

Access to Palestine

Restricted access as a case of Israel's structural violence and deprivation of
Palestinians' human needs



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31-07-2024

A Thesis submitted to the Board of Examiners
in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Master of Arts in Conflict Studies & Human Rights

Supervisor: Dr. Fabio Cristiano
Date of submission: 31-07-2024
Programme trajectory followed: Internship, 15 ECTS
Word count: 14.975

Content

List of figures.....	4
List of abbreviations.....	5
Abstract	5
1. Introduction.....	6
2. Access and mobility in Palestine.....	9
2.1 History.....	9
2.2 Present	11
2.2.1 Settlement, dispossession and physical obstacles	11
2.2.2 East Jerusalem and the seam zone	12
2.2.3 Gaza.....	12
2.2.4 Manifest violence	12
3. Theoretical framework.....	14
3.1 Azar: Protracted Social Conflict	14
3.2 Human needs.....	16
3.3 Structural violence.....	17
3.4 Access in Palestine.....	17
3.5 Spaciocide, settler colonialism and erasure	18
4. Closure of Huwara	20
4.1 Context	20
4.2 Restrictions and patterns of occupation.....	21
4.3 Human needs.....	22
4.4 Access and structural violence.....	22
4.5 Conclusion	23
5. Access to Al-Aqsa	24
5.1 Context	24
5.1.1 Religious significance.....	24
5.1.2 Illegal occupation	25
5.1.3 Status Quo	25
5.1.4 Violent past.....	25
5.2 Restrictions and patterns of occupation.....	26
5.2.1 ID-system	26
5.1.2 Movement bans	27
5.1.3 Claiming holy sites.....	27
5.2 Human needs.....	28
5.3 Access & structural violence	29
5.4 Conclusion	29
6. Denial of foreign nationals to the oPt	30

6.1 Context	30
6.2 Restrictions and patterns of occupation.....	31
6.2.1 Separating the diaspora.....	31
6.2.2 Barring foreigners	32
6.2.3 Monitoring and surveillance	32
6.2.4 Extending sovereignty	33
6.3 Human needs.....	33
6.4 Access & structural violence	34
6.5 Conclusion	35
7. Conclusion	36
Bibliography	38

List of figures

Figure 1: Azar's conflict map of Protracted Social Conflict.....	16
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List of abbreviations

COGAT	Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories
ID	Identification Document
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IHRL	International Human Rights Law
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner
oPt	occupied Palestinian territory
PA	Palestinian Authority
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
PSC	Protracted Social Conflict
RtM	Right to Movement
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

Abstract

Palestinians living under illegal Israeli occupation are increasingly subjected to extensive restrictions on their ability to access space. Ranging from physical barriers such as the Separation Wall, to administrative obstacles like the ID- and permit-systems, Palestinians' free movement is greatly limited. Analyses of this development focus almost exclusively on access as either a spatial or an economic term. Considering the far-reaching consequences of the imposed restrictions and their detrimental effects on the satisfaction of human needs, this thesis argues for a broader understanding of access as a question of violence. Through use of Edward Azar's model for Protracted Social Conflict (PSC), human needs theory and structural violence theory, three cases that highlight different ways in which Israel restricts Palestinians' access are examined. This thesis demonstrates that physical closure of Huwara, limited access to Al-Aqsa and denial of foreign nationals to the oPt, effectively deprive Palestinians of their human needs and thus constitute a structural violent practice. Informed by key concepts of spaciocide, settler colonialism and erasure, this thesis thus argues for an understanding of access as more than just spatial, but as something that can be deprived in an inherently violently manner. This thesis builds on research done at Hurryyat Center for Defense of Liberties & Civil Rights.

Keywords: Israel-Palestine, access, space, human needs, structural violence

1. Introduction

During my first time in Palestine in early 2022, I was walking around the West Bank city of Hebron, on my way to visit the famous Ibrahimi Mosque. Surrounded by Palestinian families, I crossed a checkpoint, a series of large metal gates, staffed by Israeli soldiers. I passed, admired the mosque and, while talking to a Palestinian man who had lived in the city his entire life, I started to walk towards the other side of the building, which houses the synagogue. Upon approaching a young armed soldier, the man stopped in his tracks as the soldier slightly raised her gun. She asked me for my passport and escorted me to another checkpoint several meters ahead. The man was not allowed to follow me and was aggressively told to back off. In this moment, I realised that the step I took, could be fatal for the Palestinian man next to me. More than ever before, it dawned on me that the freedom I had to take that step, was a unique privilege, based on the purple piece of paper in my pocket. Even though I had done nothing to earn this privilege, other than randomly being born in the Netherlands, it allowed me to access this space, while attempting to do so could mean arrest, physical violence or even death to the man next to me. This realisation and its sheer arbitrary and unfair nature, made my privilege painfully tangible. Amongst others, this shocking experience introduced me to the surreal and almost dystopian reality of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. It demonstrated to me that the freedom I have to go where I please, which I had often taken for granted, is not a universally given right. It is, in fact, something that is taken from an entire population on a daily basis.

This led me to return to Palestine a year later, to intern with a human rights organisation called Hurryyat, working on their Right to Movement (RtM) and Travel project. During my time there, I researched ways in which Palestinians' human right to movement is violated by the Israeli regime. As a common trend, I focussed on the ways in which Israel restricts Palestinians' access. While doing so, I discovered a discrepancy between Palestinian reality and academic writing, illustrating a crucial deficiency in the academic literature concerning movement and mobility in Palestine. I learned that most research on access in Palestine approaches access exclusively as either a spatial or an economic term, in some cases a combination of the two. However, my research and the stories of the Palestinians I met painted a different picture. They showed that Israel's restrictions do not just prevent Palestinians from accessing certain spaces or job opportunities, but in fact affect all aspects of daily life, violently obstructing Palestinians from satisfying many of their human needs. This made me acutely aware that restriction of access should not just be seen as a spatial matter, but in fact should be understood and studied as a question of violence. Therefore, my research and the findings therein, led me to write this thesis with the aim of entering one central question: How do the restrictions imposed on access within and to the occupied Palestinian territory by the Israeli regime constitute a structural violent practice?

To answer this question, I have analysed three cases, each highlighting different ways in which Israel restricts Palestinians' access. Firstly, I will analyse the physical closure of the West Bank town of Huwara, answering the question: How does closure of Huwara constitute a structural violent practice? Secondly, I will show how limited access to Al-Aqsa constitutes a structural violent practice. Thirdly, I will answer the question: How does the denial of foreign nationals to the oPt constitute a structural violent practice? By shedding light on different forms of restrictions imposed by the Israeli regime, these questions work together to answer the main research question of this thesis, proving how restricting access constitutes a structural violent practice.

This thesis is rooted in a theoretical framework consisting of three main components. Firstly, I use Edward Azar's model for Protracted Social Conflict (PSC) and his theorisation of human needs in PSCs, to examine how effects of restrictions of access relate to the satisfaction of human needs. Secondly, I use human needs theory which heavily influenced Azar's model, to understand how restrictions of access translate to human need deprivation. Finally, I use Johan Galtung's structural violence theory to demonstrate how need deprivation constitutes a structural violent practice.

The findings presented in this paper have a clear academic relevance, filling the void in academic writing on Palestine I mentioned earlier. Through use of these broader theories of

violent conflict, I show that access should be understood as a question of violence. Azar distinguishes three types of needs; I add that there is a hierarchy in those needs with access being foundational. Human needs theory proposes that needs deprivation leads to collective violence, but I add that deprivation is in and of itself violent. I then link needs deprivation to structural violence, suggesting it is an inherently violent practice. Based on these findings, I argue for a conceptual shift concerning access. Research into access in Palestine primarily approaches access as either a term describing movement and mobility, or economic participation. I argue for a broader conceptual understanding of access as a prerequisite for the satisfaction of vital human needs and as something that can be forcibly deprived. This conceptual shift is also informed by Sari Hanafi's work on spaciocide, as well as literature on settler colonialism and its inherent goal of erasing the native population.

