

Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food

In response to the call for submissions on [Interlinkages between Land Rights and the Right to Food](#), BADIL Resource Center provides data and analysis in answer to the following questions:

1. What government laws, policies, or projects limit or deny access to land and territory for farming, grazing, gardening, or fishing?
2. Are you witnessing or experiencing land grabbing, evictions, or concentration of land ownership?
3. What role do State policies or “development” projects (e.g., dams, industrial zones, tourism) play in land loss or displacement?
8. Which tools for decolonization of land systems do you know or is your community using, including measures addressing digital-based neo-colonization?

Introduction

Across historic Palestine, the Israeli regime has built a comprehensive legal, military, and administrative apparatus that systematically denies Palestinians access to land, resources, and food systems. Through laws, military orders, and “state development” projects, this apparatus fragments Palestinian territory, dispossesses communities, and obstructs agricultural, pastoral, and fishing livelihoods. Palestinians face land confiscation, displacement, and concentrated land ownership under a regime rooted in colonization, forced transfer, and apartheid.

The Israeli denial of access to and confiscation of Palestinian land are therefore not incidental to violations of the right to food: it is the central instrument by which food sovereignty is eliminated, by removing the material basis for self-sustenance, including farming, herding, fishing, and access to water or grazing. Subsequently, this serves the ultimate Israeli goal: securing maximum land with minimum Palestinians, by erasing Palestinian ownership of land, and with it, the right of return.

Israeli Land Confiscation in Mandatory Palestine

1. In the immediate aftermath of the 1948 Nakba — when over 500 Palestinian towns and villages were depopulated, the newly created Israeli regime enacted laws to seize agricultural land, fisheries, orchards, grazing areas, and water resources.
 - a. The **Absentees’ Property Law** (1950) classified more than 750,000 Palestinians as “absentees,” enabling confiscation of farms and fishing ports.
 - b. The **Land Acquisition Law** (1953) retroactively legalized mass seizures, transferring all refugee and IDP land, including fertile land to the ‘State’ and the Jewish National Fund (JNF).
2. These laws dismantled entire Palestinian food systems, from citrus and olive groves to desert pastoral economies. [This legal architecture](#) did not simply change ownership on paper, it

severed Palestinians from their economic base, replacing self-sustaining livelihoods with enforced dependency on international aid.

3. Following the 1967 occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, the Israeli regime expanded land control through over [1,000 military orders](#) and planning mechanisms to expropriate agricultural and pastoral land in order to further colonial expansion.
4. Reinterpreting and expanding “**state land**” enabled the absorption of public, uncultivated, and unregistered lands. Since 1967, about [2,145 km²](#)—38% of West Bank lands—have been appropriated, blocking Palestinian farming, grazing, irrigation, and construction, while colonizer outposts operate freely.
5. Large areas of Palestinian agricultural and communal land remain [unregistered](#) due to historical Mandate-era administrative barriers that are now weaponized against Palestinians as they are treated as “ownerless,” allowing confiscation despite long-standing use, nullifying customary land rights, and severing communities from essential fields. Additional classifications, including nature reserves, closed military areas, and colony zones, further consolidate control.

Denial of Food Sovereignty in the West Bank: Land and Resource Appropriation

6. In the occupied Palestinian territory, Israeli **access restrictions** — bypass roads, fenced zones, firing zones, or permit regimes — function as a [coordinated architecture](#) rather than isolated restrictions and systematically dismantle Palestinian self-sufficiency. They are tools of colonization, resource capture, forcible transfer and apartheid.
7. By diverting or restricting [Palestinian access to water](#), the Israeli regime constrains agricultural growth and makes farming increasingly unviable, fracturing rural economies, and ensuring dependency. Blocking herders from accessing traditional grazing routes — through bans, [livestock restrictions and recurrent theft](#) — disrupts traditional pastoral systems, and erodes household livelihoods. This **engineered scarcity ensures that Palestinian food systems cannot operate independently of Israeli-controlled resource structures**.
8. Designation of “**nature reserves**” has become a key Israeli strategy to prevent Palestinian construction, cultivation, grazing, or water access. Today, [705 km²](#) — about 20% of Area C and 12.4% of the West Bank — is designated as nature reserves, with 82% of the 53 officially declared reserves located in Area C. Across historic Palestine and the occupied Golan Heights, 530 reserves and national parks cover [25% of the land](#). The Israeli regime’s labelling of Palestinian agricultural spaces as “environmentally protected” masks a process **designed to empty land of its Palestinian inhabitants and obstruct their subsistence systems**.
9. Since the 1970s, the Israeli regime has designated extensive “**closed military zones**,” including Firing Zones as a tool of slow-motion displacement and *de facto* land confiscation. In areas such as the Jordan Valley and South Hebron Hills, these designations cut communities off from pasture, cropland, and water sources, creating coercive conditions that push families from lands they have used for generations. By late 2024, approximately 1,008 km²—[18% of the West Bank](#)—had been declared closed military zones, including 253 km² as Firing Zones, alongside 45 km² hosting more than [200 military sites](#).
10. “Firing Zone 918” in Masafer Yatta exemplifies this system: the area covers roughly 8,000 acres of [privately owned Palestinian farmland and includes 18 communities](#). From 2009 to August 2025, OCHA recorded [100+ demolitions](#) in the zone, affecting 300+ structures. Military designation has also enabled [colonizer takeovers of olive groves](#). Between 2021 and mid-2025, the UN documented [132 colonizer attacks in Masafer Yatta](#), injuring 77 Palestinians and causing significant property damage. These coercive conditions reflect a

