

IN THE
SPOTLIGHT



THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN

THE H2 AREA

OF HEBRON CITY
FINDINGS OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT

APRIL 2019

Israel exercises direct control over the 20 per cent of Hebron City, known as H2, which is home to some 33,000 Palestinians and a few hundred Israeli settlers. This area has witnessed multiple cycles of violence in the context of continuing settlement activities, which are in contravention of international law. The latest escalation erupted in October 2015, following which, Israel tightened the access restrictions it imposes on Palestinians living in the vicinity of the settlement compounds. To better understand the specific vulnerabilities of this coercive environment on the protection, services, livelihoods and social life of affected residents, OCHA, along with humanitarian partners, conducted an inter-cluster needs assessment in summer 2018. This consisted of a survey carried out of a representative sample of 280 families living in the most affected areas of H2. The findings presented here have been used to prioritize humanitarian interventions that were subsequently incorporated into the 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).



H2 area of Hebron City, February 2018.

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United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs • occupied Palestinian territory

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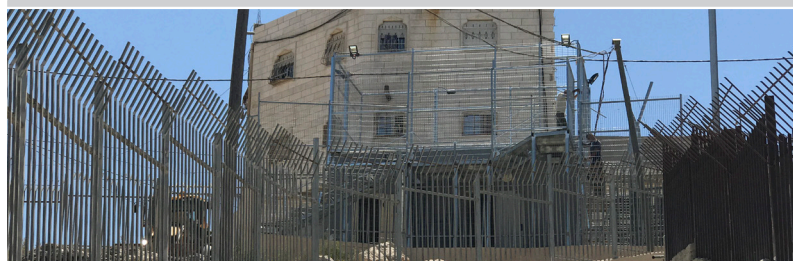


Coordination Saves Lives



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HEBRON TIMELINE

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| <p>▶ 1967 Israel occupies the West Bank.</p> | <p>▶ 1968 Israeli settlers take over the 'Park Hotel' in Hebron city.</p> | <p>▶ 1970 Israeli parliament approves the establishment of Qiryat Arba settlement next to Hebron city.</p> | <p>▶ 1979 Israeli settlers take over the 'Beit Hadassa' compound in Hebron city.</p> |
|  | | | <p>▶ 1981 'Avraham Avinu' settlement compound is established.</p> |
| <p>▶ 1994 Israeli settler kills 29 Muslim worshipers at the Ibrahim Mosque. The Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) is established.</p> | <p>▶ 1993 Israel and the PLO sign the Declaration of Principles.</p> | <p>▶ 1987 The first Palestinian uprising (Intifada) begins.</p> | <p>▶ 1984 A settlement area is established in the Tel Rumeida neighborhood.</p> |
| <p>▶ 1997 'Hebron Protocol': Israel hands over control over 80% of Hebron city (H1) to the Palestinian Authority.</p> |  | | |
| <p>▶ 2000 The second Palestinian uprising (Intifada) begins; extensive curfews imposed in the city until 2004.</p> | <p>▶ 2001 Part of Ash-Shuhada Street is closed to Palestinian pedestrians.</p> | <p>▶ 2002 Operation 'Defensive Shield': Israeli forces take control of part of H1 for over a year.</p> | <p>▶ 2010 Israel declares the 'Cave of Patriarchs' to be an Israeli national heritage site.</p> |
|  | | | <p>▶ 2014 'Rajabi house' building is occupied by settlers.</p> |
| <p>▶ 2019 TIPH mandate is terminated by Israel.</p> | <p>▶ 2018 31 new settlement housing units approved in the H2 area.</p> | <p>▶ 2017 A new municipal entity is established to administer the settlements in the city.</p> | <p>▶ 2015 Wave of Palestinian stabbing attacks; settlement area of the city declared a 'closed military area'.</p> |

BACKGROUND ON H2

With a population of over 200,000, Hebron is the second largest Palestinian city in the West Bank.¹ Unlike all other Palestinian localities (except East Jerusalem), Hebron has been the target of intense settlement activity in the heart of the city, where its commercial centre was once located. Such activities, which started just a few months after the beginning of Israel's occupation of the West Bank,² have included the establishment of five settlement residential compounds with a population of several hundred.³ Some of these compounds were owned by Jews who lived in the city prior to the establishment of the State of Israel.⁴

Due to this settler presence, Hebron was one of only two major cities (together with East Jerusalem, which is a "final status" issue), where Israeli forces did not redeploy in the context of the 1995 Interim ('Oslo') Agreement. Two years later, about 80 per cent of the city, designated 'H1', was handed over to the Palestinian Authority (PA), pursuant to a separate agreement (the Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron). Israel continues to maintain direct control in the remaining 20 per cent of Hebron, an area designated 'H2', which includes the settlement compounds and extensive surrounding areas, containing about 33,000 Palestinian residents.⁵

From its earliest days, the settlement process within the city has triggered a cycle of violent attacks and retaliations between Israeli settlers and local Palestinian residents, which has resulted in large numbers of casualties on both sides.⁶ Citing the need to prevent friction between the two populations, the Israeli authorities have gradually isolated the centre of Hebron from the rest of the city, cutting the contiguity between its southern and northern areas (see map on page 4). This policy has been guided by what the Israeli authorities referred to as the 'principle of separation'.⁷

The origins of this policy can be traced back to 1994 when, following a massacre of Muslim worshipers by an Israeli settler, Israel introduced a system to regulate separated access to the Ibrahimi Mosque/ Cave of the Patriarchs. However, it was only following the start of the second Intifada in 2000, and the rise in attacks and casualties on both sides, when the separation of the settlement areas and its surrounds from the rest of the city was implemented in a systematic manner. This was effected through the deployment of additional checkpoints and other obstacles, along with the imposition of access restrictions on the movement of Palestinians and on the operation of businesses.

In addition to settler violence and access restrictions, the lives of Palestinians in H2 have been severely affected by constant raids and incursions into their homes by Israeli forces, which often include the temporary takeover of parts of the homes. These policies and practices have generated a coercive environment, which has undermined the living conditions of Palestinians, including their security, sources of livelihoods, access to services, and family and social life. Thousands have been forced to leave the affected area.

“Both sides reiterate their commitment to the unity of the City of Hebron, and their understanding that the division of security responsibility will not divide the city [...] both sides share the mutual goal that movement of people, goods and vehicles within and in and out of the city will be smooth and normal, without obstacles or barriers.”

