The Israeli Apartheid Spatial Regime:

Fragmentation and Enclavement of Palestine

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INTRODUCTION

Across settler-colonial contexts, apartheid has relied on spatial fragmentation to dismantle collective political presence, suppress populations within administratively manageable units, and reframe domination as governance. Spatial reorganization – of territory, movement, population, and political life – has long functioned as a central technology of rule, producing durable forms of control while preserving the appearance of order, legality, and limited self-rule. In Palestine, this spatial logic has taken an increasingly consolidated form through what this paper describes as enclaving: the deliberate construction of fragmented, governed spaces – at both regional and local scales. Israeli enclaving aims to destroy Palestinian unity, disarticulate society, reorganize Palestinian life into structurally and administratively manageable enclaves, and shift responsibility for domination onto the colonized themselves. Enclaving – as a form of spatial apartheid – is not a temporary condition but a long-term cumulative process of segregation, fragmentation, and isolation. It entrenches Israeli domination and dismantles territorial continuity, collective political structures, and economic autonomy, while working to erase Palestinian national, political, and territorial presence.

Apartheid, from the Afrikaans term meaning "apartness," is a system of institutionalized racial domination in which one group systematically oppresses and controls another through law and policy; under international law, it is recognized as a crime against humanity.[1] Spatial apartheid, in this paper, refers to the territorial expression of this system, where segregation and control are enforced through the organization of land, movement, and infrastructure, shaping and restricting all aspects of life, including social, political, and economic relations. It produces conditions of enforced dependency,

1 United Nations, "Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid," United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law, New York, November 30, 1973, https://legal.un.org/avl/ha/cspca/cspca.html.

underdevelopment, and structural inequality among those subjected to apartheid.[2]

The creation of the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime laid the first precursor for the enclave system: the Nakba (1947-1949) fragmented Mandatory Palestine[3] and the Palestinian people. The 1967 war deepened this fragmentation through additional measures and practices of segregation and isolation. As a result, devisions were imposed between 1948 Palestine,[4] the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Alongside the Palestinian population in exile, these geographically and politically seperated entities - produced by the Nakba and the 1967 war - have continued to entrench the fragmentation of Palestinian land and people. The Oslo Accords (1993-1995) and the so-called peace process then introduced new categorizations of land and people, through which fragmentation, segregation, and isolation were normalized. Currently, the Israeli regime's Decisive Plan has formalized this trajectory, institutionalizing enclaves within already fragmented regions by creating facts on the ground and through the imposition of measures

2 Lungisa Sithenkosi and Ogochukwu Iruoma Nzewi, "A Blueprint to Dismantle Apartheid Spatial Differentiation? A Reflection on 25 Years of the White Paper on Local Government," *Commonwealth Youth and Development* 21 (August 2024): 3–12, https://doi.org/10.25159/2663-6549/16538.

3 Mandatory Palestine refers to historic Palestine: the whole land of Palestine before the Nakba, when it was still under the British Mandate. However, the British Mandate's decision to end the mandate left the question of Palestine to the UN. Following this act was the "Israeli Declaration of Independence" and the creation of the Israeli regime. Mandatory Palestine is what is today called "Israel" and the "occupied Palestinian territory." See: BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons 2016 - 2018*, Survey (BADIL, 2019), viii, https://badil.org/phocadownloadpap/badil-new/publications/survay/survey2016-2018-eng.pdf.

4 1948 Palestine: Refers to the territory of Mandatory Palestine that was ethnically cleansed and taken by Zionist-Israeli forces in 1947-1949. Today, this territory is called "Israel." Palestinians who remained in this area generally hold Israeli citizenship and as of 2025, a little less than half a million are internally displaced persons. See: BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons 2016 - 2018*, Survey (BADIL, 2019), 6, https://badil.org/phocadownloadpap/badil-new/publications/survay/survey2016-2018-eng.pdf.

and legislation, while presenting domination as governance.[5] While this analysis focuses on the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip – where these policies are most visible today – enclaving reflects a broader spatial regime imposed and enforced across all of Mandatory Palestine through Israeli military force, security measures, legal restrictions, permit systems, physical barriers, and Israeli and internationally imposed administrative structures.[6] Understanding the mechanisms and consequences of enclaving is therefore essential to grasping how the Israeli regime undermines the Palestinian people's inalienable rights to self-determination and return and targets their collective national aspirations.[7]

Apartheid spatial regimes are a well-used colonial tool, and their imposition is not unique to Palestine. In this context, Apartheid South Africa's bantustan system constitutes a case that provides a critical historical reference for understanding the enclaving process. Presented as "separate development" and African self-government, the bantustans fragmented Black South Africans into disconnected and under-resourced territories, stripped them of political rights, and recast dispossession as nominal autonomy.[8] Sovereignty was invoked but systematically emptied of content, as real political authority remained firmly in the hands of the apartheid regime. The bantustans

5 The Israeli Decisive Plan is an institutionalized blueprint for expanding Israeli control over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It explicitly outlines the forced displacement, subjugation, or annihilation of Palestinians. The Plan is being implemented through colony expansion, legislation, and governance structures that fragment Palestinian society and foreclose self-determination. See BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *The Decisive Plan: The Israeli Regime's Blueprint for Colonial Expansion and Palestinian Subjugation*, Position Paper (BADIL, 2025), https://badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2025/10/17/the-decisiveplan-eng-1760699781.pdf.

6 BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *Segregation, Fragmentation and Isolation*, Working Paper no. 23, Forced Population Transfer: The Case of Palestine (BADIL, 2020), https://badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2021/04/19/wp23-sfi-1618823935.pdf.

7 United Nations, Resolution 3236 (XXIX): *The Palestine Question and the Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories*, A/RES/3236(XXIX) (1974), https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ARES3236XXIX.pdf.

8 Greene, Jim, MFA, "Bantustan Politics and Government," EBSCO, 2022, https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/politics-and-government/bantustan.

thus functioned not as pathways to autonomy or self-determination but as instruments of exclusion, labor control, and political containment.

This paper first traces the development and entrenchment of apartheid precursors to the Israeli enclave system, examining the historical progression of geopolitical isolation, segregation, and fragmentation of Palestinian land and people. It then situates the Palestinian case in comparative perspective with the historical precedent of Apartheid South Africa's bantustan system, before analyzing the internal structure of enclaves, including political, economic, and security arrangements, as well as population management through forced displacement and the removal of international presence. The paper further explores the political functions of enclaves focusing on denying autonomy and sovereignty, pursuing Palestinian erasure, and producing an enduring illusion of self-determination. **Tracing these cumulative developments demonstrates that enclaving is not a speculative future outcome but an evolving present reality deliberately engineered by the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime. The process of transforming territorial configurations and political structures in ways that consolidate fragmentation and attempt to legitimize the denial of Palestinian sovereignty and the right to self-determination is underway.**

CHAPTER 1

Israeli Apartheid: Precursors to the Enclave System

Since the creation of the Israeli regime, the Palestinian people have been subjected to systematic legal, political, social, economic, and spatial division. This division has been designed and evolved to strategically serve perpetuating the domination of the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime and to eliminate the national character of the Palestinian people and with it, their right of self-determination.[9] This division has been reinforced through consecutive and subsequent Israeli policies and international political processes.[10] The Israeli apartheid spatial system is designed to replace the self-determination of the Palestinian people with a controlled, warped and externally defined version enforced by the Israeli regime.

The Palestinian people have been continuously subjected to Israeli segregation, fragmentation, isolation, and enclaving through direct force and policies creating a coercive environment leading to ongoing forcible displacement and transfer.[11] In line with that, the lands of Mandatory Palestine have been continuously shrinking, through land confiscation and colonization by the Israeli regime, reinforcing dependence and

9 United Nations, *Right of Self-Determination of the Palestinian People*, ST/SG/SER.F/3, The Question of Palestine (New York, 1979), https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-196558/.

10 Yara Hawari, *Apartheid from Within? The Palestinian Citizens of Israel*, Policy Brief (Al-Shabaka, 2017), 8, https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/apartheid-from-within-the-palestinian-citizens-of-israel/?generate_pdf=view.

11 BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *Introduction*, Working Paper no. 15, Forced Population Transfer: The Case of Palestine (BADIL, 2014), https://badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2021/04/19/wp15-introduction-1618823118.pdf.

limiting autonomy. Over time, these geopolitical divisions have shifted from fragmentation of the people toward enclaving fragmented populations: the physical and administrative enclosure of Palestinians into increasingly restricted and disconnected enclaves.

Additionally, decades of international inaction and impunity have enabled the Israeli regime to advance toward creating local enclaves within existing enclaves, where Israeli oversight extends across nearly every aspect of Palestinian daily life. Physically, this strategy seeks to restrict movement, limit access to land, separate communities, and enhance suppression policies and Israeli control. Socially, politically, and economically, it aims to perpetuate colonial domination over the Palestinian people, and weaken collective identity, preventing the exercise of self-determination and return, or even meaningful autonomy.

What began as the fragmentation of the Palestinian people through displacement, denationalization, and differentiated legal statuses has progressively evolved into a broader more precise spatial regime of fragmentation, segregation, and isolation – separating Palestinians from one another and from Israeli colonizers. In this sense, Israeli policies operate through an apartheid spatial regime that deliberately reorganizes territory, demographics, movement, governance, and daily life to produce and perpetuate domination.[12]

1.1 Early Fragmentation of the Palestinian People

The fragmentation of the Palestinian people under the Israeli regime traces back to British colonial governance in Mandatory Palestine (1922-1947), which institutionalized legal and territorial segregation,

12 Yara Hawari, *Apartheid from Within? The Palestinian Citizens of Israel*, Policy Brief (Al-Shabaka, 2017), 4-6, https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/apartheid-from-within-the-palestinian-citizens-of-israel/?generate_pdf=view.

favoring Zionist colonies.[13] The Nakba (1947-1949) transformed this framework into mass dispossession, displacement, denationalization, and initial territorial reordering. Between late 1947 and 1949, over 85% of Palestinians who lived in the territory that became "Israel" were either displaced or expelled, approximately 65% of the entire population, while the remaining 15% were placed under military rule.[14] Most refugees fled to what became the West Bank and Gaza Strip, only 22% of Mandatory Palestine.[15]

After the Nakba, the Israeli regime – having confiscated 78% of Mandatory Palestine – replaced Palestinians and their towns and villages with Israeli colonizers and colonies.[16] The remaining Palestinian population was confined and concentrated into small, non-contiguous zones that formed the earliest blueprint for today's enclave structure.

The 1949 Armistice Agreements, signed between the Israeli regime and Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria, formally ended the 1948 Arab–Israeli War and demarcated the Green Line, separating Arab-controlled territories – the West Bank under Jordanian administration and the Gaza Strip under Egyptian administration.[17] The agreements left large areas of no-man's-land and undetermined zones, reinforcing the initial fragmentation of Palestinian land and preventing the return of refugees.

After the Six-Day War, the Israeli regime expanded and militarized

13 Dalal Iriqat, *Legacy of the British Mandate: Eliminating The Palestinian Right to Self-Determination*, September 17, 2024, 111–23, https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12759.

14 BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons 2016 - 2018*, Survey (BADIL, 2019), 6, https://badil.org/phocadownloadpap/badil-new/publications/survay/survey2016-2018-eng.pdf.

15 Ibid

16 Nur Masalha, *The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Thinking and Practice: Historical Roots and Contemporary Challenges*, Policy Paper (Institute for Palestine Studies, 2023), https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1654742.

17 *The Arab-Israeli Armistice Agreements, February-July 1949: U.N. Texts and Annexes* (Institute for Palestine Studies, 1968), https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1648251.

territorial fragmentation through more colonies, bypass roads, and land seizures that further shrank Palestinian space across what became known as the "Occupied Palestinian Territory" (OPT). Taken as a whole, the historical and ongoing measures of enclaving form a continuous process: each stage mirrors the other, with additional land confiscation, deeper fragmentation, tighter Israeli control, and the deliberate obstruction of territorial continuity.

The Palestinian people were divided through an extensive system of laws and identity (ID) cards regulating rights and residency, making apartheid one of the three central pillars sustaining the Israeli regime.[18] These Israeli imposed statuses fragment Palestinian society, weaken resistance between and within each group, and reinforce a broader system of domination. Yet despite these divisions, Palestinians have sustained a shared political consciousness across citizenship and residency statuses, territories, and exile, persistently challenging Israeli policies designed to undermine their collective national identity and struggle for self-determination.

1.2 Segregation, Fragmentation, and Isolation

Separation at this stage was enforced through laws, residency classifications, and citizenship regimes, and was institutionalized via the Israeli-controlled population registry and a differentiated ID card system.[19] After occupying and extending its colonization to the rest of Palestine in 1967, the Israeli regime proceeded to further differentiate the physically remaining groups – legally, politically, and socially.

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18 Yara Hawari, *Apartheid from Within? The Palestinian Citizens of Israel*, Policy Brief (Al-Shabaka, 2017), https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/apartheid-from-within-the-palestinian-citizens-of-israel/?generate_pdf=view.

19 Amnesty International, *Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: A Cruel System of Domination and a Crime Against Humanity* (Amnesty International, 2022), 61–218, https://www.amnesty.fr/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/2e137e36-bd42-49da-b88b-abdad26eef14_Full-Report-ITPO.pdf.

Within this fragmented spatial order, the Israeli regime imposed four main categories:

1. **Palestinians in the Shatat** (exile) were denationalized and are, with their descendants, denied return;
2. **Palestinians with Israeli citizenship**, including those internally displaced, residing on Palestinian land confiscated and colonized in 1948, who face institutionalized legal, economic and social discrimination that severely limits their rights;
3. **Palestinians in Jerusalem** who hold a quasi-permanent residency without citizenship, confront severe restrictions on movement, housing, and political participation;
4. **Palestinians residing in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip** including refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), who live under military rule and are subject to restrictions on movement, residency, and return.[20]

These ID types legally determined which laws applied to each group and which rights they could exercise, including the ability to move or access services – even before permanent checkpoints were introduced and installed. Palestinians in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip were required to hold Israeli-administered ID cards, making their legal status and their civil, political, socio-economic, and cultural rights – along with access and mobility – conditional and contrasting across different groups.[21] Through this ID system, the Israeli regime institutionalized a hierarchy of unequal statuses aiming at destroying national unity and goals, as well as culture and common values.

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20 Richard Falk, Israeli Practices Toward the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid (United Nations ESCWA, 2017), https://aardi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ESCWA-2017-Richard-Falk-Apartheid.pdf.

21 BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *Installment of a Permit Regime*, Working Paper no. 18, Forced Population Transfer: The Case of Palestine (BADIL, 2015), https://badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2021/04/19/wp18-fpt-israeli-permit-system-1618823802.pdf.

This legal and administrative fragmentation gradually gave way to physical separation with the introduction of temporary "flying" checkpoints towards the end of the First Intifada[22] (uprising) in the early 1990s.[23] The "Intifada bypass" road plan was implemented to reroute roads around Palestinian areas for colonizers only, accelerating the reorientation of the West Bank road network with approximately 100 km of bypass roads paved in 1990 alone.[24]

However, it was only after the Oslo Accords in 1993 that Israeli checkpoints were fully materialized and institutionalized with the installation of over 40 checkpoints.[25] Over time, the checkpoint regime and bypass road network were consolidated and expanded, and were supplemented by a permit system, forming a new closure apparatus that reinforced separation between Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, Jerusalem residency, and those living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Eventually, this deepened the isolation of the West Bank from the Gaza Strip, particularly after the 2007 blockade.[26]

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22 The First Intifada (1987–1993) was a popular Palestinian uprising against Israeli colonization and the Israeli regime in the West Bank and Gaza. Sparked by long-standing oppression, land confiscation, and economic hardship, it involved mass protests, strikes, grassroots committees, and civil resistance, asserting Palestinian self-determination. See Roger Heacock, "The First Intifada, 1987-1993," Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question – Palquest, https://www.palquest.org/en/highlight/29773/first-intifada-1987-1993.

23 OCHA, "Occupied Palestinian Territory: Humanitarian Facts and Figures," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, December 21, 2017, https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/OCHAFACTSHEET-211217.pdf.

24 Jad Issac et al., *Assessing the Impacts of Israeli Movement Restrictions on the Mobility of People and Goods in the West Bank 2019*, Special Report (Applied Research Institute–Jerusalem, 2019), 16, https://www.arij.org/publications/papers-reports/2019-papers-reports/assessing-the-impacts-of-israeli-movement-restrictions-on-the-mobility-of-people-and-goods-in-the-west-bank-2019/.

25 OCHA, "OCHA Humanitarian Update Occupied Palestinian Territories 16 - 31 Jul 2003," August 5, 2003, https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/ocha-humanitarian-update-occupied-palestinian-territories-16.