The findings presented in this thesis also have the ability to inform societal debate on the Israel-Palestine conflict. First, they draw focus to structural violence in Palestine, steering away from simplistic and short-term analyses of manifest violence and instead argue for a more structural approach highlighting historic trends. Secondly, they inform understanding of Palestinian opposition to Israeli occupation through examination of systems of oppression and subjugation. Thirdly, they stress the entirety and connectedness of Palestine and the Palestinian population, not just Gaza as a separate entity. Fourthly, they demonstrate the dire need for access to Gaza in the current war and show that the current deprivation of access to and from Gaza should be understood as a violent act committed by Israel.

As mentioned, this thesis is based on the research I did while working at Hurryyat. For ten weeks (March to May 2023), I interned with Hurryyat Center for Defense of Liberties & Civil Rights, a small Palestinian non-profit human rights organisation based in Ramallah. Hurryyat has three main projects: through its Prisoners and Torture projects it documents, support and advocates for both terminally ill prisoners, as well as torture victims, and through its Right to Movement and Travel project, it provides legal aid to people banned from travel, researches ways in which the RtM is violated and advises international bodies on the subject. As part of its RtM project, I spent my time doing research into different ways in which Israel restricts Palestinians' movement and violates their universal human rights, publishing my findings in articles and a factsheet for the organisation's website. The choice for the three cases of this research was based on developments at the time of my internship, my own experience and personal interest and was made with support of my superiors at Hurryyat. It is important to note that this is not a comparative study, but instead an examination of different aspects of a topic, with each case demonstrating different ways in which access is restricted.

This thesis is based on the research done during my internship at Hurryyat in early 2023 and was written in 2024. My research was based on a mix of sources available to me. This included secondary literature, utilising a variety of sources such as empirical studies, reports by international institutes and NGOs, news articles and opinion pieces. Also, conversations with my supervisors, colleagues, friends and people I met during my time in the oPt and Israel, informed my research. Moreover, during my internship I attended several sessions hosted by international bodies such as the United Nations (UN), on varying aspects of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Finally, my own experiences travelling and working in the oPt also informed my research and understanding of the topics presented. Important to note, this thesis is thus not based on extensive ethnographic research, but my own experience does play a role and informs my knowledge. Also, there is an important limit to my research due to my own lack of access to information. I could only work in Palestine for a short period, I do not speak Arabic or Hebrew and I could not access some areas due to Israeli restrictions or danger of violence, like Gaza and Jenin. This means I was considerably reliant on secondary literature and my colleagues.

This thesis is structured as follows: in the following background chapter I will provide an overview of the historical context of access and mobility in the oPt. Subsequently, in the theoretical chapter, the theoretical framework of this thesis will be outlined, existing literature on access in Palestine will be reviewed and the concepts of spaciocide, settler colonialism and erasure will be explained. Each of the cases will then be presented individually, with a chapter on the closure of Huwara, one on limited access to Al-Aqsa and a final one about the denial of foreign nationals. For each case, I will present the relevant context of the case and how the

restrictions of access in the case relate to broader patterns of the Israeli occupation. Then I will show how the restrictions imposed by the Israeli regime in this case deprives Palestinians of their human needs, explain those needs in terms of Azar's model, explore what this means for the use of access as an academic concept and demonstrate how this deprivation constitutes a structural violent practice. Finally, I will conclude with a concise overview of the findings of my research, this thesis' academic and societal relevance and recommendations for future research.

2. Access and mobility in Palestine

In order to understand the deprivation of access in the oPt today, one has to understand the history of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. I will therefore provide a short historical overview of important events and their impact on access and mobility in Palestine, in order to situate the present state of access in Palestine. This overview is structured chronologically and covers the period from 1987 to 2005, comprising the First Intifada, the Oslo years and the Second Intifada. Subsequently, I will describe the present state of access in Palestine since 2005. Since this period is characterised less by individual key events and more by gradually evolving policies and practices, this section will be organised thematically, covering settlements, dispossession and physical obstacles, East Jerusalem and the seam zone, Gaza and manifest violence.

Tracing the central theme of access a common trend can be found: through policies and practices, the Israeli regime imposes administrative and physical obstacles to Palestinian movement, resulting in the separation and fragmentation of Palestinian space. I approach this development through its effects on the Palestinian population, often mentioning varying effects on different territories under Israeli control, distinguished as Israel, the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. Importantly, I must note that this distinction is an Israeli construct. All of the areas discussed constitute one Palestinian territory, intentionally separated by the occupation. I use this distinction to describe the effects of certain policies and practices on specific areas, but one must thus be conscious of the fact that these areas are not historically and inherently different, but one intentionally fragmented Palestinian land.

2.1 History

Since its occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem in 1967, Israel has increasingly struggled with the question of what to do with the Palestinian population. With the eruption of the First Intifada (1987-1993), Israel faced massive popular Palestinian opposition and perceived imminent threats to Israeli security, so the ‘Palestinian question’ became a more pressing issue. Consequently, Israel developed increasingly restrictive policies to isolate and separate Palestinian communities from each other and from the Israeli population, in order to immobilise organised opposition to its occupation.

One of the first major restrictions Israel imposed, were distinct identity cards and travel permits. In 1988, Palestinians in Gaza were issued orange cards and ‘security threats’ in the West Bank were issued green cards.¹ In 1991, Israel ended the general exit permit, meaning Palestinians required individual permits to enter Israel or East Jerusalem.² This effectively meant the end to free movement between the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem and Israel.³ These administrative distinctions were enforced through physical barriers as well, when Israel incorporated East Jerusalem in 1993 and erected checkpoints between the four areas.⁴

The Oslo years (1993-2000), shaped by the interim peace agreements (the Oslo Accords) between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, ended the First Intifada significantly impacted Palestinians’ access. With Oslo I, control over the West Bank and Gaza was to be gradually transferred to the newly established Palestinian Authority (PA).⁵ While withdrawing from Gaza, Israel also constructed the Gaza perimeter fence and increasingly controlled the flow of people and goods in and out of Gaza through stricter permit requirements.⁶ In 1995, Oslo II divided the West Bank into three different areas. Area A was to be under full control of the PA, Area B would have Israeli security and Palestinian civil control

¹ Amira Hass, “Israel’s Closure Policy: An Ineffective Strategy of Containment and Repression,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, no. 3 (2002): 5–20, 7.

² B’Tselem, “Conquer and Divide,” conquer-and-divide.btselem.org, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://conquer-and-divide.btselem.org/map-en.html#final-map-cover>.

³ Hass, “Israel’s Closure Policy,” 7-8.

⁴ Hass, 8.

⁵ Britannica Oslo

⁶ B’Tselem, “Conquer and Divide.”

and Area C would fully be under Israeli control.⁷ This division was meant to be temporary, with Area A gradually growing to cover most of the West Bank.⁸ However, with the failing of Oslo and the eruption of the Second Intifada, this never happened. In 2000, Area A, densely populated Palestinian urban areas, would make up 18% of the West Bank, with 60% becoming Area C, containing Israeli settlements, bypass roads, military zones, natural parks and, importantly, agricultural and development land.⁹ Varying degrees of control directly relate to varying degrees of access. Palestinians can move freely through Area A, but are subject to Israeli security control in Area B, facing Israeli checkpoints, obstacles and surveillance.¹⁰ Israel also controls the roads between areas A and B and the border crossings to Israel and Jordan, effectively controlling the movement of Palestinians both within and out of Palestine. Moreover, Palestinians are banned from entering Area C. Consequently, they cannot access 60% of the West Bank and travel between different areas becomes difficult, time-consuming or impossible. The division was “based on demographic considerations that reflected neither geographic features nor Palestinian space”¹¹, so Area C carves through Palestinian historical communities, disconnecting cities from each other, villages from their agricultural land and people from their families.

