

To exist is to resist

Handbook for Volunteers to Palestine



**Servei Civil
Internacional
de Catalunya**

This Handbook

“To exist is to resist. Handbook for Volunteers to Palestine” is aimed at supporting the preparation process of International Volunteering Service volunteers who participate in Workcamps, Long Term Volunteering or European Voluntary Service projects in Palestine.

This is the first edition of the Handbook and aims at: organising the key information about the political background and context, at providing some practical information and at inviting to start some reflections.

The Handbook has been created by an activist thanks to the participation in a study visit to Palestinian partners of SCI Catalunya. It looks at being enriched in a second edition by the feedback of other activists and as well as future volunteers. So, feel free to take notes for future improvements of the handbook and send them to Clara at claragiberga@gmail.com.

Enjoy the preparation and get ready for being shaken from tip to toe! Especially if it is your first time in Palestine, don't rush! Take your time to read and also get yourself enough time to reflect and process before, during and after!

SCI Catalunya will be here to support you along the whole process so do not hesitate to contact us whenever you feel you need to!

Special thanks to

All the SCI partner organisations who hosted the study visit and were open to share, explain, debate

With the support of



*If you have come here to help me,
you are wasting your time.
But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine,
then let us work together.*

Lilla Watson

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Service Civil International (SCI)

Service Civil International (SCI) is a volunteer organisation dedicated to promoting a culture of peace by organising international voluntary projects for people of all ages and backgrounds. The organisation consists of 42 branches and an ever growing number of partner organisations all over the world.

Vision, Mission, Values

SCI's vision is a world of peace; social justice and sustainable development, where all people live together with mutual respect and without recourse to any form of violence to solve conflict.

SCI's mission is to promote a culture of peace by organising international volunteering projects with local and global impact.

SCI is being guided in all its activities by our values: Volunteering, Non-Violence, Human Rights, Solidarity, Respect for the Environment, Inclusion, Empowerment and Cooperation.

What do we do?

Short and long term voluntary projects such as Workcamps, Long Term Volunteering and European Voluntary Service take place worldwide: the organisation still believes in promoting peace through concrete acts of solidarity and international cooperation. There is also a belief that peace and peaceful attitudes can and need to be learned. This is done through various forms of peace education: learning about and from peace. Seminars, trainings and workshops in the field of non-formal education have become an important additional method of SCI today to support the organisation in achieving its mission.

History

The first international voluntary project (workcamp) took place on the former World War I battlefield of Verdun in France in 1920 initiated by Pierre Cérésolle, a Swiss pacifist engineer who had been engaged in conscious objection and antimilitarist movements. The aim of the project was to reconstruct the war damaged village Esnes-en-Argonne and to create a gathering space among volunteers from different countries as a symbol of reconciliation between France and Germany. Among the small group of international volunteers there were three Germans. The team built temporary homes for the people in the village and cleared the farm land. This project is considered the beginning of SCI as a peace and humanitarian movement born in 1920.

After the first voluntary project Pierre Cérésolle organised another one in Les Ormonts in Switzerland, where twelve volunteers helped to clear rubble after an avalanche. This service was promoted as a model service for conscientious objectors to military service, in order to support a political campaign to introduce an alternative civilian service. In the following years more relief services were organised.

While during the first decade of SCI, voluntary projects were mainly relief services for regions affected by natural disasters, as of 1931 voluntary projects were implemented in other areas of social commitment as well, such as community projects (Wales) and development aid (India).

Humanitarian projects also took place. During the Spanish Civil War, Elisabeth Eidenbenz, a swiss teacher and nurse member of SCI provided support to refugee children in the Maternity of Elna, in France, close to the refugee camps. Twenty years later, SCI also supported war orphans in Tunisia during the Algerian independence war.

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During the first decades voluntary projects were organised with no formal structure. But as the idea of organising workcamps expanded to more countries, after World War II an international association of SCI member organisations with an international secretariat in Paris was founded. The exchange of volunteers and the organisation of voluntary projects were improved and the number of workcamps, volunteers and member organisations increased tremendously. In the sixties regional coordination structures for Africa, Asia and Europe were set up.

SCI Catalunya

SCI Catalunya is one of the 42 branches of Service Civil International that exist around the world. Born in 1982, we work to promote a culture of peace, global justice and social transformation from a grassroots perspective. We are based in Barcelona and our actions take place in Andorra, Catalunya, Illes Balears and País Valencià.

Vision, Mission, Values

Our vision is a world of peace, without violence of any kind nor structures that legitimate them, inclusive with diversity, with social participation and activism, based on global justice, equity, mutual support where everyone's rights are respected.

Our mission is to actively work to promote peace cultura, global justice and civil society empowerment through international volunteering, local participation and peace education with a local and global impact.

Our values are Global justice, Solidarity, Environmental justice, Empowerment, Critical thinking, Nonviolence, Feminism, Social Inclusion, Volunteering, Activism, Cooperation.

What do we do?

Our strategy is based in 4 main areas:

- International Volunteering: Short term (workcamps) and Long Term (LTV and EVS) projects understood as mutual support for local development based on global thinking.
- Local Activism: Local groups of volunteers who participate in our local community covering topics such as feminism, climate justice, peace education, community action, Mediterranean.
- Peace Education as a tool to promote global justice and to empower citizens so they can become actors of social transformation.
- Network: Working in solidarity and cooperation with other organisations, creating synergies to raise our voices and increase our impact at local, national and international levels.

