

National Conflicts, Food Sovereignty and Development Cooperation
Implications for Peace and Development in Countries in Conflict Situations
Case of Palestine

The colonization, occupation, and closure experienced in Palestine over the past several decades have caused the local food and agricultural system to fall into steep decline. As in most conflicts of this nature, Palestine has also attracted the attention and funding of the international community. This paper will address the impact that this interest from the international development sector has had on Palestine's food system, arguing that both the Israeli occupation and the international donor community contribute to the inability of Palestinian farmers to achieve sovereignty over their food system, a contention which has also been addressed in recent work by Zurayk and Gough.¹

I. General background of the national conflict

The roots of the current conflict in historic Palestine date to before the creation of Israel in 1948 with the 1916 Sykes Picot Agreement, which sought to divide West Asia between European powers, and the subsequent arrival of the British colonial regime in Palestine. Immigration of European Jews to Palestine dramatically increased under the British Mandate, substantially changing the ethnic makeup of the country.

Year	Historical Situation	Land Owned by Indigenous Palestinians (%)
1917	Beginning of British Mandate and release of Balfour Declaration	98.5
1945	Foreign Jewish Immigration and Land Purchases facilitated by the British Mandate	92
1947	United Nations Partition Plan, which was rejected by the indigenous Palestinian population (proportion of Jewish population was 31.7% at this time)	44
1948	Establishment of the State of Israel and displacement of Palestinians to the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and beyond	22
2000	Construction of the Apartheid Wall	13
2012	Continued impact of the ongoing construction of the Apartheid Wall and annexation of land in the occupied Palestinian territories (proportion of Jewish population was 48.7%)	8

Source: Land Research Centre. Presentation given at the "West Asia/North Africa Civil Society Mechanism Consultation" conference, Amman, Jordan, September 12-13, 2013.

After a series of terror campaigns by Zionist extremist groups in the region, The creation of the Israeli state in 1948 was brought about through a combination of complicity by international powers, including the British government and the newly created United Nations, and a campaign of terror by Jewish extremist groups in the region (such as the Irgun, Haganah, and Stern Gang), to give substantial amounts of Palestinian land to the newly arrived Jewish immigrants. When Palestinians resisted, dispossession and

¹ Zurayk, Rami, and Anne Gough. *Control food, control people: The struggle for food security in Gaza*. Institute for Palestine Studies, 2013.

forced displacement followed, with more than 800,000² Palestinians were driven from their homes in what is referred to as the ‘Nakba’, or catastrophe.

Many of these Palestinian refugees fled to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, which remained free from Israeli control until 1967, when Israel became the occupying power following the Six Day War. Both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have remained under Israeli occupation ever since.

Palestinians face a highly militarized Israeli society that promotes division along ethnic lines. All Israelis, with the exception of Arab-Israelis, must serve in the army for two years or more. Organizations such as Breaking the Silence,³ based on detailed testimonies of former soldiers, expose the extreme views with which soldiers are indoctrinated during their time in service. During research for a 2012 report on Palestinian children held in military custody, the British lawyers conducting the research found that every Palestinian child is considered by the Israeli military to be a “potential terrorist”,⁴ which lessens the likelihood that they are also seen as normal children. Under Israeli military legislation, Palestinians can be held in ‘administrative detention’, which allows Israelis to hold Palestinians in detention without laying charges or allowing a trial; there are currently at least 660 Palestinians being held under administrative detention.⁵ Unarmed Palestinians are also often killed by Israeli soldiers and settlers, who almost always face complete impunity for their crimes⁶

Today, Palestinians make up the largest refugee population in the world, with at least 6.6 million refugees by the end of 2008,⁷ including many still living in refugee camps in neighboring Arab countries and the oPt. Nearly five million Palestinians live under Israeli military occupation in Gaza and the West Bank.⁸

The people of the Gaza Strip have also been subject to harsh collective punishment by the Israeli regime. Gaza has been under illegal closure since 2007, with borders and coastline fully controlled by Israel, with the exception of the Western border, which is controlled by Egypt.⁹ Gaza has also experienced three intense military attacks since 2007, which killed nearly 4000 people in a combined total of just 77 days.¹⁰

Population of the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt)

West Bank population: 2.9 million^a

Gaza population: 1.85 million^a

Total population (oPt): 4.75 million^a

% Urban population (oPt): 73.9%^b

% Rural population (oPt): 16.7%^b

% Refugee camp pop. (oPt): 9.4%^b

* a further 6.14 million Palestinians live in the Diaspora, and 1.47 million live within the state of Israel
^a PCBS 2015

² Institute for Middle East Understanding (IMEU). Quick Facts: The Palestinian Nakba. (May 13, 2015).

<http://imeu.org/article/quick-facts-the-palestinian-nakba>

³ Breaking the Silence <http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/>

⁴ Sedley, Rt Hon Sir Stephen, et al. “Children in Military Custody” (June 2012): 30

http://www.childreninmilitarycustody.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Children_in_Military_Custody_Full_Report.pdf

⁵ Adameer. “On Administrative Detention” (December 2015).

http://www.addameer.org/israeli_military_judicial_system/administrative_detention

⁶ Baroud, Ramzy. “How Impunity Defines Israel and Victimized Palestinians,” *Al Jazeera* (27 March, 2016)

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/03/impunity-defines-israel-victimises-palestinians-160327085608275.html>

⁷ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). Special Statistical Bulletin On the 64th Anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba. http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/nakba_64E.pdf

⁸ PCBS. Population statistics. http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/lang__en/881/default.aspx#Population

Palestinians living in what is now Israel also face threats, harassment, and attack by the Israeli authorities, including destruction of crops and livestock.¹¹ This is particularly prevalent in the Naqab region and the city of Jerusalem, both which are areas that Zionists are actively trying to Judaize through the dispossession of the Palestinians that have been living there for centuries.