1997 Hebron Redeployment Agreement, Article 9

COVERAGE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE INTER-CLUSTER NEEDS ASSESSMENT

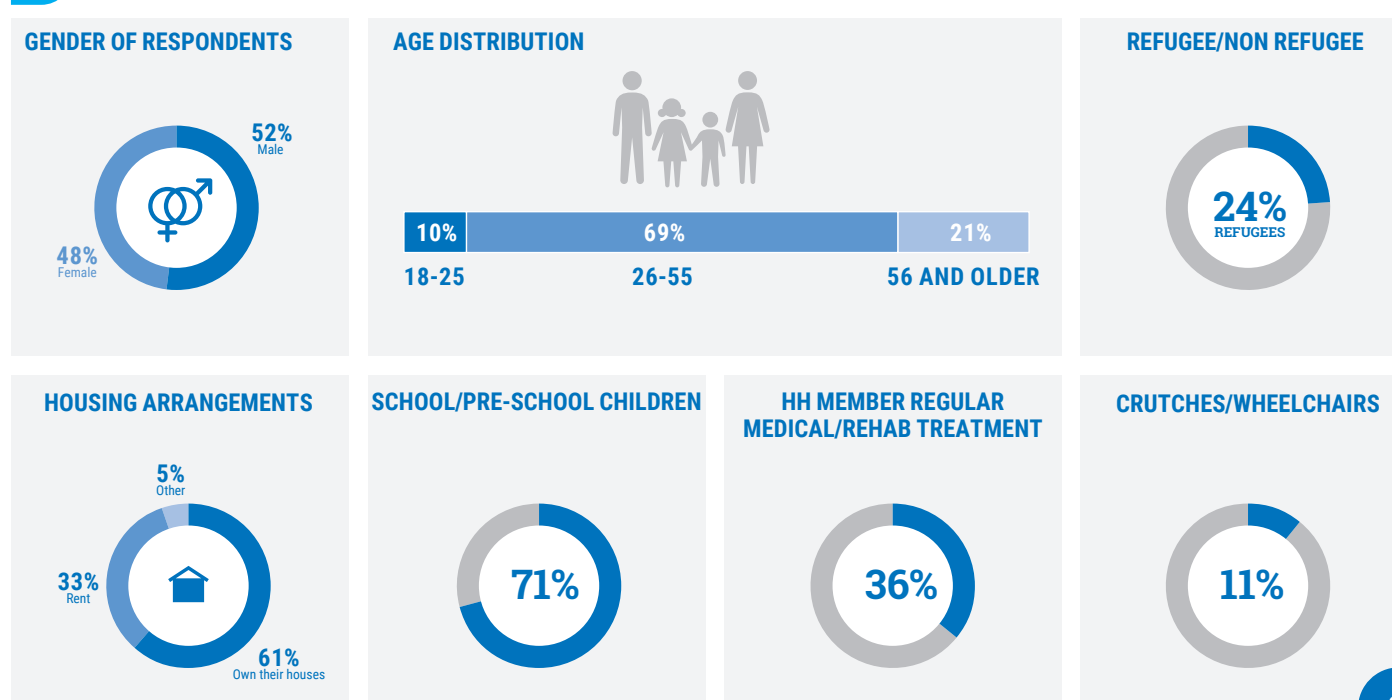
The inter-cluster needs assessment focused on the area of H2 most affected by settlement activities and access restrictions. These include two sub-areas (see map): one that was designated in 2015 as a ‘closed military zone’⁸, where only Palestinians registered as residents of this area are allowed to enter (hereafter: the prohibited area); and another where pedestrian access is controlled by a checkpoint, and/or vehicular access is blocked, and/or Palestinian houses are located immediately adjacent to one of the settlement compounds (hereafter: the restricted area).

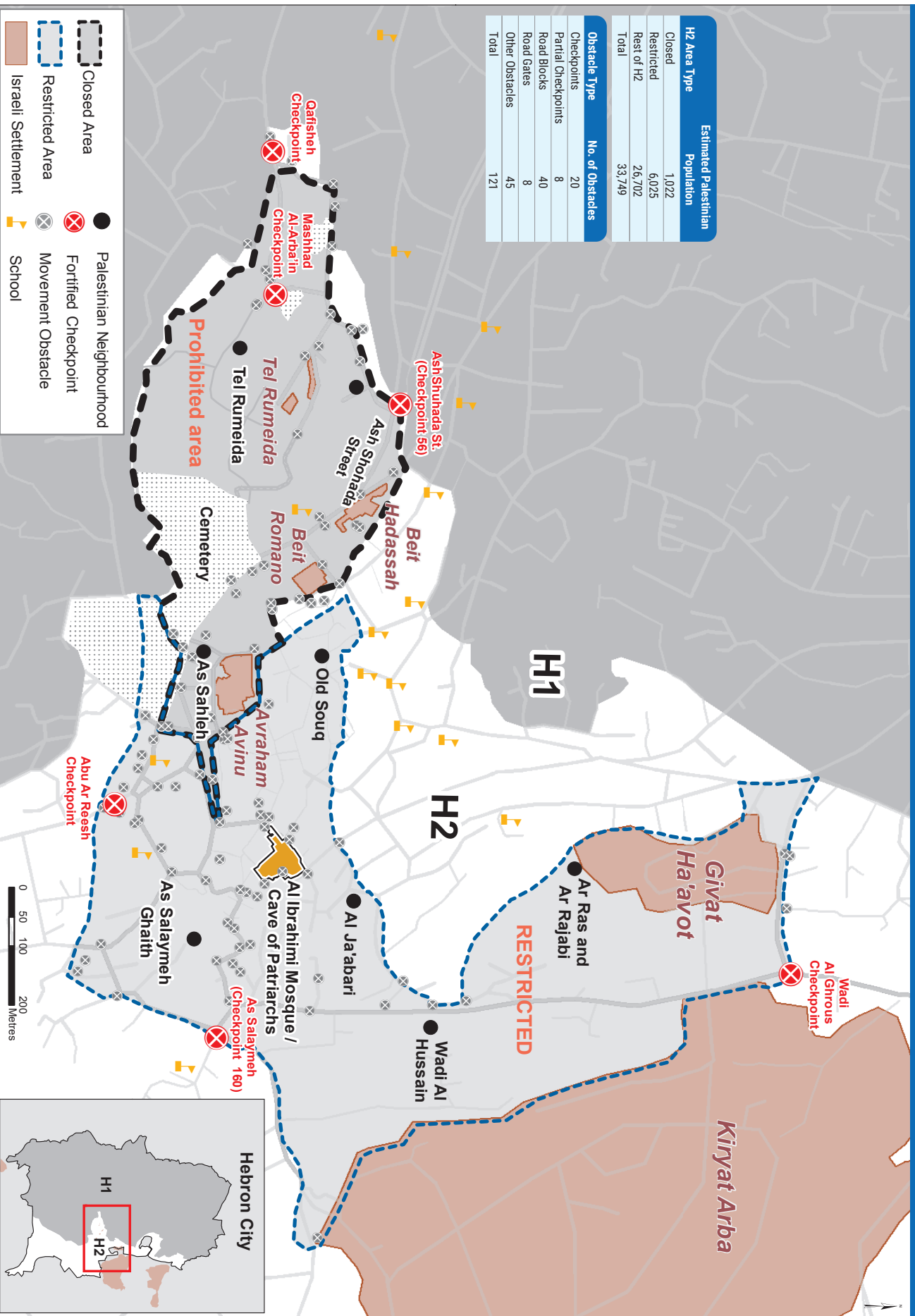
According to the 2017 PCBS census, a total of 6,920 Palestinians reside in the prohibited and restricted areas of Hebron city combined. Assuming an average family size of five, this is equivalent to 1,384 households (typically a nuclear family), of which 202 are in the prohibited area and 1,182 in the restricted area.

The survey targeted a representative sample of these two sub-areas, comprising 280 randomly selected households. To better assess the impact of the most severe restrictions, the number of selected households in the prohibited area (100 households) is proportionally higher than in the restricted area (180 households).⁹ A representative of each of the selected households was administered a questionnaire with closed-ended questions, which was prepared in consultation with the relevant cluster coordinators for protection, food security, water and sanitation, education and shelter.