SCI Catalunya and Palestine

SCI Catalunya started its solidarity with Palestine in 2004. Along this time we have shared different kind of projects with our partners in Palestine that have allowed us to understand the political situation, the role of civil society organisations and non-violent resistance movements, and to learn and get inspired from them. Our cooperation with Palestinian organisations has covered and covered actions in the fields of Activism, Education, Awareness Raising and Advocacy all of them in line with the main actions of SCI Catalunya: promoting a culture of peace through international volunteering. At a local level, SCI Catalunya is part of different civil society organisations such as "Prou Complicitats amb Israel" and "BDS Catalunya".

Introduction to the Israeli occupation of Palestine

History

Font: Escola de Cultura de Pau – Base de Datos de Conflictos y Construcción de Paz.

Before 1948

In around 60 AD, the Jewish population living in the area were expelled by the Roman authorities and obliged to live in Diaspora in European and Middle Eastern territories. During several centuries they suffered persecutions culminating in the genocide by Nazi Germany during the Second World War, in the mid-20th century. But Jewish nationalism had already begun to be forged in the 19th century under the intellectual leadership of Theodor Herzl, arguing for the creation of a Jewish state. For historical reasons, the territory corresponding to historical Palestine was chosen and the emigration of Jews to this land (aliyas) began to be encouraged. In 1897 Herzl founded the World Zionist Organisation for this purpose.

Alongside this, various events related to the progress of the First World War contributed to the upsurge of growing Arab nationalism. On one hand, the Arabs of the Middle East tried to create an independent state to replace the Ottoman Empire. Great Britain, wishing to weaken the future Turkey because of its alliance with Germany, promoted a revolt against the Ottoman authorities, offering Arab independence as a reward. The insurrection was successful and the Ottomans were defeated, but the agreement between the Arabs and the British was never applied. In 1916, representatives of France and Great Britain secretly reached an accord, known as the Sykes-Picot agreement, by which most of the Arab lands under the rule of the Ottoman Empire were to be divided with the conclusion of World War I into French and British spheres of influence, with the latter remaining in control of the currently disputed territories – the area to the west of the River Jordan, which became the Palestinian Mandate. Shortly afterwards, Great Britain declared itself favourable to the creation of a "Jewish national homeland" in Palestine (Balfour Declaration, 1917), although it specified that this must not be done at the expense of other peoples' rights.

Faced with a new wave of Jewish immigration because of the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe in 1936, the Arab population rebelled against the British authority, which repressed the rising with the help of Zionist militias and other states. This was when the Palestinian leadership went into exile and the issue of the creation of an Arab state was entirely relegated. However, the protest against Jewish immigration meant that in 1939 the British government formally withdrew its support for the Balfour Declaration. However, the imposition of Jewish immigration quotas opened up another front, this time between the mandatory power and Jewish fighters who formed armed groups like Irgoun and Stern and began a campaign of attacks on British interests.

Faced with this crisis, Great Britain handed over its mandate to the United Nations which, in November 1947, voted to partition Palestine between a Jewish and a Palestinian state. On 15 May 1948, when British forces left Palestine, the Jewish leaders proclaimed the state of Israel. From a Palestinian or Arab point of view, the UN plan was seen as a betrayal which also granted a larger portion of land to Israel despite the fact that there were fewer Jews than Palestinians. Despite this inferiority, the demographic ratio between the two peoples had substantially changed in a few decades: between 1880 and 1947 the number of Jews moved from 24,000 to 630,000, while the Arab population grew from 525,000 to 1,310,000.

1948: The Nakba

The proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948 led to the first Arab-Israeli war, which pitched the new nation against a coalition of Arab forces (Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Jordan) in a conflict that generated thousands of Palestinian refugees (between 520,000 and more than 800,000 depending on the sources, figures that would increase in the successive wars to reach the 4.4 million recorded by the United Nations' Palestinian Refugee Agency, UNRWA). Israel considered this its "war of independence", while the Palestinians spoke of the Nakba or catastrophe.

The end of hostilities in January 1949 (Rhodes Armistice) sketched out a new territorial scenario in which Israel had managed to conquer new areas not granted to it in the UN plan, while Jordan occupied the West Bank and Egypt took Gaza.

1967: The Six-Day War

From then on, new wars succeeded one another, pitching Israel against its Arab neighbours:

- In 1956 a coalition formed by Israel together with the British and French opposed the nationalisation of the Suez Canal by Egypt.
- In 1967, the "Six-Day War" made possible Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem, Gaza, the West Bank, the Golan Heights (in Syria) and Sinai (in Egypt).
- In 1973, the surprise attack by Egypt and Syria against Israel led to the Yom Kippur War.
- In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon to combat Palestinian groups established in the neighbouring country.

Not all these confrontations were motivated by the Palestinian cause. Instead, the strategic interests of each of the Arab states usually ended up guiding the combatants. For this reason, at the end of the fifties a Palestinian resistance movement was formed that was autonomous from the Arab movement in the shape of two of the principal Palestinian organisations – Fatah (Palestinian Liberation Movement) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). However, the Arab League, wishing to control the movements, promoted the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) in 1964, and this became the representative of the Palestinians. Later, with the Arab failure in the "Six-Day War", Fatah and the PFLP took control of the PLO in an attempt to free themselves from their Egyptian, Syrian or Jordanian sponsors. The events of Black September in Jordan demonstrated this rupture: The Jordanian armed forces began a struggle against Palestinian resistance which ended with the deaths of 5,000 fighters, leading to the Palestinian resistance abandoning the country and seeking refuge on Lebanese soil.