Israel receives substantial foreign assistance from the United States, primarily in the form of military aid. Since the late 1960s, when the American relationship with Israel became a core focus of US policy in West Asia¹² the United States has been the biggest ally and financial backer of the Israeli settler-colonial state.¹³ Each year, the U.S. gives over three billion dollars in financial and military support to Israel,¹⁴ and in 2007 committed to a 10-year, \$30 billion military aid package.¹⁵

US Foreign Aid to Israel: Total Aid 1949 to Present, in Millions of Dollars.

1949	\$100.0	1966	\$126.8	1983	\$2,205.6	2000	\$4,132.0
1950	n/a	1967	\$23.7	1984	\$2,631.6	2001	\$2,876.1
1951	\$35.1	1968	\$106.5	1985	\$3,676.7	2002	\$2,850.7
1952	\$86.4	1969	\$160.3	1986	\$3,663.5	2003	\$3,745.2
1953	\$73.6	1970	\$93.6	1987	\$3,040.2	2004	\$2,687.3
1954	\$74.7	1971	\$634.3	1988	\$3,043.4	2005	\$2,612.2
1955	\$52.7	1972	\$480.9	1989	\$3,045.6	2006	\$2,534.5
1956	\$50.8	1973	\$492.8	1990	\$3,434.9	2007	\$2,503.2
1957	\$40.9	1974	\$2,646.3	1991	\$3,712.3	2010	\$2,423.9
1958	\$85.4	1975	\$803.0	1992	\$3,100.0	2011	\$2,583.9
1959	\$53.3	1976	\$2,363.1	1993	\$3,103.4	2012	\$2,803.8
1960	\$56.2	1977	\$987.5	1994	\$3,097.2	2013	\$3,029.2
1961	\$77.9	1978	\$1,822.8	1995	\$3,102.4	2014	\$3,098.0
1962	\$93.4	1979	\$1,913.0	1996	\$3,147.3	2015	\$3,115.0
1963	\$87.9	1980	\$5,146.0	1997	\$3,132.1	2016	\$3,115.0
1964	\$37.0	1981	\$2,013.4	1998	\$3,080.0		
1965	\$65.1	1982	\$2,250.5	1999	\$3,010.0		

Source: Jeremy Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel," Congressional Research Service, (June 10, 2015)

⁹ Badil Resource Center for Refugee Rights. "Q&A: What you need to know about Palestinian refugees and Internally Displaced Persons."(2011). http://www.badil.org/phocadownloadpap/Badil_docs/publications/Q&A-en.pdf

¹⁰ Thomas, Michael. "Operation Protective Edge: The War Crimes Case Against Israel's Leaders" Middle East Research and Information Project (October 26, 2015) <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero102615>; Institute for Middle East Understanding. "Operation Cast Lead" (January 4, 2012) <http://imeu.org/article/operation-cast-lead>; B'tselem. "Human Rights Violations during Operation Pillar of Defense" (May, 2013) http://www.btselem.org/download/201305_pillar_of_defense_operation_eng.pdf

¹¹ Aidy, Heather, Tanya Roberts-Davis, and Meriel Watts. "Human Rights and Toxic Chemicals in the Occupied West Bank", Arab Group for the Protection of Nature and PAN Asia Pacific (forthcoming).

¹² Mearsheimer, John J., and Stephen M. Walt. "The Israel lobby and US foreign policy." *Middle East Policy* 13, no. 3 (2006): 29-87.

¹³ Alesina, Alberto, and David Dollar. "Who gives foreign aid to whom and why?." *Journal of economic growth* 5, no. 1 (2000): 33-63.

¹⁴ Kelley, Michael B. Here's How Much America REALLY Spends on Israel's Defense. (September 20, 2012). <http://www.businessinsider.com/heres-how-much-america-really-spends-on-israels-defense-2012-9>

¹⁵ Sharp, Jeremy M. "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel." Congressional Research Service. (June 10, 2015).

There are two primary reasons for the immense and largely unconditional support the U.S. gives to Israel. First, Israel plays a major role in facilitating and maintaining U.S. geo-political interests in the Arab world. These interests largely revolve around securing control of oil, with the U.S. having taken notice of West Asia oil reserves as early as 1945, noting them as “a stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the great material prizes in world history.”¹⁶ The original US objective in West Asia was prevention of the Soviet Union from obtaining access to the region and its economic resources (i.e., oil) in order to contain the spread of communism. Post 1967, when Israel’s occupation of Arab territories helped to subdue the secular Arab nationalist movement which threatened US hegemony in the region, it became clear that Israel was an American ally, and US aid to the country subsequently increased more than four-fold by the early 1970s, with diplomatic support for Israel also sharply increasing during this time.¹⁷

Second, various groups supportive of Israel within the U.S., including both Jewish and Christian Zionists as well as anti-Muslims, collectively known as the ‘Israel Lobby’, have a measure of influence over domestic politics as their support is often able to sway election results. Mearsheimer and Walt¹⁸ go so far as to claim that the lobby is powerful enough to establish policy that is counter to US interest and which jeopardizes national security. However critics, such as Jerome Slater¹⁹ and Noam Chomsky²⁰ give far lesser weight to this claim, arguing that U.S. policy in West Asia *is* to the benefit of the U.S., and showing that the same policies are present elsewhere in the world which lack strong lobbies to influence the Americans.

Despite overwhelming U.S. support to Israel, Palestinians have maintained a strong resistance movement to Israeli colonization, which has taken many forms. Two intifadas, 'uprisings', took place in 1987 and 2002, respectively. These popular movements were characterized by iconic images of Palestinian youth throwing stones at Israeli tanks, vividly highlighting the disparity in power between the two groups.

There is a long history of various types of social movements in Palestine all working toward gaining sovereignty from the Israeli state. After the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and 1995 respectively, a number of these movements became largely de-politicized as the neo-liberal agenda and "official", foreign-donor sponsored NGO trend took hold (as discussed at length by, for example, Nakhleh 2012 and Ibrahim 2011).²¹

Another popular form of resistance used by the Palestinian people is boycott, which acts as both a mechanism for exercising market power²² and as a form of political participation, and is supported domestically and abroad, by Palestinians and non-Palestinians who stand in solidarity with their cause. Since 2005 the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign has been one of the most persistent and successful movements to hold the Israeli state to account for its actions against Palestinians, persuading major international institutions and public figures to boycott and divest from Israel.

