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June 1967 War – The war that took place from 5 June 1967 to 10 June 1967 between Israel and neighboring Arab states. As a result of this war, Israel began its military occupation of the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula.

AIDA – The Association of International Development Agencies

Dunum – A unit of measurement; one dunum is equal to 1000m²

CAP – The Consolidated Appeals Process, the annual UN-led coordination of donor funding and emergency projects in the oPt

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization

Green Line – The demarcation between Israel and the West Bank as established by the 1949 armistice agreement

IMF – International Monetary Fund

IOF – Israel Occupation Forces

OCHA – The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the UN agency responsible for coordinating humanitarian assistance in the oPt. It also provides and disseminates information locally and internationally on the humanitarian situation to raise awareness

NIS – New Israeli Shekel, currency used in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory

oPt – occupied Palestinian territories, comprised of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

PNA – Palestinian National Authority

PAASS – Palestinian Authority Agricultural Sector Strategy

PCBS – Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

The Seam Zone – The area of land in the West Bank located between the Separation Wall and the Green Line

UNRWA – United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; the UN agency responsible for the provision of social services and emergency aid including food aid, education, and healthcare to registered Palestinian refugees in the oPt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria

WFP – World Food Program
Food insecurity is defined as a situation in which a state or household does not have access to the proper amount of “sufficient, safe, [and] nutritious food [required] to maintain a healthy and active life.”¹ It is a global phenomenon that affected 925 million people worldwide in 2010, 98% of whom were in developing countries.² In Arab countries, 31 million people, or 10% of the population, are classified as food insecure.³ A variety of confounding factors may contribute to a region’s food insecurity. These include environmental conditions, global food market fluctuations, development, as well as global and national politics.

Food insecurity is a major issue facing Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt.) Over 20% of the population of the West Bank and over 50% of the population of the Gaza Strip live in food insecurity.⁴ While it is also affected by global phenomena such as environmental degradation and rising food prices, food security in the oPt is largely dependent on the lack of Palestinian food sovereignty. Though closely linked to food insecurity, food sovereignty involves the right of a state to be food self-sufficient based on their own democratically-determined policies. Unlike food security, which measures the type and amount of food people receive, food sovereignty measures the extent of control a state has over its own food resources. Food insecurity in the oPt is caused by unemployment, poverty, as well as high food prices. Therefore, issues of food insecurity are compounded by a lack of food sovereignty.

Since the Occupation began in 1967, Israel has confiscated thousands of dunums of land from Palestinian farmers and has used this land to build illegal Israeli settlements, settler-only roads, and the Separation Wall that runs through the West Bank. The 519 checkpoints, roadblocks, and other closures throughout the West Bank create extreme challenges for farmers attempting to reach their land and their markets.⁵ Farmers in the West Bank are also subject to repeated destruction and vandalism of their land and crops by the Israeli military and settlers. In Gaza, farmers have lost 25% of their most fertile agricultural land to the “buffer zone” that borders Israel. Israeli patrol boats further limit fishermen to only three nautical miles off the coast, just 15 % of Gaza’s legal territorial waters promised under the Oslo Accords.⁶ The Israeli blockade of Gaza continues to impede agricultural production and access to food and has rendered 80% of Gaza’s population dependent on international emergency food aid. Therefore, due to the effects of Israeli land and resource confiscation and destruction, Israeli imposed limitations on trade, environmental issues, and a growing global food crisis, Palestine is unable to achieve the food sovereignty that could enable the economic and social conditions necessary to reduce the levels of food insecurity.

This report outlines both the multiple causes of Palestine’s lack of food sovereignty and highlights broad policy and development options from the local to the national levels to alleviate this crisis. The report will first define the concepts of food sovereignty and food security and explain the effects of food insecurity on the Palestinian population. It will then analyze how Israeli’s land policies limit Palestine’s ability to create a self-sufficient food sector, thus increasing dependency and unemployment. Related to Palestinian food dependency, Israeli limitations imports to the oPt, thereby increasing local food costs for Palestinians, will be detailed. The report will then show how environmental issues including climate change, water shortages, desertification, and biodiversity compound these food shortages. Finally, this report will connect growing food insecurity in the oPt to the global food crisis.
I. Food Sovereignty and Food Security in the occupied Palestinian territories

The concept of food sovereignty stems from the 2002 World Food Summit, where over 400 farmers’ organizations defined the concept as:

“Food Sovereignty is the right of the peoples, communities, and countries to define their own agricultural, labour, fishing, food, and land policies which are ecologically, socially, economically, and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances. It includes the true right to food and to produce food, which means that all people have the right to safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food and to food-producing resources and the ability to sustain themselves and their societies. Food Sovereignty means the primacy of the people’s and community’s rights to food and food production, over trade concerns.”

In this original definition, food sovereignty is a reclamation of national and individual control over food policies. It prioritizes local production for local markets over dependence on imported food, which can force local farmers out of business. Food sovereignty emphasizes the need for locally-oriented small-scale agriculture for consumption inside the country rather than the current global model of export-oriented industrialized agriculture. The term originated out of movements resisting the industrialization of the global food market by large agribusiness corporations, but has since expanded to greater contexts. The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) defined food sovereignty in 2008 simply as the right of peoples and sovereign states to determine their own agricultural and food policies democratically.

The oPt lacks this sovereign ability to define its own food policies. Palestinians locally produce only 60% of the consumed food items, including rice, flour, bread, meat, and fish, and only 5% of the total cereals and pulses. Palestinian local production is only able to meet its local demand in the categories of vegetable production (tomato, cucumber, eggplant, squash, beans, cabbage, and cauliflower), grapes, plums, citrus, poultry, eggs, and olive oil. For almost all other products, the oPt depends on foreign imports, primarily from Israel. This is also the case for agricultural inputs as the oPt only produces 20% of the required fertilizers and animal foodstuffs, while the rest are imported, mainly from Israel.