1987-1991 First Intifada

Armed attacks between Israel and the Palestinian groups continued during the seventies and eighties, some of them outside disputed territory (like the attack by a Palestinian group in 1973 on Roma and Athens airports or the bombing in 1985 by the Israeli air force of the PLO headquarters in Tunis). At the end of the eighties, the armed groups Islamic Jihad and Hamas carried out their first attacks. The PLO in exile had gradually lost contact with the population of the occupied territories and, in December 1987, various local leaders began demonstrations against the Israeli occupation known as the rising or Intifada. It is calculated that around 1,000 people, most of them Palestinian, died in this down to 1991. At the same time, disenchantment with the Arab states (Israel and Egypt had signed the Camp David Agreements in 1979) had gradually forged Palestinian nationalism. The PLO's support for Iraq in the Gulf War led to

greater isolation of the Palestinian movement at international level, so it was excluded from taking part in the Madrid Conference of 1991. However, Israel's increasing perception of a threat from Islamic groups like Hamas or Islamic Jihad was among the reasons leading to Tel Aviv agreeing to hold secret negotiations with the PLO in Oslo. In September 1993 the Declaration of Principles was announced, offering mutual recognition between the parties and an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho. This would lead to the Oslo peace process. In this context, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) was set up, with administrative functions in liberated areas, but the process did not tackle the problem of refugees or of Israeli settlements.

Oslo Peace Process and Oslo Accords

The Oslo Peace Process should have been completed in May 1999. However, many elements hampered its success. To begin with, the different Israeli governments, particularly that of Benjamin Netanyahu (1996-99), did not take steps to comply with the agreement, especially involving the cession of part of occupied territory. At the same time, the construction of Jewish colonies in occupied territory and road infrastructures to link them continued. Furthermore, armed attacks were continuing against Israeli citizens by armed Palestinian groups – the Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades (Hamas) and Islamic Jihad – in the form of suicide bombings.

The next attempt to recover the peace process once again failed: this was at Camp David in the summer of 2000 when Yasser Arafat, as head of the PNA, and Ehud Barak, as Israeli Prime Minister met under the auspices of the American President, Bill Clinton. Barak's offer to cede 90% of the territory was considered by many as the best ever made to the Palestinians, but Arafat refused to accept it as it would have meant giving up elements at the very heart of Palestinian claims, such as Jerusalem as capital of a future state.

2000-2005 Second Intifada

On the ground, the occupation became increasingly tough. In this context, in September 2000, the leader of the Likud party, Ariel Sharon, visited the Al-Aqsa Mosque, giving the subsequent revolt by the Palestinians (Al-Aqsa Intifada or Second Intifada) its name, as they considered that the visit to the holy place was a provocation. According to some interpretations, the violence was launched in a premeditated way by Fatah to punish Israel for the failure of the negotiations. But, in any case, the nature of this second rising or Intifada was quickly shown to be different from the previous one: militarisation was very fast and the attack-reprisal combination was continuous. Palestinian suicide attacks against Israeli citizens multiplied, generating panic among the population of Israel and this fed the adoption of iron measures in the name of security in the military, political and legal spheres, harming both the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza and the Arab population with Israeli citizenship. Military operations by the Israeli army in the occupied territories became generalised and, in 2003, came the biggest assault, on the West Bank town of Jenin, which received widespread international condemnation. At the same time, the long siege against Yasser Arafat in Ramallah, lasting months, symbolised the test of strength between the Israeli forces and the Palestinian resistance. Sharon's convincing victory in the elections of January 2003 legitimised the unilateral option and he continued to deny the existence of a Palestinian interlocutor.

However, the same year some steps were taken: In June 2003, a meeting between Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his Palestinian opposite number Mahmoud Abbas facilitated an agreement under the auspices of the US for the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from Gaza and Bethlehem. Alongside this, the Middle East Quartet (made up of the UN, the US, the EU and Russia) presented the Route Map, and Switzerland supported the Geneva Initiative drawn up by

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the Israeli opposition and former Palestinian negotiators. This was never accepted by the Palestinians and was rejected by the Israeli government, although the Route Map, which establishes the creation of two States, was the frame of reference for negotiations during the following years.

At the beginning of 2004, Israel began the construction of a wall which, for more than 700km, was intended to restrict movement from the West Bank to Israel. However, the fact that it went beyond the Green Line (the dividing line marking Israel's internationally recognised boundaries) called into question the security reasons for its construction alleged by Israel. In 2004, the International Court of Justice declared it illegal and ordered Israel to demolish it and compensate the Palestinians. At the same time, so-called selective assassinations of figures from Palestinian groups were common throughout this period. Those of the Hamas leaders, Ahmed Yassin and Abdelaziz al-Rantissi, in the space of a few months, were particularly symbolic.

The death of Yasser Arafat in November 2004 provided a new scenario which contributed to a slight improvement in relations. The election in 2005 of Mahmoud Abbas to lead the PNA facilitated some truces, such as the ceasefire of 8 February agreed with Sharon and assumed in March in the Declaration of Cairo by various Palestinian organisations. Despite the many violations of the ceasefire, its existence, together with the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and from some West Bank colonies that summer, reduced the general level of conflict compared to previous years. Hamas capitalised on the withdrawal from Gaza in summer 2005, taking credit for it as a victory, and the move also led to a social and political revolt in Israel, resulting in Sharon leaving Likud and in the creation of a new political grouping, Kadima. Sharon's unilateral policy, which also included a future withdrawal from part of the West Bank, could not continue for many reasons, including the illness of the Israeli leader, who was replaced as Prime Minister by Ehud Olmert.