Approximately two months after the conclusion of the survey, OCHA conducted ten in-depth interviews with a sample of the selected families, aimed at clarifying and illustrating some of the survey’s findings.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS AND HOUSEHOLDS (HH) IN THE SAMPLE





1. In 1997, pursuant to an agreement with the PLO, Israel handed control over 80% of the city (H1) to the Palestinian Authority.

ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

The centre of Hebron has been physically separated from the rest of the city through the deployment of physical obstacles, among other means. Currently there are 121 such obstacles, including 21 permanently-staffed checkpoints. According to the findings, some 5,600 Palestinians in the affected areas must cross a checkpoint on foot to reach their homes, including virtually all those residing in the prohibited area and two thirds of the population in the restricted area. In total, nearly 90 per cent of households, representing approximately 6,200 people, reported that they cannot reach their homes by vehicle.

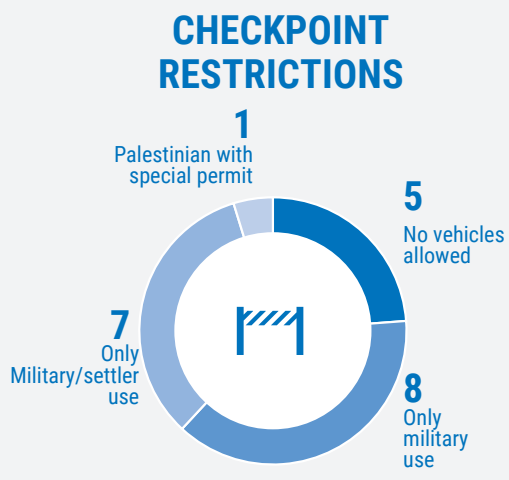
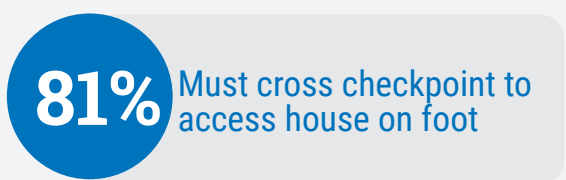
In the last quarter of 2015, following an escalation which included a wave of Palestinian attacks (mostly stabbing), Israel declared an area encompassing four of the five settlement compounds as a 'closed military zone', where only those Palestinians registered as residents of this area are allowed to enter. Access restrictions to neighbourhoods between the prohibited area and the fifth settlement compound, Giv'at Ha'avot, including the Ibrahimi Mosque/ Cave of the Patriarchs, were also tightened. During religious celebrations by Israeli settlers, the prohibited area is sealed off to Palestinians, leaving some locked in their homes and others unable to return for the duration of the events.

Since end-2015, six of the checkpoints controlling access to both these areas have been fortified with towers, turnstiles, revolving doors and metal detectors. Palestinians crossing some of these checkpoints are photographed, and cameras for face recognition have been introduced to control movement.

Access constraints have had a pervasive impact on all aspects of life in these areas, as illustrated by the survey's findings. This impact is particularly severe for persons with disabilities (PwD), the elderly and parents with young children, who often must walk hundreds of metres, and undergo checkpoint searches, before they can leave the area.

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Since early 2019, about 35 families residing in Ar Ras and Haret Jaber in the restricted area have been allowed to access their homes by vehicle through one of the checkpoints and leave the area through another.



IMPACT OF ISRAELI MILITARY OPERATIONS

Settlement activities in Hebron city have involved the deployment of Israeli military and police forces. These forces are responsible not only for the enforcement of the 'separation principle', but also for a range of other activities, such as the conduct of street patrols, arrest operations, seizure of roofs for observation purposes, and house searches and 'mappings'.¹⁰ Among those being regularly detained are Palestinian children, mostly on suspicion of stone-throwing.

The survey's findings indicate that 75 per cent of the households in the affected areas have been searched by Israeli forces at least once since October 2015. In 97 per cent of these cases, the family representative reported that the searches involved intimidation and threats, and a third reported that a member of the family was physically assaulted. Moreover, 44 per cent of the respondents, or the equivalent of over 600 households, reported that the roof or another part of their home was temporarily occupied at least once during this period. Finally, one in every five families reported that they have a child who was arrested at least once since October 2015.

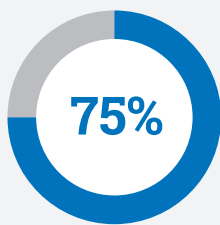
“Israeli forces raid our house continuously... In 2008 the soldiers took over the roof of the house and stayed there for more than 15 days. We were in constant fear. My children were very young and suffered sleep disruptions, anxiety and incontinence.”

Umm Yassin, 46 years old, Old City, November 2018

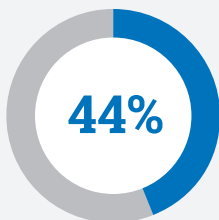
“Since 2015, soldiers have been raiding my house twice a month... During one of the raids, they locked us in one room for four hours and didn't allow anybody to use the bathroom.”

Abdel Kareem Al Jaabari, 59 years old, Wadi Hussein neighborhood, November 2018

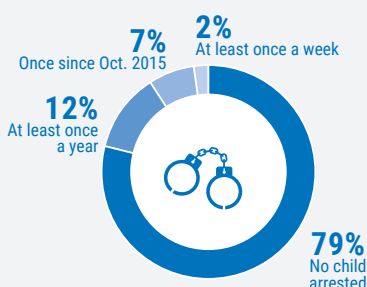
HOUSE SEARCHED at least once since Oct. 2015



ROOF/OTHER PART OF HOUSE TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED



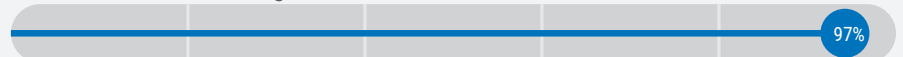
FREQUENCY OF ARREST of HH children since Oct. 2015



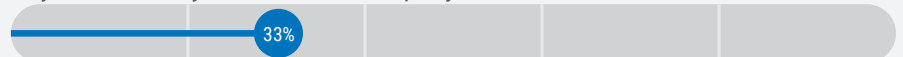
Reports by the UN Secretary General and by human rights organizations indicate that military activities in H2 often involve various forms of harassment and abuse, constituting a key component of the prevailing coercive environment.¹¹ The vulnerability and insecurity faced by Palestinians through their daily friction with Israeli soldiers appear to have increased following the escalation that erupted in October 2015. Between that date and end-January 2019, 31 Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces in H2, including 23 during attacks and alleged attacks in which they were involved. Another 743 Palestinians were injured, mostly during demonstrations and clashes. Many of these incidents have raised concern of excessive use of force, alongside serious gaps in accountability for violations reportedly committed.¹² During the same period, one Israeli settler was killed and 17 other Israelis were injured by Palestinians in H2.