broader pattern: [30% of Area C](#) is designated Firing Zones, affecting at least 38 long-established communities whose presence predates both the firing-zone declarations and the occupation itself.

11. The [permit regime](#) not only enforces other displacement policies, such as discriminatory zoning and planning policies, denial of residency or land confiscation, but is also a tool of economic destabilization. Farmers unable to access their land lose crop cycles, tree maintenance, and grazing rotations, reducing productivity and accelerating land degradation.
12. Construction of the [Israeli Apartheid Wall](#) began in 2002 and continues, with a planned route of 771 km. By the end of 2024, around 65% was completed, with over 85% running deep inside the West Bank. Its construction isolated 90 Palestinian communities into enclaves covering 705 km² (12.4% of the West Bank) and confiscated fertile lands and major aquifers.
13. The Wall also created a *de facto* “[eastern segregation zone](#)” of 1,664 km² (29.3% of the West Bank), under full Israeli military control and home to 13,000 colonizers in 38 colonies, while fragmenting over 70,000 Palestinians across 44 localities. The path of the Wall also confiscated 9.4% of the West Bank, creating “[seam zones](#)” that completely separate farmers from their lands as the Israeli regime designated these pieces of lands as military closed areas. [Statistics](#) suggest that approximately 50,000 Palestinians live in 57 communities within these so-called seam zones.
14. By controlling access and land use, the **Wall and its permit regime imposes chronic economic insecurity that fragments traditional food systems** and weakens entire rural communities. This ensures Palestinians cannot maintain self-sufficient food systems, forcing dependence on externally controlled resources, and consolidating Israeli control over land and resources.
15. **Each confiscation, access restriction, and zoning policy must be understood within a broader architecture of [fragmentation](#).** As Palestinian communities are splintered into isolated [enclaves](#), a key element of the Israeli regime’s [Decisive Plan](#) to fragment and control the population - their land-based economies collapse, and viable food production becomes impossible. [Fines and permit-regime penalties](#) against Palestinian farmers and herders function as powerful pressure mechanisms toward land abandonment. The exploitation of [natural resources](#), including stone quarries, but also industrial and extraction sites zones linked to colonies, divert land from Palestinian use, while causing severe environmental degradation. The [colonizer road system](#) and bypass infrastructure further isolate agricultural land, turning short trips into long detours and making farming economically untenable.

From Siege to Ecocide: Land and Resource Devastation in the Gaza Strip

16. While the **Gaza Strip** was already subject to restrictions before 2005, the Israeli regime’s post-2005 expansion and formalization of **land buffer zones and maritime limits have drastically reduced the areas available for farming and fishing**. Farmers faced recurrent crop destruction and routine obstruction of access, while fishermen were confined to narrow, militarized maritime strips. These measures crippled Gaza’s **historically self-sustaining**

agricultural and fishing sectors and replaced them with a humanitarian economy reliant on foreign aid.