Although the years following Oslo were supposed to be a transition towards peaceful resolution, popular discontent amongst Palestinians grew as instead the occupation intensified.¹² In 2000, Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon provocatively visited Al-Aqsa, sparking outrage amongst Palestinians which spread throughout Palestine and unleashed the Second Intifada (2000-2005).¹³ Five years of intense violence followed, leading to a growing number of physical obstacles in the oPt. Israel utilised the division of the West Bank under Oslo to separate Palestinian space through strategic placement of checkpoints and barriers, effectively fragmenting Palestinian opposition.¹⁴ This period also saw an increase of flying checkpoints, which could be erected ad-hoc in places without a previous permanent Israeli presence, further restricting Palestinian movement.¹⁵

During the Second Intifada, Israel started work on the Separation Wall. The regime planned a 713km long barrier around and through the West Bank and East Jerusalem, consisting of “concrete walls, fences, ditches, razor wire, sand paths, an electronic monitoring system, patrol roads, a buffer zone and several military checkpoints” and began construction in 2002.¹⁶ Importantly, the barrier does not follow the ‘Green Line’, but instead 85% of the route is beyond Israeli sovereign borders and in the West Bank.¹⁷ As Israeli NGO B’tselem describes: “A key factor in determining the barrier’s route was the location of settlements, thereby laying the groundwork for the de facto annexation of 81 settlements.”¹⁸ By constructing the wall around Jerusalem’s municipal boundaries, East Jerusalem was severed from the West Bank de facto illegally annexed. The barrier also cuts off Palestinians living in the ‘seam zone’ between the Green Line and the Wall, from the rest of the West Bank. Communities in the seam zone face exceptional isolation, with gates in the wall being rarely and shortly opened and few

⁷ Hass, “Israel’s Closure Policy,” 9.

⁸ Hass, 9.

⁹ Hass, 9.

¹⁰ Anna Rhodes, “Israel’s Modulation of Checkpoints: Systematic Manipulation of the Oslo Accords,” *The Macksey Journal* 1, no. 102 (2020), 8.

¹¹ B’tselem, “Conquer and Divide.”

¹² Jeremy Pressman, “The Second Intifada: Background and Causes of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” *Journal of Conflict Studies* 23, no. 2 (2003): 114–41, 114.

¹³ Pressman, “The Second Intifada,” 114.

¹⁴ Hass, “Israel’s Closure Policy,” 10.

¹⁵ Rhodes, “Israel’s Modulation of Checkpoints,” 10.

¹⁶ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), “Fact Sheet: The Humanitarian Impact of 20 Years of the Barrier,” *United Nations*, December 2022, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/the-humanitarian-impact-of-20-years-of-the-barrier-dec-2022-ocha-factsheet/>, 1.

¹⁷ OCHA, “Fact Sheet,” 1.

¹⁸ B’tselem, “Conquer and Divide.”

permits for crossing the barrier being granted.¹⁹ Judged illegal by the International Court of Justice²⁰, the wall now cuts like a knife through the Palestinian landscape, cementing Israel's occupation in concrete and metal, isolating and separating already fragmented Palestinian communities.

2.2 Present

The two decades since the Second Intifada have been characterised by an increase in closure and fragmentation, most notably through an increase and expansion of Israeli settlements accompanied by a growing number of physical obstacles and increased dispossession, further annexation of East Jerusalem, continued construction of the Separation Wall, blockading of Gaza and increased movement restrictions following episodes of intensified manifest violence.

2.2.1 Settlement, dispossession and physical obstacles

Firstly, the number of settlements and settlers has grown immensely, with around 400.000 settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 2002 to well over 700.000 in 2021.²¹ This means a growth of Areas B and C and an increase in the physical obstacles Palestinians face. To accommodate settlement, Israel forcibly evicts Palestinians, demolishes their houses and confiscates their land. Israeli construction in these areas is then strongly stimulated, while Palestinian construction permits are structurally denied.²² In East Jerusalem, this process leads to the destruction of entire Palestinian neighbourhoods, altering the demographic composition of the annexed land.²³ It also severs the strong historic and cultural ties Palestinians have to East Jerusalem and extends Israel's proclaimed sovereignty and legitimacy over it.

Settlements come with obstacles, segregated infrastructure and increased surveillance over the areas the two populations share. This means Palestinians now face restrictions in accessing their land, have to circumnavigate roads they cannot use and are subject to checkpoints and controls when traversing spaces also used by settlers. Palestinians face not just checkpoints, but a wide array of other physical obstacles. A 2018 survey conducted by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), showed there were over 700 road obstacles in the West Bank alone, consisting of road gates, earthmounds, roadblocks, partial checkpoints, road barrier, checkpoints, earthwalls, trenches and others.²⁴ The settler project and physical obstacles increase both the spatial and temporal distance

¹⁹ B'Tselem, "The Separation Barrier," B'Tselem, November 11, 2017, https://www.btselem.org/separation_barrier and Nasser Al-Qadi, "The Israeli Permit Regime: Realities and Challenges," *The Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem (ARIJ)*, October 14, 2018, <https://www.arij.org/publications/special-reports/special-reports-2018/the-israeli-permit-regime-realities-and-challenges-this/>, 5.

²⁰ International Court of Justice, *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (International Court of Justice July 9, 2004).

²¹ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Number of Settlers in the Israeli Settlements in the West Bank by Region, 1986-2021," accessed July 31, 2024, https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_Rainbow/Documents/SETT6E-2021.html.

²² The Office of the European Union Representative (West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA), "2022 Report on Israeli Settlements in the Occupied West Bank, Including East Jerusalem (January December 2022)," May 15, 2023.

²³ See: Ir Amim, "Settlements and National Parks," Ir Amim, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://www.ir-amim.org.il/en/issue/settlements-and-national-parks>, and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Threat of Demolitions in East Jerusalem," *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)*, July 9, 2019, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/threat-demolitions-east-jerusalem>.

²⁴ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Over 700 Road Obstacles Control Palestinian Movement within the West Bank," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory, October 8, 2018, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/over-700-road-obstacles-control-palestinian-movement-within-west-bank>.

Palestinians have to travel between different areas, thus detrimentally disrupting their free movement and daily lives.

2.2.2 East Jerusalem and the seam zone

Like East Jerusalem, the seam zone has also been increasingly cut off from the West Bank in the last twenty years. In 2022, 65% of the separation wall had been constructed, separating countless Palestinians from their land, most notably life sustaining agricultural land, and impeding their free movement to the West Bank and East Jerusalem.²⁵ Not only has more of the wall been constructed, passing through it has also become increasingly difficult. Obtaining a permit to cross the barrier has become progressively arduous, with an ever-growing list of requirements and long waiting times.²⁶ Even with permits, Palestinians are subject to the Israeli gate-regime, with fewer openings and shorter opening times, making farming their land increasingly challenging.²⁷

2.2.3 Gaza

The most impactful restrictions on movement have been imposed on Gaza. After its disengagement from Gaza in 2005, Israel remained in control over its borders, already restricting the flow of people and goods. After Hamas' rise to power in 2007, Israel imposed a full blockade on Gaza, cutting it off completely from the rest of Palestine and the rest of the world. This means that currently over 2.2 million people live in what has been described as the world's largest open-air prison, unable to escape Israel's iron grip to visit family, travel, study or work. The devastating effects of this blockade have become painfully obvious through Israel's destructive military campaign in Gaza since October 7th 2023, with Israel having killed over 39.000 Palestinians and displaced 1.9 million more at the time of writing.²⁸

2.2.4 Manifest violence

This recent military campaign has far-reaching consequences for access throughout Palestine, following a recognisable trend; after episodes of intensified manifest violence such as the military campaigns of 2008, 2014, 2017 and most recently following October 7th, Israel increases its closure and restrictions of the occupied territory, including the West Bank and East Jerusalem. With all eyes focussed on the destruction and displacement in Gaza, Israel tightened its grip on the West Bank, intensifying military and settler violence and collectively punishing whole communities. Roads and checkpoints have increasingly been closed, as well as the border crossing to Jordan, effectively isolating complete towns and villages and preventing people from leaving the West Bank.²⁹ Moreover, close to 160.000 Palestinians have had their permits for working in Israel and Israeli settlements revoked, severing families from an essential income and paralysing the Palestinian economy.³⁰ Furthermore, already in November 2023, the UNHR Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) reported that over 1000 Palestinians from at least 15 communities had been forced from their homes because of

²⁵ OCHA, "Fact Sheet," 1.

²⁶ OCHA, "Fact Sheet," 2.

²⁷ OCHA, "Fact Sheet," 2.

²⁸ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Reported Impact Snapshot | Gaza Strip (24 July 2024)," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory, July 24, 2024, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-24-july-2024>.

²⁹ Yara M. Asi, "The Occupied West Bank since October 7: Movement Restrictions and Collective Punishment," Arab Center Washington DC, January 26, 2024, <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-occupied-west-bank-since-october-7-movement-restrictions-and-collective-punishment/>.