26 OCHA, *Gaza Strip: The Humanitarian Impact of 15 Years of Blockade* (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2022), https://www.ochaopt.org/content/gaza-strip-humanitarian-impact-15-years-blockade-june-2022.

Isolation complements this fragmentation by confining and disconnecting Palestinian communities from one another through military checkpoints, rings of colonies around Palestinian towns and cities, segregated and restricted transportation networks, and the denial of essential infrastructure.[27] The period between 1967 and the Oslo Accords enforced separation and fragmentation, consolidating Israeli colonial-apartheid control, producing dependence, and directly obstructing the Palestinian people's right to self-determination – a process that was further entrenched and formalized with the Oslo Accords.

1.3 The Oslo Accords: Laying the Foundations for the Enclave System

The Oslo Accords laid the institutional and spatial groundwork for the contemporary enclave system, first and foremost in the West Bank, by dividing the territory into Areas A, B, and C and transforming fragmentation into a governing principle. Areas A and B together comprise roughly 40% of the West Bank, while Area C constitutes approximately 60%. Area A (around 18% of the West Bank) is formally under full Palestinian civil and security control, with the Palestinian Authority (PA) responsible for governance, policing, and internal administration. In practice, however, Israeli incursions, surveillance, and "security" operations severely limit and repress the PA's alleged autonomy. Area B (around 22%) is officially under Palestinian civil administration but joint Israeli-Palestinian security control; again, the Israeli regime often overrides PA security efforts, controlling movement and access to land, imposing its domination. Area C (about 60%) is under full Israeli civil, political, and security control, including

27 Amnesty International, *Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: A Cruel System of Domination and a Crime Against Humanity* (Amnesty International, 2022), 61–218, https://www.amnesty.fr/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/2e137e36-bd42-49da-b88b-abdad26eef14_Full-Report-ITPO.pdf.

colonies, land planning, resource management, and policing, with the PA excluded from meaningful presence and authority.[28]

The Israeli regime has actively weaponized this division: Area C as the core zone of colonial expansion, land confiscation, coercion, harassment, and displacement; Area B as a transitional control buffer in which limited Palestinian civil administration operates under overriding Israeli regime control; and Area A, while the most intensely populated, as increasingly isolated and encircled. **The A, B, and C designations imposed by the Oslo Accords were instrumentalized by the Israeli regime to entrench Palestinian dependence, regulate daily life through permits and military oversight, and systematically deny Palestinians access to land, resources, and any genuine autonomy. The Oslo Accords, rather than establish a path towards self-determination, paved the way for deeper enclosures, recurrent Israeli raids and incursions, and the consolidation of smaller regional and local enclaves.**

This spatial reordering was accompanied by a parallel restructuring of Palestinian governance, designed to manage fragmentation rather than enable liberation. Keeping aside the original intent, the PA operates as a localized governance and security mechanism embedded within the Oslo framework, functioning as a complementary instrument to the Israeli regime rather than a vehicle for autonomy or national liberation.[29] Limited in jurisdiction and operating within parameters set by the Israeli regime and its colonial allies, the PA has been leveraged to manage Palestinian political and administrative life under Israeli colonial domination.

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28 OCHA, *Humanitarian Impact of Israeli Settlements and Other Infrastructure in the West Bank* (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2007), 122–23, https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/ocharpt_update30july2007.pdf.

29 BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee *Rights, Palestinian Youth Perspectives on the Oslo Peace Process: Successes, Failures and Alternatives*, Working Paper no. 27 (BADIL, 2021), https://badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2021/09/15/wp27-pal-youth-vs-oslo-eng-1631700884.pdf.

After the Second Intifada[30] (2000-2005), segregation, fragmentation, and isolation were no longer enforced primarily through administrative categories alone but through increasingly permanent military and infrastructural measures.[31] Checkpoints, bypass roads, colonies, outposts, military, buffer and seam zones, declared nature reserves, the Apartheid Wall and eventually blockade and siege were progressively imposed across the West Bank and in between West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, and 1948 Palestine. The construction of the Apartheid Wall after 2002 further re-engineered the territory: cutting deep into the West Bank, confiscating even more lands, and producing new spaces of enclosure known as "seam zones" between the Apartheid Wall and the Green Line.[32]

This spatial hardening was accompanied by a transition from differentiated identity cards to an expansive permit regime – one of the main policies of the Israeli closure apparatus, that requires Palestinians to obtain Israeli authorization to move between cities, pass checkpoints, access Jerusalem and 1948 Palestine, reach workplaces, and access services.[33] In the seam zones, this regime is especially coercive: Palestinians require special permits simply to reside in their homes, access their land,

30 The Second Intifada (also known as al-Aqsa Intifada, 2000–2005) was a mass Palestinian uprising against Israeli colonization and the Israeli regime, sparked by Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem and decades of stalled peace efforts that failed to end occupation. It united Palestinians in popular and armed resistance against Israeli repression, colony expansion, and structural violence in pursuit of self-determination, liberation, and an end to occupation. See: Roger Heacock, "The Second Intifada, 2000-2005," Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question – Palquest, accessed February 9, 2026, https://www.palquest.org/en/highlight/33567/second-intifada-2000-2005.

31 Ahmad Ezzeddin As'ad, "Barriers, Closures and Restrictions on Movement in the West Bank Following October 7," Institute for Palestine Studies, December 26, 2023, https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1654908.

32 Jad Issac et al., *The Segregation Wall Impacts on Palestinian Environment* (The Segregation Wall impacts on Palestinian Environment, 2015), 2, https://www.arij.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The_Segregation_Wall_impacts_on_Palestinian_Environment.pdf.

33 BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *Installment of a Permit Regime*, Working Paper no. 18, Forced Population Transfer: The Case of Palestine (BADIL, 2015), https://badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2021/04/19/wp18-fpt-israeli-permit-system-1618823802.pdf.

or farm their fields.[34] Movement, access and rights became conditional, revocable, and unpredictable. The permit regime – comprising over one hundred permit types regulating residency, movement, work, medical access, and services – further entrenched administrative domination and everyday uncertainty, reinforcing enclosure under the guise of the Oslo "peace process."[35] Together, these measures transformed what had been presented as provisional arrangements into a solidified spatial regime of segregation and control.

Enclaving: The Example of Hebron

The Hebron Protocol,[36] signed on 17 January 1997, as part of the Oslo II Interim Agreement, divided the city into two areas: H1, covering roughly 80% of the city (around 18 km²) under full Palestinian civil and security control, and H2, the remaining 20%, under Israeli military control. The H2 area includes the Old City and four Israeli colonies.[37] Partitioning the city effectively created areas within Hebron where colonies exist inside the city itself, giving the colonizers a foothold to be used as a precedent to expand their presence there and elsewhere in the West Bank.[38]

34 Jad Issac et al., *The Segregation Wall Impacts on Palestinian Environment* (The Segregation Wall impacts on Palestinian Environment, 2015), 2, https://www.arij.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The_Segregation_Wall_impacts_on_Palestinian_Environment.pdf.

35 Amnesty International, *Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: A Cruel System of Domination and a Crime Against Humanity* (Amnesty International, 2022), 74-75, https://www.amnesty.fr/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/2e137e36-bd42-49da-b88b-abdad26eef14_Full-Report-ITPO.pdf.

36 *Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron*, Agreement, Oslo II Interim Agreement (United Nations, 1997), https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/protocol_concerning_the_redeployment_in_hebron.pdf.

37 OCHA, "Further Restrictions on Palestinian Movement in the Israeli-Controlled H2 Area of Hebron City," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, October 11, 2017, https://www.ochaopt.org/content/further-restrictions-palestinian-movement-israeli-controlled-h2-area-hebron-city.

38 Edward W. Said, "The Real Meaning of the Hebron Agreement," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26, no. 3 (1997), https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/40400.

In H2, Palestinians are subject to Israeli military law, while the colonizers are governed under Israeli civil law. Access restrictions are pervasive: approximately 30% of the Palestinian population lives in neighborhoods adjacent to the colonies and faces strict curfews, pedestrian bans, and road closures. Over 100 physical obstacles – including permanently staffed checkpoints and streets designated exclusively for colonizers – separate the colonies from Palestinian areas.[39] Palestinians must navigate a complex permit regime to visit relatives, access shops, or move within their own neighborhoods, effectively separating families from one another, restricting movement between streets, and fragmenting the Old City of Hebron into controlled local enclaves.[40]

Jerusalem exemplifies an intensified form of controlled fragmentation and demographic engineering, serving as both a laboratory and a precedent for practices applied by the Israeli regime. Roads, transport infrastructure, and projects like the Light Rail function as de facto barriers that, alongside the Apartheid Wall and colonies, fragment Palestinian neighborhoods and restrict spatial continuity.[41] Palestinian areas face exclusionary planning and zoning that sharply restrict housing expansion and community development, forcing many to build without permits and, therefore, under constant threat of demolition.

39 OCHA, "Further Restrictions on Palestinian Movement in the Israeli-Controlled H2 Area of Hebron City," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, October 11, 2017, https://www.ochaopt.org/content/further-restrictions-palestinian-movement-israeli-controlled-h2-area-hebron-city.

40 For more on Israeli policies in Hebron's Old City, including the permit regime, zoning, and segregation, see BADIL's case study. BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *Forced Population Transfer: The Case of the Old City of Hebron, Forced Population Transfer* (BADIL, 2016), https://badil.org/phocadownloadpap/badil-new/publications/research/working-papers/CaseStudyFPT-Hebron(August2016).pdf.

41 Michelle Campos, "The Jerusalem Light Rail in Historical Perspective: Urban Transportation and Urban Citizenship between Ottomanism and Apartheid," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, no. 92 (2022), https://doi.org/10.70190/jq.I92.p52.

Residency rights in Jerusalem are severely restricted and revocable at the discretion of the Israeli regime, a mechanism used to pressure Palestinian families and undermine demographic presence.[42] Israeli imposed home demolitions, permit denials, infrastructure neglect, colonial expansion and land confiscation systematically reshape the city's legal status, territorial reach, and population composition.[43] These coercive policies reflect an intensified and advanced model of the enclaving and fragmentation strategies first institutionalized under the Oslo Accords, and further reinforced through subsequent planning and facts on the ground in Jerusalem that impose Israeli "sovereignty."

With the ground work of enclaving established by Oslo in the West Bank and Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip was gradually transformed into a sealed regional enclave. Building on restrictions imposed since the early 1990s, movement within and out of the Gaza Strip was severely constrained, with access to medical care, trade, and travel subject to a permit regime.[44] During the Second Intifada, this enclosure was deepened through the creation of a militarized "buffer zone," or "Access Restricted Area" (ARA), initially a 100–300 m strip enforced through land destruction, home demolitions, and live fire.[45] After the 2005 "disengagement," this zone was not removed but instead formalized and expanded in practice, reaching up to 1,500 m inside the Gaza Strip.[46] In 2007, the blockade closed the Gaza Strip's borders,

42 Tamara Tawfiq Tamimi, "Revocation of Residency of Palestinians in Jerusalem: Prospects for Accountability," Jerusalem Quarterly, no. 72 (Winter 2017): 37–41, https://doi.org/10.70190/jq.I72.p37.

43 Tamara Tawfiq Tamimi, "Revocation of Residency of Palestinians in Jerusalem: Prospects for Accountability," Jerusalem Quarterly, no. 72 (Winter 2017): 37–41, https://doi.org/10.70190/jq.I72.p37.

44 OCHA, "The Gaza Strip: The Humanitarian Impact of Movement Restrictions on People & Goods - OCHA Factsheet," Question of Palestine, July 2013, https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-209300/.

45 Mezan Center for Human Rights, Fact Sheet: The Access-Restricted Areas "Buffer Zone", in the Gaza Strip (2012), https://mezan.org/en/post/39970.

46 Ibid.

airspace, and maritime access under comprehensive Israeli control, further sealing the enclave.[47]

Over the three decades of the so-called peace process, under the Oslo Accords, Israeli spatial apartheid intensified and flourished through various and multiple policies and mechanisms. The end result was that fragmentation no longer operated only between regions but within them and at multiple levels:

- **Regional enclaves**: These are macro-enclaves characterized by their large size and area, comprising a number of towns, villages, and camps falling within s Area A and B under the Oslo framework in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip;

- **Sealed enclaves**: These are sealed spaces produced by the Apartheid Wall, the seam zones, and the Gaza "buffer zone;"

- **Local enclaves**: These are micro-enclaves generated through iron gates, road closures, bypass roads, and checkpoints that sever individual villages, refugee camps, and local communities from one another and from the surrounding cities and areas.

1.4 The Formalization of Enclaves: The Decisive Plan

Building upon decades of fragmentation, segregation, and regional enclaving, the Israeli regime's Decisive Plan seeks to formalize and develop the existing regional enclaves into local enclaves. Explicitly detailing the forced displacement, subjugation, or annihilation of Palestinians, the Decisive Plan is a blueprint for expanding Israeli

47 OCHA, "The Gaza Strip: The Humanitarian Impact of Movement Restrictions on People & Goods - OCHA Factsheet," *Question of Palestine*, July 2013, https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-209300/.

"sovereignty" over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.[48] It proposes the creation of "six municipal governmental regions" -regional enclaves- in the West Bank, embedding these divisions into the current Israeli coalition agreement and securing backing from a majority of Knesset members.[49] Implementation is already underway through accelerated colony expansion, land confiscation, fragmentation and isolation of Palestinian communities through enclavement, the suppression of Palestinian resistance, and the elimination of any Palestinian and international presence. These mechanisms operate in tandem with legislative entrenchment and governance arrangements that further fragment Palestinian society and deliberately aim to eliminate any remaining pathways to unity and self-determination.[50]

Israeli colonial expansion in the West Bank works as the material engine of this formalized enclaving through the systematic confiscation of Palestinian land. The Israeli regime has advanced plans for more than 26,000 new colonial units in 2025 alone, extending over more than 30,000 dunums, primarily in and around Jerusalem.[51] Expansion in colonies such as Ma'ale Adumim, Giv'at Ze'ev, and the E1 area is strategically designed with the aim to irreversibly sever territorial continuity, isolating Palestinian communities from one another.[52]

Alongside territorial fragmentation, political fragmentation is being

48 BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *The Decisive Plan: The Israeli Regime's Blueprint for Colonial Expansion and Palestinian Subjugation*, Position Paper (BADIL, 2025), https://badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2025/10/17/the-decisiveplan-eng-1760699781.pdf.

49 Bezalel Smotrich, "Israel's Decisive Plan," *Hashiloach Frontlines*, 2017, https://hashiloach.org.il/israels-decisive-plan/.

50 Ibid.

51 "Israel Expands Settlement Projects in the Jordan Valley and Jerusalem, Accelerates Land Seizures," The Palestinian Information Center, October 25, 2025, https://english.palinfo.com/news/2025/10/25/350451/.