However, this dependence on imports from Israel does not stem from a fundamental inability to produce food, but rather from an inability to access the resources necessary to do so. Palestinians are able to use only 54.4% of possible agricultural land in the oPt. In 1965, there were 2,435 square kilometers of cultivated agricultural land in the West Bank while in 2010 there were only 1,687 square kilometers. This loss of agricultural land correlates to lowered production levels; Palestinian production of cereal and wheat in 2010, for example, was half of the 2000 level. In 1967, the West Bank was able to export 80% of the entire vegetable production and 45% of its total fruit production. Moreover, due to Israeli restrictions, Palestinian herders are able to access only 31% (620 of a total of 2,020 square kilometers) of...
Palestinian rangeland. Finally, in regards to fishing, Gaza exported 55 tons of fish in 2007, down from 1,784 tons in 1997. The reduction of independent Palestinian agricultural, livestock, and fishing production demonstrates a lack of food sovereignty. Moreover, as the Palestinian population in the oPt has grown it has also decreased local production, resulting in a dramatically lower per capita production ratio.

Food sovereignty requires control over natural resources. In the oPt, Israel’s tight control over water resources is a major obstacle for Palestinian food sovereignty. Without control over water resources, Palestinians have been unable to maximize agricultural potential. Due to stipulations in the Oslo Accords, Israel is able to abstract 82% of the total annual withdrawal from the Mountain aquifer, located under the West Bank and has taken control of many of the natural springs throughout the West Bank, thereby limiting the amount of possible irrigation-fed agriculture. As a result, only 14.7% of Palestinian agriculture uses irrigation while the remaining 85.3% is rain-fed. The dearth of irrigated agriculture makes Palestinian yields highly dependent on environmental factors. The advantages of access to adequate water are obvious: in 2007, irrigated land in the oPt yielded 4,714.5 tonnes per square kilometer while the rain-fed land produced just 171 tonnes per square kilometer. Thus, the lack of control over water and subsequent inability to implement irrigated agricultural projects severely hampers Palestinians’ ability to establish food independence.

This absence of food sovereignty creates the economic and social conditions that result in food insecurity. Although the term food security has existed for several decades with multiple definitions, the most commonly used definition comes from the World Food Program (WFP) in their publication “The State of Food Insecurity 2001.”

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Household food security is the application of this concept to the family level, with individuals within households as the focus of concern.

The concept of food security comprises four distinct components:

1. Food availability – whether produced locally or imported
2. Food accessibility – where all individuals have access to adequate resources to meet appropriate dietary needs
3. Food stability – where access to adequate food is permanently secured, with no risk of shocks
4. Food utilization – the consumption of food with adequate sanitation [and] clean water

Thus, a state or household can be classified into different levels of food security based on the degree to which they meet each of these definitions. For the oPt, the World Food Program (WFP), and the Food and Agriculture Organization divide Palestinian families into four categories with respect to food security:

1. Food Secure: Households with income and consumption above USD 6.2 / adult equivalent / day
2. Marginally Secure: Households with income or consumption above USD 6.2 / adult equivalent / day
3. Vulnerable to Food Insecurity: Households with both income and consumption below USD 6.2 / adult equivalent / day
4. Food Insecure: Households with income and consumption below USD 5.1 / adult equivalent / day
Levels of food insecurity, vulnerability to food insecurity, and marginal security are high in the oPt as the following table shows:

Table 1: Levels (%) of Food Security, Vulnerability, Marginal Security, and Insecurity in the oPt 2009, 2010,24 and 201125

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total oPt</th>
<th>Gaza Strip</th>
<th>West Bank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food Insecure</td>
<td>Vulnerable</td>
<td>Marginally Secure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Food expenditure, or the percentage of household income spent on food, is also particularly high in the oPt. A high percentage of income spent on food indicates severely low-income levels, severely high food prices, or both. Such high levels of food expenditure are also a good indication of food insecurity. The United States and France, both considered food secure, have food expenditure levels of 6% and 14%, respectively, whereas India and Kenya, both food insecure countries, have rates of 35% and 45%, respectively.26

Table 2: Food Expenditure in the oPt 2009 and 2010.27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total oPt</th>
<th>Gaza Strip</th>
<th>West Bank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Food insecure households have inflated food expenditure levels. Thus, food insecure households have less expendable income for other goods and services. The forfeiture of such goods and services in order to purchase food is known as coping. Food insecure families have a number of coping strategies. In the oPt, food insecure families often reduce the quantity and quality of food in addition to reducing the consumption of other important non-food items.
Table 3: Mechanisms used by Households to Cope with Economic Crisis.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping Strategy Used</th>
<th>Percentage of households</th>
<th>West Bank</th>
<th>Gaza Strip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ate stored food</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collected wild plants</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchased low quality markets</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bought and consumed fewer types of food item</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced portion of food for adults in favor of children’s</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced number of daily meals</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchased food on credit</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced the portion of meals for all household members</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked for and received assistant from friends and/or relatives</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sent women and/or children to work for food</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a dangerous/undesirable/ illegal jobs or activities (such as working in tunnels, begging or rubble collection in the buffer zone)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sent females (women or girls) to serve at homes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-food</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not pay bills/utilities</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sell off assets jewellery, furniture, productive assets, etc.)</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used life savings</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regrouping of family members</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce health and education expenses</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change the place of residence</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effects of Food Insecurity in the oPt

As Palestinians lack food sovereignty due to a lack of control over natural resources, agricultural production, and borders, they are unable to create the economic and social conditions necessary to alleviate the effects of food insecurity. Families in food insecure households often reduce the quantity and nutritional quality of consumer goods. Therefore, food insecurity results in negative health effects, decreased economic output, and long-term environmental damage.