EXPERIENCE DURING HOUSE SEARCHES

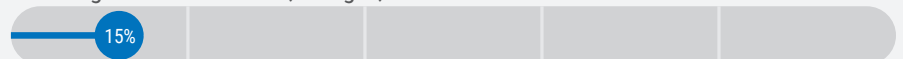
Intimidation and threatening behaviour



Physical assault by hands, clubs or sharp objects



Shooting of live ammunition, tear gas, sound bombs inside/near house



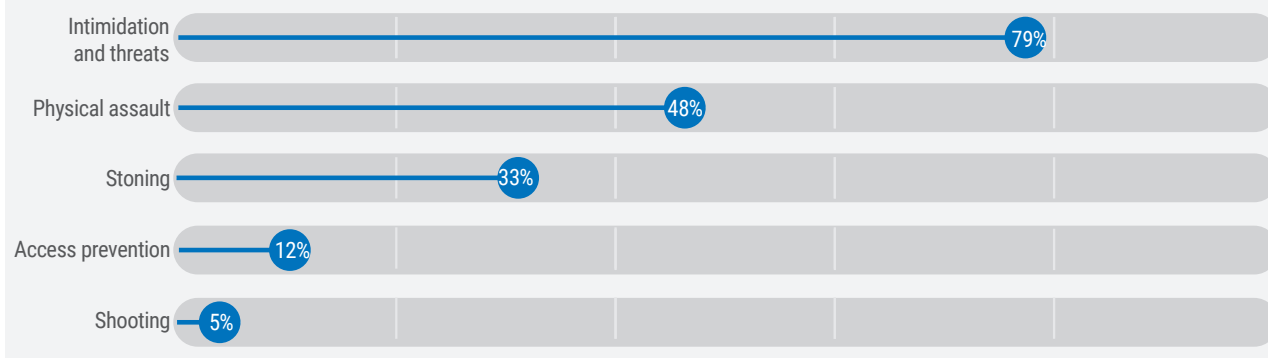
SETTLER VIOLENCE

Attacks and intimidation by Israeli settlers, many of whom are armed, have been key components of the coercive environment faced by Palestinians who live in the vicinity of the settlement compounds. The frequency and severity of settler violence has been mitigated in recent years by various factors. These include the decline in Palestinian access to the area; a protective presence by humanitarian and human rights organizations, and preventive and law enforcement measures adopted by the Israeli authorities themselves. Despite these factors, the systematic harassment of Palestinians living in the affected area of the city by Israeli settlers has continued, along with concerns about a lack of accountability, including the closure of cases of settler violence without indictment.¹³

Nearly 70 per cent of the respondents, equivalent to 955 families, reported that at least one member of their household has experienced an incident of settler violence or harassment since October 2015. Almost 20 per cent (equivalent to 263 families) indicated that these incidents have occurred on a weekly basis. Among the household affected by settler violence, the most common type of incident was intimidation and threats (almost 80 per cent), followed by physical assault (48 per cent) and stoning (33 per cent). In terms of impact, more than 80 per cent of affected households reported psychological distress, 25 per cent property damage, and 18 per cent physical injury.

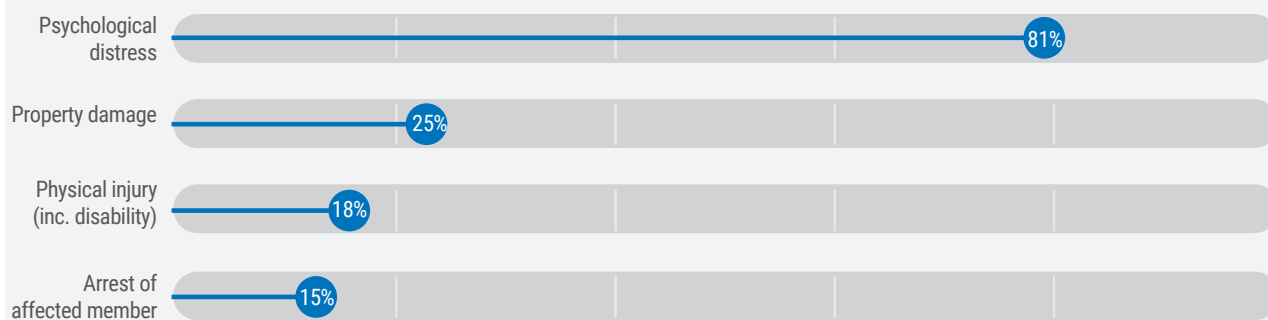
TYPE OF SETTLER VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED

by at least one HH member since Oct. 2015

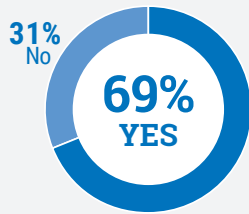


IMPACT OF SETTLER VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED

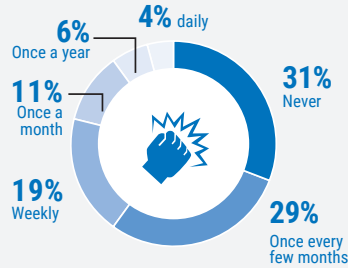
by HH member since Oct. 2015



AT LEAST ONE HH MEMBER
experienced settler violence/harassment
since Oct. 2015



FREQUENCY OF SETTLER VIOLENCE INCIDENTS
Since Oct. 2015



“I own 30 dunums of land between the Kiryat Arba and Givat Ha'avot settlements... I try to continue cultivating it, so the settlers don't take it over. I can reach most of this land only during the olive harvest after requesting coordination from the Israelis. I have been attacked by settlers so many times! On five occasions since 2008, settlers from Kiryat Arba opened fire towards me while I was working on the land. Stone-throwing happens much more frequently.”

Abdel Kareem Al Jaabari, 59 years old, Wadi Hussein neighborhood, November 2018

In January 2019, the Israeli authorities announced that the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH), would not be renewed. TIPH was the only organization documenting incidents and providing a protective presence that was authorized to access any part of the city on foot and by vehicle, at any time. Another organization, The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), also temporarily discontinued its protective presence in H2, reportedly following settler pressure. These developments may increase the vulnerability of Palestinians in H2 to settler violence.



© Photo by OCHA

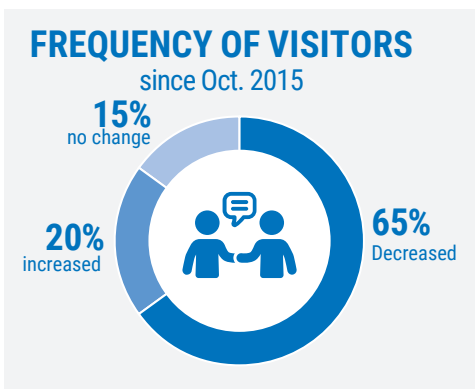
SOCIAL ISOLATION

The separation of the historical centre of Hebron from the rest of the city has severely disrupted the family and social fabric of Palestinians, with significant impact on those living in H2, whose dignity and psychosocial well-being is undermined.

The situation is most acute for those residing in the prohibited area, who are in principle prevented from receiving visitors from outside this area. Although ad-hoc exceptions can be made, depending on the level of tension, there is no mechanism in place to authorize the entry of non-residents. While access to the restricted area is somewhat more predictable, the need to cross checkpoints and the inability to reach most homes by vehicle, strongly discourage visitors.

Of the households surveyed, 65 per cent, or the equivalent of 900 households, reported a reduction in the frequency of visits from outside their neighbourhood since October 2015. Respondents attribute this trend to access restrictions and the fear of harassment of visitors by soldiers or settlers. On the other hand, 20 per cent of households indicated that the visits have actually increased during this period, which may be attributed to expressions of solidarity with families facing difficult circumstances, despite the access constraints.