¹⁶ Gendzier, Irene. U.S. Policy in Israel/Palestine, 1948: The Forgotten History. Middle East Policy Council (MEPC) 18,1 (2011). <http://mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/us-policy-israel/palestine-1948?print>

¹⁷ Wenger, Martha. U.S. Aid to Israel: From Handshake to Embrace. Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), 164. <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer164-165/us-aid-israel>

¹⁸ Mearsheimer, John J., and Stephen M. Walt. "The Israel lobby and US foreign policy." *Middle East Policy* 13, no. 3 (2006): 29-87.

¹⁹ Slater, Jerome. "The two books of Mearsheimer and Walt." *Security Studies* 18, no. 1 (2009): 4-57.

²⁰ Chomsky, Noam. "The Israel Lobby?" (March 28, 2006). <https://chomsky.info/20060328/>

²¹ Ibrahim, Nassar. *Illusion of Development under Israeli Occupation: 2011*; Nakhleh, Khalil. *Globalized Palestine: The National Sell-Out of a Homeland: 2012*.

²² Brennan, Timothy J. "Refusing to cooperate with competitors: a theory of boycotts." *The Journal of Law & Economics* 35, no. 2 (1992): 247-264.

These legitimate resistance measures have been met with condemnation in international media, particularly within the US, where organizations such as the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA) and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) are able to pressure media outlets into adhering strictly to pro-Israeli narratives.

II. State of food sovereignty

Agricultural dominance was a central strategy of the Zionist movement in establishing a Jewish state in historic Palestine, which was marketed as "a land without a people for a people without a land", and needed the Jewish people to "make the desert bloom".²³ On the contrary, evidence shows that Palestinians have a long history of agricultural practice in their homeland.

Prior to British colonization, Palestinian villages were largely self-sufficient, and offered peasants both security and protection. However, the Mandate period introduced the capitalist system to Palestine, which ultimately undermined traditional village life and left Palestinian farmers exposed to external markets.²⁴ Despite this, agriculture remained an important part of Palestine's economy throughout the Mandate period, with nearly 7.6 million dunums under cultivation and 60% of the Palestinian (Arab) population actively employed in the sector in the late 1930s.²⁵

Today in the occupied Palestinian territories, the Israeli occupation and closure have had a detrimental impact on the agricultural sector. While the entire food system is affected, the most significant impact has been on the production end, as a significant amount of farmland has been confiscated by Israeli forces, for illegal colony construction in the West Bank and for the establishment of 'security' zones in the Gaza Strip.

Due to the Israeli occupation, Palestinians are in many instances not given access to their own natural resources, particularly land and water, needed to maintain a healthy food production system. For example, 80% of groundwater from the Mountain Aquifer in the West Bank goes to the Israelis²⁶ while physical access to the surface water of the Jordan River, the Israeli occupied eastern border of the West Bank, is completely denied.²⁷ Thus, for the most part, control over Palestinian food production lies with the Israeli government, as do the types and sources of food imported into the Palestinian territories.

Overall, 26% of the oPt is food insecure, with the latest figures showing the population of Gaza at 47% food insecure,²⁸ and having reached as high as 38% and 61%, respectively, at times in recent years.²⁹

²³ Waterman, Stanley. "Ideology and events in Israeli human landscapes." *Geography* (1979): 171-181.

²⁴ Roy, Sara. *The Gaza Strip: The political economy of de-development*. Institute for Palestine Studies USA, Incorporated, 2016.

²⁵ Roy, Sara. *The Gaza Strip: The political economy of de-development*. Institute for Palestine Studies USA, Incorporated, 2016.

²⁶ B'tselem. "Discriminatory Water Supply" (September 27, 2016).

http://www.btselem.org/water/discrimination_in_water_supply

²⁷ Koek, Elizabeth. Water for One People Only: Discriminatory Access and 'Water Apartheid' in the OPT. Al-Haq. 2013. <http://www.alhaq.org/publications/Water-For-One-People-Only.pdf>

²⁸ **Socio-Economic and Food Security (SEFSec) survey, cited in UNRWA Situation Report, December 2015.**

<http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/emergency-reports/gaza-situation-report-123>; also cited in

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/fss_opt_brief_2015_q4.pdf

²⁹ Galluzzi, Caterina and Sahar Natsheh. "Market Based Food Assistance in Protracted Crises: vouchers in the Occupied Palestinian Territories", in *Revolution: From Food Aid to Food Assistance - Innovations in Overcoming Hunger*, World Food Programme: pages 33-52

Palestinians in the oPt spend 34.5% of their income on food, making food their biggest share of cash expenditure.³⁰

The local food production system in the oPt is small, and shrinking: in 1987 agriculture contributed to 18.8% of GDP, down to just 5.6% in 2012.³¹ This has been due primarily to impacts of the Israeli occupation, including appropriation of land, violence and threats of violence by Israeli colonizers towards Palestinians working in the field, and restricted access to productive resources.

The sector is the third largest employer in the oPt, engaging around 15% of the formal labour force (higher when informal employment is considered).³² Both the West Bank and Gaza Strip also experience a high dependence on staple food imports, with an export/import ratio of 1.1 compared to a world average of 11.3, and food production per capita³³ of 135, compared to a world average of 233.³⁴

In the West Bank, 200km² of land has been appropriated by the Israeli government for the construction of colonies and 196km² has been destroyed for the construction of colony bypass roads;³⁵ a further 9.5% of the West Bank has been de facto annexed through the construction of the Apartheid Wall.³⁶ Farmland is constantly under threat of confiscation, as the Israeli government exploits an old Ottoman law which allows land left uncultivated for a number of years to be seized. West Bank farmers with land near the colonies are particularly vulnerable to this, as they are often intimidated from working their land with threats of violence and destruction of trees and crops. Laws making it difficult for Palestinians to transport fresh produce around the territory - Israeli issued permits are needed for this - also hamper the viability of maintaining an agricultural livelihood.