17. Prior to the genocide, and under the Oslo framework, a 58 km–long, 0.5 km–wide Buffer Zone was established along Gaza’s northern and eastern borders, covering 8% of the Strip (209 km²). Despite the official [300-meter land buffer](#), Israeli forces attack individuals and properties up to 1.5 km inside Gaza. The UN [reports](#) that this ‘Access Restricted Area’ (ARA) covers 62.6 km² — 85% of Gaza’s maritime area and, critically, over [35% of its agricultural land](#) — rendering it partially or fully inaccessible. Further, the [buffer-zone lands](#) are among the most agriculturally productive in Gaza and include major groundwater wells.
18. In 2005, the Israeli regime widened the zone further to 24% (87 km²), impacting [7.5%](#) of the population, mostly farmers, who cannot reach their lands and consequently have planted harvests that do not require daily care, and low growing crops and trees, as any plant over [80cm](#) is forbidden, supposedly to prevent their use as natural hideouts. Over 16% of the farmers in the Gaza Strip are dependent on these lands.
19. FAO and OCHA noted that by mid-2009, nearly [46% of agricultural land](#) was inaccessible due to buffer-zone restrictions and destruction.
20. Fishing zones have also been gradually [restricted](#): from 20 nautical miles under Oslo, reduced to 12 (2002), 6 (2006), and 3 nautical miles (2007). Since October 2023, the Israeli regime has [entirely prohibited maritime access](#), effectively banning fishing and navigation.
21. **During the genocide**, the Israeli deliberate [destruction of land](#) and environment has been systematic, amounting to what experts describe as [ecocide](#). Over 95% of Gaza’s agricultural land has been rendered unusable. By mid-2025, 97.1% of tree crops, 82.4% of annual crops, and 95.1% of shrub land had been destroyed. Over 1,200 agricultural wells, thousands of farms, greenhouses, and irrigation systems have been ruined. **Less than 5% of cropland remains cultivable or accessible.**
22. As of November 2025, the Israeli regime maintains complete maritime control, denying Palestinians any sea access.
23. Before 2023, agricultural and fishing restrictions crippled Gaza’s food systems. Today, the ongoing Israeli genocide—combined with [foreign colonial](#) ‘reconstruction’ plans tied to political control—reflects a long-term strategy of the Israeli regime and its allies to reshape Gaza’s land and coast.
24. In November 2023, the Israeli regime created a [new one-kilometer-deep buffer zone](#), covering 16% of the Gaza Strip, previously accounting for around 35% of Gaza’s cultivated land and supplying a major share of its food production. The newly announced “**Yellow Line**” significantly [expands no-go zones](#), blocking Palestinian access to homes and farmland, and encompassing nearly [58% of Gaza’s territory](#). By formalizing land and coastal expropriation, the erosion of food systems is further deepened, in violation of the Palestinian right to self-determination, which encompasses control over natural resources, by shifting control of land and resources to foreign colonial control.

Across historic Palestine: ‘State Development Projects’ as Tools of Displacement

25. Afforestation projects - particularly those carried out by the [JNF](#) (more than two-thirds of the JNF forests are planted on destroyed or depopulated Palestinian villages in 1948 Palestine) — **are an ecological façade to conceal Palestinian presence and dispossession while preventing displaced communities from reclaiming return on their food-producing lands.**

26. Across historic Palestine, JNF land is held for the [exclusive benefit of “the Jewish people,”](#) thereby systematically excluding Palestinian use. Through **forestation, “development” projects, colony support, and leasing restrictions**, the JNF entrenches a geography in which Palestinian cultivation and habitation become structurally impossible, as land, food production, and economic development is racially allocated.
27. Declaring Palestinian lands as reserved for “public use,” “nature reserves,” or “development” projects masks a deliberate [pattern of expropriation](#): these designations overwhelmingly benefit Israeli colonizers, while denying Palestinian access. Lands historically used for food, grazing, and livelihoods are rendered inaccessible, and fertile areas confiscated under the pretext of regional development, tourism, or housing. **These mechanisms legitimize land theft and convert Palestinian agricultural landscapes into Jewish-only residential, industrial, military, and tourism infrastructure.**
28. **Jisr az-Zarqa**, the last Palestinian coastal village, faces aggressive expropriation for tourism and luxury development. In **Tantura**, a parking lot and tourist resort were built on [mass graves](#) from the massacre carried out by Zionist militias during the 1948 Nakba. The Israeli Planning and [Zoning regime](#) blocks Palestinian expansion while enabling colonizer growth into remaining agricultural areas. In the Golan Heights, Palestinian and [Syrian villages lost orchards, vineyards](#), and water resources to colonizer agriculture, including the [Israeli wine industry](#). In the [Naqab](#), Bedouin communities face land confiscation through demolitions, “unrecognized” village status, JNF forestation, and repeated mass eviction attempts such as in [al-‘Araqib](#). Israeli national parks, forests, and tourism routes sit atop depopulated and destroyed villages or former farmland, erasing ownership and blocking refugee return.
29. Today, [93% of land](#) in 1948 Palestine is classified as “Israel Lands,” meaning land owned either by the regime, the JNF, or related public agencies, regardless of historical Palestinian ownership.