52 CWRC, *Violations of the Israeli Occupation State & Colonizers in the Occupied Palestinian Territories 2026*, Annual Report 2025 (Colonization & Wall Resistance Commission, 2026), 37–38, https://www.cwrc.ps/file/attachs/5456.pdf.

deliberately consolidated. While the PA manages limited civil sectors, the Israeli regime has increasingly moved to dismantle it and suppress any quasi-functioning united governance structures in Palestine. The Decisive Plan, calls for alternative "self-governing" arrangements designed to erase political aspirations of liberation, gradually dismantle the PA, and replace it with co-opted enclave elites.[53]

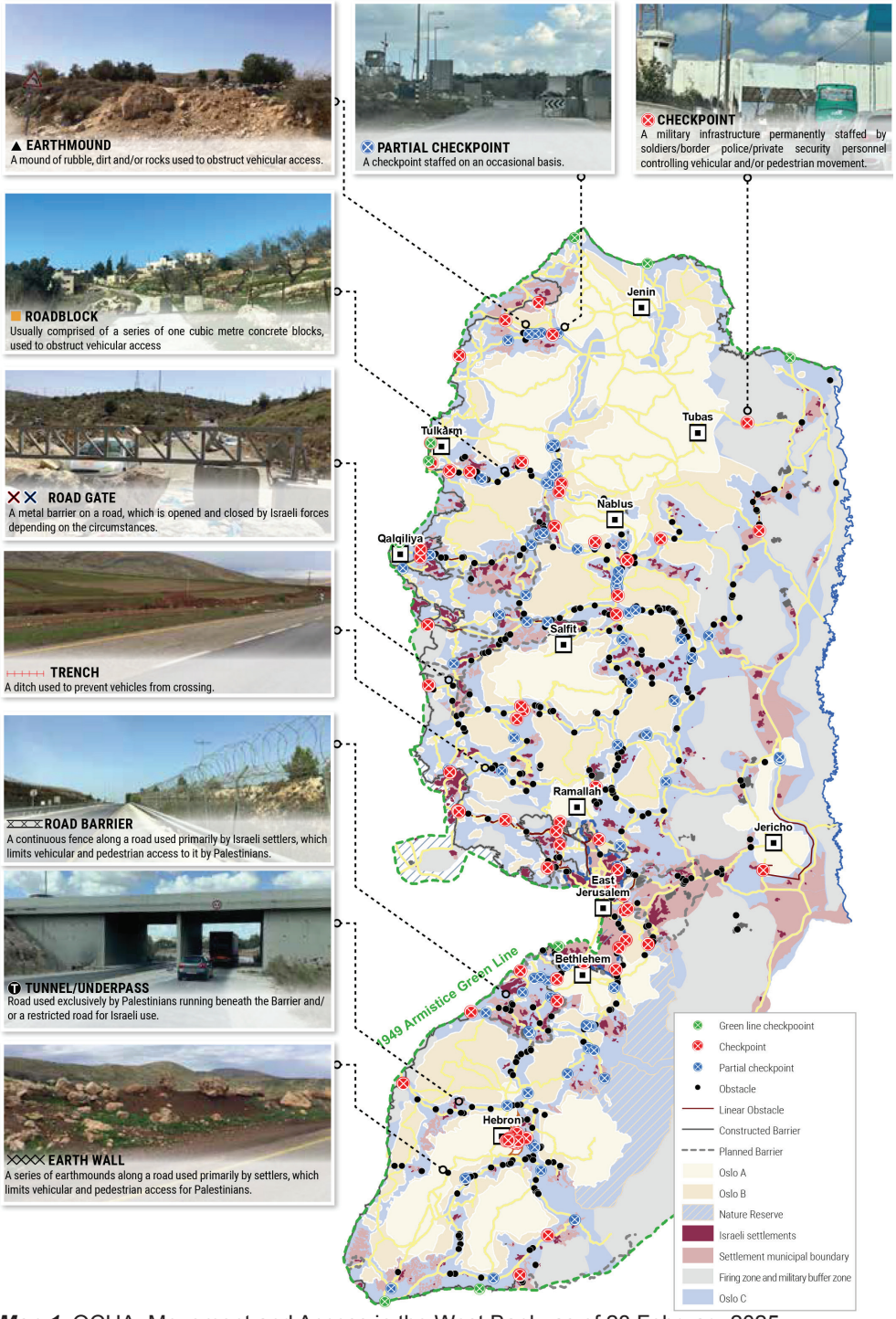
This political and territorial re-engineering is enforced on the ground through an expanding architecture of mobility control. In the West Bank, villages and towns are transformed into isolated local enclaves by an extensive system of checkpoints and iron gates. These iron gates – which can be closed at any moment, severing access to essential services, livelihoods, and social ties – are color-coded, reflecting their function and level of access. Yellow gates are installed at many entrances of cities, towns, and villages and are opened or closed depending on Israeli needs and assessments. When yellow gates are open, Palestinian movement is allowed, but with frequent checks and delays. Green gates require special access permits. Orange gates are usually completely closed to Palestinians; and blue or black gates signify military-only zones.[54] However, these color-based classifications remain unofficial and ambiguous, forming part of a broader policy of deliberate uncertainty by the Israeli regime, in which access is governed by shifting practices rather than clear, publicly defined regulations.

As of May 2025, at least 849 movement obstacles were officially documented across the West Bank.[55] At that time, the total number of

53 BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *The Decisive Plan: The Israeli Regime's Blueprint for Colonial Expansion and Palestinian Subjugation*, Position Paper (BADIL, 2025), https://badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2025/10/17/the-decisiveplan-eng-1760699781.pdf.

54 Khalil Assali, "Perspective: Color-Coded Gates and Frightening Uncertainty in Bethany," *Jerusalem Story*, September 18, 2025, https://www.jerusalemstory.com/en/blog/perspective-color-coded-gates-and-frightening-uncertainty-bethany.

55 OCHA, "West Bank Movement and Access Update," May 28, 2025, https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/west-bank-movement-and-access-update-may-2025.



Map 1: OCHA, Movement and Access in the West Bank, as of 28 February 2025

open or closed road gates stood at 288, constituting roughly a third of all movement obstacles. Since then, new gates and roadblocks have continued to be installed on a near-daily basis; this rapid pace is evident in that, between May and September 2025 alone, at least 27 additional obstacles – including 18 iron gates – were recorded.[56] Checkpoints along the Green Line are not included in this count, nor are restrictions such as the declaration of "closed military zones," the temporary closure of Jenin and Tulkarm refugee camps for returnees, or physical obstacles installed by Israeli forces since March 2025.[57] Everyday life is thus governed by this closure apparatus, permits and arbitrary restrictions on movement, while infrastructure constraints and colony expansion compound economic stagnation, producing chronic dependency and uncertainty.

Regional, Local, and Enclosed Enclaves in the West Bank

The Decisive Plan formally outlines six municipal regions in the West Bank consisting of Hebron, Bethlehem, Ramallah, Jericho, Nablus, and Jenin. [58]However, the map of land confiscation presented by Smotrich in September 2025, indicates approximately 82% of the West Bank and shows a different configuration.[59] For example, the map below includes Tulkarem while excluding Bethlehem, illustrating inconsistencies between the Decisive Plan's text and its cartographic representation. These discrepancies do not alter the Plan's overarching purpose: the consolidation of Israeli domination through spatial fragmentation.

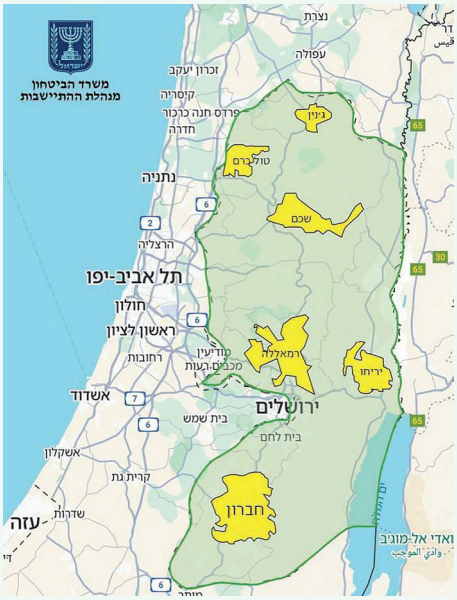
56 OCHA, "Humanitarian Situation Update #324 | West Bank," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, September 18, 2025, https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-324-west-bank.

57 Ibid.

58 Bezalel Smotrich, "Israel's Decisive Plan," *Hashiloach Frontlines*, 2017, https://hashiloach.org.il/israels-decisive-plan/.

59 Sam Sokol, "Smotrich Proposes Annexing 82% of West Bank in Bid to Prevent Palestinian State," *The Times of Israel*, September 3, 2025, https://www.timesofisrael.com/smotrich-proposes-annexing-82-of-west-bank-in-bid-to-prevent-palestinian-state/.

On the ground, the West Bank already functions as a system of 11 regional enclaves: Nablus, Hebron, Ramallah, Jenin, Tulkarem, Bethlehem, Jericho, Salfit, Tubas, Qalqilya, and "East Jerusalem." Each of these regional enclaves are composed of villages that operate as local enclaves, controlled through checkpoints, gates, cement blocks, earth mounds, and curfews imposed by Israeli forces.[60] Within these local enclaves, smaller enclosed enclaves, **comprising the refugee camps**, are actively constrained, demolished, or erased, further limiting Palestinian autonomy and erasing historical presence.



Map 2: Times of Israel, A Map Presented by Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich Detailing a Proposed Israeli Annexation of 82 Percent of the West Bank, September 3, 2025.

This multi-scalar system demonstrates that territorial, political, and social fragmentation is not a future threat but an evolving present reality, entrenched and continuously reinforced. By embedding control at these enclaves, whether the regional, local, or enclosed, the Israeli regime not only isolates Palestinian communities and restricts mobility but also systematically undermines social cohesion, forecloses collective political action, and entrenches a structure of domination that renders Palestinian self-determination increasingly illusory.

60 Mohammed Ali and Marium Haddad, "Ten Maps to Understand the Occupied West Bank," *Al Jazeera*, September 16, 2024, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/9/16/ten-maps-to-understand-the-occupied-west-bank.

In the Gaza Strip, enclaving is mirrored through externally imposed "post-genocide" planning and management under Trump's 20-point plan, which was adopted by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) through Resolution 2803.[61] Trump's plan divides the Gaza Strip along what is referred to as a "yellow line," an Israeli-imposed boundary used as a new de facto internal border. This line places more than half of the Strip under Israeli control, seizes most of the agricultural land, and confines the Palestinian population to a narrow coastal zone.[62] It further segments the territory into a "green zone," militarized and administered under Israeli and international control where reconstruction would be permitted; and, a "red zone," left in ruins with no reconstruction planned. Similar to the West Bank, these designated zones would be maintained by force across the Gaza Strip to engineer internal separation and regulate movement, restricting human, humanitarian, medical, and commercial circulation.[63] In this way, the intensified blockade, the expanded and violently enforced buffer zone, and the "yellow line" function not only as mechanisms of spatial control but as tools of genocide. As a result, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip remain physically confined, internally displaced, economically suffocated, starved, and vulnerable to further eradication.

The following testimony, conducted by BADIL on 3 March 2026, provides a firsthand account of the emerging local enclave system in Gaza, detailing the ongoing fragmentation on the ground and how Palestinians are "notified" of the imposed yellow and red zones.

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61 United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 2803 (2025),* S/RES/2803 (United Nations, 2025), https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/2803(2025).

62 Emma Graham-Harrison, "'Yellow Line' That Divides Gaza under Trump Plan Is 'New Border' for Israel, Says Military Chief," World News, *The Guardian*, December 8, 2025, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/dec/08/yellow-line-that-divides-gaza-under-trump-plan-is-new-border-for-israel-says-military-chief.

63 Al Mezan, *The Gaza Bantustan—Israeli Apartheid in the Gaza Strip* (Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, 2021), 14–16, https://mezan.org/uploads/files/16381763051929.pdf.

H.A., 33-year-old man, Gaza

The Yellow Concrete Cubes in Gaza

I see that the nature of Gaza's division is different from any other area, different from the West Bank, and different from the rest of Palestine. There, with the establishment of checkpoints, it might be possible for Palestinians to reach somewhere or they might get denied entry. But here in Gaza, when a yellow cube is placed in a certain area, no Palestinian can remain. That is, we don't know what happens afterward.

For example, I lived in a refugee camp, and a cube was placed at the door of my house. Within half an hour, I had to leave. After that, returning was impossible. The area just keeps shrinking; with no space remaining to come back to. Even moving around the perimeter becomes forbidden.

These streets are extremely dangerous. The entire area is considered unsafe, with no designated safe zones. Anyone approaching a yellow cube, even within 100-200 m, is immediately fired upon. Every day, we hear of 3-4 martyrs, sometimes 7-8, from areas where people tried to approach the yellow cube.

The yellow cube barely indicates the area it marks, the path it signals, the road, or where you should go from there. We only know that passing or crossing it is forbidden, without actually knowing the boundaries of the zone.

Nothing like this exists outside of Gaza, so it's difficult to imagine. In the West Bank, there may be some visibility, with army control and checkpoints that can close – but here in Gaza, we are completely surrounded by the army or areas of concentrated military presence. Gun posts, cannons, and artillery are active around the clock. Anyone who approaches within 200–500 m of any area considered inside the yellow or red lines is immediately fired upon. I cannot see these areas from afar.

Recently, three photographers were going around the refugee camps and surrounding cities near the eastern borders. They had an activity for the children at the camp near the [Israeli] brigade headquarters. They were shot at just for being near it. You are not allowed to film in the area, and you are not allowed to be there. No one really knows what is inside that area, its exact boundaries. Sometimes they don't even place the cubes; they consider it enough based on previous attacks.

These yellow cubes are a new measure, implemented only one, two, or three months ago. Before that, leaflets were distributed with a warning: "These are dangerous areas – stay away." In many cases, Israeli forces entered these areas shortly after and carried out killings. The zones were then declared active combat areas, despite the fact that no actual combat had taken place but rather a massacre. This was done largely to show the international community that warnings had been issued and that leaflets had been scattered everywhere.

The 20-point plan effectively denies Palestinians the reparations, restitution, and meaningful reconstruction owed to them for the ongoing Israeli-perpetrated genocide.[64] It also exposes the complicit role of the United States (US), along with the states that voted to pass the resolution, in actively reshaping the Gaza Strip's geography and population to entrench Israeli colonial domination. The plan is not only the blueprint for managing Palestinians under colonial control, but also attempts to erase genocide from global memory while embedding the Israeli regime's colonial-apartheid system within an international framework. The US and the Israeli regime are engineering an order that institutionalizes fragmentation.[65]

64 BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *Rights-Based Reconstruction: Decolonization and Reparations*, Position Paper (BADIL, 2025), https://badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2025/07/07/pp-reconstruction-vs-reparations-eng-1751895094.pdf.

65 Al-Shabaka, hosts, Munir Nuseibah and Inès Abdel Razek, *Legitimizing Genocide: The Israel-Trump Plan and Gaza's Future*, Al-Shabaka, December 9, 2025, 16:0 - 33:54, https://al-shabaka.org/policy-labs/legitimizing-genocide-the-israel-trump-plan-and-gazas-future/.

This engineered fragmentation is neither accidental nor temporary. It is strategically aligned with broader policy goals aimed at weakening Palestinian collective identity and preventing political mobilization. By compartmentalizing Palestinians into increasingly small, disconnected, and tightly regulated enclaves, the Israeli regime aims to erode social cohesion, foreclose collective action, and normalize spatial apartheid as a condition of life. Enforced Israeli enclaving works to extinguish any viable prospect of Palestinian self-determination.

Overall, the Israeli regime accelerated the division strategy through fragmenting the already fragmented Palestinian people and Mandatory Palestine. It now imposes a unified enclave system across the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and Jerusalem through a layered closure apparatus, restrictive legal regimes, and constrained governance that regulate movement, residency, construction, and access to resources. This system consolidates Israeli domination by controlling land and fragmenting Palestinian social and political life, while erasing almost eight decades of disregarded legal accountability and foreclosing the possibility of unified Palestinian national aspirations and self-determination. In line with this trajectory, the Decisive Plan explicitly rejects Palestinian "national aspiration" and political representation. It envisions an enclave system in which Palestinians are confined to localized administrative structures under Israeli sovereignty, effectively denying any independent political role for Palestinian institutions.[66] Even the PA, used previously to administer layers of fragmentation, is now deemed unnecessary and undesirable, as it continues to represent a unified political body that the current stage of enclaving seeks to eliminate. The cumulative effect is the erosion of Palestinian presence and the neutralization of political agency through sustained fragmentation and suffocation.

66 "The continued existence of the two conflicting national aspirations in our small piece of territory will ensure many more years of bloodshed and armed conflict. Only when one of the sides concedes, willingly or by force, and forgoes its national aspirations in the Land of Israel, will the desired peace come about and civilian coexistence become possible." See: Bezalel Smotrich, "Israel's Decisive Plan," *Hashiloach Frontlines*, 2017, https://hashiloach.org.il/israels-decisive-plan/.

CHAPTER 2

The Bantustan System Under Apartheid South Africa: A Historical Precedent

Across settler-colonial and apartheid contexts, spatial fragmentation has functioned as a means of dismantling collective political presence, confining populations within administratively manageable units, and recording domination as governance. This process was implemented through law, administrative measures, and colonial planning that deliberately constructed racialized spatial boundaries to segregate and restrain indigenous populations, restructuring social and legal orders to entrench political domination.[67]

A particularly instructive historical precedent is Apartheid South Africa's bantustan system, which physically and administratively segregated and fragmented Black South Africans. Ethnically defined bantustans isolated them from one another and from white-controlled areas while presenting these divisions as forms of lawful self-governance. **The bantustans did not constitute genuine autonomy, but rather operated as instruments of control, containment, and political neutralization**.[68]

Reading the enclave system in Palestine through this lens clarifies both the continuities and the specific adaptations of apartheid techniques

67 Sarah Hunt, "Settler Colonialism," Routledge Handbook of Law and Society, https://ebrary.net/172003/law/settler_colonialism.

68 United Nations Department of Special Political Questions, Regional Co-operation, Decolonization and Trusteeship, *Decolonization Issues Before the General Assembly at Its Forty-Second Session (1987),* ST/SG/SER.F/88–10625 (United Nations, 1987), https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/sites/www.un.org.dppa.decolonization/files/decon_num_35.pdf.

across settler-colonial contexts; highlighting how Israeli settler-colonial apartheid has refined, advanced and consolidated domination through spatial control and segmentation.

2.1 Forced Displacement and Demographic Engineering

The bantustan system was a foundational component of apartheid governance in South Africa, designed to sustain white minority rule through territorial and political fragmentation. Formalized through the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 and related legislation,[69] it created ten ethnically defined "homelands" that stripped Black South Africans of national citizenship and confined them to isolated, non-contiguous territories.[70] Framed as self-determination, the bantustans functioned in practice as apartheid mechanisms of exclusion, population control, economic exploitation, and political neutralization.