For the oPt, malnutrition resulting from food insecurity has increased dramatically under occupation. As of 2008, Gazan households were obtaining 80% of their calories from cereals, sugar, and oil, a diet that may contain sufficient calories but that leads to micronutrient deficiencies and other adverse medical conditions. For example, the decrease in Palestinian consumption of animal meat, which is high in iron and protein, as a coping mechanism for food insecurity, has led to a 60% increase in underweight children (2.5% to 4%) and an 11% increase in anemia among children between 9-12 months (70.1% to 77.5%). If left untreated, anemia can lead to problems with concentration and thinking, and in severe cases, heart attacks. This is a growing problem in Palestine, as UNRWA estimated in 2002 that 19% of children suffered from anemia.

Coping with food insecurity also leads to reduced nutrition for mothers. This leads to an increased chance of infant mortality or later-stage diseases. For every 1,000 babies born in Gaza, 28 die from malnutrition, anemia, or other food insecurity related causes. In early childhood, even temporary interruptions in the intake of calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals during the first 1,000 days of a child’s life can lead to permanent reductions in cognitive capacity. As a result of nutrient deficiency in mother’s milk, almost 76% of Palestinian children are now deficient in vitamin A, a leading cause of blindness in children that can later result in death. Vitamin A deficiency in women and children also increases vulnerability to other conditions such as iron deficiency, anemia, diarrhea, measles, or stunted growth among children. Stunting, which comes from not receiving enough nutrition as a fetus or early in childhood, can lead to lower learning and work capacity as well as a higher risk of disease and mortality. Over 10% of children under the age of five now suffer from stunted growth, up from 7.2% in 1996. Among women, nutrient deficiency increases the risk of obstructed labor and thus maternal mortality.

Between 50% and 60% of Palestinians also suffer from deficiencies in caloric and vitamin E intake, the latter of which can lead to muscle weakness and retinal degeneration. Twenty percent of Palestinians also suffer from Iodine Deficiency Disorder (IDD), which can lead to brain damage including cretinism. IDD can also lead to goiters; in 2005 14.0% of Palestinians suffered from either type I or II goiters. The World Health Organization (WHO) considers goiter rates above 5% to be a severe health problem. In 2012, Palestinians completed renovation of an ionized salt factory that could supply 80% of local salt consumption, thus reducing the high rate of IDD. However, the factory is located in Area C and Israeli soldiers frequently harass workers, thereby hampering the ability of the factory help eliminate this major health problem.

Although poverty is a primary cause of food insecurity, food insecurity can also exacerbate poverty and economic problems for a country. Despite a lack of direct studies on the economic effects of food insecurity in the oPt, studies conducted in other countries can serve to illuminate general effects of food insecurity in the region. First, the adverse effects of malnourishment on the cognitive development of children result in lower academic achievement, increased social and behavioral problems, and a lack of physical, mental, or emotional development. Food-insecurity related health problems also lead to more hospitalization and medical treatment leading to inefficiencies in the economy. Furthermore, the lack of food
sovereignty costs the oPt over USD one billion annually in lost potential agricultural exports.47

Finally, coping mechanisms adopted by individuals and households to alleviate their food insecurity can damage the long-term environmental sustainability of the oPt. For example, if farmers lack the water necessary to supply their agriculture, their lands will produce lower yields. This leads to lower income, which decreases their ability to replant fields. Any fields that lie unused due to insufficient water or funds will suffer from decreased soil quality.48 This process is intensified if farmers do not use proper crop rotation methods to replenish the nutrients in the soil, or if they overharvest their crops. This vicious cycle means increased soil degradation or soil erosion, which can damage the long-term environmental and agricultural sustainability of the land.
II. Israel’s Policies of Land and Resource Confiscation as a Cause of Food Insecurity

Israel’s policies of land and resource confiscation are a major obstacle to Palestinian food sovereignty and therefore facilitate Palestinian food insecurity. Since 1967, Israeli policies have taken on different forms of structural violence, including land acquisition for settlement and military purposes and the confiscation of water and agricultural resources. These polices also entail direct physical violence as Israeli soldiers and settlers often destroy Palestinian resources and/or endanger Palestinians attempting to access them. Although these policies vary between different areas of the oPt, many use a veneer of security to provide preferential treatment to Israeli settlers at the cost of Palestinian food security.

West Bank

Land

As of July 2012, 125 Israeli settlements exist in the West Bank, along with an additional 12 large Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem and around 100 outposts. These outposts are typically smaller communities that receive government assistance but are not officially recognized as settlements. All of these establishments are considered illegal by international law. There are 501,856 settlers living in the West Bank and settlement regional councils control 42.8% of West Bank; Israeli military bases cover another 10%. Moreover, 220,000 dunums of land in the West Bank have been confiscated for the construction of settler-only roads. The West Bank was divided into Areas A, B, and C during the Oslo Accords, which facilitated Israeli control over Palestinian land. Area A falls completely under Palestinian control. Area B has dual responsibility; Israel controls all security issues and the Palestinian National Authority exerts civil control. Area C, constituting 61% of the West Bank, is entirely under Israeli control. Around 70% of Area C is completely off-limits to Palestinians with an additional 29% heavily restricted.