³⁰ PCBS. "Palestinian Expenditure and Consumption Survey" (2011). By territory: 32.7% in the West Bank; 39.4% in Gaza Strip

³¹ UNCTAD. *The Besieged Palestinian Agricultural Sector: 2015*.

³² UNCTAD. *The Besieged Palestinian Agricultural Sector: 2015*.

³³ "Food production per capita is calculated as the vector of quantities of total food production multiplied by the 1999–2001 average international commodity prices in international dollars, and then divided by total population of the corresponding year." [From Yu, Bingxin, Liangzhi You, and Shenggen Fan. *Toward a typology of food security in developing countries*. No. 945. International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), 2010.]

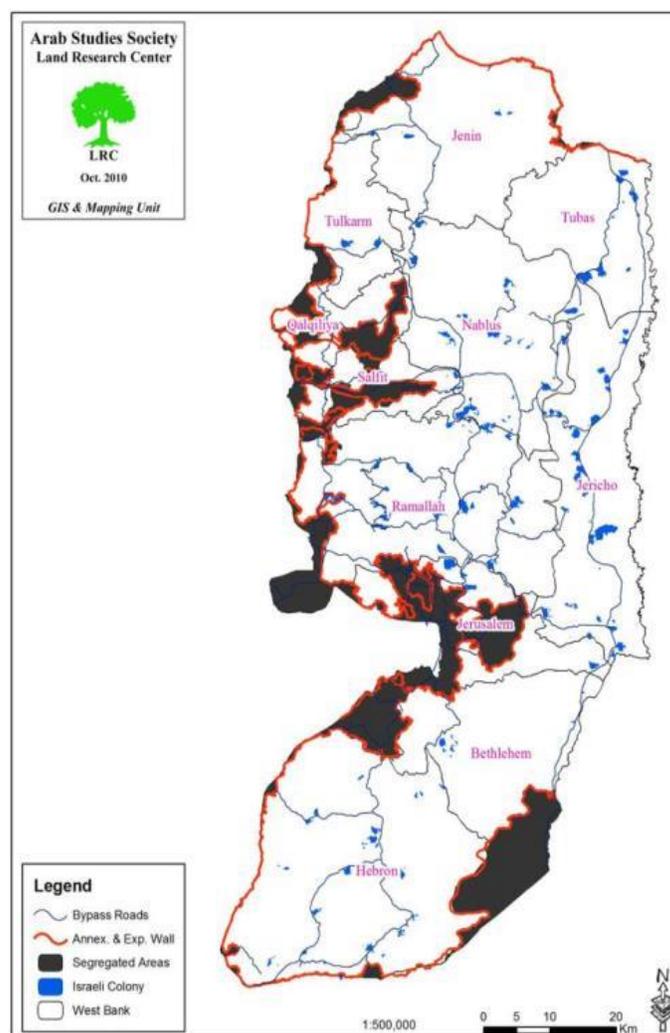
³⁴ ESCWA. *Food Security and Conflict in the ESCWA Region* (2010).

https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/e_escwa_ecri_10_1_e.pdf

³⁵ 2010. Land Research Center.

³⁶ UN OCHA OPT. Five Years After the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion: A Summary of the Humanitarian Impact of the Barrier (July 2009).

http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_barrier_report_july_2009_english_low_res.pdf



Since the late 1990s, the productivity of the agricultural sector in the Gaza Strip has roughly halved due to the impacts of Israeli occupation and, for the past decade, closure.³⁷ The closure of Gaza has especially severely constrained the agricultural industry, as farmers are not able to import materials and inputs needed for production, nor are they able to export their produce. Israel has imposed several no-go zones, or "Access Restricted Areas" (ARAs), which are off limits to the Palestinians. 35% of agricultural land in the Gaza Strip is now classified as ARAs, making it impossible for Palestinian farmers to continue to cultivate, resulting in the loss of \$50.2 million USD each year.³⁸ UNOCHA OPT regularly reports several occasions each month of Israeli forces opening warning fire at farmers and fisherman in ARAs.³⁹ The fishing industry was previously one of the most lucrative in Gaza, but under closure fishermen are currently limited to 9 nautical miles offshore, an area that has been decreased to as low 3 nautical miles in

³⁷ World Bank, "Palestinian Economy is Losing Long-Term Competitiveness", Press Release (March 11, 2013). <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/03/11/palestinian-economy-losing-long-term-competitiveness>

³⁸ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. Access Restricted Areas in the Gaza Strip (2014). <http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/publications/2014/201402-me-palestine-under-fire-brief-en.pdf>

³⁹ OCHA OPT. "Protection of Civilians Weekly Report" (August 2-8, 2016). <http://www.ochaopt.org/content/protection-civilians-weekly-report-2-8-august-2016>

recent years.⁴⁰ 95% of fishermen are now dependent on foreign aid due to these harsh restrictions on fishing.⁴¹

During the latest attack during the summer of 2014, 1263 greenhouses were damaged or destroyed, and 1,855 hectares of agricultural land were severely damaged.⁴² Losses to the sector were estimated at \$550 million by the Ministry of Agriculture, and at least 40,000 employed in farming and fishing were directly impacted by the attacks.⁴³

Despite this, Palestinians continually strive to preserve their food sovereignty. Boycott of Israeli foods and agricultural goods as a form of resistance stimulates increased production of and demand for domestic small-scale food products. During the first intifada (1987-1991) widespread boycott meant that most Palestinians supported only locally produced food, and many became food producers themselves, growing their own 'victory gardens'. Communities found innovative ways to covertly support Palestinian food sovereignty. An example of this occurred in the town of Beit Sahour, where the Agricultural Neighborhood Committee purchased and raised 18 cows in order to provide milk to its population; these cows quickly became the target of an Israeli military campaign, on the grounds that they were a threat to Israeli security.⁴⁴

Civil society organizations such as Arab Group for the Protection of Nature (APN) promote food sovereignty through direct support to farmers. APN's Million Tree Campaign, which operates under the slogan "they uproot one tree... we replant ten", not only provides agricultural support to farmers but also acts as a resistance movement against Israeli attacks on the Palestinian food system.