Forced displacement was a central mechanism in the construction and maintenance of the bantustan system. Through demographic engineering, millions of Black South Africans were uprooted and redirected into these under-resourced enclaves in order to secure white control over urban centers, agricultural land, and labor markets.[71] By the 1950s and 1960s, reducing the urban African population had become a strategic priority,[72] reinforced by legislation such as the Group Areas Act

69 Bantu Authorities Act, 68 of 1951, The Union of South Africa (1951), https://media.lawlibrary.org.za/media/legislation/295328/source_file/9c6fb807b31afbf6/bantu-authorities-act-1951.pdf.

70 Greene, Jim, MFA, "Bantustan | Politics and Government," EBSCO, 2022, https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/politics-and-government/bantustan.

71 David Marshall Smith, *The Apartheid City and Beyond: Urbanization and Social Change in South Africa* (Witwatersrand University Press, 1992), https://www.stellenboschheritage.co.za/wp-content/uploads/David_M._Smith_The_Apartheid_City_and_Beyond_UrBookFi-2.pdf.

72 Ibid

1950.[73] Between 1960 and 1982, approximately 3.5 million people were forcibly displaced, primarily as internally displaced persons, while tens of thousands fled to neighboring states.[74] After that, those who remained in Apartheid South Africa were compelled into "citizenship" in bantustans they had no historical connection to, masking dispossession under the guise of administrative reclassification.[75]

2.2 Discontinuous Territories and Spatial Control

Spatial fragmentation was built directly into bantustan geography. Some consisted of disconnected blocks of land surrounded by white-controlled areas, preventing territorial coherence or economic autonomy.[76] Bophuthatswana, for example, was composed of seven separate fragments, earning the nickname "Jigsawland."[77] This fractured landscape embedded apartheid's racial hierarchy into space itself.

The spatial discontinuity of the bantustans is illustrated in the map below.

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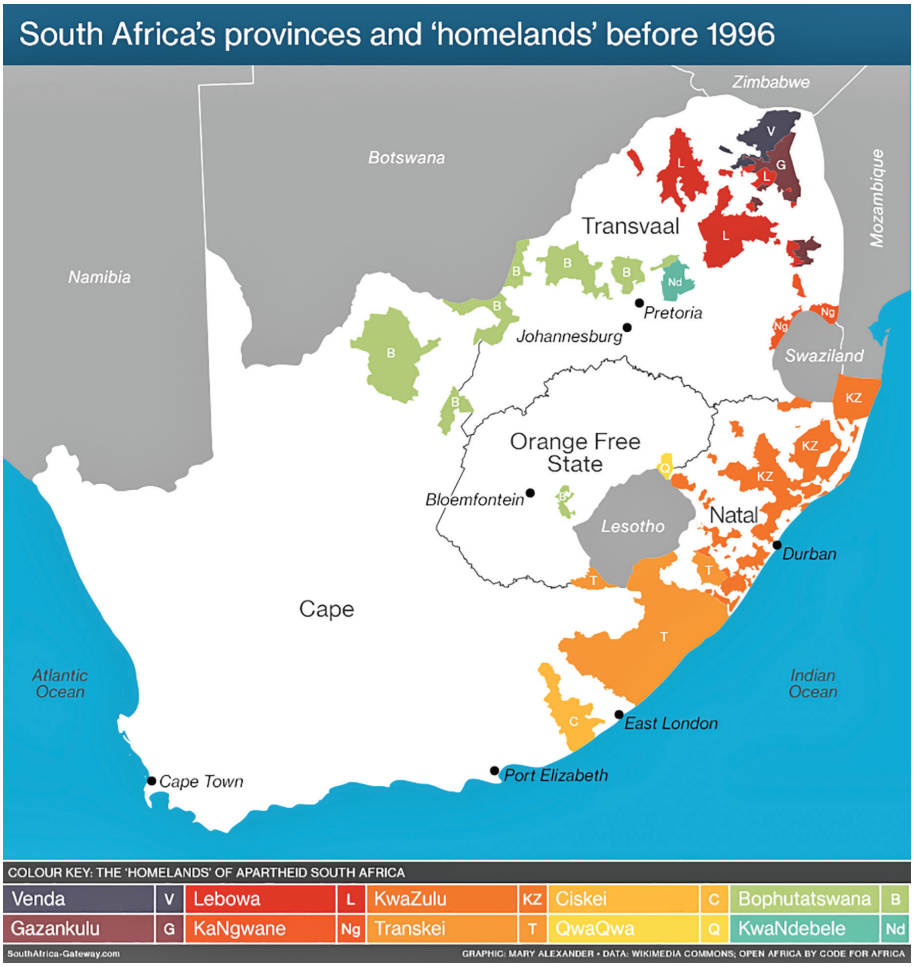
73 Solène Baffi et al., "The South African Urban System," in *International and Transnational Perspectives on Urban Systems*, ed. Rozenblat C et al. (Springer, 2018), https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01774707.

74 Martin Abel, "Long-Run Effects of Forced Resettlement: Evidence from Apartheid South Africa," *The Journal of Economic History* 79, no. 4 (2019): 915–53, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26832117.

75 Ibid.

76 Sakiel A. Monama et al., "South African Spatial Planning Fragmentation: Repealing the Apartheid Planning Imprint," *International Journal of Entrepreneurship* 26, no. 1S (2021): 1–11. https://www.abacademies.org/articles/south-african-spatial-planning-fragmentation-repealing-the-apartheid-planning-imprint-13336.html.

77 The Associated Press, "RR7801A Independence for Bophuthatswana," AP Newsroom, July 21, 2015, https://newsroom.ap.org/editorial-photos-videos/detail?itemid=44e06c039b3233ae62edef7d05124534&mediatype=video&source=youtube.



Map 3: South Africa Gateway, *Map of provinces and bantustans in Apartheid South Africa Before 1996*, December 22, 2025.

2.3 Indirect Rule and the Co-optation of Local Leadership

The system also relied on the manipulation of "traditional" leadership.[78] Drawing on colonial doctrines of indirect rule, apartheid policy makers insisted that African societies were inherently tribal, each with fixed

78 S. F. Khunou, "Traditional Leadership and Independent Bantustans of South Africa: Some Milestones of Transformative Constitutionalism beyond Apartheid," Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal (PELJ) 12, no. 4 (2009): 81–122.

ethnic identities.[79] This tribalization was manipulated to fragment Black communities, prevent the emergence of a unified political consciousness, and maintain populations as manageable, controllable units.[80]

Co-opted local elites were granted limited authority within state-designed structures. While they gained limited influence within their communities, their power was ultimately an extension of apartheid, lending a façade of legitimacy while remaining fully subordinate to apartheid power.[81]

2.4 The Illusion of Self-Rule

Ideologically, the bantustan project drew on colonial notions of "native self-rule" to justify the political, economic, and security domination by delegitimizing Black claims to national belonging.[82] Politically, it fractured the population into ethnic "nations" governed by co-opted leaders. Economically, it confined people to under-resourced bantustans, controlling labor supply while severely limiting economic autonomy. In terms of security, coercive control remained centralized in the South African Police (SAP) and the South African Defense Force (SADF), with bantustan police trained and supervised to enforce compliance, while real military power remained firmly in apartheid hands.[83]

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79 Leroy Vail, ed., "Introduction: Ethnicity in Southern African History," in *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (University of California Press, 1989), https://sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/archive-files/leroy_vail_the_creation_of_tribalism_in_southernbook4you-1.pdf.

80 Ibid.

81 Chitja Twala and Ayanda Sphelele Ndlovu, "'Dangling the Land as a Carrot': The Bantustans and the Territorial Extension Under the Apartheid Regime in South Africa," *Histories* 5, no. 1 (2025): 12, https://doi.org/10.3390/histories5010012.

82 Laura Evans, "Contextualising Apartheid at the End of Empire: Repression, 'Development' and the Bantustans," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 47, no. 2 (2019): 372–411, https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2019.1605705.

83 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (South Africa), *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report: Volume Two* (1998), https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/report/finalreport/volume%202.pdf.

"Self-rule" thus functioned as a legal fiction that reclassified dispossession as autonomy. Under Hendrik Verwoerd's doctrine of "separate development," apartheid was rebranded as a modern alternative to decolonization, fracturing the Black population into ethnic "nations" governed by compliant leaders and projecting an international illusion of progress.[84]

The bantustan system shows how apartheid turned territorial fragmentation, forced displacement, and the fiction of "self-rule" into a coherent technology of domination, entrenching racial hierarchy while masking dispossession as autonomy. The effects of the bantustan system continue to shape South Africa's spatial and socio-economic inequalities today, with former bantustan areas still bearing the structural scars of engineered displacement and underdevelopment.[85]

84 T. Dunbar Moodie, "Separate Development as a Failed Project of Social Engineering: The Flawed Logic of Hendrik Verwoerd," *South African Historical Journal* 69, no. 2 (2017): 153–61, https://doi.org/10.1080/02582473.2017.1293720.

85 Martin Abel, "Long-Run Effects of Forced Resettlement: Evidence from Apartheid South Africa," *The Journal of Economic History* 79, no. 4 (2019): 915–53, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26832117.

CHAPTER 3

The Structure of Enclaves

The enclaving in Palestine today is a central technology of Israeli settler-colonial rule, built on deliberate strategies of fragmentation, isolation, and segregation designed to manage, and dominate the Palestinian people. Through Israeli imposed legislation, measures, territorial divisions, and mobility restrictions, Palestinian political life, economic activity, and everyday existence are reorganized into disconnected, tightly regulated enclaves.

3.1 Political Structure

While the PA was officially named in the Oslo Accords II as the "Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority, i.e. the elected Council."[86] However, the Israeli regime's Decisive Plan explicitly frames Palestinian political organization through the language of "tribal" and "local" governance. It argues that Palestinians are not a coherent national collective but a set of distinct regional and familial groups.

Crucially, the Decisive Plan openly rejects Palestinian national self-determination. It states: "there is room for only one expression of national self-determination west of the Jordan River: that of the Jewish nation" and that "an Arab State actualizing Arab national aspirations cannot emerge within the same territory."[87] The Plan thus reserves national self-determination exclusively for the colonizing collective,

86 *Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (a.k.a. "Oslo II"),* Agreement (United Nations, 1995), https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-185434/.

87 Bezalel Smotrich, "Israel's Decisive Plan," *Hashiloach Frontlines*, 2017, https://hashiloach.org.il/israels-decisive-plan/.

while effectively eliminating Palestinian national self-determination and collective political rights.

On this basis, the Decisive Plan proposes dividing Palestinian "self-government" into six municipal regions: Hebron, Bethlehem, Ramallah, Jericho, Nablus, and Jenin, each governed by nominally "elected" representatives.[88] **The proposed municipal enclaves (the regional enclaves) would operate under strict Israeli domination, control, and supervision, with real authority over external political and diplomatic representation, security and defense, infrastructure, borders, and essential services remaining firmly in Israeli hands. This governance model reflects a broader colonial strategy of projecting Palestinian autonomy while consolidating Israeli "sovereignty."**

The following testimony, collected by BADIL on 27 February 2026, reflects the perspective of a politically engaged community member, offering insight of the emerging regional enclaves, highlighting the laws, administrative frameworks, and structural patterns shaping Palestinian governance on the ground.

K.A., 60-year-old man, Aida Refugee Camp (Bethlehem)

The Making of Municipal [Regional] Enclaves

Today, the situation is clear. The idea of "six enclaves," or even seven, was proposed by Israeli politicians, modeled similarly to the Emirates [United Arab Emirates]: separate emirates, tribal-based, with local leadership, economic linkage fully controlled by the occupation. The goal is no unified political entity, no central leadership, and no concept of a unified Palestinian people, not even partially […].

88 BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *The Decisive Plan: The Israeli Regime's Blueprint for Colonial Expansion and Palestinian Subjugation*, Position Paper (BADIL, 2025), 14, https://badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2025/10/17/the-decisiveplan-eng-1760699781.pdf.

> Today, imposing the enclaves is easier due to the current reality: division, a culture distant from collective nationalism and internal conflict – evident during the genocide in Gaza. The Palestinian official reaction, particularly under Oslo's approach, was either neutral or aligned in practice with Israeli and US agendas, in terms of weapons, governance in Gaza, and other issues.
>
> […] Additionally, tribal roles are emerging, especially in Hebron and Bethlehem, and the Israeli regime exploits this. There have been direct meetings with tribal leaders and interventions in internal issues, sometimes even addressing Palestinians killing Palestinians. The model could start in these areas. Even attempts to play the sectarian card, for example, claiming Christians are persecuted in Bethlehem, which is false.
>
> Still, it is difficult for this plan to succeed entirely. Despite weakened organizations, they are present. A few events could disrupt the plan. After thirty years of fostering individualism and private interests, it is harder to mobilize collective action like in the 1980s [referencing the First Intifada]. But the experience shows that not everything is predetermined.
>
> […] The current approach is clearly intent on destroying any Palestinian body, even weak or cooperative ones. Neither the PA, nor a national authority, nor political factions are exempt [from destruction].

Under Apartheid South Africa, the political and administrative architecture of the bantustan system – formalized through the Odendaal Commission in the 1960s – was designed precisely to institutionalize "self-governing" structures without conceding sovereignty.[89] Each bantustan was assigned a Legislative Council combining

89 United Nations Department of Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Decolonization, ed., *Decolonization. No. 9, Dec. 1977: Issue on Namibia* (United Nations, 1977), 73, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/151193.

appointed "traditional authorities" with a limited number of elected representatives, initially at most 40%.[90] Despite the formal trappings of representation, key powers – including defense, foreign affairs, internal security, borders, infrastructure, and resource management – remained exclusively under apartheid authority.[91] The later declaration of so-called "independent homelands" such as Transkei, Venda, and Bophuthatswana further entrenched this fiction of autonomy; none were internationally recognized, and all remained economically and politically dependent on Apartheid South Africa.[92]

As in the bantustan system, governance structures framed as "authentic" or locally representative under the Decisive Plan function not as mechanisms of autonomy but as administrative tools that legitimize fragmentation while obscuring continued domination. The Plan makes this explicit, stating that "a division into regional municipal governments will dismantle the Palestinian national collective and the ambitions to realize its independence."[93] It further anticipates coercive enforcement, noting that those who reject this new order and continue "to fight the IDF [Israeli Defense Forces], the State of Israel, and the Jewish population…will be dealt with by the security forces with a strong hand."[94]

Legal and administrative frameworks determine the scope of Palestinian political life in advance, ensuring that no decision can be taken without external approval. In Apartheid South Africa, this was achieved through

90 International Court of Justice, *South West Africa Cases (Ethiopia v. South Africa; Liberia v. South Africa), Pleadings, Oral Arguments, Documents, Volume VI,* Legal Case Document 9281 (Parts III–VI) (The Hague, Netherlands, 1966), https://www.icj-cij.org/index.php/node/141849.

91 Ibid.

92 Chitja Twala and Ayanda Sphelele Ndlovu, "'Dangling the Land as a Carrot': The Bantustans and the Territorial Extension Under the Apartheid Regime in South Africa," *Histories* 5, no. 1 (2025): 12, https://doi.org/10.3390/histories5010012.

93 Bezalel Smotrich, "Israel's Decisive Plan," *Hashiloach Frontlines*, 2017, https://hashiloach.org.il/israels-decisive-plan/.

94 Ibid.

legislation such as the National States Citizenship Act and the Self-Governing Territories Constitution Act,[95] which established bantustan institutions while reserving decisive authority for the apartheid regime.[96]

The elimination of formal Palestinian political institutions does not emerge in isolation, but reflects a broader trajectory of policies that have progressively dismantled the political framework established under the Oslo Accords. Over the past decade, the Israeli regime has increasingly rejected negotiations on a 'final status,' adopting a short-term approach based on "conflict management," aimed at maintaining Israeli control while limiting Palestinian sovereignty.[97] This has effectively ended the already limited and largely symbolic "peace process" under US supervision, which had functioned more as a cover for the international community to present the PA as a negotiating partner within the Oslo framework – rather than a genuine path to Palestinian sovereignty. What little negotiation and administrative functioning existed has been frozen since the beginning of US president, Barack Obama's administration, leaving the PA increasingly sidelined and the Israeli regime unchallenged in its consolidation of control.[98]

At the same time, the functional scope of the PA, especially the political character, has been steadily narrowed, with its role increasingly confined to limited civil administration, often explicitly conditioned on security coordination, while the Israeli regime asserts near-complete control over Palestinian life, leaving little room for any genuine Palestinian

95 Self-Governing Territories Constitution Amendment Act, 1993, Pub. L. No. Government Gazette, State President's Office, No. 1849, G 1515, No. 152 of 1993 (1993), https://www.saflii.org/za/legis/num_act/stcaa1993553/.