The estimated 150,000 - 250,000 Palestinians in Area C live in harsh and difficult conditions, especially in regards to food security. They struggle to maintain sustainable livelihoods because of Israeli policies. Palestinians are not allowed to build or make any kind of external renovations to buildings or water collection systems, like cisterns or wells, in Area C without permission from the Israeli Civil Administration. The process for obtaining a permit can take years and the final decision is refused if the proposed building does not fit Israel’s complicated and highly restrictive planning rules. Permits are only given to those building plans that fit into Israeli Civil Administration zoning plans and fall within the 1% of Area C where Palestinian construction is allowed. Unfortunately most of this land is already heavily built up. In addition to being banned from building anywhere near military areas and settlements, Palestinians cannot build at the edges of their communities, effectively preventing their expansion and ability to utilize their land for agricultural purposes.
Any structure that is built without an Israeli permit in Area C is liable to demolition by Israeli forces. Demolition orders have been given to all types of structures, ranging from educational facilities to clinics, from personal homes to communal agricultural structures. From 2000 to 2007, Israel denied 94% of Palestinian permit requests, granting only 91 permits while issuing 4,993 demolition orders. The difficulty in obtaining an Israeli permit has completely stifled social, economic, and agricultural development in most rural Palestinian areas. Farmers and shepherds from communities that are located within military zones who attempt to graze their animals are often arrested and their animals are confiscated. Farmers whose land lies behind the Separation Wall, or in closed off areas near settlements, must apply for permits from the Israeli military in order to visit and tend to their land. According to a 2007 survey conducted by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), only 18% of applicants in Area C receive the permits they need to access and farm their restricted land. Likewise, the Separation Wall effectively prevents Palestinian farmers from accessing their land; out of 67 gates, which provide access to land encircled by the wall to 67 different communities, 29 are never open.

In these rural areas, Israel has confiscated significant amounts of Palestinian land, both publicly and privately owned. Since 1967, Israel has taken control of 85% of Palestinian grazing land and 50% of the irrigated agricultural lands in the West Bank. The route of the Separation Wall has led to the confiscation of another 670,921 dunums, or 11.9% of the West Bank.

These confiscations and restrictions have greatly reduced the ability of the Palestinian people to effectively farm their land. Although 62.9% of all arable land is located in Area C, there is a greater rate of food insecurity in Area C than in the rest of the West Bank. Moreover, as the Jordan Valley is considered the “breadbasket” of the oPt and is primarily Area C, these policies of land confiscation and restriction prevent Palestinians from establishing agricultural policies that could significantly reduce food insecurity. It is estimated that if these policies and restrictions were removed, an additional 50,000 dunums of the Jordan Valley could be cultivated. This would add USD 1 billion per year to the oPt’s GDP, representing a potential 9% increase.

Graph 3: Food Security Levels among Households in Area C

Figure 7: Food Security levels among households in Area C (%)
**Water**

While access to water is vital for food security, control of water resources is a key component of food sovereignty. Since the beginning of the Occupation in 1967, however, Palestinians have been denied both access to and control of Palestinian water sources. Despite being legally entitled to control several water sources of the Jordan Valley water basin including the Jordan River and the Mountain aquifer as well as the Coastal aquifer near Gaza; Palestinians are routinely denied their right to this water. In the West Bank, Palestinians are given access to around 10% of the groundwater in the three basins of the Mountain aquifer, under the West Bank. Even before the occupation of the West Bank began, Israel took control of Palestinian water resources with the construction of the National Water Carrier that took water from the Sea of Galilee to the Negev, effectively diverting 75% of the water from the Jordan River. Today Israel has completely denied Palestinians access to the Jordan River and has confiscated many of the natural springs in the West Bank. Additionally, deep Israeli wells have reduced the flow of water from Palestinian wells and any springs remaining under Palestinian control.

In addition to losing control of valuable water resources, Palestinians face discrimination in the distribution of water from the Israeli water company, Mekorot. Israeli settlers receive access to 75 Million Cubic Meters (MCM) of water, while Palestinians, who represent a much larger percentage of the total West Bank population, receive only 44 MCM. The per capita water usage of settlers is four times higher than that of the Palestinians, as Israelis consume 280 liters per day while Palestinians consume between 57-76 liters per day. The WHO recommends access to no less than 100 liters per day per person in order to avoid water-borne diseases. Some West Bank communities, however, receive as little as 10-20 liters per day per person. Meanwhile, there are 120 Palestinian wells that are inoperable due to the inability to receive Israeli approval for repair and maintenance. The World Bank claims that if Palestinians controlled their own water sources, GDP from agriculture would increase by 10% and 110,000 jobs could be created.

**Gaza Strip**

**Land**

Food insecurity in Gaza is higher than in the West Bank due to slightly different causes. Over 46% of arable land in the Gaza Strip is inaccessible or unusable due to prolonged blockades, proximity to the buffer zone, or destruction caused during Operation Cast Lead. All of Gaza’s borders, territorial waters, and airspace are controlled by Israel or Egypt. As such, Gaza is forced to rely on these powers for all imports and exports and is effectively inhibited from obtaining any degree of food sovereignty.

Officially, the Israeli military imposes a 300-meter buffer zone inside Gaza. However, in practice Palestinians’ lives are in danger anywhere within 500-1,500 meters of the border. This area has become de facto off-limits, as people who venture into this poorly-demarcated zone risk being shot by Israeli soldiers. The total...
land inaccessible to Palestinians amounts to around 27,000 dunums, representing 35% of agricultural land and 17% of Gaza’s total land area. This land has the potential to produce an additional 75,000 tonnes of produce each year. However, the Israeli military discourages use of this land through systematic leveling of farmland, fruit trees, and greenhouses. Although some farmers attempt to cope with these conditions by using low-maintenance rain-fed crops, these methods result in lower yields, lower incomes, and, consequently, higher food insecurity.

**Water**

The only fresh water source available to Palestinians in Gaza is the Coastal aquifer. Unfortunately, this aquifer has been overused by both Palestinians and Israelis, allowing for the seepage of agricultural chemicals and natural minerals into the aquifer. Additionally, Israeli import restrictions have prevented Palestinians from constructing safe sewage disposal facilities. Israel has allowed less than 20% of the materials needed to remedy these sanitation problems to enter Gaza since 2010. As late as 2011, Israeli airstrikes continued to destroy Palestinian water infrastructure, including a sewage pumping station, wells, and reservoirs. Since 2005, Israel has destroyed 305 wells in the buffer zone. Fuel and electricity shortages stemming from the blockade also limit Gaza’s capacity to treat sewage, leading to the overflows that damage the Coastal aquifer. Overwithdrawal from the Coastal aquifer has caused the table water to fall below sea-level, leading to increased salinity levels.

