

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN REPORTING ON OCCUPIED PALESTINE

1. Israel occupies the State of Palestine.

This is not a conflict among equals but a belligerent military occupation, whereby Israel is the occupying power and Palestine a nation under foreign occupation. Israel has systematically denied the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to freedom and self-determination. Israel imposes a policy of forced displacement of the indigenous Palestinian population and replacement with foreign settlers.

2. The main issue is the Israeli Occupation.

The Israeli government attempts to shift the focus away from their colonization enterprise and illegal occupation, which is the root cause of the continuous uprisings of the Palestinian people who have for decades endured an Apartheid regime. Though Israeli spokespeople have claimed that the main issues are Al-Aqsa and "Palestinian incitement", the fact of the matter is that Israel continues to systematically deny Palestinian rights. Israeli leaders continue to incite against Palestinians, just as the so-called "Aqsa-deal" does not address the core of the issue.

3. Palestinian Recognition of Israel was met with more Colonization.

In 1988 the PLO made the historic compromise of recognizing Israel over 78 percent of historic Palestine (the 1967 border). It declared a Palestinian State on 22 percent of our historic homeland. Twenty-eight years have passed since that moment and Israel still does not recognize the existence or the right of an independent State of Palestine. Instead, Israel has opted to strengthen its belligerent occupation, continues its colonization of Palestine, and imposes an Apartheid regime on the Palestinian people. As a matter of fact, since Palestine recognized Israel, the number of settlers has tripled (from 190,000 to more around 600,000).

4. For Israel, forcible displacement and colonization are an official policy, not the two-state solution.

On the eve of Israeli elections in March 2015, Netanyahu promised his constituents, “If I’m elected, there will be no Palestinian State”. This was reinforced by his cabinet when Ayelet Shaked declared that “there never will be a Palestinian state”. Israel’s top diplomat, Tzipi Hotovely was also clear about Netanyahu’s government intentions: “All the land is ours.” Israel today continues to reject the two-state solution while their settlement-expansion and forcible displacement policies continue to plague Palestinian aspirations of peace and security.

5. East Jerusalem is an integral part of the Occupied State of Palestine.

East Jerusalem was occupied by Israel in 1967, and subsequently annexed by the occupying power in violation of international law. Despite Israeli claims and efforts to change the historical narrative of the occupied city, 360,000 Palestinian live in East Jerusalem, comprising 40 percent of the city’s population, and the legal status of East Jerusalem is an occupied territory, and must continue to be referred to as such.

6. Israeli settlements in Occupied East Jerusalem are as illegal as settlements in the rest of the Occupied State of Palestine.

Israel refers to the illegal settlements in Occupied East Jerusalem as “neighborhoods” in order to normalize the annexation of the occupied Palestinian capital. In reality those illegal settlements have the same legal status as the rest of the settlements in Occupied Palestine and those inhabiting the settlements are also illegal settlers. Pisgat Ze’ev, Gilo, French Hill, Neve Ya’akoub, Har Homa, Ramat Shlomo, Giva’at Hamatos, East Talpiyot (Armon HaNetziv) and Ramot, among others, are all illegal Israeli settlements and should be referred to as such.

7. The Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound is under Israeli Occupation just as the rest of East Jerusalem.

While some media outlets have preferred to focus their discussion on whether Al-Aqsa is holy for Muslims or for Jews, they tend to omit the fact that this Muslim holy site is under Israeli Occupation, as is the rest of Occupied East Jerusalem’s Old City. Interference with the institutions of the occupied by the occupying power, is strictly prohibited by international law. Israel has effectively interfered with and changed the status quo of Christian and Muslim prayer sites and institutions in Occupied East Jerusalem.

8. Israel has effectively changed Al-Aqsa's Status Quo.

The Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound is a holy site comprised of 144 dunums of land¹, which includes the two mosques (the Dome of the Rock and Al-Qibli) as well as open areas for prayers around them. The Status Quo of Religious Sites which mandates prayer rights, right to access, and excavation and maintenance regulations, dates back to the Ottoman Period. However since 1967, Israel, the occupying power, has effectively changed Al-Aqsa's Status Quo through several policies, including terror attacks, the destruction of the ancient Minbar (prayer platform) of Salah ad-Deen al Ayyubi (1969), several military raids and storming of the compound, including the one led by former Israeli PM Ariel Sharon (2000), illegal and unauthorized excavations, destruction of 20 Islamic graves to make room for the "Jewish Biblical Garden" (2014), as well as systematic closures over the Holy Site. Under the Status Quo, the Waqf Custodian is the administrator and manager of the site. However, Israeli occupying forces restrict access to Palestinian worshippers, systematically enter without authorization, and bar Muslim freedom of worship. In 2012, age restrictions were imposed on Muslim worshippers on three occasions. In 2014, the Israeli occupying forces imposed age restrictions for Muslim worshippers on 41 occasions. In addition, Israel closed the compound to all Muslim worshippers and visitors for one day on October 30, 2014, the first such full closure in 14 years. Placing cameras that will broadcast to Israeli occupying forces is a further violation of the Status Quo.

9. International protection is a right for the Palestinian people.

After half a century of belligerent military occupation, Palestinian civilians have been dramatically affected by Israeli policies such as forced displacement and collective punishment. This has been possible due to an unprecedented culture of impunity granted to the Israelis by many international actors, including the Security Council. Cases such as large-scale attacks on Gaza, settler terror, attacks by the Israeli occupying forces on civilian populations, and expulsions are not exceptions, they are the reality Palestinians endure daily under the Israeli occupation. International protection is an internationally-recognized right for our people and it is the responsibility of the international community to provide it.

10. International law, UN resolutions and agreements were made to be implemented, not to be "negotiated upon."

As a response to the current situation, several international partners have asked for the resumption of negotiations with Israel. While Palestine supports a negotiated two-state solution, there are basic requirements for negotiations to be meaningful and not a simple public relations exercise to strengthen Israel's impunity. Full implementation of Israeli obligations Israel has already committed to in signed agreements must come to fruition, such as full cessation of settlement activities, release of Palestinian prisoners, and the reopening of Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem, among others, is a must for any negotiations to be credible. Clear terms of reference based on international law, including a clear timeframe and an end to the occupation that began in 1967, are necessary. Any political process should lead to the implementation of international law and UN resolutions, not the strengthening of Israel's occupation, colonization, Apartheid and culture of impunity.

¹ Each dunum is the equivalent to 1000 square meters.