³⁰ The Economist, "Israel Is Strangling the West Bank's Economy," *The Economist*, December 7, 2023, <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2023/12/07/israel-is-strangling-the-west-banks-economy>.

military and settler violence.³¹ With a continued intensification of military and settler violence in the months since then, this number has only increased.³² Additionally, between October 7th 2023 and June 24th 2024, “Israeli authorities demolished, confiscated or forced the demolition of 1,013 Palestinian structures in East Jerusalem and Area C”, resulting in the displacement of 2246 people.³³ Thus, using the ongoing violence in Gaza as pretext, Israel has further restricted access and displaced more Palestinians in the entire occupied Palestinian territory.

³¹ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Alarming, Urgent Situation in the Occupied West Bank, Including East Jerusalem,” United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, November 3, 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2023/11/alarming-urgent-situation-occupied-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>.

³² AJLabs, “Israel-Hamas War in Maps and Charts: Live Tracker,” Al Jazeera, October 9, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/10/9/israel-hamas-war-in-maps-and-charts-live-tracker>.

³³ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), “Humanitarian Situation Update #183 | West Bank [EN/AR/HE] | OCHA,” United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), June 26, 2024, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/humanitarian-situation-update-183-west-bank>.

3. Theoretical framework

In order to situate this thesis in a broader academic debate and illustrate how the findings of the cases presented contribute to a conceptual shift of access as a question of violence, an overview of the theoretical framework in which this research was done is necessary. This chapter will therefore provide a review of the theories used and how they relate to the specific cases. Pursuing a comprehensive analysis, the relevant theories and conceptual application are arranged hierarchal from concrete to abstract, followed by an overview of how the concept of access has been applied to the case of Palestine. As mentioned, the main argument of this thesis is that restricting access is a structural violent practice. To demonstrate this, I will approach access as a key component of Edward Azar's theory on PSC, followed by an overview of human needs theory in which Azar's PSC-model is rooted and finally linking this to the broader theory of structural violence. In order to narrow down the scope of this research, I will centre the concept of access throughout and link it to the relevant parts of the theories examined. Subsequently, I will provide an overview of how access as a concept is applied in existing research on the case of Palestine and explain how the findings of this thesis propose a conceptual shift pertaining to the use of access in conflict studies. Finally, I will explain three important concepts that inform my understanding of restricting access as a violent practice, namely spaciocide, settler colonialism and erasure. By examining access through the lens of these theories of violent conflict and linking it to key concepts pertinent to the Palestinian case (i.e. spaciocide, settler colonialism and erasure), this chapter ultimately aims to broaden our understanding of access as a concept of conflict studies. I argue for moving away from studying access as a purely spatial term and instead considering access as a question of violence, as something that can be violently deprived.

3.1 Azar: Protracted Social Conflict

Firstly, Azar's model of PSC has to be examined. Through studying a "new type of conflict", which, 'distinct from traditional disputes over territory, economic resources, or East–West rivalry ... revolves around questions of communal identity'³⁴, Azar created a model (figure 1)³⁵ for explaining these complex and multifaceted conflicts, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, which he called Protracted Social Conflicts. Azar identifies "four clusters of variables identified as preconditions for their transformation to high levels of intensity"³⁶

The first cluster is the communal content of societies with PSCs, arguing that the unit of analysis in these conflicts should be the "identity group – racial, religious, ethnic, cultural and others"³⁷ and their relation to the state. This relation is shaped by external factors such as a colonial legacy and domestic factors such as intercommunal rivalry.³⁸

The second cluster, most important for this thesis, concerns the deprivation of human needs as driving factor for conflict. Azar distinguishes three types of human needs. Firstly, *security needs* are "basic human needs ... such as nutrition, housing and physical security"³⁹. Secondly, he outlines *acceptance needs* as a "socially accepted and recognised communal identity."⁴⁰ Thirdly, *access needs* concern an "effective participation in political, market and decision-making institutions."⁴¹ Even though conceptualised as three distinct categories, Azar demonstrates their interconnectedness. As Demmers illustrates in her review of Azar's model, "one has to have access to work or land in order to be able to feed one's family. The allocation

³⁴ Jolle Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2017), 85.

³⁵ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 86.

³⁶ Oliver Ramsbotham, "The Analysis of Protracted Social Conflict: A Tribute to Edward Azar," *Review of International Studies* 31, no. 1 (January 2005): 109–26, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210505006327>, 114.

³⁷ Edward E. Azar, "Protracted International Conflicts: Ten Propositions," *International Interactions* 12, no. 1 (1985): 59–70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050628508434647>, 31.

³⁸ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 86.

³⁹ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 86.

⁴⁰ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 87.

⁴¹ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 87.

of the means to satisfy basic material needs is thus highly dependent upon access needs; the effective participation in social institutions such as political authority or the market is a crucial determinant for satisfying security needs.”⁴² This serves as just one example of the interplay between the three distinct needs.

However, following my case studies on access in and to the oPt, I would go one step further and argue that access is not just one of three interconnected needs, but in fact underlies and facilitates security and acceptance needs. The restriction of access hinders the satisfaction of a wide range of needs, including physical security, work, religion, family life, education, communal identity and self-determination. Thus, in the case of Palestine, denial and restriction of access is so extensive and all-encompassing that it obstructs the satisfaction of most other needs. Therefore, access should be understood in a conceptually broader sense than just in terms of space or participation. I argue that access should be conceptualised as a *platform need*; a need on which the satisfaction of a plethora of other needs depends. For this conceptualisation, I draw on International Human Rights Law (IHRL), in which a platform right is understood as a right upon which other rights depend.

The third cluster concerns the state and its willingness and capacity to satisfy human needs. Azar argues that most states with PSCs fail to satisfy those needs, with the state’s communal content, regime type, level of legitimacy, availability of resources and policy capacity as important variables.⁴³ Demmers notes: “The likelihood for protracted conflict to break out is largest in societies where political authority is monopolized by a dominant identity group, using the state as an instrument to maximize their interests and exclude others.”⁴⁴ Finally, the fourth cluster of preconditions are international linkages, specifically economic dependency and political and military relationships which “impact state autonomy and independence and, at times, force state governments ‘to pursue both domestic and foreign policies disjoined from, or contradictory to, the needs of its own public’”.⁴⁵ Azar then goes on to explain the process-level dynamics which determine whether these preconditions actively lead to violent conflict, but this part is left out of consideration in the scope of this research.

For my analysis to be comprehensive and coherent and to be able to conceptually focus the thesis around the concept of access, I will only focus on second cluster of Azar’s model. This is not to say that deprivation of access exist in a vacuum and is the sole cause of violence in Palestine, as Azar’s model in its entirety could be and has been applied to the Israel-Palestine conflict. However, this is too much for the scope of this thesis and would dilute from any meaningful analysis.

⁴² Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 87.

⁴³ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 87-88.

⁴⁴ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 87.

⁴⁵ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 88.