96 John Dugard, "South Africa's Independent Homelands: An Exercise in Denationalization," *Denver Journal of International Law & Policy 10*, no. 1 (1980), https://digitalcommons.du.edu/djilp/vol10/iss1/4.

97 As'ad Ghanem, *Palestinian Politics after Arafat: A Failed National Movement* (Indiana University Press, 2010), 26, https://yplus.ps/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Ghanem-Asad-Palestinian-Politics-after-Arafat-A-Failed-National-Movement.pdf.

98 Josh Ruebner, "Obama's Legacy on Israel/Palestine," sec. 1, *Institute for Palestine Studies* 46, no. Autumn (2016), https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/207365.

governance or autonomy.[99] Parallel administrative shifts have also taken place, including the restoration and expansion of the Israeli Civil Administration's authority in the West Bank and growing direct Israeli intervention even within Areas A and B.[100] Recent legislative and administrative measures concerning land registration, ownership, and absentee property regimes further consolidate Israeli control over territory and resources.[101] These developments are accompanied by efforts to sideline or replace elements of the international governance framework historically present in the Palestinian context, including the deliberate Israeli-US campaign to dismantle the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).[102]

Taken together, these developments indicate not a reconfiguration of Palestinian governance, but the systematic erosion of the political dimension of the Oslo framework itself. In this context, the Decisive Plan's proposal becomes less a rupture than the consolidation of an ongoing trajectory: formal Palestinian political institutions are eliminated altogether, with authority reassigned to enclave-based leaders across the six regional enclaves, whose continued role is contingent on not challenging nor disrupting Israeli control, but welcoming and marketing the subjugation.

Palestinians pushed into enclaves will be those filtered through a vetting system that excludes refugees, suppresses resistance, and forcibly displaces entire communities. Those who remain are expected to be

99 Ismat Quzmar, "Palestinian Clearance Revenues: Israel's Tool to Collapse the PA," *Al-Shabaka*, December 1, 2024, https://al-shabaka.org/policy-memos/palestinian-clearance-revenues-israels-tool-to-collapse-the-pa/.

100 Balasan Initiative For Human Rights, *Institutionalizing Annexation: Israel's Registration of West Bank Land as "State Land,"* February 17, 2026, https://balasan.org/institutionalizing-annexation-israels-registration-of-west-bank-land-as-state-land/.

101 Ibid.

102 BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *Engineered Collapse: The United Nations' Strategic Assessment of UNRWA and Palestinian Refugee Rights*, Position Paper (BADIL, 2025), 26, https://badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2025/08/04/pp-engineeredcollapsofunrwa-1754313775.pdf.

the most governable, deemed "cooperative" enough – by demonstrating "loyalty" to the Israeli regime – to tolerate life within controlled enclaves.[103]

Enclaving: The Example of Beit Ummar and Al-Arroub Refugee Camp

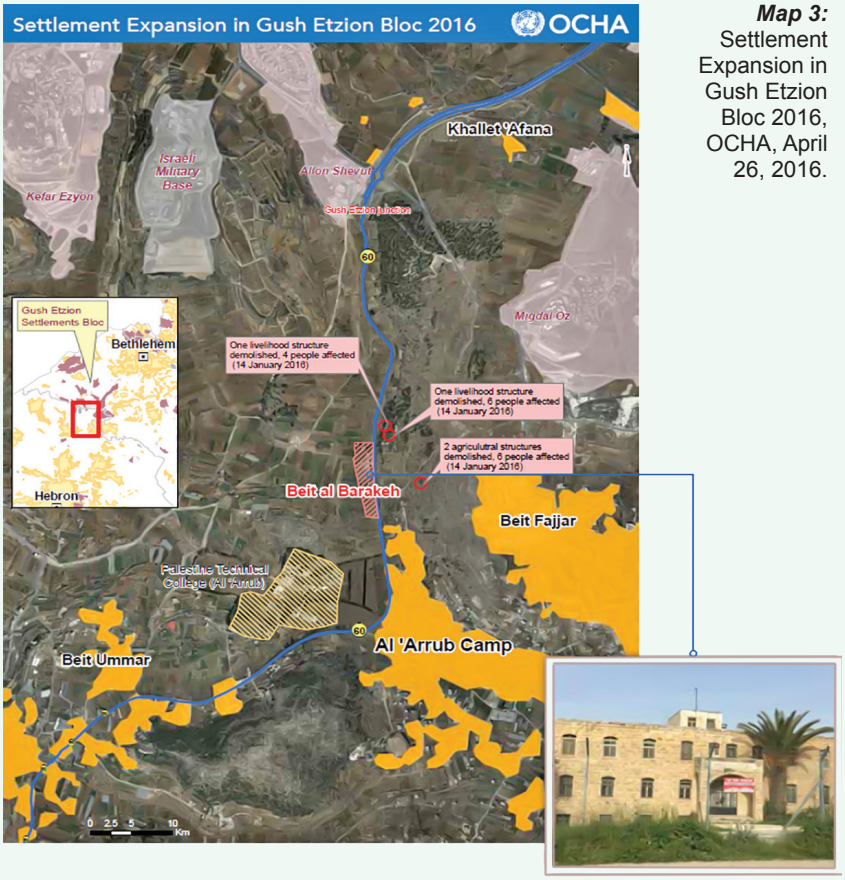
Beit Ummar and the adjacent Al-Arroub refugee camp (on the main Bethlehem-Hebron Road in Wadi Al-Saqi') are two illustrative examples of Palestinian communities fully enclosed within the Israeli apartheid spatial regime. Al-Arroub refugee camp was established in 1949 and functioned as a local enclave for Palestinians forcibly displaced during the Nakba, primarily from Al-Ramla, Al-Khalil, and Gaza, confined to a limited area as part of the initial phase of territorial fragmentation.

Beit Ummar is a Palestinian town whose lands have been progressively confiscated and enclosed by Israeli colonies. Since 1967, five Israeli colonies have been established on Beit Ummar's land, resulting in the confiscation of approximately 4,000 dunums and the demolition of numerous Palestinian homes.[104] Together, Beit Ummar and Al-Arroub, bordered by Sa'ir and Al-Shuyukh to the east and Halhul to the south, form local enclaves within the larger Hebron regional enclave.

Israeli colonies were established in stages, for example: Kfar Etzion in 1967 and Allon Shevut in 1970, seizing land and cutting off agricultural plots around Beit Ummar and Al-Arroub. Over the following decades, enclaves intensified through checkpoints, mobile roadblocks, and iron gates, restricting movement and pushing the communities into local enclaves. After the Oslo Accords, Al-Arroub refugee camp was

103 BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *The Decisive Plan: The Israeli Regime's Blueprint for Colonial Expansion and Palestinian Subjugation*, Position Paper (BADIL, 2025), https://badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2025/10/17/the-decisiveplan-eng-1760699781.pdf.

104 "Beit Ummar – The Occupation in a Nutshell," *Green Olive Tours*, n.d., accessed February 19, 2026, https://greenolivetours.com/beit-ummar-the-occupation-in-a-nutshell/.



Map 3: Settlement Expansion in Gush Etzion Bloc 2016, OCHA, April 26, 2016.

placed mainly within Area B, while the section along Highway 60 (the blue line in the map) falls within Area C, under full Israeli planning and control, with an Israeli force's watchtower located immediately outside the camp.[105] This division reinforces restrictions on movement, development, and access to services, further implementing the local enclave structure. A permanent checkpoint at Al-Arroub isolates roughly 31,000 people from Highway 60 and Hebron, the region's main economic and service hub. [106]

105 "Arroub Camp," UNRWA, 2023, https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/west-bank/arroub-camp.

106 OCHA, "New Israeli Settlement in Hebron Governorate Raises Humanitarian Concerns," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory, April 26, 2016, https://www.ochaopt.org/content/new-israeli-settlement-hebron-governorate-raises-humanitarian-concerns.

Israeli colonial infrastructure projects further reinforced fragmentation. The bypass road, "Lev Yehuda-Levinger Road" or "Hebron bypass road," was slated for expansion in 2018 and officially inaugurated in July 2023, providing a high-speed route for Israeli colonizers to bypass Palestinian villages.[107] Centered on the lands of Beit Ummar and Al-Arroub refugee camp, the project entails the expropriation of approximately 1,309 dunums of Palestinian land for the road and its so-called "security area," including a 2019 military order confiscating around 401 dunums. The plan allocates about 461 dunums for the new road itself, alongside 105 dunums of previously existing roads, while effectively restricting Palestinian access to an additional 707 dunums.[108] By isolating Al-Arroub and Beit Ummar and severing access to surrounding agricultural lands, the project undermines livelihoods and deepens territorial enclosure.

Closed iron gates, road blocks, home raids, ID checks, and arbitrary detention are routinely implemented by Israeli forces; as is collective punishment – including killings, mass arrests, curfews, and property confiscation. Israeli forces have also repeatedly targeted UNRWA facilities in the camp, including schools and health centers, using them as sites for detention, interrogation, and military operations. These mechanisms filter the population according to the logic outlined in the Decisive Plan: annihilating those deemed resistant while consolidating those judged "cooperative" into tightly monitored enclaves. Movement restrictions disrupt schooling, healthcare access, and economic activity, rendering political participation and meaningful autonomy virtually impossible.

In the Gaza Strip, governance is imposed through an externally controlled hierarchy following UNSC Resolution 2803, which endorsed

107 "New Hebron Bypass Road Inaugurated in Gush Etzion," Israel National News, July 10, 2023, https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/373945.

108 The Land Research Center, "New Segment of Bypass 60 Devours Vast Areas North Hebron," *POICA*, December 2, 2019, https://poica.org/2019/11/new-segment-of-bypass-60-devours-vast-areas-north-hebron/.

Trump's 20-point plan.[109] Ultimate authority rests with the US, with Donald Trump as Chairman of the Board of Peace (BoP), a foreign-appointed body acting as a de facto colonial ruler over the Gaza Strip.[110] The BoP – which the Israeli regime is a member of –controls budgets, security, aid, and reconstruction, while delegating operational authority to the High Representative nominated by Trump, Nickolay Mladenov.[111] This representative will direct Trump's 20-point plan implementation, including forming the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG) and supervising all its activities and daily operations.

Palestinian participation is confined to the NCAG, a vetted, technocratic, apolitical body with no independent authority, whose members are appointed, supervised, and removed at will by the High Representative and BoP and whose role is strictly limited to executing externally mandated civil and administrative functions.[112] Throughout this structure, the US advances Israeli colonial objectives, ensuring all governance, security, and reconstruction in the Gaza Strip serve Israeli interests. Political power remains entirely in foreign hands, mainly the US and the Israeli regime, foreclosing any possibility of Palestinian political agency.[113]

The proposed municipal self-governance structures in the West Bank, alongside the externally imposed administration in the Gaza Strip, both reflect a political doctrine in which the very existence of Palestinians as a national group or a people is perceived as a threat to the continuation

109 United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 2803 (2025),* S/RES/2803 (United Nations, 2025), https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/2803(2025).

110 Ibid.

111 Board of Peace, *Board of Peace Resolution No. 2026/1,* (2026), https://ia601600.us.archive.org/12/items/board-of-peace-resolution/Board_of_Peace_Resolution.pdf.

112 Ibid.

113 Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, "Enshrining Israeli Hegemony Under the Veil of Peace: Tr ump's Revised Plan for Gaza," *The Unit for Political Studies*, October 2, 2025, https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/PoliticalStudies/Pages/enshrining-israeli-hegemony-under-the-veil-of-peace-trumps-revised-plan-for-gaza.aspx.

of the Israeli regime – an outlook that has driven the policies of the ongoing Nakba.[114] Far from enabling autonomy, the enclave system not only manages Palestinians' political life but is designed to define the limits of their existence, restrict their future, and destroy any future form of self-determination.

The Decisive Plan makes this hierarchy explicit, arguing that "granting full voting rights to the Arab residents…will create a significant deficit in the Jewish component of the State of Israel," and accepting that if the model "includes a certain deficit at the democratic level, then this is certainly a tolerable price to pay."[115] In doing so, the Plan openly subordinates democratic equality to ethnonational preservation, framing Palestinian political participation as a demographic and ideological threat. As a result, it effectively eliminates Palestinian collective political agency and reduces their presence to a managed population within a regime that determines the limits of their existence. This is not only a step into a "democratic deficit," but the institutionalization of administratively controlled enclaves aimed at ultimately eliminating Palestinian presence and rights.

3.1 Economic Structure

Economic life under these six regional enclaves in the West Bank will be tightly regulated to serve the strategic interests of the Israeli regime. Palestinians are already deeply dependent on the Israeli regime's economy for trade, mobility, employment, and access to resources – the dependency designed and established by the Israeli regime institutionalized under

114 With the Decisive Plan and the genocide in Gaza, the Israeli regime's doctrine has become clearer than ever: the veneer of a political dispute ("us versus them") reveals what has long been an existential binary ("us or them"), in which Palestinian demographic presence, political claims, and national continuity are constructed as incompatible with the survival of Israeli sovereignty. See Bouka, *Israel's Political Discourse Justifying Its Actions towards Palestinians from October 7th, 2023*, July 31, 2025, 13–17, https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4259960.

115 Bezalel Smotrich, "Israel's Decisive Plan," *Hashiloach Frontlines*, 2017, https://hashiloach.org.il/israels-decisive-plan/.

the Oslo Accords, particularly through the 1994 Paris Protocol, which structured economic relations between the PA and the Israeli regime.[116]

The Paris Protocol regulated the economic framework governing the Palestinian economy under Israeli control and effectively prevented the development of an independent Palestinian production system or coherent national economy. Under this agreement, the Israeli regime controls customs, trade, and external tariffs, and imports and exports are processed through Israeli ports and checkpoints. As such, Palestinian producers are locked into asymmetric economic relations and their ability to access foreign markets on competitive terms is severely restricted. This system enforces economic subordination, and is accompanied by measures aimed at maintaining the Israeli new liberal colonial domination, which even entails among other things the dismantlement of the PA, which ultimately leaves little room for Palestinian governance or autonomy.[117]

Building on the Paris Protocol and its outcomes, combined with the ongoing enclaving, the existing economic framework further prevents the emergence of a national production system. The erosion of the productive base is particularly visible in the agricultural sector, which has long been central to Palestinian livelihoods and food security. Palestinian producers face severe restrictions on land use, movement, and access to land, alongside increasing colonizer attacks and land confiscation, all of which raise production costs and limit market access.[118] These attacks, coupled with high transaction costs and the

116 "Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization," Annex IV of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Oslo II), April 29, 1994, https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/ParisProtocol_en.pdf.

117 Ismat Quzmar, "Palestinian Clearance Revenues: Israel's Tool to Collapse the PA," *Al-Shabaka*, December 1, 2024, https://al-shabaka.org/policy-memos/palestinian-clearance-revenues-israels-tool-to-collapse-the-pa/.

118 Samia Al Botmeh and Iman Saadeh, *Palestinian Agriculture, Food Security and Incomes in the Context of Genocide*, Priorities for Palestine's Economy in the Midst of War, Second Paper (Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), 2024), 6 https://mas.ps/cached_uploads/download/2024/12/02/paper-2-1733151676.pdf.

inability to compete with Israeli prices, have led to a steady decline in agricultural productivity and forced many rural farmers to abandon cultivation.[119]

Meanwhile, the regulation of imports through Israeli-controlled ports has fostered a class of Palestinian economic actors concentrated in trade, services, finance, and real estate, oriented primarily toward consumption rather than productive investment.[120] This dynamic reinforces a rentier-style economic structure tied to Israeli-controlled markets, where limited economic growth occurs without the foundations of sovereign economic development or a self-sustaining national economy.[121] In contrast, Palestinian labor is drawn to the Israeli market by higher wages that local markets cannot match.[122] This migration of labor reduces domestic productivity, weakens the Palestinian economy's capacity to compete in a free market, and further entrenches structural dependency.

These dynamics have been further exacerbated by the Israeli regime's suspension and deductions of clearance revenues, which in 2025 reached nearly ILS 4.1 billion. This severely constrains government liquidity, limits public sector salaries, and weakens the PA's ability to finance essential services.[123] Collectively, these mechanisms produce fragmented, enclave-based economic structures that serve Israeli

119 Abdo Hassoun et al., "The Implications of the Ongoing War on Gaza for Food Sustainability," Sustainable Futures 9 (June 2025): 100473, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sftr.2025.100473.

120 Raja Khalidi and Sobhi Samour, "Neoliberalism as Liberation: The Statehood Program and the Remaking of the Palestinian National Movement," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 40, no. 2 (2011): 6–25, https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2011.xl.2.6.