Volunteers from Arab Group for the Protection of Nature (APN) confronted by Israeli soldiers on the way to plant trees in Hebron, Occupied Palestinian Territories. 2015.

⁴⁰ UNOCHA-OPT and WFP. *Between a Fence and a Hard Place* (2010).

https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_special_focus_2010_08_19_english.pdf

⁴¹ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. *Access Restricted Areas in the Gaza Strip* (2014). <http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/publications/2014/201402-me-palestine-under-fire-brief-en.pdf>

⁴² UNITAR and UNOSAT. *Impact of the 2014 Conflict in the Gaza Strip* (October 2014).

https://unosat.web.cern.ch/unosat/unitar/publications/UNOSAT_GAZA_REPORT_OCT2014_WEB.pdf

⁴³ UNOCHA. 27 August 2014. *Gaza Initial Rapid Assessment*.

https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/gaza_mira_report_9september.pdf

⁴⁴ See "The Wanted 18" (film), 2014. Directed by Amer Shomali and Paul Cowan.

III. Role of development cooperation

Palestine, like many countries experiencing protracted crises, relies heavily on donor assistance and international aid to sustain the sectors which are unable to thrive due to Israeli occupation, dispossession and closure. Palestinians living in the oPt are the largest per capita aid recipients worldwide,⁴⁵ with international aid making up an estimated 36 percent of GDP;⁴⁶ Gaza in particular is heavily dependent on aid, with 80% of the population receiving some form of assistance, primarily food aid.⁴⁷

Accepting aid has often meant accepting the terms and recommendations of those offering assistance. The aid industry in the oPt has been widely criticized and debated for a number of reasons. In the agricultural and food sectors, it has been argued that aid “directs Palestinians to consume what they don’t produce; and eat only what and when their occupier allows.”⁴⁸

The overarching criticism of the aid agency in Palestine is that despite the good intentions of some individuals, it systemically “undermines local leadership, local agendas, grassroots participation, and the dignity that comes with self-reliance, responsibility, and equality”⁴⁹ in favour of serving the interests of donors. This often occurs by ignoring or minimizing attention to the root causes of ‘development’ issues. This is particularly evident in the context of the Israeli occupation and colonization of the Palestinian people, where lack of appropriate focus serves to legitimize, maintain, and entrench a status quo that is counter to both international law and human rights.

Depoliticization of Palestinian NGOs also occurs through selective funding which excludes overtly political projects and organizations, restricting political aspects of projects, and requiring organisations to avoid open criticism of the occupation or support for the resistance movement.⁵⁰ Local NGOs have been known to modify their programming in order to attract international funding, which often comes with conditions, both explicit and implicit. However, research has shown that Palestinians would much rather have “political intervention and the financial support they are entitled to in order to pursue their own development [and] rejection of false development projects that are, at best, distractions, and at worst, harmful to Palestinian dignity, independence and sustainability.”⁵¹

Conditionalities attached to foreign aid, most notable USAID, discussed below, serve to prevent Palestinians from developing a popular, cohesive movement to achieve sovereignty and ‘development’.

⁴⁵ Dalia Association. “Does the International Aid System Violate Palestinians’ Rights?”

<http://www.dalia.ps/node/123>

⁴⁶ Murad, Nora Lester. “An Alternative to International Aid”, Open Democracy (February 25, 2014)

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/openglobalrights/nora-lester-murad/alternative-to-international-aid>

⁴⁷ UNOCHA. “The Gaza Strip: The Humanitarian Impact of the Blockade” (July 2, 2015)

<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/gaza-strip-humanitarian-impact-blockade-july-2015>

⁴⁸ Nakhleh, Khalil. “Oslo: Replacing Liberation with Economic Neo-Colonialism.” Al-Shabaka (April 10, 2014)

<https://al-shabaka.org/commentaries/oslo-replacing-liberation-with-economic-neo-colonialism/>

⁴⁹ Dalia Association. “Does the International Aid System Violate Palestinians’ Rights?”

<http://www.dalia.ps/node/123>

⁵⁰ Awad, Yasmine and Robert E. Foxsohn. “Breaking the Complicity: ‘Developing Palestine means Ending the Occupation’”, Electronic Intifada (August 11, 2002)

<https://electronicintifada.net/content/breaking-complicity-developing-palestine-means-ending-occupation/4043>

⁵¹ Murad, Nora Lester. “Should Palestinians boycott international aid?” The Guardian (October 18, 2012)

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2012/oct/18/should-palestinians-boycott-international-aid>

The aid community also removes of the burden of responsibility for the devastating impacts of the occupation, colonization, and repeated military campaigns from Israel, as the development industry tries to 'band-aid' these impacts.⁵²

Local NGOs are now also forced to spend their resources, both time and money, on "servicing donors in order to meet their administrative demands."⁵³

A further criticism of the aid industry in the context of Palestine, and protracted crises in general, is that funding is often distributed on a project-by-project basis which is incompatible with long-term situations.⁵⁴

Despite the huge amounts of aid money flowing into the oPt, Palestine, and particularly Gaza, is perpetually in a state of "de-development",⁵⁵ a concept which describes the distortion and undermining of the development process leading to a country that "is deprived of its capacity for production, rational structural transformation, and meaningful reform."⁵⁶ Roy argues that Palestine has experienced accelerated de-development since Oslo, despite that fact that more than \$8 billion in development has been provided to the Palestinians since the signing of Oslo,⁵⁷ with the U.S. alone providing \$5 billion in bilateral aid in that time.⁵⁸

The Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP), which is supported by the US, the World Bank, and the EU, view the agricultural sector as having limited potential for growth,⁵⁹ following the typical neoliberal line of thought. Many of the donor projects that are aimed at helping Palestinian farmers encourage them to produce chemically-intensive, industrial-style,⁶⁰ export-oriented agricultural produce, which has contributed substantially to a decline in Palestinian production that supports local food needs. Recommendations for farmers to focus on export agriculture also overlooks the context of occupation and closure, whereby Israeli control over the best agricultural land, access to subsidies, and control over Palestinians' ability to export means that Israeli colonizers are significantly better positioned to compete for export markets.