Colonization in the West Bank (including Jerusalem)

30. The Israeli regime labels colony expansion as “regional development” or “housing solutions”, or more recently “imposing Israeli sovereignty”, to ultimately advance its long-standing objective of maximum land with minimum Palestinians. **Colonies** physically cover 3.5% of the West Bank (around 201 km²) but span nearly [10%](#) (around 545 km²) through jurisdictional boundaries that extend far beyond their built-up areas. Expansion involves roads, restricted zones, water diversion, and security perimeters that **displace Palestinians, and remove arable land, grazing routes, and water sources, undermining local food production.**
31. In **Jerusalem**, municipal boundaries were redrawn to encompass 28 surrounding Palestinian communities, expanding the city from 6.5 km² to 71 km². [Land use was reclassified](#): 35% for colonies, 22% for green zones (off-limits to Palestinians), and only 13% for Palestinian construction, already densely built.
32. Formally endorsed by the Israeli regime on 20 August 2025, the **E1 plan** colony plan is a core component in the realization of the [Decisive Plan](#) and a critical step in the [imposition of colonial domination using segregation, fragmentation and isolation](#). This scheme plans for thousands of new colonial units and appropriates pastoral lands, forcibly removing Bedouin communities such as Khan al-Ahmar. If realized, it would also severely fragment the West Bank even further, effectively isolating Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank and separating Bethlehem from Ramallah and Jericho.
33. Israeli-backed **colonizer attacks** further deny access, and facilitate subsequent [land theft](#): in 2023, 96,000 dunums went unharvested, causing losses over [\\$10 million](#), – further eroding a *fellaheen* (farmer) economy and entrenching a dependency-based colonial one that violates

the right to agricultural self-sustenance. The [olive harvest](#) — central to Palestinian culture, food security, and annual income — has become a focal point of violent land grab strategies. These attacks aim to **pressure rural communities to abandon land and allow colonizers to seize and absorb it into expanding outposts.**

34. In the West Bank, only 53% of the land remains under Palestinian use, [while the Israeli regime controls 47%](#) — 28.5% in the Jordan Valley under military control, 9% lies west of the Apartheid Wall, and 9.5% seized for Israeli colonies.

Palestinian Strategies to Protect Land and Food Systems

35. **Legal Advocacy:** Litigation, mapping, and UN submissions to highlight violations including denial of access to land, forcible transfer, and destruction of food systems, and challenge systems of land designations and displacement.
36. **Community-Based Protection:** Agricultural cooperatives, seed-saving, terrace restoration, and indigenous grazing practices help sustain Palestinian food systems, while rebuilding, replanting, and maintaining herding routes embody acts of *sumud*.
37. **Digital Counter-Mapping:** Counter-mapping projects, GIS documentation of land confiscation, and real-time monitoring of colony expansion challenge Israeli-controlled digital platforms that erase Palestinian geography.
38. **International Solidarity:** BDS campaigns target entities complicit in land colonization. Partnerships with global Indigenous movements build shared resistance to land theft and resource dispossession.
39. **Decolonial Approaches:** BADIL's rights-based [decolonial approach](#) emphasizes on reparations, including return for Palestinian refugee and displaced communities, property restitution and restoration of Palestinian ecosystems as central elements to food security.

Conclusion

Today, Palestinian farmers cultivate under conditions that go well beyond ordinary hardships. Palestinian access to land and food systems is systematically obstructed through the Israeli regime's legal, military, and development policies designed to dispossess and fragment communities. In this context, under constant threat of demolition or seizure, farming is no longer a mere livelihood, it has become an act of resistance. Prior to Israeli colonization, Palestine, its people and economy were primarily agricultural, relying on *fellaheen* and Bedouin tribes. By taking away the land, Palestinian culture, heritage, identity, and skills that were associated with the land, the Palestinian way of life was unravelled and is now on the verge of extinction. **Protecting the right to food necessitates dismantling colonial structures, implementing reparations, which includes return, property restitution, compensation and guarantees of non-repetition, as well as restoring access to land and resources, and supporting Palestinian resistance through legal, agro-ecological, digital, and solidarity-based strategies.** This means recognizing the fallacy of the two-state solution: by limiting Palestinian rights and land access to the 1967 areas, it reproduces the very fragmentation that undermined Palestinian food sovereignty in the first place, and further entrenches Israeli colonial domination.