



## [The Israeli Army and Its History of Committing Human Rights Violations](#)

Recently, Israeli armed forces brutally killed an American activist in the illegally-occupied West Bank, the latest incident in a string of unjustified violence. As discussed in last week's newsletter, this was not an isolated or rare occurrence, and on the contrary, is part of a pattern and extensive track record of abusive behavior that Israeli forces have exhibited throughout the years. Due to this, human rights activists and fair-minded experts have colloquially come to refer to them as Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) given their history of forcibly and unlawfully annexing land, committing human rights violations against Palestinian civilians, and instituting a discriminatory system of apartheid policies.

These human rights abuses and war crimes have been taking place since the lead-up to the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, as the Nakba saw the mass ethnic cleansing, violent displacement from their generational homes, and land dispossession of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. Over 500 Palestinian villages and towns were destroyed and depopulated by Israeli forces, and thousands of civilians were killed in dozens of massacres. Although the United Nations – [which recognized Palestinians right to the land](#) – attempted to compromise, Zionist paramilitaries began the forceful displacement and massacre of Palestinians in the pursuit of expanding the borders of Jewish settlements that had been granted. The result was a genocide of 15,000 Palestinians, the capturing of around 80% of historic Palestinian land, and the forcible displacement of approximately 750,000 Palestinians from their ancestral homes. Human Rights Watch [sums up](#) the aim of Israeli policy succinctly as the “seeking of maximal land with minimal Palestinians,” something that has been institutionalized with military and government actions from the onset.

Following the Nakba, a slew of massacres followed, all in the spirit of illegally annexing land, wiping out civilians, and perpetuating a long history of apartheid and genocide against the Palestinian population. Catastrophes mirroring the Nakba periodically occurred, reinforcing the discriminatory two-tier standards for Palestinians and Israelis and resulting in the mass killing of Palestinian civilians. Such was the case in 1967 during the Naksa – or “setback” – when Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza after waging the Six-Day War, nearly 20 years after the mass expulsion and killing of Palestinians who lived there and the subsequent Resolution 194 from the U.N. General Assembly which called for the rightful return of Palestinian refugees that had been unlawfully and forcibly displaced. It is important to note that in the late 1980s, groups like Hamas were formed in direct response to continued Israeli oppression and violations and in the mid-1990s, Israel even built an electronic fence around the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in an attempt to sever ties between the two Palestinian territories. Human rights groups have [documented](#) how Palestinians are consistently “denied adequate housing and access to services while being subjected to forced evictions and movement restrictions,” – actions which are carried out by Israeli armed forces.

[Decades](#) of forced displacement, home demolitions, denial of resources, and Israeli settler violence – often protected and even encouraged by the state – have culminated in what we witness today. Crimes against humanity and human rights violations are alleged to be “investigated” by none other than their very perpetrators: Israeli forces and the government itself. As such, these human rights abuses go unchecked and unpunished, leaving it up to brave individuals, activists, or investigative journalists to document them in order to draw more

widespread attention to the various atrocities that many are forced to endure. What is happening to these citizens now is nothing new; as this has been the tragic reality for the past seven-plus decades. It is only now becoming more widely-acknowledged and seen, thanks to the digital and social media-driven technological age and scope of accessibility to information that we all have today.

While it is certainly heartening to see the growing awareness regarding Israeli armed forces' scope of human rights violations, individuals drawing increased attention to them cannot act alone. Powerful and influential global forces like the United States should have the due diligence to issue or demand independent investigations into these types of violations, like for example, the string of Americans wrongfully murdered in the West Bank, the demolition of schools and hospitals, and continuous Israeli air raids on areas deemed to be safe zones. These human rights violations are [taking place](#) in both Gaza and the illegally-occupied West Bank, where in the latter, Israeli forces have instituted a system of apartheid – segregating Palestinians and Israeli settlers, and implementing a dual set of laws. Ultimately, the array of atrocities carried out by Israeli forces cannot logically be claimed under the guise of “security” or “self-defense” when one sees the pattern of abusive and offensive behavior that has long been occurring.