Several major developed-country donors, including the U.S., Germany, France, Japan, and the World Bank also promote the creation of industrial zones (also known as Special Economic Zones – SEZs), which fits into the neo-liberal economic model accepted by the Palestinian Authority after the Oslo

⁵² Abdelnour, Samer. "Aid Industry Doing No Harm in Palestine?" Electronic Intifada (March 22,2011) <https://electronicintifada.net/content/aid-industry-doing-no-harm-palestine/9826>

⁵³ Allen, Lori. "Funding Cannot Stop Rights Abuses" Open Democracy (November 11, 2013) <https://www.opendemocracy.net/openglobalrights/lori-allen/funding-cannot-stop-rights-abuses>

⁵⁴ Allen, Lori. "Funding Cannot Stop Rights Abuses" Open Democracy (November 11, 2013) <https://www.opendemocracy.net/openglobalrights/lori-allen/funding-cannot-stop-rights-abuses>

⁵⁵ Roy, Sara. "The Gaza Strip: A case of economic de-development." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 17, no. 1 (1987): 56-88 and Roy, Sara. *The Gaza Strip: The political economy of de-development*. Institute for Palestine Studies USA, Incorporated, 2016.

⁵⁶ Roy, Sara. "De-development revisited: Palestinian economy and society since Oslo." *Journal of Palestine studies* 28, no. 3 (1999): 64-82.

⁵⁷ Mahmoud, Hani. "Foreign Aid: Development or 'de-development'?" Open Democracy (April 13, 2014) <https://www.opendemocracy.net/arab-awakening/hani-mahmoud/foreign-aid-development-or-dedevelopment>

⁵⁸ Zanutti, Jim. "U.S. Foreign Aid to the Palestinians," Congressional Research Service (March 18, 2016).

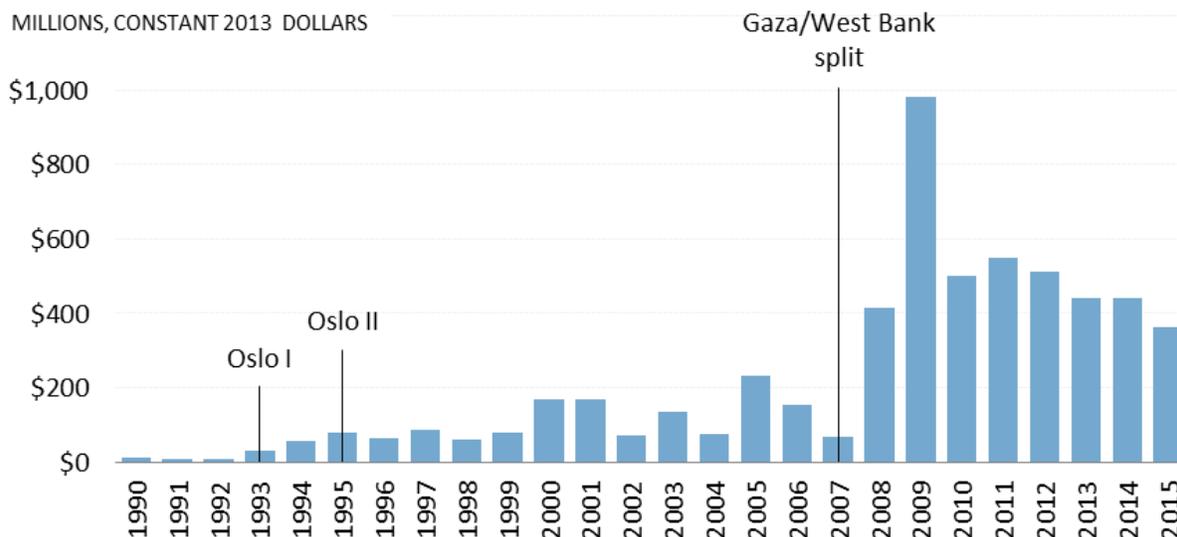
⁵⁹ Zurayk, Rami, and Anne Gough. *Control food, control people: The struggle for food security in Gaza*. Institute for Palestine Studies, 2013.

⁶⁰ Mansour, Aisha. "Impact of Post Oslo Aid Interventions on the Palestinian Agricultural Sector." Master's thesis, International Cooperation and Development (MICAD), Bethlehem University, 2012.

Accords.⁶¹ Small-scale food producers in the West Bank are increasing subject to land confiscation for the construction of the SEZs by the Palestinian Authority, which claims ‘eminent domain’ whereby it is able to purchase land at below market value, claiming its use for ‘public good’.⁶² The Jenin Industrial Zone is being constructed on some of the most fertile land in Palestine. By deliberately stripping food producers of their land, locals are concerned they will be turned from productive farmers into wage laborers. Far from helping the Palestinian struggle for sovereignty, these zones are also complicit in the occupation of the West Bank, as they have a symbiotic relationship with the existing Israeli colonies, and provide an easy way for other Israeli companies to work within the Palestinian economy.⁶³

US foreign aid to Palestinians is particularly problematic. It is used to support US policy objectives, which vilify Hamas, the democratically elected government of the Gaza Strip, as a terrorist organization and continues to promote a peace process that will lead to a two-state solution,⁶⁴ a project which Palestinians have become increasingly disillusioned with given the decline in sovereignty Palestine has experienced since the Oslo years. American aid commitments increased substantially at the time of the signing of the Oslo Accords, and again after Hamas was elected as the governing party of Gaza in 2007, highlighting the tie between U.S. political objectives and generosity of assistance.⁶⁵

Overall U.S. Bilateral Assistance to the Palestinians: 1990-2015



Source: Zanotti, 2016, "U.S. Aid to the Palestinians" (page 6).