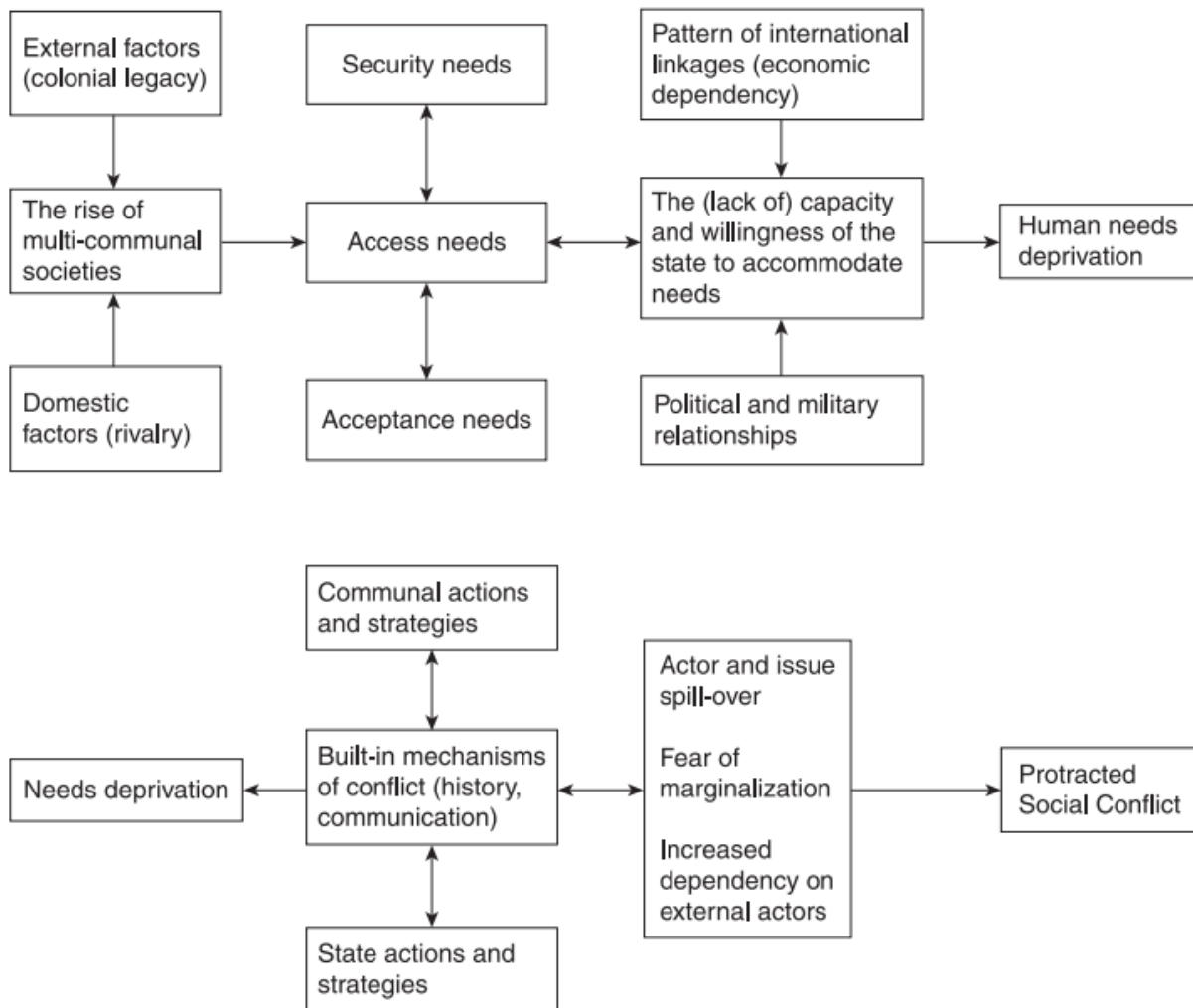


Figure 1: Azar's conflict map of Protracted Social Conflict

3.2 Human needs

To bridge the gap between the concrete restriction of access and the more abstract theory of structural violence, one must consider the human needs theory in which Azar's work is deeply rooted. Human needs theory centres around the assumption that "if people are deprived of satisfaction of their basic needs on the basis of their communal identity, collective action is likely to occur".⁴⁶ Essentially, this means that violence is the result of people's need for identity. Authors like Gurr and Burton respectively propose that "relative deprivation can lead to collective violence, and the relentless struggle of groups to overcome the frustration of their basic human needs for identity, participation, recognition and security ... lay at the roots of protracted conflict."⁴⁷ Since access can be seen as a human need and as a platform need, restrictions of access therefore constitute a deprivation of human needs. Recognising that needs deprivation can lead to violence, I also argue that the deprivation in and of itself is a violent act. This serves as an important conceptual distinction, especially in complex protracted conflict, where the security measures imposed by the dominant group are often framed as measures against violence committed by the oppressed, while those measures are in fact already violent acts against the oppressed. This abstract logic will be further explained in the case studies. For example, the closure of Palestinian land and the construction of the separation wall are framed by the Israeli regime as security measures against violent

⁴⁶ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 90.

⁴⁷ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 91.

Palestinian resistance. However, because these measures inherently restrict Palestinians' access and thus deprive their human needs, they can be understood as violent practices.

3.3 Structural violence

This view of needs deprivation being an inherently violent practice can be explained through structural violence theory. This theory, proposed by Johan Galtung, argues against the narrow understanding of violence as 'manifest violence', or visible action. Instead, he argues for a different form of structural, invisible violence. This violence is "built into unequal, unjust and unrepresentative social structures (imperialism, capitalism, caste society, patriarchy, racism, colonialism)".⁴⁸ He thus explains violence as: "avoidable insults to basic human needs, and more generally life, lowering the real levels of needs satisfaction below what is potentially possible."⁴⁹ This means that when structures like poverty harm people by preventing them from satisfying their human needs while this could be avoided, those structures can be seen as violent. The deprivation of needs can thus be understood as avoidable insults and therefore constitutes structural violence. In the case of Palestine, this means that the systematic restriction of access deprives people of their human needs and thus constitutes a structural violent practice.

This provides an important insight that can inform analyses and societal debate concerning the Israel-Palestine conflict as a whole. As evident in the public and political response to the events of October 7th 2023 and the Israeli military campaign that followed, people have a tendency to focus on the visible violence, often describing it as 'sudden' or 'unprovoked'⁵⁰. However, my analysis shows the continuous structural violence committed before, during and after such eruptions of manifest violence. In Galtung's words, this means that even without the active military campaigns, violent raids and torture of prisoners that the Israeli regime commits, Palestine is at best in a state of negative peace. That is to say, there might be an absence of manifest violence, but the structural violence has not been overcome.⁵¹

3.4 Access in Palestine

Having reviewed these general theories about conflict and violence, it is important to consider the existing literature on the case of Palestine. In order to situate this thesis in a broader academic debate, I will provide an overview of the use of access as a concept as applied to Palestine. Literature on access in Palestine can mostly be grouped in two distinct but related categories. The first group approaches access as a primarily spatial term. Authors like Baylouni, Baumann, Braverman, Del Sarto, Griffin and Parizot consider access mainly in terms of geographic mobility. Their focus is on varying degrees of access to different spaces, movement through those spaces and the construction of space through degrees and forms of mobility. While the effects of those differences may be discussed, the focus is chiefly on spatiality and access as a precondition for geographic movement. The second group approaches access as a principally economic term. Authors like Agbahey, Siddig and Grethe, Brown and Fratto study varying degrees of access to labour and to markets and their effects on Palestinian workers and the Palestinian economy. This is often connected to restrictions in geographic mobility and access to land, but the use of access is conceptually primarily economic. Besides these two groups, there is a third category of authors who provide analyses that in some way bridge the two or also explicitly consider the socioeconomic effects of degrees of access. For example, Tawil-Souri researches the effects of the ID-system on geographic as well as economic mobility and the bordering along ethnic lines it entails, Aburas and Shahrour analyse mobility restrictions and employment as well as environmental impact, Al Qadi

⁴⁸ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 59.

⁴⁹ Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 197.

⁵⁰ Seth J. Frantzman, "A Massive, Unprovoked Attack on Israel - Analysis," The Jerusalem Post, October 7, 2023, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-762048>.

⁵¹ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 60.

examines the permit regime and its socioeconomic effects and Hass argues for a broader understanding of the effects of closure as not just spatial, but also temporal and socioeconomic.

These studies provide some insight into how access affects various aspects of Palestinian life, but remain quite narrow in their understanding of access. One author who comes closest to the definition of access proposed in this thesis, is Julie Peteet. In her book ‘Space and Mobility in Palestine’, she studies several forms of closure and mobility restrictions and their consequences on Palestinian life and identity. As she aptly concludes: “Confinement and obstructed mobility are stripping Palestinians in the West Bank of the economic, social, and civic life that mobility makes possible.”⁵² She convincingly argues that access entails much more than just spatial or economic mobility, having far-reaching consequences for all aspects of Palestinian life and Palestinians’ needs. It is in this spirit that I place access at the centre of this thesis, as something that is not just spatial or economic, but as a platform need that many other aspects of life and identity rely upon, that can be deprived in a manner that constitutes a structural violent practice.