In follow-up interviews, respondents indicated that families residing in H2 are often branded “hardship cases” by the broader Palestinian society, encouraging some to leave, so that their sons and daughters have a better chance to marry. This is particularly acute in the case of families with young men, who are concerned that prospective parents-in-law will refuse to allow their daughters to move to an isolated area as, customarily, new wives move in with their husbands’ families.

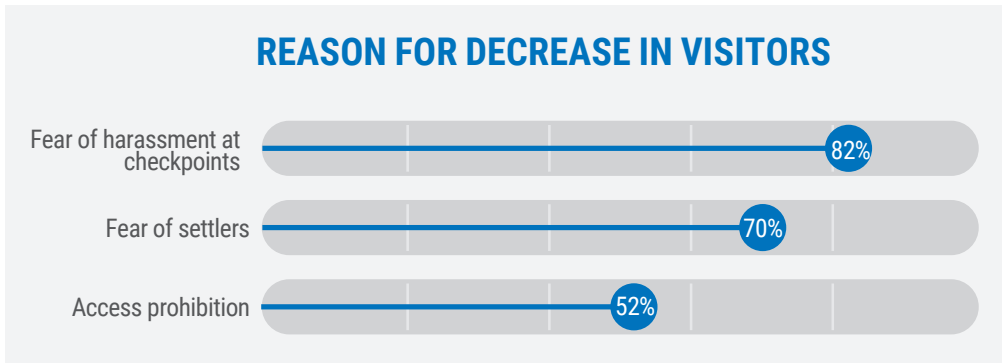


“My daughter got engaged and married recently. Contrary to the local tradition of having the future in-laws come to ask for the daughter’s hand in her parents’ house, we had to do it at a relative’s house in H1. Her wedding also took place outside of our house as relatives and friends, including the groom and his family, do not have the special numbered IDs and cannot cross the checkpoint. Her husband is still unable to visit us for the same reason. Closures have put an end to any normal life.”

Imad Abu Shamsiya, 48 years old, Tel Rumeida, March 2017

“We are isolated and because of that we face a social stigma in Palestinian society. Our daughters and sons can’t get married easily to people not living in the old city. We are paying a huge price but I’m unable to do anything about it.”

Umm Ahmad Jaber, 53 years old, Old City, November 2018



ACCESS TO EDUCATION

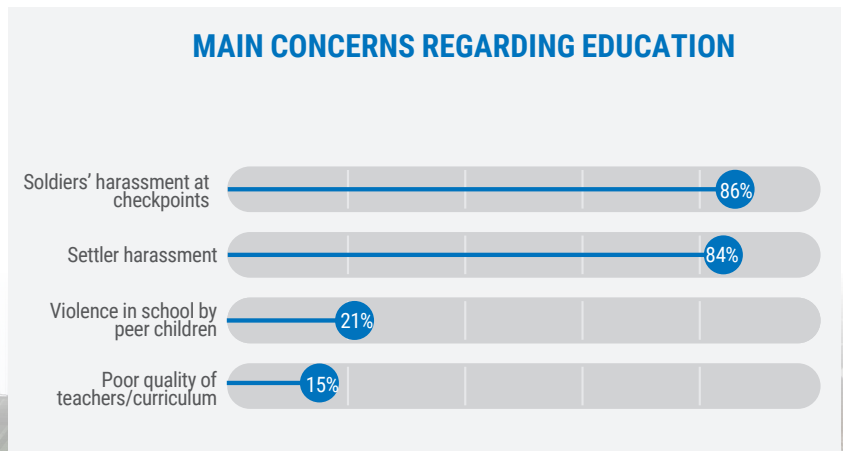
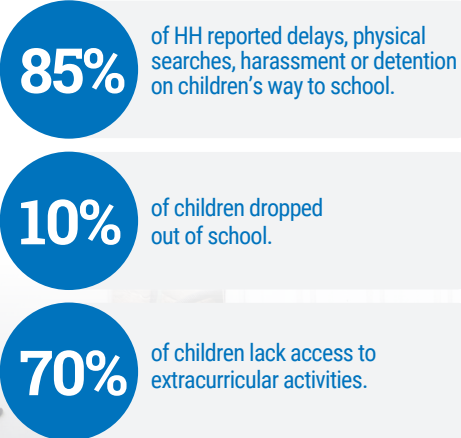
According to the survey, 88 per cent of school children residing in the affected area, or the equivalent of 2,200 children, must cross a checkpoint to reach school. This entails daily friction with soldiers: almost 90 per cent of the surveyed households with school-age children reported that their children have faced at least one incident of delay, physical search, harassment or detention on their way to school in the previous six months.

Children attending schools located in the vicinity of checkpoints, or on streets regularly patrolled by Israeli forces, are also affected, even if they do not need to cross a checkpoint to reach school. This is due to the regular clashes, search operations, and arrests taking place in or around schools, which usually follow stone-throwing by Palestinian students at the soldiers. Most of the clashes involve the shooting of large amounts of tear gas, and often also rubber bullets.¹⁴

Twice a day I have to go through the Bab Az Zawiya checkpoint to reach school and return home again. This is because we are not allowed to walk on Ash Shohada Street, which is the direct route to my school. During Jewish holidays and when the security situation is tense, I also get searched at the checkpoint. Soldiers ask me to empty my bag and show them my books.”

13-year-old girl from Tel Rumeida, March 2018¹⁵

Overall, about 85 per cent of the households surveyed identified harassment by Israeli soldiers and Israeli settlers as major concerns affecting the access of their children to education. Child-friendly spaces in the H2 area are also limited, with 70 per cent of surveyed households stating that their children do not have access to extracurricular child-friendly spaces and/or activities. According to the survey, 10 per cent of children between the ages of six and 16 have dropped out of school, attributed to security concerns, financial constraints or under-performance.



Palestinian schoolboys pass Israeli soldier at checkpoint.

ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

Access to health services in the affected areas of H2, including in situations of emergency, has long been hampered by movement restrictions, and indirectly by the deterioration of the residents' economic situation. People with mobility impediments who require regular medical treatment or rehabilitation, such as PwDs or the elderly, are particularly impacted: they must walk significant distances and cross a checkpoint to access transportation to the medical centres.

Since 2011, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has been operating a facility in the restricted area, which provides primary health care and responds to emergency calls by means of a single ambulance. In the event of a request from someone in the prohibited area, the PRCS must contact the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which in turn coordinates with the Israeli military for the ambulance to access the area. Despite this arrangement, PRCS staff often face delays at checkpoints, necessitating additional communication with the ICRC to facilitate their passage. Regardless of the restrictions at checkpoints, some homes are inaccessible by ambulance, either because an area is blocked by un-staffed obstacles (fences, roadblocks or road gates) or because of the narrowness of the alleyways.

The emergency evacuation of patients is often impeded by settler violence: in 2018, OCHA recorded three incidents in H2 involving stone-throwing at, or blocking of ambulances by Israeli settlers. For example, on 18 November 2018, dozens of settlers surrounded a PRCS ambulance on its way to evacuate a patient in Tel Rumeida, following coordination with the Israeli authorities, and smashed its windows; Israeli forces who arrived at the scene ordered the ambulance to leave before the patient could be evacuated.