Much of the aid provided by major donors such as the U.S. and EU is explicitly centered around Palestinian cooperation with Israeli state and institutions,⁶⁶ which undermines struggles against the unjust

⁶¹Bahour, Sam. "Economic Prison Zones." *Middle East Research and Information Project* (2010).

⁶²Sansour, Vivien and Alaa Tartir. "Palestinian Farmers: A Last Stronghold of Resistance." *Al-Shabaka* (July 1, 2014) <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/palestinian-farmers-a-last-stronghold-of-resistance/>

⁶³Tartir, Alaa. "PA Industrial Zones: Cementing Statehood or Occupation?" *Al-Shabaka* (February 7, 2013), <https://al-shabaka.org/commentaries/pa-industrial-zones-cementing-statehood-or-occupation/>

⁶⁴Zanotti, Jim. "U.S. Foreign Aid to the Palestinians," Congressional Research Service (March 18, 2016).

⁶⁵Zanotti, Jim. "U.S. Foreign Aid to the Palestinians," Congressional Research Service (March 18, 2016).

⁶⁶Adwan, Sami and Philip Veerma. "Reflections on Joint Israeli-Palestinian Cooperation Projects," *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture*, 7(1&2): 2000. <http://www.pij.org/details.php?id=288>

power relation between the two communities, and completely exclude those who refuse to normalize relations with Israel by adhering to boycott movements. It also fully excluded Gaza, in large part because the governing party, Hamas, refuses to acknowledge the legitimacy of the settler-colonial state of Israel. Explicit conditions on US foreign aid to Palestine include: prohibition of any aid going to Hamas or Hamas-controlled entities; prohibition of funds to PA personnel in Gaza; prohibition of aid to the PLO or the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation (PBC); prohibition of funds to support a Palestinian state unless that state meets certain pro-Israel conditions; and allowing vetting, monitoring, and evaluation of all programs in Palestine.⁶⁷

An example of the type of project USAID runs in the agricultural sector focuses on obtaining Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification for 200 strawberry producers in Gaza,⁶⁸ yet does not pressure Israel to end the same closure which prevents the import of agricultural inputs and the export of fresh produce, thus preventing the farming industry from thriving. Perishables grown for export such as strawberries are often left to rot at the border when Israeli forces will not allow them through;⁶⁹ this type of crop is more vulnerable to whims of the Israeli authorities than crops that would be consumed within Gaza. This disregard of the root causes of food insecurity and the weakened agricultural sector in the Gaza Strip thus reinforces Israel's manipulation of the food system as a method of control.⁷⁰

IV. Regional perspective

Half of the countries in the Arab region have already experienced conflict this century, resulting in a region that is plagued by forced displacement and vulnerable to foreign intervention. The tendency for donors and development agencies to ignore root causes of problems such as food insecurity in times of conflict in their programming is prevalent in many countries in the Arab region.

Some of the problems facing West Asia can be traced back to the artificial division of the region into countries based not on what made sense for the population, but to appease the European colonial powers after World War II. The establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine in a predominantly Arab region was particularly problematic, but places such as Iraq now also face tensions due to the structure and composition of the country. As noted earlier, the primary American involvement in the region began in the 1960s, stemming from the Cold War and the perceived need for the U.S. to control West Asia oil resources in order to prevent the Soviet Union from gaining access to them.

While countries throughout West Asia receive aid from a variety of sources, the focus here will be on the role and impacts of development and other aid from the United States, given its immense involvement in the region. The case of Iraq, which has also experienced several decades of protracted crisis, will be examined, as will the wider Arab region strategy of USAID. The role that the discourse of water scarcity in the region has played in relation to the agricultural sector will also be discussed.

The U.S.-led Oil for Food program implemented by the United Nations, which allowed Iraq to sell oil on the world market in exchange for food aid, medicine, and other humanitarian necessities was one of the biggest 'foreign aid' scandals in recent history. The program was rife with corruption, as contracts and funds were directed to a number of businessmen and politicians, highlighting the anti-humanitarian nature

⁶⁷ Zanotti, Jim. "U.S. Foreign Aid to the Palestinians," Congressional Research Service (March 18, 2016).

⁶⁸ Israeli Defense Forces. "An Educational Program for Gaza Strip Farmers." (July 24, 2011) <http://www.idf.il/1283-12520-EN/Dover.aspx>

⁶⁹ Published by Palestinian farming and civil society organizations. *Farming Injustice: International trade with Israeli agricultural companies and the destruction of Palestinian farming*: February 2013.

⁷⁰ Zurayk, Rami, and Anne Gough. *Control food, control people: The struggle for food security in Gaza*. Institute for Palestine Studies, 2013.

of some of these large-scale programs. It is also worth noting again the U.S. interest in obtaining oil from the region, for which it was willing to partially lift the sanctions it had originally proposed.

The US also made attempts of development of the Iraq agricultural sector in the midst of its eight-year long occupation of that country. Documents from the United States Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service outline the technical cooperation provided to Iraq with no regard to the political context and implications of the occupation on the sector.⁷¹ Some of this aid came in kind, in the form of corn and soy, under the USAID Food for Progress program.⁷² This sort of dumping of excess American grain is known to have detrimental effects on local production, which is unable to compete with the low prices of these goods.