Due to sewage and naturally-occurring saline seepage, it is estimated that 90-95% of the aquifer water is contaminated by dangerous levels of nitrate and chlorides. The Coastal aquifer is also polluted with chemical and microbial contaminants, heavy metals, fuels, nitrates, and toxic organic compounds produced by Israeli farms. Much of this pollution comes from the Israeli use of prohibited pesticides and fertilizers. As the Coastal aquifer supplies water to both Israel and Gaza, a contaminated water supply significantly contributes to the inability of Gaza’s farmers to produce a sufficient agricultural yield.
Since January 2009, Israel has also imposed a three nautical mile limit on Palestinian fishermen off the coast of Gaza. However, according to the Oslo Accords, Palestinian fishermen are legally permitted to fish up to 20 nautical miles out. Consequently, sea access for Palestinians is reduced by 85%. Fishermen who attempt to travel beyond this three nautical mile zone face violent repercussions by the Israeli navy, who will shoot at, arrest, and/or confiscate the boats and equipment of these fishermen. In 2011, there were 72 reports of fire against fishermen, with one fisherman lost at sea, and four injured. As a result of access restrictions and the Israeli navy’s violent acts in the sea, the amount of fish caught by Gazan fishermen has fallen from 3,600 tonnes in 1999 to a low of 1810 tonnes in 2010.

The map below shows the land and sea zones in Gaza that are prohibited.
The Annual Gaza Fishing Catch (figures in tonnes)\textsuperscript{92}

1999 – 3,600
2004 – 2,951
2007 – 2,702
2008 – 2,845
2009 - 1,525
2010 - 1,810

The port in Gaza City is now filled with small fishing boats as fishermen have seen their livelihood severely restricted due to the 3-nautical mile limit imposed by Israel in the sea off Gaza.
The Effect of Operation Cast Lead on Food Security in the Gaza Strip

Operation Cast Lead, the Israeli military offensive on Gaza that took place between 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009, caused the death of around 1,440 Palestinians and injured another 5,380. Thousands of homes and buildings, as well as infrastructure, industry, and land were destroyed. This loss of life, land, and infrastructure has halted the development of agricultural resources in Gaza, which has led to continued high rates of food insecurity. Before the offensive, 56% of the Gazan population was food insecure, primarily due to the limitations of the Israeli blockade and restrictions on possible aid. However, by the end of the offensive, due to the destruction of the agricultural capacity of Gaza, an estimated 75% of the population was food insecure.

Operation Cast Lead destroyed 6,271,746 dunums of agricultural land as well as livestock and agricultural infrastructure such as chicken coops and greenhouses. By mid 2009, 46% of agricultural land in the Gaza Strip was deemed inaccessible. Over 80 fishing boats docked at ports along Gaza’s coast and fishing equipment were also damaged, causing a loss of approximately USD 342,000. It was shortly after the end of the offensive, in February 2009, that Israel reduced the permissible fishing area of Gaza to three nautical miles, further curtailing the industry and harming the ability of fishermen to sustain their livelihoods.

Operation Cast Lead also affected access to land, as 200km of agricultural roads sustained damage. Israeli attacks also resulted in damage to water pumps and subsequent difficulty in access to freshwater. The bombing of sewage treatment plants, which contaminated large swathes of land, exacerbated this shortage of clean, healthy water. Finally, as a result of Israeli use of white phosphorous weapons, despite its international ban in populated areas, crops in the eastern Gaza Strip show evidence of poisoning, including trees appearing yellow in color or exhibiting stunted growth. The Gaza Ministry of Agriculture has endeavored to prevent farmers from cultivating these contaminated lands.

Heavy bombing of 80% of the estimated 1,000 underground smuggling tunnels between Egypt and Gaza, which were used to circumvent the blockade and bring in 90% of all Gaza’s imports, further reduced the ability of Palestinians to acquire necessary foodstuffs. These bombings thus eliminated a primary means to reduce food insecurity. Overall, Operation Cast Lead caused a loss of USD 268 million. These actions have limited Gazans’ ability to be self-reliant and have in fact made them even more dependent on restricted Israeli imports and international food aid.
Effect of Israeli Policies on the Palestinian Economy

Employment

Israeli restrictions have had a severe impact on the Palestinian GDP. The IMF has estimated that the new restrictions that have been put in place since the signing of the Oslo Accords have greatly reduced the economic health of the oPt; real GDP per capita would be 88% higher today if the pre-1994 growth rates had been allowed to continue unobstructed.\(^{106}\) After the signing of the Oslo Accords and the creation of the Palestinian Authority, a number of new restrictions were placed on Palestinians under the auspices of state building. Moreover, the destruction of land and property during the second Intifada, combined with the closure system and the construction of the Separation Wall further devastated the Palestinian economy.\(^{107}\) The unemployment rate increased by 80% at the beginning of the second Intifada and, although the rate has improved to 23.5% overall in 2011,\(^{108}\) the effects of the second Intifada and subsequent Israeli policies continue to reduce the potential for sustainable, inclusive economic growth and job creation that could reduce food insecurity levels in the oPt.\(^{109}\)

Table 4: Unemployment Rate (%) for the Population Aged 15 and Over in the oPt 1998-2012\(^{110}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total oPt</th>
<th>Gaza Strip</th>
<th>West Bank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012(^{111})</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 2: Unemployment Rate (%) for the Population Aged 15 and Over in the oPt 1998-2012\(^{112}\)
Decreased Income