121 Ibid.

122 Samia Al Botmeh and Iman Saadeh, Palestinian Agriculture, Food Security and Incomes in the Context of Genocide, Priorities for Palestine's Economy in the Midst of War, Second Paper (Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), 2024), 8, https://mas.ps/cached_uploads/download/2024/12/02/paper-2-1733151676.pdf.

123 Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute - MAS, Palestine Economic Update - February 2026 (MAS, 2026), 4, https://mcusercontent.com/13d1f45f84d8b3e9049e401b5/files/8302d51d-ac8d-034c-8f5a-f8924529507a/Update_February_EN_.pdf.

strategic interests, inhibit integrated national planning, and prevent the development of a coherent and viable Palestinian economy.

The Decisive Plan reinforces spatial and economic fragmentation: each regional enclave functions selectively and independently, restricting collective governance, regional economic integration, and national development. Regional administrations may manage day-to-day affairs and maintain limited internal coordination, but overarching economic planning, investment, and development are controlled by the Israeli regime. Local economic structures are produced to preserve existing tribal and familial hierarchies rather than fostering a unified Palestinian national economy. Labor, consumption, and infrastructure improvements are channeled to align with Israeli priorities, creating a system in which economic opportunity is conditional on compliance with Israeli oversight and the co-optation of hand-picked Palestinian elites.

The following testimony, conducted by BADIL on 24 February 2026, illustrates how structural restrictions, checkpoints, and enclave fragmentation shape the daily economic realities of Palestinian producers in the West Bank.

A.A.N., 61-year-old man, Jericho

Trade Under Closure

Since 1995, I have worked as a food broker for farmers in the Jordan Valley, which is considered the main source of vegetables and various fruits. My work focuses on coordinating with vegetable traders in the markets of Bethlehem and Hebron. My job requires securing the delivery of agricultural products to traders according to seasonal availability. This is not a simple task; it requires prior coordination and organization, as well as strict commitment to production and delivery schedules.

The problem now is that all this coordination and planning means nothing in the face of the obstacles imposed by Israel. It has become difficult to convince traders to purchase crops while they are still in the fields, because no one knows what will happen the next day. And if they do buy the produce in the fields, it becomes difficult for me to guarantee delivery on time due to road closures and checkpoints. If a truck is delayed at a checkpoint for 4-5 hours which happens frequently, I lose all my profit, assuming the truck is not turned back and the goods do not spoil.

I used to send 12-15 trucks daily to Bethlehem and Hebron. During the genocide in Gaza, I have only been able to send 4-5 trucks a day and that is on a good day. […] Of course, all of this affects prices. Some traders have even told me that our prices have become higher than Israeli goods that enter the market easily. […] Others have said it might be better for each area to grow its own produce […] or simply import from Israel, which is easier, more secure, and perhaps even cheaper!! Forget Bethlehem and Hebron, I can no longer guarantee bringing goods even from the northern Jorgan Valley and Tubas, which are near me. The whole situation has become nothing but constant frustration. A person can no longer work properly or even know what to do anymore.

As for Jerusalem, it remains fully under the Israeli regime's control. Urban planning, residency, construction, and access to services are systematically restricted, and movement is regulated through checkpoints, gates, and permits to effectively cut off the city from neighboring Palestinian communities, tighten up this enclave and create smaller local enclaves within.[124] Economic activity and social life are tightly constrained, reinforcing spatial segregation and demographic control.

For over 16 years, the Gaza Strip has suffered under a comprehensive Israeli blockade, which has severely restricted the movement of

124 T.R., "Jerusalem Governorate: Israeli Intensification of Military Checkpoints and Iron Gates Aims to Isolate the City of Jerusalem from Its Surroundings," WAFA Agency, accessed February 16, 2026, http://wafa.ps/Pages/Details/161448.

people and goods and pushed unemployment and food insecurity to unprecedented levels. Access to essential services, trade, and agricultural and fishing activities has been drastically curtailed, and the electricity supply meets only half of demand.[125] This prolonged and deliberate de-development by the Israeli regime contributed to the gravity of its genocide and resulted in the worst economic crisis on record in recent decades with an unprecedented loss of 87% of Gaza's economic value since 2022.[126]

The ongoing blockade paved the way for tighter control: economic power is now fully concentrated in the BoP, which oversees budgets, donor funding, financial mechanisms, and reconstruction resources, while its operational arm, the High Representative, approves contracts and directs all economic operations.[127] Membership in the BoP is nominally free, but those seeking permanent influence must contribute financially, creating a "'pay-to-play' club."[128] Economic "redevelopment," including proposals for a special economic zone, is externally managed and conditioned on compliance with the 20-point plan, turning the genocide and destruction perpetrated by the Israeli regime enabled by complicit states into a mechanism for profit and strategic leverage.[129]

The day-to-day limited management powers given to the NCAG,

125 OCHA, *Gaza Strip: The Humanitarian Impact of 15 Years of Blockade* (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2022), https://www.ochaopt.org/content/gaza-strip-humanitarian-impact-15-years-blockade-june-2022.

126 "Gaza Facing Worst Economic Collapse Ever Recorded, UN Trade Agency Warns," UN News, November 25, 2025, https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/11/1166444.

127 Board of Peace, *Board of Peace Resolution No. 2026/1* (2026), https://ia601600.us.archive.org/12/items/board-of-peace-resolution/Board_of_Peace_Resolution.pdf.

128 Julian Borger, "Trump's Board of Peace Is an Imperial Court Completely Unlike What Was Proposed," US News, *The Guardian*, January 20, 2026, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jan/20/trumps-board-of-peace-is-an-imperial-court-completely-unlike-what-was-proposed.

129 Al-Haq, "Al-Haq Trump Trilogy Part III: The 'Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict' ('20-Point Plan')," Al-Haq, December 10, 2025, https://www.alhaq.org/publications/27079.html.

donor-driven reconstruction mechanisms, and volunteer-based financing further turn the Gaza Strip into a marketplace for international interests. Reconstruction is financialized and conditional; replacing reparations, decolonization, and lifting the blockade with a system that serves US-Israeli agendas, reinforcing dependence, inequality, and foreign control over the Gaza Strip's economy while removing any accountability. It further denies Palestinians the restitution, compensation, and reparations legally and morally owed to them for the material and human losses inflicted to them by the Israel regime during the genocide.[130]

What is presented as economic administration by the BoP bears important similarities to the bantustan model of managed dependency developed under Apartheid South Africa. There, economic underdevelopment was due to neglect that came with an intentional strategy. Bantustans were deliberately deprived of industrial bases, sufficient farmland, and independent resources, ensuring that they could not sustain viable economies. This structural deprivation forced residents into "migrant labor": Black South Africans leaving the bantustans to work in white-controlled urban areas or mines were legally classified as temporary workers, even though they remained within the country. This designation imposed strict permits, limited rights, and a quasi-foreign status.[131] Meanwhile, health and education systems in the bantustans were systematically underfunded and designed to produce unskilled labor, reinforcing economic dependency and limiting local development.[132]

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130 BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *Rights-Based Reconstruction: Decolonization and Reparations,* Position Paper (BADIL, 2025), https://badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2025/07/07/pp-reconstruction-vs-reparations-eng-1751895094.pdf.

131 Holly E. Reed, "Moving Across Boundaries: Migration in South Africa, 1950–2000," *Demography* 50, no. 1 (2013): 71–95, https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-012-0140-x.

132 Matthew Gallo, "Bantu Education, and Its Living Educational and Socioeconomic Legacy in Apartheid and Post-Apartheid South Africa," *Senior Theses*, May 16, 2020, https://research.library.fordham.edu/international_senior/43.

In both contexts, economic dependency is not simply a byproduct of political domination but a central tool through which control is exercised.

3.3 Security Structure

In the West Bank, the six regional enclaves and numerous local enclaves are separated by colonies, military zones and bases, checkpoints and other barriers, bypass roads, forming a closure apparatus, as well as tight security and continuous surveillance enforced by Israeli colonial forces and colonizers. Israeli forces monitor and enter communities at will and close them arbitrarily, regulating the movement of people, goods, and services. Constant Israeli monitoring and movement restrictions – enforced through the enclave system's security infrastructure of checkpoints, iron gates, and inspection regimes – ensure that regional enclaves remain fragmented, as Palestinians' commute across regions becomes increasingly difficult, restricting access to education, employment, and social life, while limiting collective political life and weakening social cohesion.

The following testimony, conducted by BADIL, on 24 February 2026, demonstrates how the enforcement of checkpoints, gates, and other surveillance measures constrains the mobility of Palestinian students and shapes their educational experiences across enclave boundaries.

R.J., 19-year-old woman, Beit Jala (Bethlehem Governorate)

Movement Restrictions and Student Access

I am a Human Rights and Political science student at Al-Quds Bard University (Abu Dis). I am almost done with my first year and still have three more years to complete. I have to go to campus four days a week,

depending on my schedule. The distance itself is not far, but the gates and the Wadi Nar [the container] checkpoint delay us. Many times, I cannot leave Bethlehem and reach the University, and often I arrive late to my lectures. Sometimes I have to stay overnight at my friend's house there. Other times, my father comes to pick me up, especially when we get stuck at checkpoints at night.

Honestly, the checkpoints and gates feel like they are stealing my life, I spend long hours wasted for no reason. Last month, I was wearing a top with a map of Palestine under my jacket, during inspection an Israeli female soldier noticed it and insisted that I take it off. She began calling other soldiers, and they closed the checkpoint for everyone […]. I was terrified. They kept demanding that I take off the top, mocking me and yelling at me. I refused at first because I was not wearing anything else over my undershirt […]. In the end, after the other soldiers left, she forced me to take it off. I remained in my jacket and went back home with my friend because I was devastated […] and when my family found out, they were furious.

My mother and father are trying to convince me to leave Al-Quds University and change my major to study in Bethlehem University instead […]. I do not want to change my major, and I do not want to remain confined to Bethlehem. I originally wanted to attend Birzeit University, but my parents refused because of the risks and the road. My father fears that one night, without warning, they will completely close the gates and checkpoints and each of us will be trapped in a different town.

In Jerusalem, physical, legal, and technological measures produce a system of continuous surveillance and coercion, leaving Palestinian political or civic authority practically non-existent.[133] Here, the analogy is less about delegated authority and more about direct rule, akin to

133 Anas Ibrahim, *Israel's Surveillance and Repression Policies in Jerusalem: From Isolation to Security Flooding*, Policy Paper (Institute for Palestine Studies, 2025), 11, https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1657541.

areas of 'white South Africa' where the SAP exercised unmediated control, backed by military force when necessary.[134]

Restrictions on housing, land access, and construction in Jerusalem and Area C – enforced through near-impossible permit regimes and home demolitions – undermine Palestinian community continuity and fragment space.[135] As under Apartheid South Africa's permit and land regimes in "white areas," these legal and administrative frameworks are security-based and controlled. They are designed with three aims: to suppress and facilitate the suppression of the Palestinians, especially those who have been or are involved in the resistant movement; to ensure Palestinians' subjugation to the regime and compliance with its regulations; and to enforce segregation and keep Palestinians politically, economically, and spatially confined within shrinking enclaves.[136]

Currently, surveillance in the Gaza Strip is enforced by the International Stabilization Force (ISF), a foreign-led military and policing force established under Trump's 20-point plan.[137] The ISF is tasked with demilitarization, oversight of local police, overseeing humanitarian zones, and enforcement of the plan's directives. Operational authority is coordinated with the High Representative, who supervises all civil administration, policing, and public order, while ultimate control remains with the BoP.[138] All aspects of movement, access to aid,

134 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (South Africa), *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report: Volume Two* (1998), https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/report/finalreport/volume%202.pdf.

135 Defense for Children International-Palestine, "Demolishing Lives: Israeli Authorities' 'Permit Regime' Targets Palestinian Families in the Occupied West Bank," Defense for Children International-Palestine, March 23, 2024, https://www.dci-palestine.org/demolishing_lives_israeli_authorities_permit_regime_targets_palestinian_families_in_the_occupied_west_bank.

136 Nic Olivier, *Property Rights in Urban Areas*, 3, no. 1 (1988): 23–33, https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/AJA02586568_844#page=5.

137 United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 2803 (2025),* S/RES/2803 (United Nations, 2025), https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/2803(2025).

138 Board of Peace, *Board of Peace Resolution No. 2026/1* (2026), https://ia601600.us.archive.org/12/items/board-of-peace-resolution/Board_of_Peace_Resolution.pdf.

reconstruction, and daily life in the Gaza Strip are monitored and conditional on compliance with BoP's imposed regulations.

Similarly, in the bantustan system, political decentralization was inseparable from centralized coercive control exercised through the SAP and the SADF.[139] Bantustan police were trained and supervised by the SAP and SADF to enforce compliance, while real military power remained centralized.[140] Bantustans' security legislation, police, and soldiers were responsible for actions taken in the name of law and order, enabling widespread brutality and political repression. Legal instruments entrenched dependence and restricted autonomy.[141] For example, the "pass laws" criminalized movement by requiring Black South Africans to carry permits specifying where they could live or work, subjecting them to constant surveillance, raids, and arrests.[142]

The international imposed security framework for the Gaza Strip similarly positions Israeli colonial forces as instruments of external political arrangements. Palestinian political participation is further constrained, and made conditional on full compliance with international oversight and reform programs. Movement of people and goods remains tightly controlled by the BoP, reinforcing the Gaza Strip as an externally managed enclave whose autonomy is illusory.

The combination of regional "self-government" in the West Bank, strict Israeli administrative control in Jerusalem and BoP oversight in

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139 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (South Africa), Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report: Volume Two (1998), https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/report/finalreport/volume%202.pdf.

140 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (South Africa), *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report: Volume Two* (1998), https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/report/finalreport/volume%202.pdf.

141 "The Homelands - The O'Malley Archives," accessed January 19, 2026, https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/index.php/site/q/03lv02424/04lv03370/05lv03413.htm.

142 Philip Frankel, "The Politics of Passes: Control and Change in South Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 17, no. 2 (1979): 199–217, http://www.jstor.org/stable/160715.

the Gaza Strip, ensures that Palestinian communities are politically fragmented, economically dependent, and territorially constrained. This integrated system of surveillance and administrative control, enabled by international inaction, embeds dependency as the dominant condition, masking structural injustices and maintaining Israeli domination. The Israeli-engineered enclave system operates as a political and economic façade, presenting the illusion of local governance while ensuring that Palestinians remain fragmented, isolated, subordinated, surveilled, security-controlled and economically constrained, effectively sustaining Israeli domination.

3.4 Population Management

A. Forced Displacement and Dispossession

Under the enclave system, dispossession operates on multiple levels: legal, spatial, demographic, and political. This includes both the physical removal and enclaving of Palestinians from their lands, and the implantation of Israeli colonizers. The result is political erasure, where the very idea of the Palestinian people's collective and inalienable rights is pushed out of the legal and territorial landscape.[143] By restricting governance to regional enclaves, imposing foreign oversight bodies, and maintaining full Israeli control over borders, land, and movement, Palestinian national institutions are prevented from emerging, functioning or asserting autonomy. Existing structures are deliberately weakened, fragmented, and made dependent. Territorial elimination is achieved through colony expansion, land confiscation, zoning restrictions, and spatial enclosures that shrink Palestinian presence while expanding Israeli control and colonies. As enclaves tighten, political characters of the people disappear while access to

143 Fatma Sarıaslan, "Apartheid in South Africa and Israel: Striking Parallels, Crucial Differences," TRT Afrika, October 8, 2025, https://www.trtafrika.com/english/article/9805a1fefa29.

land, housing, and public space becomes increasingly limited, making Palestinian communities easier to manage, oppress, and displace.

The enclave system relies not only on immediate displacement or lethal enforcement for perceived non-compliance but also on gradual erosion of rights, land, movement, and political capacity, operating through Israeli bureaucratic, spatial, and militarized mechanisms resulting in a highly coercive environment.[144] Forced displacement – en masse or gradual – emerges not only as an explicit policy outcome but as an accumulative consequence, as the enclave structure itself produces a coercive and cohesive environment of domination that facilitates ongoing dispossession and erasure without necessitating continuous large-scale deportations.

Forcible displacement is being implemented at a large scale across Palestine, while simultaneously and systematically preventing return. In the Gaza Strip, the majority of Palestinians have been repeatedly displaced since the start of the genocide in October 2023. As of 5 September 2025, at least 1.9 million people – about 90% of the population – have been displaced, with many forcibly displaced multiple times.[145] Israeli policies and the implementation of Trump's 20-point plan reinforce patterns of displacement and continually denied any component of reparations: return, property restitution, compensation and non-repetition.

In the northern West Bank, Israeli forces' operations targeting refugee camps – particularly in Jenin, Tulkarm, and Nur Shams – have caused widespread destruction, home demolitions, and infrastructure damage,

144 Simon Reynolds, *Coercive Environments: Israel's Forcible Transfer of Palestinians in the Occupied Territory* (BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, 2017), https://badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2021/04/20/ft-coercive-environments-1618907680.pdf.