American development aid to the Arab region primarily goes through the USAID Middle East Regional Cooperation (MERC) program, which actively promotes Arab cooperation with Israeli institutions; the participation of one Arab partner and one Israeli partner is a requirement of any project. One major goal of the MERC program is "to contribute to the Palestinian-Israeli peace process through the establishment of cooperative relationships that will last beyond the life of the project."⁷³

The current agricultural success projects promoted on the MERC website focus on technical aspects of agricultural production, efficiency, and improvement, while entirely ignoring the political contexts of the region, despite the explicitly political goal of the program.⁷⁴

The Arab region has also been pressured to accept the externally-imposed discourse that water resources are too scarce to support a substantial agricultural sector, and that it should thus severely limit the amount of food produced domestically. This narrative has caught on with many leading political figures, leading to a number of countries which neglect their agricultural sectors and depend largely on imported food. The Arab region is the most food-import dependent region in the world, with over 40% of agricultural foods consumed coming from abroad.⁷⁵

The West Asia region has long been advised to maintain or even increase this trade imbalance, and to import food as a means to preserve water resources (also known as 'virtual water' imports).⁷⁶ This has been promoted as a way to alleviate conflict that could occur over competition for water resources, however, the vulnerabilities and lack of agency this sort of policy allows for communities already in crisis has not adequately been addressed. However, one of the primary reasons for water 'scarcity' in Jordan, for example, is the unilateral diversion of water away from the Jordan River by the state of Israel. The construction of the National Water Carrier of Israel, completed in 1964, diverts 350 million cubic meters

⁷¹ United States Department of Agriculture. "U.S. Agricultural Programs in Iraq", Fact Sheet: 0270.06 (August 2006) <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdamediafb?contentid=2006/07/0270.xml&printable=true&contentidonly=true>

⁷² United States Department of Agriculture: Foreign Agricultural Service. "Food for Progress." <http://www.fas.usda.gov/programs/food-progress>

⁷³ Jewish Virtual Library. "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel: Middle East Regional Cooperation Program (MERC)" <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/merc.html>

⁷⁴ USAID. "MERC Agriculture Success Stories" (September 28, 2012) <https://www.usaid.gov/where-we-work/middle-east/merc-agriculture-success-stories>

⁷⁵ French National Institute for Agriculture (INRA) and Pluriagri. "Addressing Agricultural Import Dependence in the Middle East and North Africa Region Through the Year 2050 (October 2015) <https://inra-dam-front-resources-cdn.brainsonic.com/ressources/afile/308329-e5409-resource-addressing-agricultural-import-dependence-in-the-middle-east-north-africa-region-through-to-the-year-2050.html>

⁷⁶ Allan, John Anthony. *'Virtual water': a long term solution for water short Middle Eastern economies?*. London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1997.

of water from the Sea of Galilee, which would naturally flow down the Jordan River into the Dead Sea, to the southern desert and Tel Aviv.⁷⁷

V. Synthesis

In the complex and protracted crisis occurring in Palestine, it is clear that development cooperation, and particular development cooperation in the agricultural sector, is not benefitting the Palestinian population in the long run. The root cause of the occupation is systemically being ignored and local needs and capacities are undermined while the agricultural sector continues to decline, in spite of the billions of dollars of aid that flows into the oPt. The push for export-oriented agriculture, often promoted by the development sector, can be a direct threat to local agricultural industries, such as the example of the Palestinian Authority using eminent domain to confiscate farmland for the development of SEZs.

The inappropriate and sometimes detrimental development cooperation measures described above impact a wide range of actors in Palestine in a number of ways. Local NGOs feel forced to change their programming to fit donor needs, sometimes alienating themselves from the population they are trying to serve, despite wanting sovereignty to pursue their own goals. Local food producers are pressured into participating in export-driven agriculture which leaves them vulnerable to Israeli border controls, while the primary need of maintaining or gaining access to their own land and water resources is neglected. International NGOs are often detached from the realities, desires, and needs of the farming communities they are trying to serve, which can hinder the Palestinian movement for sovereignty.

Palestinian society post-Oslo has grown accustomed to the huge development industry that has taken over their nation, and while on the surface many accept the donor-led changes to their society, there is an increasing resentment and drive to resist these policies. This can be seen in the increase of community-led initiatives that focus on local produce, markets, and agriculture-related events such as Sharaka.⁷⁸

The Israeli state is one of the biggest benefactors of the development industry in Palestine, as the status quo of its colonizing of Palestine is not seriously challenged, and its responsibilities toward the population over which it is the occupying power are fulfilled by donors and NGOs. On a fundamental level, much development cooperation in Palestine ignores the root causes of food insecurity and the suffering agricultural sector, thus benefitting Israel's policy of occupation and closure against the Palestinian people. USAID in particular stands in direct opposition to the right of Palestinians to fight for their national sovereignty, as the primary condition of this aid is cooperation with their oppressors, the Israeli state.

It is clear in Palestine that only a political solution that ends the Israeli occupation, secures access for Palestinians to their sources of production (land and water), and ensures genuine ownership of agricultural projects can end the 'development' issues face by Palestinians.

This paper proposes four primary recommendations to improve the appropriateness and effectiveness of development cooperation:

1. Universal implementation of the progressive *Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises (FFA)*. The FFA was unanimously endorsed in October 2015 by all member countries of the UN Committee on World Food Security. The most relevant tenants of

⁷⁷ Gompert, David, Kenneth Shine, Glenn Robinson, C. Richard Neu, and Jerrold Green. *Building a successful Palestinian state*. Rand Corporation, 2001.

⁷⁸ Sharaka – Community Supported Agriculture facebook group.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/360906177468/?ref=ts&fref=ts>

the document include addressing the root causes of conflicts, supporting local food systems including through local procurement of food aid, not using food as a tool for political or economic pressure, and respect for tenure rights.

2. Adherence to the Do No Harm framework for donor intervention, which advocates seven steps toward the improvement of the impact of aid in conflicts: understand the context of the conflict; analyze dividers and tensions; analyze connectors and local capacities for peace; analyze the assistance program; analyze the assistance program's impact on dividers and connectors; consider and generate program options; and test programming options and redesign project.⁷⁹

3. Abide by International Law and Respect Human Rights, including refraining from being complicit in breaches of international law or disregard of human rights by third parties.

4. Mobilization of community resources and community philanthropy⁸⁰ to decrease or eliminate dependence on international aid that does not ultimately work in the best interest of the community. Local sources of funding can ensure projects are more in touch with what communities want and need, and can free them from conditionalities that hinder genuine drives for sovereignty

⁷⁹ Anderson, Mary B. *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – Or War*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999.

⁸⁰ Murad, Nora Lester. "An Alternative to International Aid," Open Democracy (February 25, 2015) <https://www.opendemocracy.net/openglobalrights/nora-lester-murad/alternative-to-international-aid>