Fatah - Hamas

The result of the Palestinian elections of January 2006 meant a substantial change in the Palestinian domestic situation which was automatically transferred into relations with Israel. After years of Fatah control of the PNA, the unexpected triumph of the Islamist movement Hamas, with an overall majority, caused reactions at many levels. The opposition between supporters of Fatah and Hamas was shown in the struggle for control of ministries and, above all, the security forces. Hamas' refusal to recognise the State of Israel, to renounce violence and to accept the agreements previously adopted led to the economic and political blockade of Palestine by Israel and the international community. The new large-scale Israeli military attacks on Gaza came as a part of this siege policy against Hamas, above all in July 2006 in order to stop the launching of Qassam rockets against Israel and as a reprisal for the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier, resulting in hundreds of Palestinian deaths, most of them civilians. In practice, the Palestinian leadership became a two-headed one: the PNA, led by the President, Mahmoud Abbas (Fatah), and the Government, led by the Prime Minister, Ismail Haniya (Hamas). The culmination of this situation, which was translated into a domestic armed conflict between Palestinian factions, with hundreds of deaths in the first half of 2007, was Hamas taking power in Gaza and Abbas declaring an emergency government in the West Bank in June 2007.

Wars on Gaza

Israel's supposed attempts to move forward peace with the Palestinians by dealing only with sectors close to Abbas and isolating Hamas and the Strip achieved little. Israeli military action,

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together with the construction of colonies and restrictions on movements by Palestinians, did not cease. In this context the Annapolis conference was held in the US (November 2007) without great achievements. At the beginning of 2008, the violence intensified, and in February there was a strong Israeli offensive against Gaza, causing the deaths of 125 Palestinians in five days. Alongside the armed violence, the iron economic blockade imposed by Israel on the Strip, which limited the entry of fuel into the area and hampered the arrival of humanitarian aid, led, at the end of January, to the fence separating Gaza and Egypt being violently opened and thousands of people crossing into the neighbouring country. In June, Israel and Hamas agreed to cease hostilities in Gaza for a period of six months. However, the ceasefire was violated by Israel on the 4th of November. In the late December and during three weeks, the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) launched a big military operation (Operation Cast Lead) that killed 1.400 Palestinians and led to the virtual destruction of the territory.

In 2012 the IDF launched another big military operation (Operation Pillar of Defense) an eight-day Israel in the Hamas-governed Gaza Strip, which began on 14 November 2012 with the killing, of Ahmed Jabari, chief of the Gaza military wing of Hamas by an Israeli airstrike. During this operation around 100 Palestinian civilians were killed and almost 1.000 were injured.

In 2014 the IDF launched yet another big military operation (Operation Protective Edge). During this operation, around 2250 Palestinian civilians were killed.

At the moment this handbook is being finalised (May 2018), there is a violent tension in the Gaza Strip due to the violent repression of the Israeli to the Great March of Return, a six-week campaign composed of a series of protests launched on 30 March 2018 near the Gaza-Israel border to demand that Palestinian refugees and their descendants be allowed to return to what is now Israel. They are also protesting the blockade of the Gaza Strip and the moving of the United States Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Violence during the protests has resulted in the deadliest days of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the 2014 Gaza War causing already more than 100 deaths.

Currently

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict continues to revolve around issues that appear to be untouchable for the parties: firstly, the dispute over the status of Jerusalem as capital, claimed by the Palestinians and, at the same time, assumed de facto by Israel; the issue of refugees, whose return is perceived by the Palestinians as a right (recognised by the UN) which they do not want to give up, while for Israel it constitutes a particularly important element, as it involves changes to demographic relationships in its territory; the marking of boundaries, with a wall altering the line that would frame a future Palestinian State, which, among other factors, hampers the viability of such a state; Israeli occupation – in the form of colonisation, the building of blocks of settlements, demolition of houses, incursions, imposition of military controls and movement restrictions, etc. – the end of which is claimed by the Palestinians as a sine qua non condition for any agreement. Finally, many elements make it difficult to transform the conflict, starting with its duration and the symbolic charge present in the claims and discourses of both parties. At the same time, in the analysis of the conflict other elements must be mentioned, such as the serious humanitarian consequences generated (both in terms of injured and refugee victims and economic and social asphyxia) and the massive regional and international repercussions of the conflict.

Territory

The land is one of the biggest issues of the conflict Palestine. In the map below you can see how Palestinian population has seen their land to decrease along the conflict history. Even the already not favourable scenario of the UN Partition Plan 1947 was still a better situation than the current one. Palestine sees its population divided in different territories, suffering differently from the state of Israel occupation and repression:

- Gaza strip: Governed by the Palestinian National Authority.
- West Bank: Governed by the Palestinian National Authority, under the occupation of the State of Israel.
- 48 Palestine: Currently Israel.
- Jerusalem: West Jerusalem is part of Israel and East Jerusalem (including the old city) is part of Palestine, under the occupation of Israel.