3.5 Spaciocide, settler colonialism and erasure

Additionally, this reassessment of access as an academic term is informed by three important concepts: spaciocide, settler colonialism and erasure. First, Syrian-Palestinian scholar Sari Hanafi, conceptualises the Israeli colonial project as spaciocidal, targeting “land for the purpose of rendering inevitable the ‘voluntary’ transfer of the Palestinian population, primarily by targeting the space upon which the Palestinian people live”.⁵³ He argues that Israel employs three strategies, namely ‘space annihilation’ or the mass destruction of space, ethnic cleansing through expulsion and settlement and ‘creeping apartheid’ which “utilizes increasingly impregnable ethnic, geographic, and economic barriers between groups vying for recognition, power, and resources.”⁵⁴ Israel’s targeting of Palestinian space is not just about destruction, but involves a “deliberate exterminatory logic of the space liveability that underpins the assault on the space.”⁵⁵ This is where spaciocide can inform our understanding of access in Palestine. As apparent in the case studies, restrictions imposed on Palestinians’ access, construct barriers between different groups, both physical and administrative. Also, obstructing access reduces the liveability of Palestinian space. Therefore, restricted access should be seen in light of Israel’s spaciocide. Moreover, Hanafi demonstrates that spaciocide is an intentional strategy aimed at the ‘voluntary transfer’ of the Palestinian population, freeing the land of its native population for Israeli settlement. This view is rooted in his understanding of Israel as a settler colonial state aimed at erasing Palestine.

Israel should be understood as a settler colonial project. The Israeli colonial project is fuelled by Zionism, a nationalist ideology based on the idea that there should be a Jewish national state in Palestine.⁵⁶ As Salamanca et al. aptly explain, the ultimate goal of the Israeli regime is thus to claim as much land as possible for Jewish settlement, waging a “zero-sum contest fought against the indigenous population.”⁵⁷ The presence of a native Palestinian population is therefore an obstacle in Israel’s colonial project. So, erasure of Palestine and Palestinians is an important goal; not just by physically removing them, but by destroying Palestinian culture and identity and severing historic ties to their land. Through replacing the

⁵² Julie Peteet, *Space and Mobility in Palestine* (Bloomington Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2017), 203.

⁵³ Sari Hanafi, “Spacio-Cide: Colonial Politics, Invisibility and Rezoning in Palestinian Territory,” *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 2, no. 1 (2009): 106–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17550910802622645>, 107.

⁵⁴ Sari Hanafi, “Explaining Spacio-Cide in the Palestinian Territory: Colonization, Separation, and State of Exception,” *Current Sociology* 61, no. 2 (2012): 190–205, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392112456505>, 191-192.

⁵⁵ Hanafi, “Explaining Spacio-Cide,” 193.

⁵⁶ Britannica, “Zionism | Definition, History, Examples, & Facts,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, January 30, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Zionism>.

⁵⁷ Omar Jabary Salamanca et al., “Past Is Present: Settler Colonialism in Palestine,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 1 (2012): 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473x.2012.10648823>, 1.

Palestinian population with Jewish settlements, constructing narratives to justify Israeli domination and combatting Palestinian narratives, Israel unmakes Palestinian space and makes Israeli space. Hawari notes that “this making and unmaking is a continuous process in which the desired outcome is the eventual elimination of the Indigenous people and the conquering of their space.”⁵⁸ This understanding informs our understanding of access. As will be shown in the case studies, access is required for maintaining social bonds, a shared culture and a collective identity. Restricting that access and obstructing those ties might then be intentional strategies inherent to settler colonialism, aimed at erasing Palestine as a whole.

⁵⁸ Yara Hawari, “Erasing Memories of Palestine in Settler-Colonial Urban Space the Case of Haifa,” in *Routledge Handbook on Middle East Cities*, ed. Haim Yacobi and Mansour Nasara (London: Routledge, 2019), 104–20, 111.

4. Closure of Huwara

On February 27th, 2023, Israeli settlers went on a violent rampage through the Palestinian town of Huwara, in the northern West Bank. Described by some as a pogrom, settlers ravaged through the town for hours, killing one man and setting fire to Palestinian houses and cars, all under the watchful eye of Israeli soldiers.⁵⁹ Although devastating in its scale, attacks like this are not unique nor isolated.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, Palestinians in Huwara are all too familiar with settler violence and suffer the consequences of Israel's policy of protecting and supporting settlers while enforcing measures of closure on the Palestinian population in the wake of such attacks.

In recent years, Huwara has become a 'flashpoint' of settler violence and imposed closure, making it a focal point of violent political rhetoric and an exemplary case of larger trends in the occupied Palestinian territory. Due to its location and the frequent manifest violence, Huwara is increasingly subjected to closure through physical obstacles. This closure can be seen as illegal collective punishment, illustrates the segregation between Israeli settlers and Palestinians and establishes 'calibrated chaos' that disrupts Palestinian daily life. Through this process, closure prevent Palestinians from satisfying their need to work, learn and maintain familial life. Closure also works to separate and fragment Palestinian space, creating enclaves that hinder collective identity and self-determination. Therefore, closure of Huwara shows that the deprivation of these human needs, presented as a security measure by Israel, is in fact a structural violent practice.

4.1 Context

To understand Israel's closure of Huwara, one must understand its geographic, strategic and symbolic location. Huwara is a town just south of the major Palestinian city of Nablus. It is surrounded by several Israeli settlements, whose inhabitants have been described as extremist and hardline settlers.⁶¹ These settlers use the road through Huwara to access settlements and are thus in frequent contact with Palestinians. Like in other shared spaces, the settler population often commits violent acts against the native population. These assaults on Palestinian space, often targeting property and livelihood, enjoy protection from the Israeli military and support from Israeli politicians. In the case of the events in early 2023, Israeli soldiers were reported to have stood by idly while settlers ravaged through the town, granting them protection, preventing Palestinian medical services from entering the town and even partaking in the violence against Palestinian inhabitants.⁶² Following the devastating attack, some Israeli politicians applauded the pogrom in violent rhetoric. Minister of Finance and settler Bezalel Smotrich, said: "I think the village of Huwara needs to be wiped out. I think the state of Israel should do it"⁶³. Zvika Fogel, a member of the Israeli Knesset echoed this in stating he wanted to see a "closed, burnt Huwara"⁶⁴ and a member of the Israeli Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee, Danny Danon, called for the town's shops and main road to

⁵⁹ Oren Ziv, "Huwara Reels after Night of Settler Terror under Army's Watch," +972 Magazine, February 27, 2023, <https://www.972mag.com/huwara-settler-violence-army/>.

⁶⁰ See for example B'Tselem's overview of settler violence in Huwara: B'Tselem, "Settler Violence = State Violence," B'Tselem, accessed July 31, 2024, https://www.btselem.org/settler_violence_updates_list?f%5Bo%5D=nf_location%3A203306.

⁶¹ Peter Beaumont, "'We Can't Even Cross': The West Bank Town Split in Two by Israel," *The Guardian*, November 9, 2023, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/09/palestinian-town-split-in-two-by-israel-huwara>.

⁶² Fatima Abdulkarim, "'A Closed, Burnt Huwara': How Israeli Settlers Launched a Pogrom," *The Nation*, March 16, 2023, <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/palestine-israel-huwara-pogrom/>.

⁶³ "Palestinian Village Should Be Wiped Out: Israeli Finance Minister," *Al Jazeera*, March 1, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/1/israel-arrests-settlers-after-anti-palestinian-pogrom>.

⁶⁴ Michael Bachner, "'We Need Burning Villages': Coalition Lawmaker Backs Unprecedented Settler Rampage," *Times of Israel*, February 27, 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/we-need-burning-villages-coalition-lawmaker-backs-unprecedented-settler-rampage/>.

remain “tightly closed”.⁶⁵ These comments clearly show political support for settler violence and closure of Huwara.

In addition to being surrounded by settlements, Huwara lies close to Nablus. This city has long been a bastion of Palestinian commerce and culture, as well as activism and resistance. In recent years, a new non-state armed group has appeared in Nablus, dedicated to violently resisting the occupation. Named the Lion’s Den, the group consists mostly of young men and breaks from existing historical resistance groups, carrying out numerous attacks against Israeli soldiers and settlers in and around Nablus.⁶⁶ Their emergence has led to an increase in Israeli military raids into Nablus and the surrounding area. Huwara serves as a gateway to this important Palestinian stronghold, situated along Route 60, connecting Nablus to other cities further south.⁶⁷ As a result, Huwara “was once one of the busiest commercial centres for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, its local businesses relying heavily on travelling Palestinians from out of town”.⁶⁸ Through its closure, Huwara’s thriving economy is detrimentally affected and historic Palestinian centres of commerce and culture are effectively separated.

