

Living Under Occupation: Laws and Realities for Palestinians in the West Bank (2019)

Governance Structure: Areas A, B & C

Under the 1995 Oslo II Accord, the West Bank was divided into three zones:

- Area A (~18%): Full Palestinian Authority (PA) civil and security control.
- Area B (~22%): PA civil administration, joint Israeli-Palestinian security control.
- Area C (~60%): Fully under Israeli military and administrative control.

Freedom of Movement

- Checkpoints, roadblocks, and separation barriers: restrict daily travel, often without warning.
- Permit system: Required for movement into East Jerusalem, Israel, and parts of the West Bank.
- Enclosure fences: Some towns are entirely fenced or gated off, isolating residents.

Housing & Land Use

- Area C building restrictions: Permits for Palestinians are rarely approved.
- Land confiscation: Land often reclassified as 'state land' or for military use, restricting access.

Education

- Compulsory until age 15; administered by PA in Areas A/B.
- Access challenges: Checkpoints and settler violence impact student attendance.

Healthcare Access

- PA administers care in Areas A/B.
- Permit delays and checkpoint issues hinder access to hospitals, especially in East Jerusalem.

Legal Systems & Security

- Palestinians are subject to Israeli military law; settlers follow Israeli civil law.

- Military raids, administrative detentions, and child arrests are common.

Water & Resource Use

- Israel controls ~90% of groundwater resources.
- Area C villages often lack water networks and rely on expensive tankered water.

Other Everyday Restrictions & Impacts

- Settler violence: Property damage and assaults often go unpunished.
- Economic restrictions: Settlement expansion and military zones limit livelihoods.
- Family reunification: Often blocked or indefinitely delayed.

Israeli Military Law for Palestinians

Palestinians in the West Bank are governed by Israeli military law, while Israeli settlers are governed by Israeli civil law. This dual system creates stark legal inequality.

Military Orders:

- Over 2,500 military orders issued since 1967 regulate every aspect of Palestinian life.
- Military Order 101: Prohibits public gatherings of over 10 people without military permission.
- Emergency Regulations 1945: Allow indefinite administrative detention, house demolitions, and censorship.
- Permit Regime: Required for work, movement, building, and even medical care.

Military Courts:

- Palestinians, including children, are tried in military courts with 99% conviction rates.
- Administrative detention allows imprisonment without charge, often indefinitely renewed.
- Children can be arrested without parental presence or legal representation.

Freedom of Expression:

- Peaceful protests and social media activity may be prosecuted as 'incitement'.
- Publications, gatherings, and political speech are tightly controlled.

Everyday Impact:

- Movement, housing, education, and family life are subject to military permits and orders.
- This legal regime reinforces systemic inequality and control under occupation.