According to the survey, of the 63 households that requested an ambulance in the first half of 2018, 18 (or 29 per cent) reported that the ambulance could not reach their homes. The average waiting time reported by households in the prohibited area that requested an ambulance was 44 minutes, while the average for those in the restricted area was 36 minutes.

AMBULANCE WAITING TIME

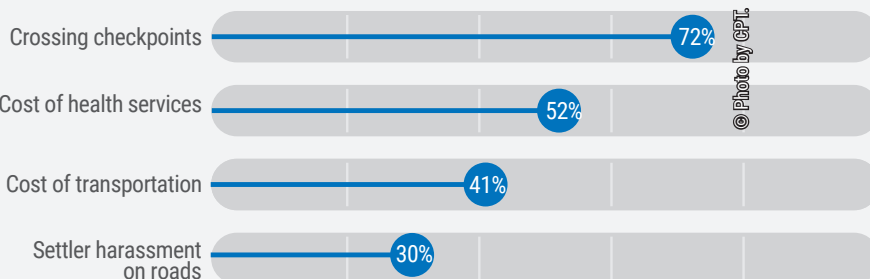


44 Minutes
In prohibited area



36 Minutes
In restricted area

MAIN CONCERNS REGARDING ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE



“In 2013, I was physically assaulted by soldiers at a police station, I fell down on an iron bar and broke five vertebrae. I underwent several operations and my body is full of platinum. I can't pass through the metal detector without it beeping. Every time I have to cross the checkpoint, which is several times every day, I have to explain my case to the soldiers. And then they ask me to take off my belt and my shoes. It is humiliating!”

Mufeed Sharabati, 53 years old,
Ash Shohada street, November 2018



“I haven't left the house for over a month now. I'm a sick woman with asthma and can no longer bear the humiliation of soldiers or checkpoints: the scanning, the searches and the delays. I've even stopped going to see the doctor. I've stopped taking medication and only use the inhaler my son bought for me.”

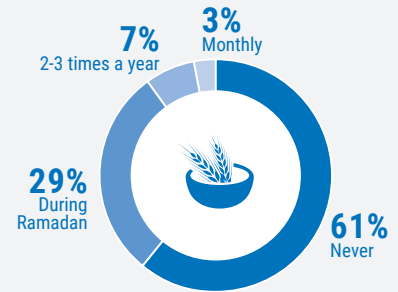
Jamila Al Shalaldih, 56 years old,
Ash Shohada street, March 2017¹⁶

INCOME AND FOOD INSECURITY

The area surrounding the settlement compounds was once a vibrant commercial hub that served the entire southern West Bank and beyond. The longstanding access restrictions and closure orders have devastated commercial life in this area, depriving thousands of families of their source of livelihood. According to the Hebron municipality, 512 Palestinian businesses in the affected areas of H2 have been closed by military order, and more than 1,000 others have shut down due to restricted access for customers and suppliers.

The ‘fortification’ of key checkpoints into H2 with turnstiles, revolving doors and metal detectors since late 2015, along with blockage of vehicle lines, has further hampered the transport of commodities, undermining the operation of the few still-open businesses. To bring inputs and raw materials into the As Salayme area, for example, residents must submit a special request to cross ‘Checkpoint 160’ by car, in order to reach a gate in the fence surrounding the neighbourhood, where they must offload their goods and carry them by hand.

FOOD ASSISTANCE (in kind or coupons)

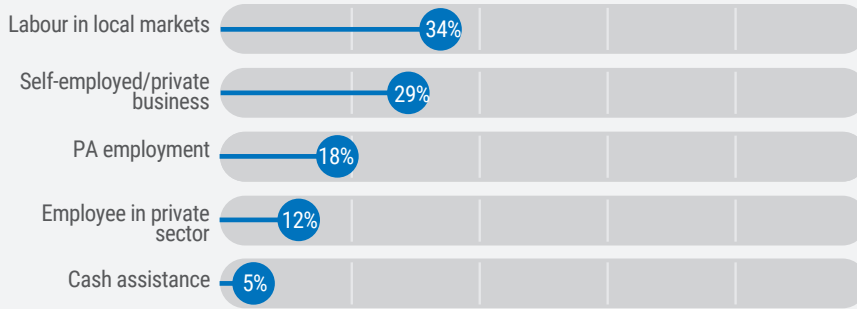


“Before 2015, my main source of income was animal breeding: mainly sheep and goats. I used to bring in the fodder through Checkpoint 160 on donkey carts. Now, after the fortification of the checkpoint and the sealing off of my [As Salayme] neighbourhood with a gate, I can no longer bring in fodder or veterinary services. The number of animals has dropped from 120 to just 18. I started working as a labourer in a local clay factory and my monthly income has gone down from 3,000 to 800 NIS.”

Na’el Al Fakhouri, father of six,
September 2017¹⁷



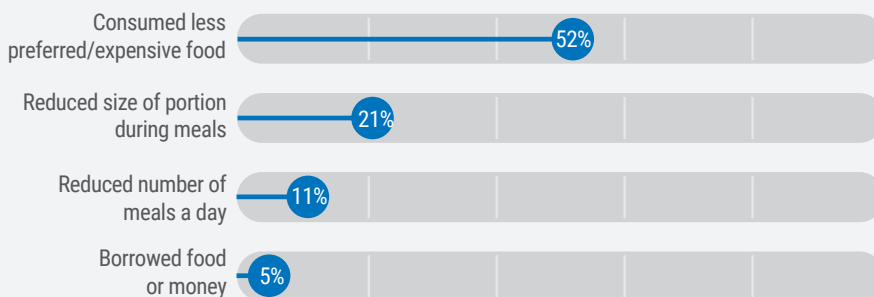
MAIN SOURCES OF INCOME FOR HOUSEHOLDS (multiple answers)



In interviews conducted by OCHA, residents also reported that the unpredictable access situation often discourages employers in the H1 area of the city and elsewhere from hiring workers residing in the prohibited and restricted areas, while making it difficult for those employed to keep their jobs.

The poor economic situation in the area has affected food consumption practices among surveyed residents. This is consistent with a trend in the rest of the oPt, where food insecurity is caused by insufficient income, rather than a lack of food in the market. Of the households surveyed, 98 per cent indicated that they had to adopt some type of coping mechanism to deal with food insecurity, primarily the consumption of cheaper and less preferred items and a reduction in the size of meal portions.

COPING MECHANISMS (multiple answers)*



*In the 30 days preceding questionnaire

“I’m a baker. I’ve lost four different jobs at bakeries in the last three years because too often I couldn’t make it at 5:00 am for the morning shift. It’s almost impossible! The military gate at the As Salayme neighbourhood doesn’t open before seven in the morning so the only alternative is Checkpoint 160. However, I’ve tried to avoid it out of fear, especially when no other Palestinians are around. I am jobless and cannot feed my family.”

Mohammed Geith, 30 years old, father of one, December 2018.

“People lose jobs and employment opportunities just because they live in this area... You never know if you can be on time for work and when you’ll get back. Also, most people in H2 can’t get permits to work in Israel. That’s why I’ve recommended many times that organizations and the government create work opportunities inside the H2 area.”