In addition to a sharp increase in unemployment, Israeli policies of restriction have also contributed to a decreased level of income. According to a 2004 World Bank study, real per capita income declined by nearly 40% during the first two years of the second Intifada.\textsuperscript{113} Between 2000 and 2009, the Gross National Income per capita decreased from 3,147 USD to 2,656 USD.\textsuperscript{114} Moreover, even though real GDP per capita in the oPt increased by 7% over the first two quarters of 2011, this economic growth came primarily from donor aid rather than a rebounding private sector.\textsuperscript{115} Moreover, the current economic improvement in the West Bank is slowing down due to decreases in donor aid, a lack of private sector investments, and access and movement restrictions.\textsuperscript{116} In fact, in the Gaza Strip, the median net wage in the second quarter of 2011 was just NIS 48 per day, far less than the pre-blockade second quarter levels of NIS 58 per day in 2007 and NIS 67 in 2006. Accounting for inflation, the real wages between 2007 – 2011 decreased by 22% in the Gaza Strip and 6% in the West Bank.\textsuperscript{117}

Poverty

As a result of both the increased unemployment and the corresponding decrease in income, one in four Palestinians lives in poverty. These individuals fall below the poverty line and do not have the financial ability to meet their healthcare, education, transportation, personal care, and household needs in addition to basic food, clothing, and housing requirements.\textsuperscript{118} In addition, 12.9% of Palestinians live in deep poverty (7.8% in the West Bank and 21.1% in the Gaza Strip.) Due to Israeli land and resource policies, Palestinians have seen decreased levels of income and employment, leading to higher poverty and consequently high levels of food insecurity.

Table 5: Poverty Rates (% of population) According to Consumption by Household in the oPt by Region\textsuperscript{119}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>oPt</th>
<th>Gaza Strip</th>
<th>West Bank and East Jerusalem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011\textsuperscript{120}</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Israel’s control over the Palestinian economy limits movement within the oPt and restricts imports and exports. In addition, Israel’s complicated procedures for obtaining permits for building and investment limit Palestinians’ ability to develop the necessary infrastructure for its economy. Thus, similar to Israel’s policies of land and resource confiscation and destruction, these limitations on movement, trade, and investment act as obstacles to Palestinian food sovereignty and encourage food insecurity.

**West Bank**

As of December 2011, there were 511 Israeli-imposed road closures and checkpoints within the West Bank, comprised of 400 roadblocks and earth-mounds, 98 permanent checkpoints and 256 flying checkpoints. As a result of these movement impediments, food often does not reach its destination or is damaged as it sits for long hours at checkpoints. Long waiting times can often double the cost of transportation, thereby increasing the price of the food for the consumer. In order to export agricultural goods producers have to pay an additional cost to the Israeli government. These factors make business planning extremely difficult and discourage both domestic and foreign investment. In addition, as Israeli goods do not encounter the same difficulties in transportation, these products are cheaper and flood the Palestinian market. These factors cripple Palestinians’ ability to achieve food sovereignty and ultimately, the ability to meet the nutritional needs of those living in the oPt.

The Separation Barrier also greatly inhibits agricultural trade and food security. Around 85% of the Wall, upon completion, will run through parts of the West Bank, rather than on the Green Line. This will consequently isolate 9.4% of the Palestinian population and completely amputate East Jerusalem from the rest of the oPt. Nearly 498,000 Palestinians live in the area that is currently separated from the West Bank by the Wall. This area is known as the Seam Zone. Entering the Seam Zone requires special permits that are not easily obtained, effectively obstructing the ability of farmers to tend to their land. Israel’s routine rejection of permit requests is typically premised on the grounds that farmers cannot show a “connection to the land.” Furthermore, difficulties in bringing produce through the Israel’s 80 agricultural gates have forced many farmers to stop cultivation or switch to more durable but lower value, rain-fed crops. Likewise, farmers on the east...
side of the Wall have immense problems trying to sell crops in Israel or other foreign destinations, as a majority of the gates are only open six weeks during the year, usually for limited hours.\textsuperscript{127} These constraints on the agricultural sector limit Palestinian agricultural output, thus reducing the food supply and driving up costs, ultimately contributing to Palestinian food insecurity.

\textbf{Gaza Strip}

The Israeli-imposed siege of Gaza greatly restricts movement and business. When the blockade of Gaza was first imposed in 2007, imports, including industrial, agricultural, and construction materials, were greatly limited. Nearly all exports were eliminated.\textsuperscript{128} The average daily number of trucks allowed into the Gaza Strip dropped from 583 trucks to 112 trucks, one-fifth of the pre-blockade average.\textsuperscript{129} Although 70\% of imported goods are food products, many food products such as fresh meat, dried fruit, seeds and nuts, and fishing equipment are prohibited by Israel.\textsuperscript{130} Consequently, 80\% of Gazans are dependent on foreign aid.\textsuperscript{131} Before the blockade, Gazan manufacturers exported 1,090 truckloads of goods in the first five months of 2007, whereas only 147 truckloads, consisting only of cut flowers and strawberries, were exported in the first two years after the blockade was imposed. Already insecure, the agricultural potential of the Gaza Strip has been effectively eliminated by the implementation of the blockade. Overall, OCHA estimates that restrictions on Gaza, coupled with the destruction of lands, has resulted in the loss of 75,000 metric tonnes of potential produce each year, valued at an estimated USD 50.2 million.\textsuperscript{132}

In response to international pressure, on June 20, 2010, Israel decided to “ease” the blockade by expanding access to imports. This excluded “dual-use items” that could be potentially used for military strikes against Israel.\textsuperscript{133} On December 8, 2010, Israel announced it would allow the export of agricultural produce, furniture, and textile products.\textsuperscript{134} Despite this, Palestinians still face difficulty and delays in importing products into the Gaza Strip. Only one commercial crossing, Kerem Shalom, remains open for traders and the crossing hours are unpredictable. In 2012, imports into the Gaza Strip have remained at only 37\% of the pre-blockade levels. Exports also remain greatly restricted as today’s average of seven truckloads per week represents less than 3\% of the pre-blockade level (240 truckloads.)\textsuperscript{135} Although the eased restrictions on access of food have allowed for a larger range of imported food products, continued high unemployment levels and inflated food prices mean most people cannot afford to benefit from this increased selection.\textsuperscript{136} Restrictions on movement and business contribute to a harsh cycle of high unemployment, poverty, and thus decreased food security.
In addition to Israeli policies of land and resource confiscation and the limitations on movement and trade, the Palestinian agricultural sector is also hampered by environmental challenges that include deforestation, water shortages, desertification, and risks to natural biodiversity. While these environmental issues are universal in nature, their consequences greatly impact the local Palestinian environment and food security levels.