4.2 Restrictions and patterns of occupation

Closure in Huwara is chiefly a physical process. After violent incidents, Israel has added checkpoints, roadblocks and barriers, forcibly closed down shops along the main road and since October 5th 2023, the main road was completely closed off for Palestinian inhabitants.⁶⁹ This recurring closure often follow attacks by Palestinians on Israeli soldiers and settlers, thus punishing an entire community for the actions of individuals, under the pretence of preventive security against future attacks. Huwara is not unique in this, for closure of villages after attacks on Israeli soldiers and settlers is a common practice. For example, in the period from January 2017 to October 2018, OCHA documented 93 such incidents affecting a total of 30 communities.⁷⁰ Closing off entire communities after violent incidents may constitute collective punishment, as reported by the UN Secretary General in 2017.⁷¹ Importantly, collective punishment is deemed illegal under international law.⁷² In enforcing the closure of Huwara, Israel may therefore be in violation of the international treaties it is party to.

The result of this closure highlights the stark contrast between Israeli settlers and native Palestinians. Settlers remain free to use the closed areas, traversing the contested space under the protection of the Israeli military. Palestinians however, are forbidden from traversing the same space and are subjected to the debilitating effects of the closure. As a result, the segregated areas the respective civilians can access, the imbalance in human rights they possess and the disproportionate freedoms they enjoy, all cement the inherent discriminatory disparity between Israeli settlers and Palestinians living under occupation.

⁶⁵ “Israel Besieges Nablus, MK Calls for Huwara to Be ‘Tightly Closed,’” *Middle East Monitor*, March 27, 2023, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230327-israel-besieges-nablus-mk-calls-for-huwara-to-be-tightly-closed/>.

⁶⁶ Bethan McKernan and Sufian Taha, “‘It’s Going to Explode’: Young Palestinians Look to the Gun amid Israeli Offensive,” *the Guardian*, September 21, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/21/its-going-to-explode-young-palestinians-look-to-the-gun-amid-israeli-offensive> and “Who Are the Lions’ Den Armed Group in the Occupied West Bank?,” *Al Jazeera*, October 26, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/10/26/who-are-the-lions-den-armed-group-in-occupied-west-bank-explainer>.

⁶⁷ Zena Al Tahhan, “‘Military Camp’: Palestinian Town of Huwara under 55-Day Israeli Closure,” *Al Jazeera*, November 29, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/11/29/military-camp-palestinian-town-of-huwara-under-55-day-israeli-closure>.

⁶⁸ Al Tahhan, “Military Camp”.

⁶⁹ See: Al Tahhan, “Israeli Settlers Attack Palestinians in Nablus amid Army Siege”, Beaumont, “‘We Can’t Even Cross’,” and Al Tahhan, “‘Military Camp’.”

⁷⁰ OCHA, “Over 700 Road Obstacles,” 8.

⁷¹ Secretary General of the United Nations, “Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem” (United Nations, April 13, 2017), 8.

⁷² GCIII, Art. 87, API Art. 75.2.d, APII Art. 4.2.b.

Additionally, closure serves to create a ‘calibrated chaos’. As Peteet describes the term: “Control through the creation of calibrated chaos, the changing of rules and procedures with no warning or explanation, is enacted daily at checkpoints (...) Unpredictability is the new norm.”⁷³ The abrupt and inconsistent nature of closure disrupts daily routines and increases spatial and temporal distance, sowing uncertainty and unpredictability. A trip to work, school or a family visit which would normally take minutes, can suddenly take hours.⁷⁴ This disruption of daily life thus reinforces Israeli control over the occupied population and is detrimental for Palestinians and their livelihoods.

4.3 Human needs

Closure as seen in Huwara has far reaching implications for the Palestinian population. The physical obstacles prevent them from working and earning a sufficient income, with the local economy having come to a halt as shops are closed and Palestinian traffic having become non-existent.⁷⁵ This effectively deprives Palestinians from satisfying their basic human need to work and subsequently their basic need for physical security, with financial insecurity possibly leading to failure to maintain housing and sustenance. Moreover, inhabitants struggle to satisfy basic human needs such as water and electricity, with facilities to do so now closed or inaccessible.⁷⁶ Similarly, physical closure obstructs access to education, with students and teachers not being able to reach their places of learning and schools closing out of fear for its students being harmed and harassed.⁷⁷ In addition, familial and communal bonds are severed by preventing people from visiting and socialising with their relatives and their friends.⁷⁸ Naturally, this is detrimental for the Palestinian population inhabiting Huwara, as their human needs for work, physical security, education, family and community are increasingly difficult to satisfy. This effectively makes Palestinian space in Huwara increasingly unliveable. This can be seen as a form of spaciocide, wherein the space itself is not visibly destructed, but it made to be inhabitable.⁷⁹ The physical closure also erects ethnic and geographic barriers between Palestinians and Israeli settlers traversing the same space, thus signalling a form of creeping apartheid.⁸⁰ In addition, because of physical obstacles, areas like Huwara are also separated from other Palestinian spaces, fragmenting the occupied Palestinian territory into small enclaves; like remote islands in a sea of Israeli control. Separated enclaves lead to separated pockets of Palestinian populations, culture and community, whose interconnectedness and state-building capacity become subject to the will and policy of the occupier. Therefore, this fragmentation hinders Palestinians’ satisfaction of their human need for self-determination and collective identity. As mentioned, this is a conscious strategy of the settler colonial project, aimed at erasing not just the Palestinian presence in the occupied land, but also Palestinian collective identity and ties to their land.

4.4 Access and structural violence

Evidently, the satisfaction of Palestinians’ human needs is severely obstructed through Israel’s policy of closure. Returning to Azar’s conceptualisation of human needs then, all three categories are impeded upon. Obstacles to income and basic needs such as electricity and water

⁷³ Julie Peteet, *Space and Mobility in Palestine*, 38.

⁷⁴ Beaumont, “‘We Can’t Even Cross’.”

⁷⁵ Al Tahhan, “‘Military Camp’.”

⁷⁶ Beaumont, “‘We Can’t Even Cross’.”

⁷⁷ “Israel Closes Palestinian Stores in Huwara,” *Middle East Monitor*, March 20, 2023, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230320-israel-closes-palestinian-stores-in-huwara/> and Howard Scott, Montaser Motia Ujvari, and Matthew Smith, “‘Our Identity Is Our Dignity’: Digital Transformations: Palestinian Aspirations, Idealism, Reality and Pragmatism,” *Education as Change* 28, no. 1 (2024): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.25159/1947-9417/13828>.

⁷⁸ Asi, “The Occupied West Bank since October 7.”

⁷⁹ Hanafi, “Spacio-Cide,” 108.

⁸⁰ Oren Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: Univ. Of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

fall neatly under his category of *security needs*, severing familial and communal ties and fragmenting collective identity can be conceptualised as *acceptance needs* and finally, work, education and self-determination could fall under the header *access needs*. However, as I argued in the previous theoretical chapter, a conceptual hierarchy of sorts should be made in his categorisation. As the closure of Huwara shows, access is a prerequisite for the satisfaction of all these needs. Even though closure may at first glance take an exclusively physical form, it deprives Palestinians of their ability to satisfy any of their needs, whether *security, acceptance or access*. As the UNHR puts it, these violations of human rights, “undermine the right of Palestinians to self-determination and to an adequate standard of living”.⁸¹ Therefore, access should be understood as not just “participation in political, market and decision-making institutions”⁸², but a broader, more significant *platform need* and a requirement for the satisfaction of all human needs.

Assuming, then, that access is a human need upon which all other needs rely, its deprivation is an inherently violent practice. As mentioned, Galtung understands violence as not just visible, manifest violence, but also seemingly invisible “avoidable insults to basic human needs, and more generally life, lowering the real levels of needs satisfaction below what is potentially possible”⁸³. Intentional closure by Israel and the deprivation of Palestinians’ human needs it constitutes, can clearly be understood as an avoidable insult to basic human needs and may amount to spaciocide. Therefore, closure is an inherently structural violent practice.