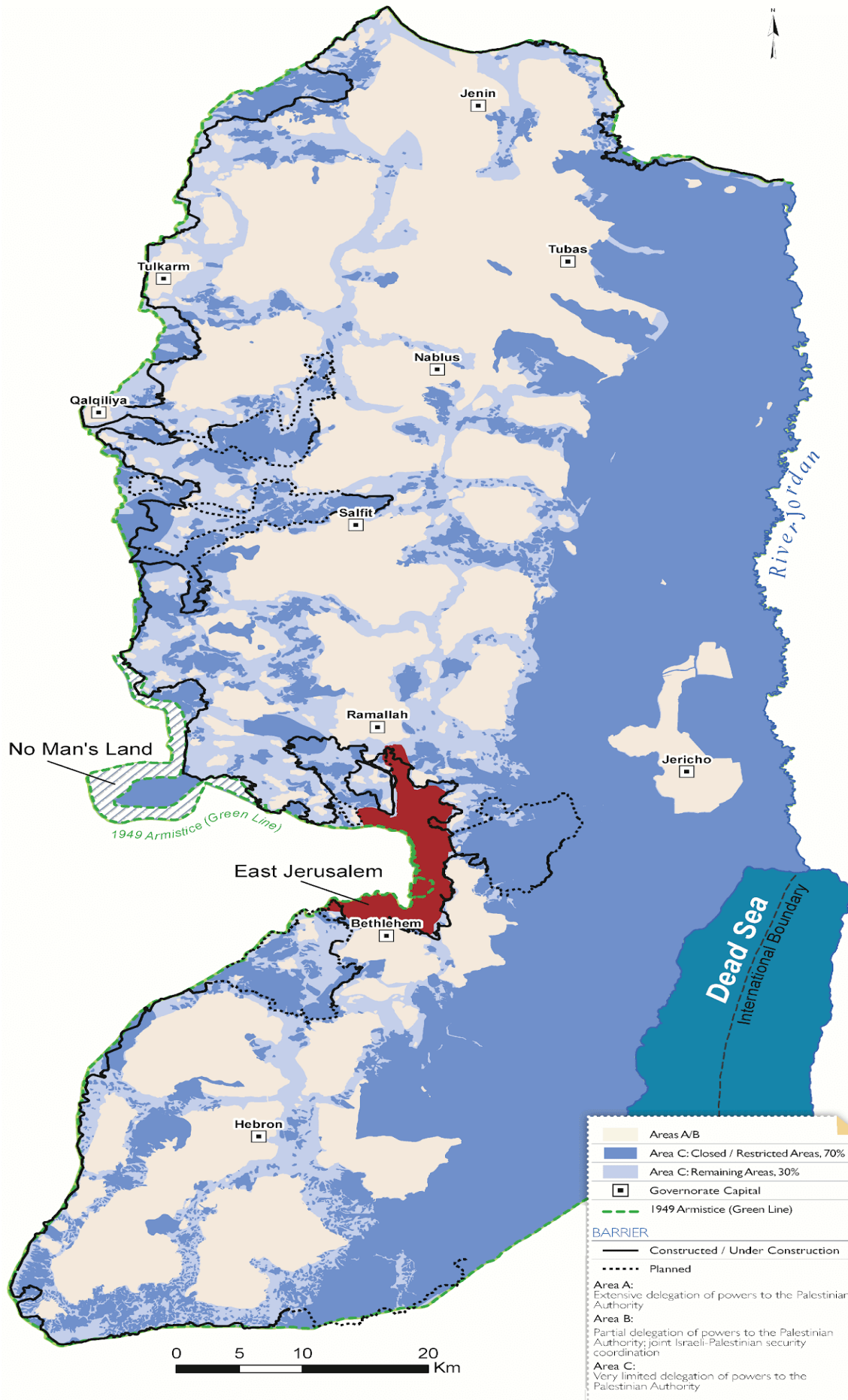


The Oslo II Accord (1995) divided the West Bank into three administrative divisions: Areas A, B and C. The distinct areas were given different statuses, according to their governance pending a final status accord:

- **Area A** is exclusively administered by the Palestinian National Authority. It comprises 18% of the West Bank territory.
- **Area B** is administered by both the Palestinian Authority and Israel. It comprises 22% of the West Bank territory.
- **Area C**, which contains the Israeli settlements, is administered by Israel. It comprises 60% of the West Bank territory and forms a contiguous territory.

Area A and B are home to approximately 2,8 million Palestinians who live subdivided into 165 separate units of land that have no territorial contiguity. Area C is home to 150,000 Palestinians in 532 residential areas as well as 389,250 Israelis in 135 settlements.

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Areas A, B, C Map. Credits: UN OCHA

Restriction of Movement

(Font: UN OCHA).

Israel restricts Palestinian movement within the occupied Palestinian territory through a combination of physical obstacles, including the Wall and checkpoints, bureaucratic constraints, such as permit requirements, and the designation of areas as restricted or closed. This multi-layered system impacts the flow of people and goods between the Gaza Strip and the outside world, including the West Bank; into farming and fishing areas within Gaza; and within the West Bank, in particular into East Jerusalem, in areas isolated by the Barrier, 'firing zones', the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron city (H2), and land around or within Israeli settlements. Combined, these restrictions impede access to services and resources, disrupt family and social life, undermine livelihoods and compound the fragmentation of the occupied Palestinian territory.

Wall

(Font: [UN OCHA: The Humanitarian impact of the Barrier. July 2013](#)).