145 UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation Report #187 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, Including East Jerusalem," UNRWA, September 5, 2025, https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-187-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem.

leaving some 32,000 Palestinians displaced, with the refugee camps remaining closed and Palestinians unable to return to this day.[146] Entire communities in Area C, including in Masafer Yatta, Ein Samiya, and the Jordan Valley, have been forcibly displaced from their homes, with colonies, colonizer attacks, and road closures preventing access to essential services.[147] UN experts have highlighted these actions as coordinated measures of confiscation and ethnic cleansing, noting that Israeli forces and colonizers work in tandem to displace Palestinian families, seize land, and render areas uninhabitable.[148]

Additionally, Israeli forces continue to play a direct role in enforcing Palestinian labor mobility, and population movement, while suppressing economic, social, and political resistance, a dynamic that closely resembles the patronage-driven bantustan administrations protected by SAP-backed structures.[149] Black South Africans were forcibly displaced into under-resourced, fragmented homelands to secure white control over urban centers, agricultural land, and labor markets, while constraining community autonomy.[150] This deliberate engineering of dependency through forced displacement, spatial fragmentation, and limited resources closely parallels the ongoing Israeli enclave system's methods of political and territorial control.

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146 UNRWA, "UNRWA Situation Report #191 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied West Bank, Including East Jerusalem," UNRWA, October 7, 2025, https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-191-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem.

147 CWRC, *Violations of the Israeli Occupation State & Colonizers in the Occupied Palestinian Territories 2026*, Annual Report 2025 (Colonization & Wall Resistance Commission, 2026), https://www.cwrc.ps/file/attachs/5456.pdf.

148 United Nations Human Rights Council, *Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem, and the Obligation to Ensure Accountability and Justice (A/HRC/61/26),* A/HRC/61/26 (United Nations, 2026), https://www.un.org/unispal/document/human-rights-situation-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territory-including-east-jerusalem-and-the-obligation-to-ensure-accountability-and-justice-a-hrc-61-26-advance-unedited-version/.

149 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (South Africa), *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report: Volume Two* (1998), https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/report/finalreport/volume%202.pdf.

150 South African History Online, "Forced Removals in South Africa," South African History Online, May 31, 2024, https://sahistory.org.za/article/forced-removals-south-africa.

Internal Palestinian adaptiveness becomes a survival mechanism, while resistance is met with systematic repression. Palestinian attempts to assert political, social, or cultural agency, whether through protests, demonstrations, or community organizing, are criminalized, surveilled, or violently suppressed.[151] Intimidation, arrests, administrative detention, raids, and restrictions on civil society extend across the entire community, targeting activists, youth, families, and community leaders alike, with the aim of ensuring that organized resistance cannot challenge the enclave system nor Israeli domination.

B. Elimination of International Presence

International presence in Palestine constitutes more than a humanitarian or technical role; it represents a form of political presence that interrupts the Israeli regime's attempt to establish exclusive control and its process of enclaving. Through monitoring, reporting, service provision, and legal engagement, international actors introduce alternative sources of authority, visibility, and accountability that challenge the consolidation of a single, unrestrained colonial power. At the same time, such presence forms the basis for international protection frameworks, enabling intervention, advocacy, and legal scrutiny under international law. For the Israeli regime, therefore, the removal of international actors is not simply administrative or security-driven, but strategic: it eliminates competing political presence and weakens mechanisms that could contest or constrain its domination.

It is precisely for these reasons that Palestinian erasure is also reinforced through the systematic targeting of international presence. While the Israeli regime has long obstructed United Nations (UN) bodies and

151 BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *Suppression of Resistance,* Working Paper no. 19, Forced Population Transfer: The Case of Palestine (BADIL, 2016), https://badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2021/04/19/wp19-suppression-of-resistance-1618823842.pdf.

other international actors through non-recognition-of-non-cooperation with mandated mechanisms, visa denials and bureaucratic restrictions, these attacks have intensified, aiming to eliminate all international presence.[152] The Israeli regime, with co-participation from the US, seeks to dismantle, block, and expel UNRWA. Other international and monitoring organizations have also been targeted, effectively removing them from both regional and local enclaves.[153]

In South Africa, international and UN presence was largely external and political, operating through solidarity movements, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), churches, and trade unions outside the bantustans rather than providing services or monitoring on the ground.[154] Bantustans were intentionally insulated from international actors, creating internally sealed spaces that fragmented political life and blocked meaningful engagement. The Israeli regime's ongoing attacks on international presence perform a similar function: fragmenting political life, insulating enclaves from external scrutiny, and normalizing domination by actively removing international actors to consolidate territorial and political control.

The dismantling of UNRWA, the primary international and UN-mandated institution servicing Palestinian refugees,[155] further accelerates erasure.[156] In 2024, the Israeli Knesset passed laws banning UNRWA's operations while forbidding any cooperation with the

152 Al-Haq, "Israel's Refusal to Grant/Renew Visas to the UN OHCHR Highlights the Urgent Need to End Israel's Impunity," Al-Haq, October 19, 2020, https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/17456.html.

153 Human Rights Watch, *Israel: Aid Groups Barred From Gaza, West Bank*, February 24, 2026, https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/02/24/israel-aid-groups-barred-from-gaza-west-bank.

154 E. S. Reddy, "Apartheid and the International Community," *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 4, no. 3 (1974): 19–24, https://doi.org/10.2307/1166689.

155 United Nations General Assembly, *Assistance to Palestine Refugees*, UN Resolution 302 (IV) (1949), https://www.unrwa.org/content/general-assembly-resolution-302.

156 "Israel's New Laws Banning UNRWA Already Taking Effect," UN News, January 29, 2025, https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/01/1159586.

agency; these took effect in January 2025 and significantly obstructed UNRWA's ability to function.[157] A subsequent amendment adopted in December 2025 expanded the ban by stripping UNRWA of legal protections and authorizing the disconnection of utilities from its facilities, institutionalizing its exclusion.[158] These legal measures were accompanied by systematic physical and political attacks on UNRWA, both of which undermined its mandate. Physical attacks included the demolition of its headquarters in Jerusalem and assaults on facilities and staff.[159] While political measures involved sustained campaigns of demonization, defunding, and the attempted transfer of its services to other actors. Together, these pressures have significantly weakened the Agency's ability to provide humanitarian protection.

As UNRWA is gradually dismantled and eliminated, states remain complacent and complicit, failing to provide sustained political backing or sufficient financial support necessary to safeguard its mandate and operations. Additional international humanitarian and human rights organizations are rendered increasingly vulnerable to closure, restriction, and politicized vetting. Thirty-seven international non-governmental organizations (iNGOs) operating in Gaza and the West Bank had their licenses revoked, forcing them to cease operations by 31 December 2025.[160] This move is part of a broader, ongoing pattern of eliminating

157 United Nations Palestine, "Israel's New Laws Banning UNRWA Already Taking Effect," United Nations, January 30, 2025, https://palestine.un.org/en/288442-israel%E2%80%99s-new-laws-banning-unrwa-already-taking-effect.

158 UNRWA Commissioner, "UNRWA Commissioner-General on New Anti-UNRWA Legislation Passed by the Israeli Parliament," UNRWA, December 30, 2025, https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/unrwa-commissioner-general-new-anti%E2%80%91unrwa-legislation-passed-israeli-Parliament.

159 Abdel Ra'ouf Arnaout and Lina Altawell, "Ben-Gvir Leads Israeli Forces to Demolish UNRWA Buildings in Occupied East Jerusalem," AA, January 20, 2026, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/ben-gvir-leads-israeli-forces-to-demolish-unrwa-buildings-in-occupied-east-jerusalem/3804840.

160 "53 International NGOs Warn Israel's Recent Registration Measures Will Impede Critical Humanitarian Action," *United Nation Question of Palestine*, January 2, 2025, https://www.un.org/unispal/document/53-international-ngos-warn-israels-recent-registration-measures-will-impede-critical-humanitarian-action-non-un-document/.

international presence, and it is unlikely to stop with these organizations, further accelerating the collapse of international monitoring, protection, and accountability mechanisms. Israeli measures and actions are deliberately eroding the international protection framework, thus further facilitating the displacement and management of Palestinians within fragmented, tightly controlled enclaves.

The elimination of UNRWA transforms collective political claims into individualized humanitarian needs, facilitating erasure while shifting the burden and cost of Israeli colonial domination onto other states. States' continued inaction and complicity actively enable this process.

The erasure of international presence goes beyond the dismantling of UNRWA or iNGOs: it involves the replacement of the entire UN institutional framework with the BoP. Legally mandated by the UN General Assembly, UNRWA operates under international law, and provides impartial services to Palestinian refugees. However, the BoP consolidates executive, financial, and operational power in a single, externally appointed body whose mandate serves US–Israeli strategic objectives.[161] This system transforms governance, aid, and monitoring into tools of control: humanitarian services, reconstruction projects, and civil administration are directed according to foreign political priorities, rather than Palestinian needs or legal entitlements. By replacing established international oversight with the BoP, the Israeli regime and its external partners ensure that Palestinians are entirely dependent on a foreign-imposed colonial structure, eliminating avenues for independent political, social, or legal action and institutionalizing control over Palestinians' future at every level.

161 Al-Shabaka, hosts, Munir Nuseibah and Inès Abdel Razek, *Legitimizing Genocide: The Israel-Trump Plan and Gaza's Future*, Al-Shabaka, December 9, 2025, 16:0 - 33:54, https://al-shabaka.org/policy-labs/legitimizing-genocide-the-israel-trump-plan-and-gazas-future/.

CHAPTER 4

The Political Functions of Enclaving

Beyond physically, socially, and economically fragmenting the Palestinian people, the Israeli enclave system serves deeper Israeli political objectives. Through law, force, infrastructure, and administrative control, enclaving operates as a long-term strategy to restructure political life, redefine self-determination, and erase any horizon for a unified national aspiration. It serves as a mechanism to manage the Palestinian people as a fragmented population (minorities, groups, separate communities, sectors and individuals) rather than a rights-bearing national collective. Israeli enclaving, as an apartheid spatial regime does not merely constrain space and movement; it restructures the conditions of Palestinian political existence itself.

This section examines the political functions of enclaving in three interconnected dimensions: first, it outlines autonomy, sovereignty, and self-determination, highlighting how the enclave system reinforces their denial; second, it analyzes how Israeli domination is oriented toward the pursuit of erasure rather than labor exploitation; and third, it explains how an illusion of self-determination is produced to legitimize and stabilize and normalize this spatial regime of control.

Zionist Colonial Strategy and the Roots of the Enclave System

The contemporary enclave system is neither new nor spontaneous. From its earliest planning, Zionist leadership explicitly envisioned a Palestine without full Palestinian presence, setting the colonial underpinnings and necessity for the Israeli regime's pillars of domination which have

culminated into the imposition of the Decisive Plan and institutionalized enclaving.

In 1943, Yosef Weitz, director of the Jewish National Fund Land Settlement Committee (1932–1948), explicitly articulated this strategy:

> It must be clear that there is no room in the country for both peoples…If the Arabs leave it, the country will become wide and spacious for us…The only solution is a Land of Israel…without Arabs…There is no way but to transfer the Arabs from here to the neighboring countries, to transfer all of them, save perhaps for [the Palestinian Arabs of] Bethlehem, Nazareth, and the old Jerusalem. Not one village must be left, not one tribe.[162]

Weitz's statement is one of many such statements by Zionist colonial leaders on the expulsion and displacement of Palestinians.[163]

This demonstrates that the elements of territorial fragmentation, forcible displacement, and eventual erasure are **deeply rooted in Zionist colonial strategy**, providing the continuity for the enclave system and the ongoing denial of Palestinian sovereignty, self-determination and return.

4.1 The Denial of Autonomy and Sovereignty

Autonomy refers to a conditionally delegated form of self-governance within a broader political framework. It allows a group or territory to independently manage certain internal affairs – ranging from

162 Benny Morris, *1948 and after: Israel and the Palestinians*, with Internet Archive (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1994), 121, http://archive.org/details/1948after00benn.

163 IMEU, "In Their Own Words: Israeli Leaders on the Expulsion of Palestinians During Israel's Establishment," The Institute for Middle East Understanding, May 9, 2007, https://imeu.org/resources/resources/in-their-own-words-israeli-leaders-on-the-expulsion-of-palestinians-during-israels-establishment/226#:~:text=David%20Ben%2DGurion%2C%20Israel%27s-%20first,144.

administrative policies to fiscal, educational, cultural, and resource management – while ultimate authority remains with the central state. Autonomy is conditional, delegated, and has historically been viewed with suspicion as a potential step toward secession. However, contemporary practice recognizes it as a mechanism to accommodate and circumvent claims for self-determination or local identity while preserving "state" sovereignty and integral unity. It provides local governance under higher authority and oversight, without altering the overarching legal or political framework. While it may grant meaningful local control, autonomy does not confer full legal or political independence.[164]

Sovereignty denotes supreme and non-derivative authority over a territory and population. It includes full control over borders, law-making, security, and external relations. Sovereignty is the juridical and institutional foundation that enables a people to exercise genuine self-determination. In international law, sovereignty signifies independence, equality, and territorial integrity among political entities, forming a cornerstone of the modern international nation-state system. Unlike autonomy, which grants only limited self-governance within a broader framework, sovereignty entails full and ultimate authority over both internal and external affairs.[165]

Collective/national self-determination is recognized under international law, entitling a people to freely choose their political status without foreign or external domination or intervention and to pursue their economic, social, and cultural development in connection with the territory to which they are intrinsically linked. This right is rooted in legal instruments that guarantee peoples' authority to determine their

164 Marc Weller and Stefan Wolff, *Autonomy, Self-Governance and Conflict Resolution: Innovative Approaches to Institutional Design in Divided Societies*, January 2005, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242218065_Autonomy_Self-Governance_and_Conflict_Resolution_Innovative_Approaches_to_Institutional_Design_in_Divided_Societies.

165 Sir Arthur Watts, "Sovereignty," The Princeton Encyclopedia of Self-Determination, accessed February 16, 2026, https://pesd.princeton.edu/node/671.

own governance and development, and it requires both meaningful participation in political decision-making and effective control over the land on which they live. Peoples' right of self-determination is a peremptory norm: it cannot be denied nor fulfilled through limited forms of autonomy alone, as sovereignty is a prerequisite for its full realization.[166]

The Israeli regime does not merely deny the Palestinian people's sovereignty and self-determination; it actively fragments, manipulates, and reconfigures these principles through a system of imposed and controlled domination. Through fragmentation to the process of enclaving, the Israeli regime imposes full control over territory, borders, population movement, resources, security, and external relations, while selectively delegating already pre-approved administrative functions to a narrow set of Palestinian elites. This produces a system in which "sovereignty" is unilaterally claimed and exercised by the Israeli regime, yet strategically denied and deliberately obscured for the Palestinian people through the language of "self-rule," and "interim governance," much like the bantustans in Apartheid South Africa.

Even as a delegated authority, "autonomy" in the enclaves falls below a minimal threshold of meaningful self-governance, as evidenced in the Decisive Plan and the 20-point plan, where it functions primarily as an illusion. All decisive powers – cultural, political, economic, and territorial – remain fully under the control of the Israeli regime. This so-called self-governance constitutes neither sovereignty nor genuine self-determination; it operates instead as a technology of rule, reorganizing domination while displacing responsibility. The Palestinian people retain an inalienable right to self-determination, which requires full sovereignty and genuine control over the land of Mandatory Palestine,

166 Aureliu Cristescu and UN. Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. Special Rapporteur on the Right to Self-determination, eds., *The Right to Self-Determination: Historical and Current Development on the Basis of United Nations Instruments: Study* (UN, 1981), https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/25252.

governance, and political, economic, and social affairs.[167] The systematic denial of these conditions is not accidental but structurally embedded in the architecture of the Israeli enclave system.

4.2 The Pursuit of Erasure

Despite some structural parallels between Apartheid South Africa's bantustans and the Israeli regime's enclaves for Palestinians, the two systems differ in their underlying economic logic and ultimate objectives. In South Africa, a main goal of apartheid was to rely on the exploitation of Black labor, creating a complex system of economic interdependence: Black South Africans were fragmented in bantustans to serve the labor needs of white-controlled urban and industrial centers. The exclusion and fragmentation of Black South Africans into bantustans was for mainly internal purposes of maintaining white supremacy, privileges and domination through economic suppression.

By contrast, the Israeli regime's enclaves are not primarily about mere internal goals or labor exploitation but focused-demographic engineering: the replacement of Palestinians with Israeli colonizers with the aim to establish an imperial state playing the major role in dominating the region within the broader colonial framework. Palestinians are not valued or desired as a workforce to be integrated into the economy; rather, they are treated as a demographic threat, to be displaced, controlled, and eventually erased.[168] This policy of erasure within Palestine shows the Israeli regime's broader goal of reshaping the Southwest Asia and North Africa region, a goal that has become very clear within the last two years, emphasized by Israeli prime minister,

167 United Nations, *Right of Self-Determination of the Palestinian People*, ST/SG/SER.F/3, The Question of Palestine (New York, 1979), https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-196558/.