Mufid Sharabati, 53 years old, Ash Shohada street, November 2018

WATER AND SANITATION

The entire Palestinian population of Hebron city experiences poor water supply. Although the vast majority of homes are connected to the water network, actual supply is intermittent, entailing only one 24 hour cycle every 3-4 weeks, during which water is stored in tanks located on the roof or in the courtyard of homes. On average, residents of Hebron city receive some 50 litres of piped water per day per capita (after accounting for water losses), only half of what the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends for domestic consumption.¹⁸ To cope with the low frequency of piped water, most Hebron residents have to purchase trucked water.

Given the severe access constraints in the prohibited and restricted areas of H2, the Hebron Municipality supplies households in these areas with water more frequently than in the rest of the city. Despite this preferential treatment, the amount is insufficient for many families to cover their needs, particularly in the summer. As the access of water trucks to the prohibited area is not permitted, once water reserves are exhausted, residents rely

“We're not allowed to bring in water tanks. I've been without water for a month now. I buy water from the supermarket for personal use, this is the only way, and we need to cross through the checkpoints with the bottles. We are still better off than others, as we get water for one full day every couple of weeks. The other days the water flow is very low. That's why it is not enough, especially in summer.”

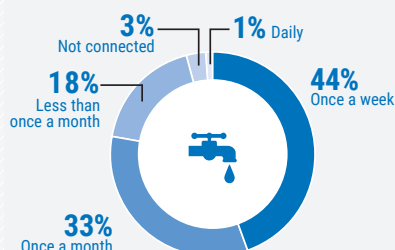
50-year-old widow living with her 13-year-old daughter in Ash Shohada street, November 2018



on the filling of buckets at mosques and large cisterns, or the purchase of bottled water, which they carry by hand through the checkpoints. Although the entry of water trucks to the restricted area is permitted, families must request a special authorization from the Israeli authorities via the Hebron Municipality. A similar mechanism is used for the entry of pumping machines needed to empty the sewage cesspit in the few houses not connected to the sewage network.

Of the surveyed households, 44 per cent reported that they receive piped water once a week, and another third reported water supply once a month. Some 72 per cent of the households indicated that checkpoints are the main impediment to the supply of trucked water and over a third reported that their water storage tank requires repair or replacement.

FREQUENCY OF PIPED WATER SUPPLY



95% piped water as main source.

72% checkpoints major obstacle for water trucks.

44% also rely on water tankering.

34% water tank needs repair/replacement.

30% lack solid waste/garbage container within 200 m of house.

SHELTER

Almost 70 per cent of surveyed households, or the equivalent of some 970 households, indicated that their house is currently in need of renovation or repair due to leakages in the ceiling/walls; and the poor status of pipes. Inadequate or unsafe doors and windows; and lack of sufficient ventilation and light. Additionally, 46 per cent of households reported that they require additional measures to protect their houses from settler violence, such as steel nets for the windows, external fences/gates, and some type of covering for their yard.

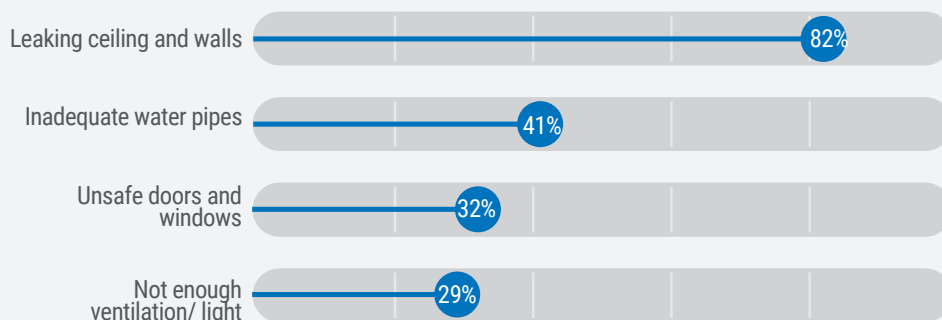
However, 85 per cent of household representatives said that they have faced constraints to renovating or repairing their homes, with access restrictions being the most cited reason, followed by lack of financial resources and support, settler harassment and direct prohibition by the Israeli military.

According to the Hebron Municipality, the entry of construction materials and equipment into both the prohibited and restricted areas is technically possible, following coordination with the Israeli authorities. However, the process is time-consuming and the outcome uncertain.

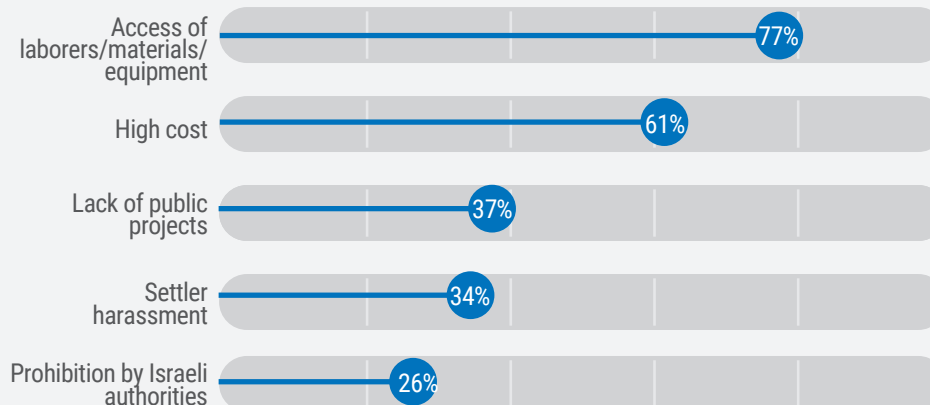
“Forcible transfer does not necessarily require the use of physical force by authorities, but may be triggered by specific circumstances that leave individuals or communities with no choice but to leave; this is known as a coercive environment[...] Palestinians have been forced to move due to a coercive environment within Area C of the West Bank and the area of the city of Hebron, which is under Israeli control (H2).”

Report of the UN Secretary General, March 2017¹⁹

MAIN REASONS REQUIRING HOUSE RENOVATION/REPAIR



MAIN IMPEDIMENTS TO HOUSE RENOVATION/REPAIR



“We applied to the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee several times. Our house is very old, we need new water tanks, new doors and we can't afford to do things on our own. The main difficulty is financial.”

Umm Yassin, 46 years old, Old City, November 2018

“In 2015 I applied for support to repair my roof which always leaks during the winter. I never got a response. I can't ask for help from my relatives to fix things at home, as the soldiers wouldn't allow them through the checkpoint, let alone allow bringing in building materials or equipment, which is impossible.”

Umm Amira, 50-year-old widow living with her 13-year-old daughter in Ash Shohada street, November 2018

CONCERN OVER FORCIBLE TRANSFER

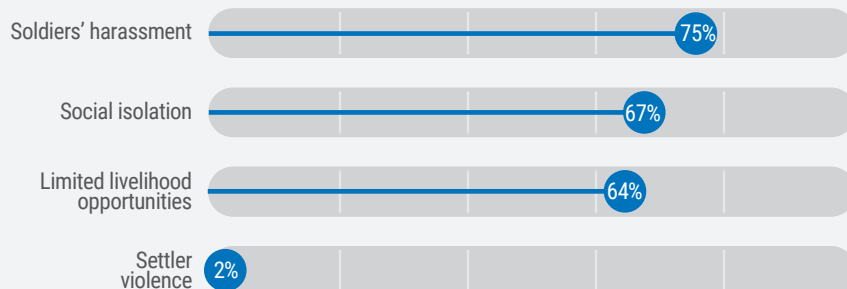
The coercive environment faced by the Palestinian residents of H2 has forced many to leave the area, raising concern about forcible transfer, which is a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention.²⁰ Due to incentives by the Palestinians authorities, including various types of subsidies and exemptions, in recent years, some of the abandoned homes have been re-occupied by other Palestinians, but many more remain empty, generating an atmosphere of a ‘ghost town’.

