres, and concentration camps. Sexual violence is routine in these camps.

The Bisan Center for Research and Development, the International Peoples' Assembly, and Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research call upon intellectuals, civil society groups, and political and social organisations to pay close attention to the developments not only in Gaza, but also in the other parts of the OPT. The ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity cannot be ignored or allowed to continue with impunity.



Aude Abou Nasr (Lebanon), *Gaza*, 2023.

Fadwa Hafez Tuqan was born in the Palestinian city of Nablus in 1917. By the time she died in 2003, her city was under Israeli military rule as part of the occupied West Bank. The poet Mahmoud Darwish wrote a eulogy for her that reflected on how she, like others, had to write poetry in the face of the earthshattering events of 1948 and 1967. 'What does the poet do in a time of catastrophe?', Darwish **asked**. 'Suddenly, the poet must get out of himself to the outside, and poetry is the witness'. One of her most celebrated **poems** is 'The Seagull and the Negation of the Negation', **published** on 15 November 1979 in Jerusalem's *Attali'ah*, a weekly newspaper that ran from 1977 to 1995 carrying voices of the Palestinian left:

> It crossed the horizon and divided the darkness,
> Mastering the blue, darting on wings of light –
> Twisting, turning, and still turning.
> It knocked at my dark window, and the gasping silence quivered:
> *Bird, is it good news you bring?*
> It told me its secret, and yet breathed not a word.
> Then, the seagull disappeared.
>
> Bird, my seabird, I now know
> That during hard times, standing in the tunnel of silence,
> All things change.
> Seeds sprout even within the heart of the dead,
> Morning burst out of darkness.
> I know now,
> As I hear horses galloping, the call of death along the shores,
> That when the flood comes,
> The world will be cleansed of its sorrows.
>
> Bird, my seabird, rising from the depth of darkness,
> God's blessings upon you for the good news you bring.
> For I know now
> Something happened… the horizon parted, and the house greeted the light of the day.

Warmly,

Vijay