Like elsewhere in the world, Palestine is expected to become warmer and dryer; by the end of the 21st century, the oPt will see an increase of average temperatures by 3.5° to 7°C and rainfall will decrease by 10% by 2020 and 20% by 2050. Indeed, the detrimental effects of global climate change have already occurred, as the annual temperature in Jerusalem increased by 1.55°C between 1973 and 2010, with 2010 being the warmest of the last 125 years. This temperature increase has created a northern shift in wind patterns, decreasing precipitation in the southeastern Mediterranean. Concurrent data show significantly increased inland aridity between 1970 and 2002. In the West Bank, yearly average rainfall between 2007 and 2011 varied between 354 mm and 500 mm, compared to the historical average of 532 mm. Similar climate conditions appeared in the Gaza Strip as the yearly average rainfall was between 228 mm and 316 mm for the same period, compared to the historical yearly average of 358.5 mm. Shortages of water reduce the quantity of plant growth, decreasing overall Palestinian agricultural production. These conditions are especially damaging for the 55,000 farmer and herder families in the oPt, as 87% of the cultivated lands is used for rain-fed agriculture and 33% of the total land area of the West Bank is pasture land for grazing.

Moreover, in Gaza, an increase in sea level is expected. It is predicted that by 2100 the sea level of the Mediterranean Sea will rise by 35 cm. This will damage agricultural lands and water sources by increasing levels of salinity in the soil. Coupled with a lack of soil flushing due to decreased precipitation, increased salinity will increase saline intrusion into underground water sources, further contaminating precious fresh water. Additionally, the rise in the sea level will amplify

IV: Environmental Factors
the current coastal erosion caused by development on the coastline. The Gaza Strip lacks the ability to adapt to these rising sea levels with environmental initiatives, as restrictions on importing basic building materials hamper any attempt to build coastal defenses or reservoirs to increase resiliency during dry spells.

Locally, the oPt faces major environmental problems that are independent of the global trends. One of the most pressing issues facing the oPt is the availability of fresh water. Israel and the oPt both benefit from Mountain aquifer, the Jordan River, and the Coastal aquifer. Antiquated agreements of the Oslo Accords give Israel control of 80% of the water accessed from the Coastal aquifer. The Coastal aquifer supplies 450 MCM to Israel and 55 MCM to Gaza. However this water source has become dangerously polluted through Israeli industrial runoff and the lack of any waste removal or treatment plant in Gaza. Also, Israel takes slightly more than 10% of the annual yield of the Mountain aquifer. The Jordan River has been nearly eliminated through overuse, specifically the Israeli dam in the sea of Galilee has helped reduce the flow of the Jordan River by 98% since 1967. What remains of the river is highly salinated, polluted, prohibited for use by Palestinians. The Jordan River, prior to 1950, had an annual flow of 1,300 MCM per year, but today less than 50 MCM of highly saline or wastewater from Jordan, Israel and Syria flow to the Dead Sea. Israel has diverted 650 MCM for domestic and agricultural use by the national water carrier. This has resulted in the rapid decline of water levels in the Dead Sea.

The overall dearth of water resources in the region and the Israeli domination over the existing shared resources has left the oPt dangerously dry. While Palestinian in the West Bank have access to an average of 50-70 liters per day per person, herders in the Jordan Valley are often forced to live on no more than 10-20 liters per day per person and Palestinians in Gaza, on average, have access to 91 liters per day per person, 90% of which is unfit for consumption due to high nitrogen level. Not only is this level of water consumption below the WHO’s recommended daily level, it is only a fraction of what Israelis consume. Israelis living in Israel proper consume an average of 280 liters per day per person while Israeli settlers receive 70 times more water per person than the average Palestinian. This discrimination in water distribution is not only a major factor in domestic health, but it is also a tremendous problem for the Palestinian agricultural sector. As discussed above, 87% of Palestinian cultivated land depends on rainfall as farmers do not have access to enough water through the established water networks. As water resources become more scare and more polluted, Palestinian farmers will become increasingly dependent on rain-fed crops while changes in temperature and rainfall make these rain-fed crops far more risky and unpredictable.

These environmental factors, compounded by the limitations and discrimination of the Israeli occupation, have led to high rates of food insecurity in the oPt. Moreover, shortages and the effects of climate change will exacerbate problems in food production and availability, thus producing the potential for higher rates of food insecurity in the future.
The continued increase in global and local food prices limits Palestinians’ ability to meet their nutritional requirements and decreases food security levels. Global food prices in 2011 were the highest in over 30 years. According to the FAO, global food prices increased by 20.6% between 2007 and 2011. Cereal prices increased by 24.3% and sugars increased by 117%. Food prices are expected to increase in real terms by an additional 50% over the next 40 years.

Domestically, from 2007-2011, the Consumer Price Index (CPI), a measure of the prices paid for a basket certain goods, increased by 19% in the West Bank and 22% in the Gaza Strip, representing a general increase of the price levels. During this same period, however, food costs increased by 29%, meaning that the price of food is rising faster than the general inflation level. Further, the price of Haifa Wheat Flour, a staple of the Palestinian diet, increased by 52% in the West Bank and 40% in the Gaza Strip from 2005 to 2012. In the same period, the price of rice in the West Bank increased by 40% and the price of sugar rose by 85%. In the Gaza Strip, prices for rice has increased by 70% and by 75% for sugar. However, since 2007 real wages have actually decreased by 6% in the West Bank and 22% in the Gaza Strip. This means that real prices have drastically risen in the last five years, leading to a decreased purchasing power of workers in the oPt.