168 Fatma Sarıaslan, "Apartheid in South Africa and Israel: Striking Parallels, Crucial Differences," TRT Afrika, October 8, 2025, https://www.trtafrika.com/english/article/9805a1fefa29.

Benjamin Netanyahu with calls to "change the face of the Middle East"[169] and stating "We are at a historic turning point and everyone is slowly turning to realize it … a new Middle East will emerge"[170] in which the Israeli regime consolidates power and influence beyond its immediate territory.

Palestinian erasure is the ultimate aim of the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime: **to impose its "sovereignty" on the maximum amount of Palestinian land with the minimum number of Palestinians**. Spatial fragmentation and re-fragmentation into smaller, more suppressed and less populated enclaves aligns with Zionist-Israeli colonial strategy. This vision is often associated with the notion of "Greater Israel," an expansionist concept that imagines Israeli sovereignty extending beyond Mandatory Palestine to encompass other territories including Lebanon, Jordan, and some parts of Syria, Egypt, and Iraq.[171]

In the Gaza Strip, Palestinians experienced Israeli genocide as the primary form of their erasure, which is now continued through prolonged suffocation, land confiscation, and control over movement, resources and aid via the BoP. Meanwhile, the West Bank is carved into smaller and smaller enclaves managed through overlapping Israeli forces and administrative systems that deepen dependency and restrict political and economic autonomy.

In both Palestine and Apartheid South Africa, the manipulation of leadership structures, the control of mobility, and the deliberate engineering of isolation serve a common purpose, sustaining political

169 Seda Sevencan, "'We Are Going to Change the Middle East,' Says Israeli Premier," AA, October 9, 2023, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/we-are-going-to-change-the-middle-east-says-israeli-premier/3012947.

170 "Netanyahu Vows Iran Will 'Pay the Full Price' After Missile Hits Tel Aviv Hospital," Charisma Magazine Online, June 20, 2025, https://mycharisma.com/news/netanyahu-vows-iran-will-pay-the-full-price-after-missile-hits-tel-aviv-hospital/.

171 Timur Shah, "What Is 'Greater Israel'?," Middle East Eye, August 15, 2025, https://www.middleeasteye.net/explainers/what-greater-israel.

fragmentation, entrenching territorial control, and foreclosing the right of peoples' self-determination with profound consequences. **Spatial apartheid systems are designed to not only limit access to land, resources, and economic opportunity but also target social cohesion, and erode political agency. The ultimate aim of both the bantustan and enclave regimes is to suppress the emergence of all and any national aspirations and resistance.**

4.3 The Illusion of Self-Determination

For a regime of enclaving to remain politically viable, coercion alone is insufficient; it must also manufacture the appearance of a political horizon. The Israeli regime deliberately produces an illusion of Palestinian self-determination – directed not only at the international community but also at Palestinians themselves. This simulated horizon functions as a governing technology: it deflects pressure, disciplines the population, and obscures the colonial character of the system by presenting domination as a "process," "reform," or "transition." In this way, enclaving not only erases Palestinian political presence but replaces it with a carefully managed fiction of autonomy and self-rule.

The groundwork for this illusion was laid under the Oslo Accords, where the PA was granted limited administrative and security functions. Its powers were tightly circumscribed, closely monitored, and dependent on Israeli approval, establishing a precedent of externally controlled autonomy that the Decisive Plan would later fully exploit. This arrangement reinforced the impression of self-governance without substantive sovereignty or genuine autonomy.

This logic has a clear precedent in Apartheid South Africa. The so-called "independence" of the bantustans was one of apartheid's most calculated political fictions. These "pseudo-independent" bantustans

provided the apartheid regime with a mechanism to legitimize forced displacement and continued domination,[172] even though no international body, aside from Apartheid South Africa itself, recognized them.[173] By assigning Black South Africans citizenship in bantustans, the regime excluded them from political and civic life in and with "white South Africans," stripping them of rights where they lived and worked.[174] Bantustan leaders held limited authority under strict regime oversight, while white bureaucrats retained conclusive control, even restricting "Africanization"[175] to ensure that no white official served under Black administrators.[176] In this way, the bantustans simultaneously facilitated territorial engineering, provided legal cover for racial exclusion, and functioned as administrative tools of labor control and political domination – all while projecting the image of "self-rule."

The Israeli regime's enclaving strategy reproduces this governing logic through a differentiated set of contemporary policy frameworks. The Decisive Plan, framed in the language of "quiet, peace, and real coexistence," centers on the management of a permanently subordinate population rather than on sovereignty.[177] By promoting the illusion

172 Chitja Twala and Ayanda Sphelele Ndlovu, "'Dangling the Land as a Carrot': The Bantustans and the Territorial Extension Under the Apartheid Regime in South Africa," *Histories* 5, no. 1 (2025): 12, https://doi.org/10.3390/histories5010012.

173 Joe W. (Chip) Pitts III, "The Concept of Citizenship: Challenging South Africa's Policy," *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* 19, no. 3 (1986): 534, https://scholarship.law.vanderbilt.edu/vjtl/vol19/iss3/3.

174 Ibid, 535.

175 Africanization in the bantustans referred to the nominal replacement of white officials with Black administrators, but was tightly controlled by Apartheid South Africa. It applied mostly to low-level posts and ensured no white official would ever be subordinate to a Black one, preserving white oversight despite claims of autonomy. See V. B. Khapoya, "Bantustans in South Africa: The Role of the Multinational Corporations," *Journal of Eastern African Research & Development* 10, no. 1/2 (1980): 28–49, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24325810.

176 V. B. Khapoya, "Bantustans in South Africa: The Role of the Multinational Corporations," *Journal of Eastern African Research & Development 10*, no. 1/2 (1980): 28–49, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24325810.

177 Security Council, "Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2814 (2026), Security Council Renews Mandate of United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti," UN Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, January 29, 2026, https://press.un.org/en/2026/sc16285.doc.htm.

of coexistence, such frameworks legitimize territorial fragmentation, enforce compliance, and isolate communities from collective political action, ensuring that resistance is met with military, administrative, and bureaucratic repression. In this context, the PA's role, including exercising municipal and "security coordination" functioned primarily to implement Israeli policies and maintain administrative order, rather than to advance Palestinian self-determination. Having served this function, the PA is now sidelined and will no longer have a role in the enclave system, serving only as a pathway, demonstrating the temporary and instrumental nature of its authority. As in the bantustan system, the promise of autonomy functions as a technique of depoliticization and control, ensuring political subordination and isolation despite the appearance of self-rule.

The logic of managed politics reaches its most explicit form under US pressure through Trump's 20-point plan, which advances a model of internationalized governance over the Gaza Strip. Under this framework, "dialogue" between the Israeli regime and undefined Palestinian representatives substitutes for political resolution.[178] Dialogue here signifies consultation without power, discussion without leverage, and participation without the capacity to shape outcomes. National liberation is not merely postponed; it is structurally excluded and reduced to a management exercise, where Palestinians may participate only within tightly pre-structured limits. Supported internationally, Trump's 20-point plan prioritizes states' interests over all Palestinian rights, including completely undermining their right to reparations.[179] Therefore, treating Palestinians as objects of policy while rhetorically invoking sovereignty that is systematically denied to preserve Israeli colonial-apartheid control.

178 Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, "Enshrining Israeli Hegemony Under the Veil of Peace: Trump's Revised Plan for Gaza," *The Unit for Political Studies*, October 2, 2025, https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/PoliticalStudies/Pages/enshrining-israeli-hegemony-under-the-veil-of-peace-trumps-revised-plan-for-gaza.aspx.

179 Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO) and Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council (PHROC), "Position Paper: Palestinian Civil Society Condemns UNSC Resolution 2803 Establishing Joint US-Israel Illegal Occupation of Gaza," Al-Haq, November 20, 2025, https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/26842.html.

The international community's embrace of "statehood" discourse does not break with this logic but extends it. The so-called "pathway to Palestinian statehood," advanced through recent resolutions such as the so-called New York Declaration[180] and related international plans, functions less as a genuine political horizon and more as a mechanism to entrench Israeli domination and legitimize the fragmentation and erasure of Palestinian presence and rights. By institutionalizing the separation between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, these proposals codify a geopolitical division produced by Israeli policy and transform it into an internationally endorsed structure of apartheid. In practice, the rhetoric of statehood serves to normalize territorial dismemberment, population enclosure, and the delegation of authority to externally vetted actors, while sidelining any meaningful exercise of self-determination.

Crucially, the Israeli regime has never agreed to, nor articulated, any genuine proposal for Palestinian sovereignty or meaningful recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. This omission is deliberate and longstanding: none of the Oslo Accords – including agreements, protocols, and annexes – made any explicit reference to the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, neither the right to self-determination nor the right of return, as enshrined in UN General Assembly Resolution 3236 (1974).[181] This absence is foundational rather than incidental: the structuring objective is not decolonization or equality, but the erasure of Palestinians as a political subject. Accordingly, official discourse remains confined to vague notions of "coexistence," while systematically denying sovereignty, return, and territorial integrity.

Self-governance and autonomy for the enclaves is contingent

180 "New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution - UN High-Level International Conference," *Question of Palestine*, July 29, 2025, https://www.un.org/unispal/document/un-high-level-international-conference-new-york-declaration-29jul2025/.

181 United Nations, *Resolution 3236 (XXIX): The Palestine Question and the Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories*, A/RES/3236(XXIX) (1974), https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ARES3236XXIX.pdf.

upon externally approved leadership, "security coordination," demilitarization, and de-radicalization in accordance with US-Israeli demands. Social, economic, and cultural rights are repackaged as privileges to be earned through compliance with imposed benchmarks, while the Palestinian people's inalienable and basic rights are once again deferred, fragmented, and effectively denied. As the Decisive Plan states, "…there is no room for two national movements in the State of Israel…there will be those who decide to continue fighting – and they will be quickly defeated by our forces…The plan only disallows one thing: the continued existence of two concrete national ambitions within this one land."[182]

By redirecting political struggle away from rights and toward technical reforms, away from resistance and toward managed dialogue, and away from a unified people and toward administratively separated enclaves, the enclave system works to render the political question of Palestine obsolete. The outcome is a model of governance that denies sovereignty, restricts basic freedoms despite nominal autonomy, and offers "self-determination" while suppressing self-rule. Enclaving is an administrative architecture designed to manage Palestinians indefinitely, preserve Israeli domination, and block any horizon of decolonization.

Neither conditional "statehood" nor the language of "coexistence" reflects what Palestinians are entitled to under international law. Under international law, the Palestinian people's right to self-determination is not negotiable; it is a well-established legal fact recognized as an *erga omnes* and peremptory norm. The Palestinian people's right to determine their political status was acknowledged *de jure* long before the creation of the Israeli regime, including under Article 22 of the 1919 Covenant of the League of Nations.[183] This right has since been

182 Bezalel Smotrich, "Israel's Decisive Plan," *Hashiloach Frontlines*, 2017, https://hashiloach.org.il/israels-decisive-plan/.

183 United Nations, *Right of Self-Determination of the Palestinian People*, ST/SG/SER.F/3, The Question of Palestine (New York, 1979), https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-196558/.

repeatedly affirmed by the UN and codified in Common Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).[184] Framing Palestinian rights and demands as calls for "coexistence" or conditional "statehood" therefore misrepresents the legal reality: what is owed is the full decolonization of Mandatory Palestine through the realization of the Palestinian people's inalienable rights to both self-determination and return.[185]

The South African experience also exposes the structural limits of such political fictions. Daily life in the bantustans was marked by deprivation, restricted services, fragmented families through migrant labor, and pervasive political repression. Yet communities developed adaptive strategies, sustaining social life and political agency under conditions of confinement. Over time, spaces designed to isolate and depoliticize became sites of growing political consciousness, communal solidarity, and organized resistance.[186] The pressures of enforced separation and institutionalized inequality fostered a shared sense of injustice that transformed these marginalized enclaves into early centers of mobilization whose political effects outlasted apartheid itself.[187] Read in this light, the illusion of self-determination appears not only as a central technology of domination, but also as an inherently unstable one: while it seeks to manage, fragment, and depoliticize, it simultaneously reproduces the conditions under which collective political resistance re-emerges.

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184 United Nations, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, UNTS vol. 999, p. 171 (1966), https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights.

185 BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *Rights-Based Reconstruction: Decolonization and Reparations*, Position Paper (BADIL, 2025), https://badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2025/07/07/pp-reconstruction-vs-reparations-eng-1751895094.pdf.

186 Facing History & Ourselves, "Introduction: Growing Resistance Meets Growing Repression," August 3, 2018, https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/introduction-growing-resistance-meets-growing-repression.

187 Ibid.

CONCLUSION

Palestine is being systematically fragmented and enclaved under a deliberate colonial-apartheid framework driven by Zionist colonial strategy, whose ultimate goal is the consolidation of Israeli "sovereignty" at the expense of the Palestinian people's sovereignty, rights, and presence. Israeli spatial apartheid transforms the rhetoric of "self-governance" into a tool of control, masking domination behind the façade of autonomy managed through the PA. What Apartheid South Africa called "separate development" under co-opted bantustan leaders reappears today as the Israeli regime's system of enclaves, demonstrating how spatial control is a persistent and adaptable tool of settler-colonial domination.

By framing confinement as a technical matter of governance, municipal administration, or a security necessity, global powers actively perpetuate a colonial status quo and shield the Israeli regime from accountability, normalizing oppression as routine administration. As a result, Israeli fragmentation of Palestinian space continues unabated, enabled by states' inaction, complicity, and the broader international normalization of Israeli oppression. In South Africa, international pressure eventually forced steps toward dismantling apartheid, yet structural legacies of the bantustans – fragmented territories, entrenched inequalities, and socio-political exclusion – persist, illustrating how deeply spatial control can endure even after formal reforms. In Palestine, Israeli spatial apartheid continues to deepen, with Palestinian life and presence systematically reduced and subjected to erasure.

Palestinian space is being divided into multiple layers of control. The Israeli closure system – including checkpoints, iron gates, the permit regime, and zoning policies – is not a set of mere restrictions; these

are core components of the enclaving process, systematically enforced across Palestine. This system has recently accelerated, intensifying enclosure and control. The Israeli enclaving system fragments Palestinians politically, socially, and economically at every level, restricting mobility, access to resources, and the capacity for collective action. The Israeli regime, aware that any unified Palestinian political authority or organized resistance threatens its settler-colonial project, systematically targets national institutions and political bodies. These attacks – ranging from undermining the PA to repressing resistance movements – are designed to dismantle any possibility of Palestinian unity, ensuring that no collective political, economic, or social force can challenge them. Through this layered structure of control, enforced via enclaves, the Israeli regime aims to suppress coordinated resistance and the pursuit of national aspirations.

The regional and local enclaves imposed on Palestinians by the Israeli regime, as documented in this paper, already materially and politically constrain Palestinian space and lives, yet they represent only an initial phase of the broader system envisioned in the Decisive Plan. The enclaving process is ongoing, and the final configuration of this Israeli spatial-apartheid framework has not yet been fully realized.

The lessons are clear: fragmentation and demographic engineering are deliberate tools of domination. The ongoing Nakba is not a series of isolated events but a continuous imposition of colonization, displacement, and dispossession that began under the British Mandate and persists today.

Without significant action and practical measures, Palestine risks full absorption into a system of enclaves where existence is conditional, sovereignty impossible, and rights systematically denied. Recognizing the structural logic of the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime is not only an academic exercise – it is a legal, moral, and political imperative.

To end Israeli settler-colonialism and apartheid, states must reaffirm the unity of the Palestinian people, reject limits on their right to self-determination, confront Israeli crimes, and challenge the impunity of the regime. Protecting and ensuring Palestinian rights requires comprehensive economic, military, and political sanctions to dismantle the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime and demand accountability and reparations for the systematic erasure of Palestinian life, land, and rights.[188]

As in South Africa, states and international bodies must refuse to recognize or legitimize the Israeli system of enclaving and treat it not as a resolution but as a tool of domination, just as they refused to recognize the bantustans. The solidarity movement must play a crucial role by escalating the implementation of strategic and effective actions designed to pressurize governments to end their inaction and/or complicity with the Israeli regime and actively support Palestinian resistance. Only through sanctions will the Israeli regime be dismantled, including its enclave system, ushering in meaningful decolonization that centers the exercise of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and return.

188 BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *Action Plan: What States, UN Agencies, International Organizations and Businesses Can Do* (BADIL, 2024), 7, https://badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2024/11/26/confront-israeli-crimes-action-plan-en-1732632553.pdf.

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