In 2015, as part of a preservation and revitalization plan, the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee surveyed all housing units in what it defines as Hebron’s Old City, which includes most of the prohibited and restricted areas, as well as additional surrounding areas. Of a total of 3,369 housing units surveyed in this area, almost a third (1,079 housing units) were empty.

When asked to list the three major concerns related to their current residence in H2, 75 per cent of the households surveyed in OCHA’s assessment cited harassment by Israeli forces, 67 per cent social isolation, and 64 per cent limited livelihood opportunities. These choices are consistent with the answers provided to other questions in the survey.

However, only two per cent of the households cited settler violence and harassment as one of the three major concerns, although the vast majority have been affected in one way or another by this activity. One possible explanation is that settler violence has been so ‘normalized’ that it evokes less concern than in the past. Some of the people reached during the follow-up interviews, interpreted this as a general perception among Palestinians that most incidents of harassment involve, in one way or another, both settlers and soldiers, rendering the differentiation meaningless.

HH 3 MAIN CONCERNS



THE CASE OF ABU TALAL AL HADDAD AND HIS FAMILY

Abu Talal is a fifty-seven-year-old father of seven. Attracted by the considerably lower rents and subsidies offered by the Palestinian authorities, in 2001 the family moved from the H1 area of Hebron to the Tel Rumeida neighbourhood in H2. In December 2017, the family was driven out of their home and relocated back to the H1 area.

His wife, Im Talal, recalled an incident that took place in 2004, when her son Ahmed, seven years old at the time, was attacked by settlers who broke his arm and injured his head. "I thought I lost him forever."

"Starting in October 2015, my daughter Rama, nine years old at the time, was harrassed multiple times by a group of settlers while on her way to Qurtoba School. The settlers intimidated her and threatened to kill her. Since then I've had nightmares about what could happen to my daughter."

While the lower living costs in H2 originally alleviated the family's poor financial circumstances, violent incidents generated new expenses. Abu Talal recalled:

"In 2011, my car, which was parked outside the closed area, was vandalized along with other vehicles, when a group of settlers attacked the area. Also, our house was occupied by soldiers numerous times. In one particular instance, in February 2017, dozens of soldiers raided our house, kept us all in one room and used the house as a military post for 24 hours. When they left, I discovered that they vandalized our chairs and beds and made a mess on the carpets with their muddy boots. I had to throw away my belongings."

When their children grew up and reached marriageable age, the family faced a dilemma, as movement restrictions discouraged callers or suiters from outside.

"My daughter Shatha is 29-years-old now. Marriage opportunities are not easy to find in H2. We were isolated and forgotten. Families with potential grooms did not consider my daughter due to fears of accessing the area. My son, Shaaban, now 27, only managed to find a bride after we moved out of the closed area; he will get married next March," Im Talal explained.

END NOTES

1. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), 2017 Census.
2. On Passover Eve of 1968, a group of Israeli civilians rented a room in the Park Hotel in Hebron city for 48 hours, but refused to leave for several months. In response, the government decided to establish the settlement of Kiryat Arba next to Hebron.
3. The precise population of these settlements is unknown. The largest settlement compound within Hebron city (Givat Ha'avot) is included within the municipal boundaries of the Kiryat Arba settlement.
4. A massacre carried out in 1929 by Palestinians against Jews living in Hebron city resulted in the displacement of the entire Jewish community. Some Jewish families, who returned to the city in 1931, were subsequently evacuated by the British authorities. See historical background by the [Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#).
5. Calculation based on data from the 2017 Census disaggregated by building, provided by PCBS to OCHA.
6. For figures on Palestinian and Israeli deaths and injuries since 2008, see [OCHA interactive dashboard on casualties](#). For a list of Palestinian attacks against Israelis in Hebron city since 1929, see [Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) website.
7. In a document submitted to the Israeli Supreme Court in 2007, in response to a suggestion by security experts to ease access restrictions for Palestinians in the city, the IDF legal advisor for the West Bank, Harel Weinberg said: "It seems that the basis of the opinion [of the security experts], whereby it is possible for Palestinians to live a normal life in the area alongside that of Israelis, is inconsistent with the principle of separation that underlies the security forces' plan to safeguard the space". Cited in ACRI and B'Tselem, [Ghost Town](#), p. 6.
8. The closed military order was issued on 1 November 2015 and was renewed periodically until 15 May 2016. The order does not appear to have been renewed since that date, although in practice restrictions remain in place.
9. The size of the samples was established based on a margin of error of five per cent.
10. According to an IDF officer serving in H2, in testimony provided to the Israeli NGO '[Breaking the Silence](#)', "during mappings we enter a home without any prior intelligence, there's no wanted [person] for interrogation, nothing to do with any hostile terrorist activity or danger. You enter a house just to check, and you map the house – how many rooms there are – and move on to the next house [...] I felt that the army had a very strong desire, and an interest backed by the Jewish community, for them (the Palestinians) to know and see that the army is there all the time. The army is there, the army feels comfortable there, the army is on the terrain, the army is patrolling there".
11. According to a [UN Secretary-General report to the General Assembly](#) from March 2017 (para. 52), "in Hebron's H2, the general sense of insecurity caused by the heavy military presence and security operations, which often involve the use of force by Israeli security forces, as well as harassment and arbitrary arrests, contribute to the coercive environment." A similar concern was raised by [UN Secretary-General in another report](#) to the General Assembly, para. 28. See also, reports and testimonies by the Israeli human rights organizations '[Breaking the Silence](#)' and [B'Tselem](#).
12. On concerns about excessive use of force, see [UN Secretary-General report to the General Assembly](#). On the lack of accountability for violations by Israeli soldiers see data by the Israeli human rights organization [Yesh Din](#).
13. [According to the Israeli human rights organization Yesh Din](#), only eight per cent of complaints about settler violence in the West Bank between 2005-2017, monitored by the organization, led to the indictment of soldiers.
14. Following the release of a video taken on 18 November, showing an Israeli soldier firing a tear gas canister into An Nhada School, the IDF spokesperson stated that the incident was unusual and would be investigated and regulations clarified. Berger, Yotam, "[Israeli Army Denied Soldiers Threw Gas Canister into Hebron School. Then a Video Surfaced](#)" Ha'aretz, December 6, 2018.
15. OCHA, [The Humanitarian Bulletin](#), March 2017.
16. OCHA, [The Humanitarian Bulletin](#), March 2017.
17. OCHA, [The Humanitarian Bulletin](#), September 2017.
18. The World Bank, [Securing Water for Development in West Bank and Gaza](#), 2015, p. 9.
19. Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, [Report of the Secretary-General](#), A/HRC/34/38, para. 27-28, 16 March 2017.
20. The prohibition of the forcible transfer of protected persons from or within an occupied territory is enshrined in Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. For a specific connection between the existence of a coercive environment and a forcible transfer see the [Report of the Secretary-General](#).
21. Each respondent was requested to identify three main concerns.



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