In 2002, the Government of Israel decided to build a Barrier with the stated aim of preventing violent attacks by Palestinians inside Israel. However, the vast majority of the Barrier's route is located within the West Bank, separating Palestinian communities and farming land from the rest of the West Bank and contributing to the fragmentation of the oPt. The inclusion of Israeli settlements behind the Barrier is the single most important factor behind the deviation of the route from the Green Line.

The Barrier has reduced the access of Palestinians living in communities located behind the Barrier to workplaces and essential services. To continue living in their own homes and to maintain family and social relations with the rest of the West Bank they must obtain permits or "prior coordination" and pass through Barrier checkpoints. Access of service providers to these communities, including ambulances and fire brigades, has been impaired.

Agriculture-based livelihoods of thousands of families have been undermined due to the permit and gate regime, which restrict access to farmland behind the Barrier. Permit applications are regularly rejected on grounds that farmers failed to prove their "connection to the land" to the satisfaction of the Israeli authorities, as well as on security grounds. The limited opening of the agricultural gates has forced permit-holders to stop cultivation or to shift from labour-intensive to rain-fed and low-value crops.



The wall at Aida camp in Beit Lehem
Photo credits: Clara Giberga



The wall at Aida camp in Beit Lehem
Photo credits: Clara Giberga

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The Barrier has transformed the geography, economy and social life of Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, as well as the life of those residing in the wider metropolitan area. Neighbourhoods, suburbs and families have been divided from each other from the urban centre, and rural communities separated from their land in the Jerusalem periphery.

In its 2004 Advisory Opinion, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) established that the sections of the Barrier which run inside the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, together with the associated gate and permit regime, violate Israel's obligations under international law. The ICJ called on Israel to cease construction of the Barrier, dismantle the sections already completed, and repeal all legislative measures related to that the Barrier.

Key Facts:

- The Barrier consists of concrete walls, fences, ditches, razor wire, groomed sand paths, an electronic monitoring system, patrol roads, and a buffer zone.
- The Barrier's total length (constructed and projected) is approximately 712 km, more than twice the length of the 1949 Armistice ("Green") Line.
- Approximately 62% of the Barrier's approved route is complete, a further 10% is under construction and 28% is planned but not yet constructed.
- Some 85% of the Barrier's route runs inside the West Bank, rather than along the Green Line; if completed as planned, the Barrier will isolate 9.4% of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.
- Nearly half of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank (71 out of 150) and over 85% of the settler population are located in the area between the Green Line and the Barrier's route.
- Around 11,000 Palestinians living in 32 communities located between the Barrier and the Green Line (hereafter: behind the Barrier), depend on the granting of permits or special arrangements to live in their own homes.
- In 2013, a rerouting of a section the Barrier near Tulkarm was completed, allowing 350 people in the Khirbet Jubara community free access to the rest of the West Bank.
- Palestinians with West Bank ID cards who are granted special permits can enter East Jerusalem through four of the 14 Barrier checkpoints around the city.
- Approximately 150 Palestinian communities have land located behind the Barrier, forcing residents to seek special permits or 'prior coordination' to access it.
- Access to agricultural land through the Barrier is channelled through 74 gates, the majority of which (52) only open during the olive harvest (October-December).
- Despite the presence of the Barrier, between January and March 2013 at least 14,000 Palestinians without the required permits smuggled themselves every day into Israel to look for employment (PCBS).

Video by UN OCHA: Walled Horizons English

Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=bsAgeQTuKwM>

Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuyhLziZTH8>

Checkpoints

Since the 1990s, Israel created hundreds of permanent roadblocks and checkpoints. The Israeli Security Forces (the Israeli Military Police, the Israel Border Police or other soldiers) have different checkpoints all over the occupied territories. This way, they limit and control the movement of Palestinian citizens and make their life more and more difficult.

In September 2011, the UN OCHA said there were 522 roadblocks and checkpoints obstructing Palestinian movement in the West Bank, up from 503 in July 2010. That number does not

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include the temporary checkpoints known as "flying checkpoints," of which there were 495 on average per month in the West Bank in 2011, up from 351 on average per month in the previous two years.

According to B'Tselem, there were 99 fixed checkpoints in the West Bank in September 2013, in addition to the 174 surprise flying checkpoints. In August 2013, 288 flying checkpoints were counted.

However, according to the Israel Defence Forces, after withdrawing the majority of checkpoints as a goodwill gesture, in May 2013 there were 13 checkpoints in the West Bank, down from 40 in 2008. Furthermore, according to the IDF, these checkpoints are not always used, with the frequency of use depending on the perceived security threat. This figure does not include the numerous road blocks that prevent Palestinians from crossing the barrier, which in many cases blocks access to areas within the West Bank.

[Map of West Bank Access Restrictions: October 2017](#) by UN OCHA.



Jalameh (North West Bank) Check Point.
Photo credits: Clara Giberga



Hebron City Check Point
Photo credits: Clara Giberga

Settlements

(Font: UN OCHA).

Since 1967, about 250 Israeli settlements and settlement outposts have been established across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in contravention of international law. Settlements are a key driver of humanitarian vulnerability. The establishment and constant expansion of settlements has had a negative impact on the living conditions of Palestinians, resulting in the loss of property and sources of livelihood, restrictions on access to services, and a range of threats to physical security, which in turn have generated need for assistance and protection measures by the humanitarian community. Some of these impacts are related to Israeli settlers' attacks on Palestinians, and the lack of adequate law enforcement by the Israeli authorities.