In the oPt, the global increase in food prices has had several effects on business operations; more than half of traders felt that the increase in food prices depressed the overall demand for food and forced them to reduce their stock levels, while almost three-quarters reported increased food prices resulted in reduced sales. The FAO estimated that the historically high food prices in January 2011 may have caused a 3.2% increase in the number of people (71,000 people) experiencing food insecurity in the Gaza Strip.
VI: Creating Food Sovereignty in the oPt: Overcoming Food Insecurity

For the past decade, there has been significant attention given to the problem of food insecurity in the oPt. Annually, organizations release reports detailing the levels of food insecurity in the oPt and urge more effective responses on part of the PNA and the international community. However, despite the attention that has been placed on food insecurity, food insecurity levels have remained quite constant over the last decade. Between 2006 and 2010, food insecurity plagued between 33% and 38% of Palestinians before dropping to 27% in 2011. While it is certain that the 2011 drop in food insecurity is a result of sustained efforts by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and various nongovernmental organizations, there is still much to be done in order to ensure that all Palestinians are able to access the food they need. Therefore, instead of simply alleviating food insecurity among Palestinian communities, more must be done to pave the more sustainable path towards food sovereignty in the oPt.

The PNA, in response to the unacceptable levels of food insecurity, has developed plans to rehabilitate farmland in order to increase local Palestinian output while also investing in resource management and water conservation. International organizations are also active in trying to overcome the challenges that cause food insecurity. For example, the UN Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) is a means to coordinate emergency projects and donor funds of the UN, NGOs, and other stakeholders in the oPt. The 2012 CAP will devote over USD 170 million to the oPt’s food sector, almost 41% of the entire consolidated appeal. An additional USD 25 million will be used in the agricultural sector.

These efforts, however, generally target the symptoms of food insecurity, rather than the cause. The PNA has devoted admirable effort to maximizing production on the limited land available to Palestinians while the CAP has
endeavored to provide impoverished Palestinians with the food and supplies necessary to survive. To eliminate food insecurity however, it will be necessary to target the cause of food insecurity, rather than alleviate the consequences. As is evident throughout this study, Palestinian food insecurity is caused by the restrictions placed on Palestinian food policy by Israel. In other words, it is the lack of food sovereignty - the lack of independent control of food policy - that has caused such a consistently high level of insecurity. A 2008 report by the WFP, FAO, and UNRWA unquestionably blames the lack of food sovereignty as the cause of Palestinian food insecurity:

The main driver of Palestinian food insecurity is of a political nature, as key elements of vulnerability are rooted in the military and administrative measure imposed by the Israeli occupation - closure regime, permits, destruction of assets - as well as settlement expansion and derived infrastructure multiplication - access to land and water, bypass roads, etc.

In other words, Palestinian food insecurity is caused by an inability to access Palestinian food resources. The political problems that have allowed the Israeli occupation to continue are responsible for the unacceptable level of food insecurity; the limitations imposed by the Israeli occupation violate the Palestinian right to food sovereignty, reducing the ability to any Palestinian government to effectively combat food security.

The restrictions of the Israeli occupation have created a situation in which Palestinians - previously independent in food production - have become dependent on Israel. Land and resource confiscation, the implementation of Israel's permit regime, control of water sources, settlement expansion, and control over Palestinian borders are all consequences of the politics of the Occupation, which lead to food insecurity. These factors inhibit Palestinians from maximizing local food production and perpetuate the dependence of the Palestinian people on imported food, leaving Palestinian food security at risk of international market pressures and more susceptible to environmental shocks.

In this way, efforts by the PNA or the international community to maximize production of available resources or to provide food to those in poverty, while commendable, have a minimal and unsustainable effect on food insecurity in the oPt. In order to sustainably reduce food insecurity, it is imperative to solve the political problems that are at the base of Palestinian food insecurity. International organizations and governments must directly challenge Israel's discriminatory and unjust policies that have managed to keep one third of Palestinians living in food insecurity. Projects should be designed to defy Israel's illegal control over Palestinian food resources and should be supported by political organizations at the national and international level.

Palestinian food insecurity has been a priority for the international development and aid community for years. However, in the last decade there has been only a slight decrease in the total level of food insecurity in the country. These improvements are the result of emergency aid in the form of unsustainable food aid and efforts to increase productivity of resources available to Palestinians. Meanwhile, environmental pressures associated with global climate change and regional water challenges will continue to create increasingly difficult obstacles for Palestinian food production. In order to effectively and sustainably lower Palestinian food insecurity, Palestinians must be granted their right to food sovereignty. The realization of Palestinian food sovereignty not only requires the elimination of the political root cause of food insecurity, but also the proper management of resources.


68. UNRWA and UNICEF, (April 2010).


81. UN OCHA, “Special Focus: Easing…” (March 2011).

From 1967 to 1987, there were fewer economic restrictions placed on Palestinians. Comparatively, the Oslo Accords and the closures during the first and second Intifadas greatly harmed the Palestinian economy. The IMF estimates the GDP growth rate from 1967 to 1987 to have been 4.4% per year whereas the growth rate from 1994 to 2010 the GDP growth rate was estimated at -0.6% per year. Using a comparison to countries with economic growth similar to Palestine's before 1987, the IMF has calculated that the per capita GDP would be 88% higher if pre-1987 growth rates had continued.

Ibid. The second Palestinian popular uprising began in September 2000 and technically never ended. Although from late 2005 and early 2006 there was a definite drop in activity along with the Hamas officially condemning suicide bombings and the evacuation of settlements in the Gaza Strip.


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