Figures on settler violence are available in OCHA's online dashboard on [Vulnerability Profile of Palestinian Communities in Area C\(link is external\)](#) and in the weekly [Protection of Civilians reports](#).

Refugees and right of return



Entrance of Aida Camp, Beit Lehem.
Photo credits: Clara Giberga

Palestine refugees are defined by the UN RWA as “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict”. In the aftermath of the six-day war of 1967 and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip there was a new big wave of displaced persons.

When the UN RWA began operations in 1950, it was responding to the needs of about 750,000 Palestine refugees. Today, some 5 million Palestine refugees are eligible for UNRWA services.

Some Palestinian people fled to other countries and some stayed within Palestine but had to leave their homes and move to other cities or villages. This is why one can find refugee camps also in Palestine. Nearly one-third of the registered Palestine refugees, more than 1.5 million individuals, live in 58 recognized Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Right of Return

One of the biggest demands of the Palestinian population is the fulfilment of the Right of Return of Palestinian refugees, who keep the keys of their homes as a symbol of resistance.

They are supported by the 13th Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which declares that "Everyone has the right to leave any country including his own and to return to his country". They also cite the non-binding article 11 of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194, which "Resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return".

Volunteering in Palestine



Photo credits: Clara Giberga

Political aspects

Palestine will (probably) shake you and it will (probably) hurt. Take your time to read and also get yourself enough time to reflect and process before, during and after. Here we would like to suggest you some reflection so grab a cup of “shai bi-maramiya” (delicious tea with sage) and find some time for yourself.

Why Palestine?

Why did you choose to do your volunteering camp in Palestine? What called you? What are you interested into? What do you expect? What is your motivation? What are your fears?

Privilege awareness

When volunteering (in general but especially in a conflict area) we need to be aware of our own power position, how it will be perceived there and how can we make a positive use of it and not to use it negatively. A lot of this goes into doing a very deep reflection process of our own areas of privilege and oppression and try to figure out how this can relate to other people's privileges and oppressions, in this case, I dare to say, much more oppressed than us.

On the next page we would like to propose you an exercise to reflect upon that.

The plot of privileges and oppressions



This exercise is inspired in Intersectional theories. This is your plot of privileges and oppressions. For each of the axis (gender, age, etc) you will have to think of what is the social norm about it (i.e.: In gender identity, being a cis male is the norm). Once you know, you have to think where do you think you are in regards to the norm and make a sign in the line closer to the centre if you are not so normative (i.e.: in gender, being a trans person) or farther from the centre if you are more normative. Once you have answered for all the axis, you can unite the points and create a form. We invite you to paint it and to look at it: this is your plot of privileges and oppressions, how does it look like? Is it big? Is it equal? Where are you privileged and how does that make you feel? Where are you oppressed and how does that make you feel?

It is key to be aware of your privileges when volunteering abroad so you are aware of the power position you are in when relating to the local community, the local organisation that hosts the project, etc. Some recommendations from our side would be: Be mindful, give space, observe a lot, listen a lot, speak less, ask curiously and carefully and above all: don't judge. All of this is very easy to say and very difficult to do for real so we encourage you to work on yourself before, during and after your stay in Palestine.

Practical aspects

Arrival to the airport

Firstly: don't fly with EL AL or Arkia (or any other Israeli company: Sun d'Or, Up, Israir). EL AL is the state of Israel airline and Arkia is a low-cost flight company. A very powerful non-violent tool to support the Palestinian cause is to support the BDS movement (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions to Israeli companies, institutions, etc.) so if you want to support the Palestinian cause, we would suggest you to think of it further than your volunteering action.

Secondly: buy your own flight, much easier! They might ask you who bought your flight and if it is not you, they might ask you to show the e-mail and the more you have to show, the more complicated it can get sometimes.

- If you have no other chance than flying with EL AL, Arkia or Vueling (yes, they cooperate):

Most probably (surely if you fly from Spain) you will have your interview before doing the check-in for your flight.

They will ask you for your passport, if you already visited Israel, why do you go there, what is the relationship between the people who flies (if more than one) or why do you fly alone or if you know someone there (if flying alone), who bought your flight, who packed your luggage, could someone have interfered with your luggage while you didn't see it, etc.

They will not like that you are travelling to the West Bank so try to tell them something else. But be mindful and ready of every single detail: They will be paying a lot of attention to your verbal and non-verbal communication; if you say something with your hands shaking, or something not coherent or you hesitate, they will notice and they will ask more questions until they understand what is going on.

They can also check your luggage (quite common for many travellers, not only those that look suspicious to them) so be mindful which kind of information you have there (not a good suggestion to have the work-camp info-sheet or this handbook or other Palestinian related materials). Think of which kind of travel guide you want to bring: you can get one of Israel from the public library or buy a cheap one.

If the interview goes well, you will go to check in and have a safe flight and once in Tel Aviv's airport, the border control will be quite easy (they will probably ask you which airline you flew with and just give you the entry card if you say EL AL)! In the worst-case-scenario, you will be denied boarding and will have to stay home.

- If you fly with other companies (very recommended):

You will have your interview at the border control of Tel Aviv airport. There is a longer queue and they normally ask fewer questions unless they find something suspicious (from a very racist perspective): an Arabic country stamp on your passport, an Arabic origin name/family name, an Arabic appearance. In most of the cases they ask you for your passport, where did you fly from, if it is your first time in Israel, what is the purpose of your visit. In some cases they might ask you where will you go or where will you be staying. It is therefore advisable to have the first night booked or at least the name of few hostels in Tel Aviv to tell them you didn't book but you have some names and are going to do so once you arrive.

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- General recommendations:

They could check you on-line or ask you to show your computer, your phone, etc. So, take some time to check on your name on Google and see if there are results related to Palestine. Check your social media public posts and either delete them or hide them or change your name in that social media so it is more difficult to find.

Departure from the airport

The way out of Israel's airport is also delicate! First things first: You will not talk about the people you met in Palestine, even if they will discover you have been in the West Bank. Talking about them might put them into trouble and we don't want that.

Secondly, get ready some days before the departure:

- The interview: Once you enter the airport building you will either find a queue for the interviews before the check-in or be approached by surprise by the Israeli Security and be interviewed right on the spot. If you travel with someone else it is very likely that you will be interviewed separately and then the different versions will be contrasted. They will ask you where you went, what did you do and they can ask details to see consistency. They will ask you for your passport and look for Arabic countries stamps and ask you about your travels there.
- The sticker on the passport: After the interview, they will place a sticker on your passport with a number according to how risky you are for them. According to your number you will follow a path or another. The easy way would be like going through any security process in any European country. The normal way would be like going through some more queues and additional checks on your belongings. The difficult way, in case your number says you are "super bad", would be like you having to have an additional interview, probably in a separate room, and some additional checks on your body (they might ask you to take off your clothes and stay in underwear).
- In the normal or difficult situation, they will check your hand luggage so make sure you don't have any items that can link you with having been in the West Bank. In case you do, send them home by post and it will take up to 3 weeks to arrive. In case you don't send the items by post and they find them, they will ask you additional questions, they will check you more in detail, etc. The checked-in luggage, if you have one, will also be checked (they will ask you to leave it open for inspection and you will find a paper once you open it back home stating your items have been inspected for security reasons).

So, suggestion: don't bring materials that can relate you to having been in the West Bank and, above all, DON'T bring materials that can compromise the organisations you have visited. You are leaving back home, they are staying under occupation.

Transportation

There are many ways to move around in Palestine and, even if it takes longer than expected due to the obstacles in the way (wall, settlements, checkpoints, etc), it is quite easy to understand how to move around thanks to the hospitality of Palestinian citizens who are always there to help even when not speaking fluent English.

- **City transportation:** Most of the city transportation is done by foot or by taxi. In Nablus, for example, there is a fixed price for the public taxis (those taken at the central station).
- **Inter-city transportation:** Most of the travels by public transport are done in very common orange mini-vans and just few of them (mainly those departing from Israeli cities and arriving to Jerusalem or going from Jerusalem to bigger West Bank cities) are done by bus.

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- **Private cars:** If you decide to travel with someone you know by car and you happen to be stopped by border police at the check point, tell them you are a tourist who was staying in X city, found a driver on the door of the hostel on that day and asked him to take you to Y city. Protect your Palestinian friends by not making them get into trouble if border police understands you are friends, colleagues, members of an organisation, etc.

Having Google maps will not help you in the West Bank: it is not complete so even if you want to use the Google maps offline option, it will not help. The app “Maps.me” provides a better alternative and more accurate mapping of the West Bank with a larger number of sights and conveniences marked out. It also lets you download maps, so that you can use them offline.

Crossing check-points

You will cross some check-points with no control and you will cross others with long queues. Probably there is a “routine” behind the controls, but the feeling while in there was that there was some kind of “random” approach to when to open/close the check-point, there is no published schedule, there is no provided information of when it will be open/closed.

It has never happened to me and I don't know under which circumstances it happens (probably very rarely) but apparently some check-points can add a stamp on your passport. That would make your way out from the airport quite difficult as it would be clear you have been in the West Bank, so try to avoid that to happen.

In case it would happen, arrive with enough time in advance to the airport on your departure date and take some time to get emotionally and mentally ready for a long interview (Where did you go? What did you do? Who did you meet? Do you have any friends there? Who do you know? Why did you go?) and a check of your personal belongings and probably yourself.

Communication

There is wi-fi almost everywhere, like almost everywhere in the world nowadays. It is handy, anyway, to have a local SIM card to make phone calls and to not to depend on wi-fi to have internet. So, in case you want to buy yourself a SIM Card, take into consideration:

- **West Bank:**

The Palestinian phone company is Jawwal. They don't offer internet services but you will be able to make phone calls to Palestinian numbers and, if your phone allows, you will be able to connect to wi-fi. Calls are cheap.

The Israeli phone company is O19. The company works in the West Bank so that the settlers can use their Israeli phones. They do offer internet services so, think well if you will need internet outside of wi-fi areas and, in case you do, then buy one before crossing to the West Bank (in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem). In autumn 2017, the cost of an O19 SIM Card with 6GB/month was 100NIS (25€).

- **48 Palestine / Israel:**

You cannot buy Palestinian SIM cards there and you cannot use Palestinian SIM cards there.

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(in Catalan, Spanish, English)

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Col·lectius d'activisme a qui seguir

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Comitè Nacional Palestí del BDS: www.bdsmovement.net

RESCOP - Red Solidaria contra la Ocupación de Palestina

<http://www.nodo50.org/causapalestina/spip.php?auteur1>

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