4.5 Conclusion

To conclude, the case of Huwara illustrates that restricted access through closure has devastating effects on the human needs of Palestinians. Closure restricts access to work, physical security, education, family and community; separation and fragmentation restrict access to self-determination and collective identity. This goes to show that closure is about more than just freedom of movement; it is in fact a requisite for human life. This makes closure not just a preventive security measure, but a conscious deprivation of Palestinians’ access to their basic human needs and is therefore in and of itself, a structural violent practice.

This is an important conclusion which can inform and alter our understanding of Israel’s policies in the occupied Palestinian territory. Physical closure, like enforced in Huwara, is a widely used practice by the Israeli occupation. From the infamous closure of Hebron’s Al-Shuhada street, temporary closure of cities like Jenin during military raids to the construction of the separation wall and the blockade of Gaza, closure is a widespread tool of the occupation. In legitimising these instances of closure, they are constantly presented as security measures, in service of preventing possible attacks on Israeli citizens. This creates a one-sided illusion of Israel being the victim of unprovoked Palestinian violence, only working to protect its own population through constructing physical barriers. The case of Huwara, however, shows that implementing this policy of closure, is in reality a structurally violent practice depriving the occupied Palestinians of their basic human needs.

⁸¹ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “Freedom of Movement Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem” (United Nations, February 2016).

⁸² Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 87.

⁸³ Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means*, 197.

5. Access to Al-Aqsa

In April 2023, as Muslims around the world celebrated the holy month of Ramadan and Jews prepared for Passover, joyful celebrations were overshadowed by distressing images of Israeli police restricting Palestinians' access to Al-Aqsa and violently evicting worshippers from the compound in the Old City of Jerusalem, one of the holiest places in Islam. Videos showed riot police breaking into the compound using tear gas and stun grenades, beating worshippers with batons and guns and arresting over 400 people.⁸⁴ However shocking, this violent incursion was not unprecedented. Israel routinely forbids Palestinians from entering Al-Aqsa, while violent evictions often pave the way for Jewish Israelis to enter the compound, known to them as Temple Mount, and perform religious rituals there. Restrictions and intrusions like this are not exclusive to, but often intensify during religious holidays. Illegal under international law and the agreed status quo of Al-Aqsa and widely understood to be intentionally provocative, these escorted incursions have been condemned by the international community. Sparking widespread outrage amongst Palestinians and Muslims, Israeli aggression towards Al-Aqsa have also led to eruptions of retaliatory violence.

To understand why Al-Aqsa is such a sensitive and contested space and a 'focal point' of the Israel-Palestine conflict, it is important to consider these instances of manifest violence in broader context. Closure, restrictions and attacks of Al-Aqsa do not exist in a vacuum, but rather have an extensive relevant context, characterised by religious significance, Israeli occupation, the established status quo and a history of violence. Restrictions of access to Al-Aqsa are components of harmful and discriminatory structures of Israeli occupation, including the ID-system, movement bans and the claiming of holy sites. Through these systematic practices, Israel deprives Palestinians' human needs of community and religion, constituting a structural violent practice.

5.1 Context

5.1.1 Religious significance

Al-Aqsa is the popular term for a plaza formally called Al-Haram al-Sharif, situated in the Old City of Jerusalem, in occupied East Jerusalem. The plaza houses the Dome of the Rock, the Al-Aqsa of Al-Qibli mosque, the Western or al-Buraq Wall and contains several other mosques, prayer rooms, courtyards and religious landmarks.⁸⁵ It is considered to be the third most holy place in Islam, after Mecca and Medina, because of its significance in the history of Islam. It is believed to be the site of the second mosque ever built and the destination of Muhammed's miraculous journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, where he led prophets in prayer and ascended to heaven to meet God.⁸⁶ Due to this immense religious meaning, Al-Aqsa is an important site for prayer and pilgrimage. Especially during Friday prayers, Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr, countless Muslims, especially Palestinians, travel to Al-Aqsa to worship, congregate, celebrate and mourn.⁸⁷

In Judaism, the plaza is known as Temple Mount and also has immense religious significance. Jerusalem is believed to be the centre of the world, with Temple Mount as the location of the two ancient Jewish temples.⁸⁸ In Jewish tradition, the First Temple was

⁸⁴ "Israeli Forces Storm Al-Aqsa, Attack Worshippers during Ramadan," Al Jazeera, April 5, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/5/israeli-police-attack-worshippers-in-jeruselems-al-aqsa-mosque>.

⁸⁵ Nadda Osman, "Al-Aqsa Mosque: The Significance of One of Islam's Holiest Sites," Middle East Eye, April 15, 2022, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/discover/palestine-al-aqsa-islam-one-of-islam-holiest-significance>.

⁸⁶ Osman, "Al-Aqsa Mosque," and Hillel Cohen, "The Temple Mount/Al-Aqsa in Zionist and Palestinian National Consciousness: A Comparative View," *Israel Studies Review* 32, no. 1 (June 1, 2017): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.3167/isr.2017.320102>.

⁸⁷ Osman, "Al-Aqsa Mosque,"

⁸⁸ Cohen, "The Temple Mount," 9.

constructed by Solomon, king of Israel, to house the Ark of the Covenant.⁸⁹ After its destruction under the Babylonians it was rebuilt, until this Second Temple too was destroyed by the Romans.⁹⁰ Temple Mount is also believed to be the site of the Foundation Stone from which the world was created and where Abraham bound his son Isaac for sacrifice.⁹¹ Finally, the plaza contains the Western Wall, which is believed the last remnant of the ancient wall around Temple Mount. Therefore, this is an important site for prayer and pilgrimage.

5.1.2 Illegal occupation

In addition to its religious significance, events at Al-Aqsa should be understood in context of Israeli occupation. As explained earlier, Israel has increasingly annexed and incorporated East Jerusalem, including the Old City, even though this was condemned by international bodies and judged illegal under international law. In this illegal annexation, Israel has increased its control over Al-Aqsa and the surrounding area. Following the '67 occupation, Israel razed the Moroccan Quarter to construct an open space in front of the Western Wall. The new square became the first symbolic Israeli space in East Jerusalem and increasingly became a central religious destination intertwined with political symbolism.⁹² In an effort to expand its control, Israel confiscated Mughrabi Gate connecting the Western Wall to the Al-Aqsa plaza and took control over two buildings in the compound to establish police headquarters.⁹³ Since then, Israel has closed most of the 15 gates that originally allowed entry into the compound, often opening only one and controlling it with a heavily armed military and police presence.⁹⁴

5.1.3 Status Quo

This increased Israeli presence around the plaza, Al-Aqsa is officially still in the hands of the Jordanian Waqf, an Islamic endowment tasked with custodianship over the site. In line with historic tradition, the Waqf manages the site and allows non-Muslims to visit the compound, but not pray there. This arrangement is colloquially known as the Status Quo, with the Waqf managing the site and Israel controlling the site's access and security.⁹⁵ Under this Status Quo, extremist Jewish groups are not allowed to enter Al-Aqsa and should be banned by the Israeli authorities.⁹⁶ These hardline groups known as 'Temple Mount groups', advocate the destruction of Al-Aqsa and the creation of a Third Temple.⁹⁷ The international community, the Israeli Supreme Court and the Chief Rabbinate of Israel have opposed this extremist agenda and voiced their support for the agreement, but Temple Mount groups have enjoyed political and financial backing from Israeli politicians and have increasingly been allowed to enter Al-Aqsa under police and military protection.⁹⁸

5.1.4 Violent past

Despite this agreed status quo, Israel remains in de facto control over who has access to Al-Aqsa. In violation of the agreement, Israel frequently denies or restricts Palestinians' access to the site, while allowing Jewish Israelis, including extremist politicians and organisations,

⁸⁹ "Temple Mount | Sacred Site, Jerusalem," Britannica, July 25, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Temple-Mount>.

⁹⁰ Britannica, "Temple Mount."

⁹¹ Osman, "Al-Aqsa Mosque," and Cohen, "The Temple Mount," 9.

⁹² Nazmi Jubeh, "Jerusalem's Haram Al-Sharif: Crucible of Conflict and Control," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 45, no. 2 (2016): 23–37, 23-25.

⁹³ Jubeh, "Jerusalem's Haram al-Sharif," 25.

⁹⁴ Osman, "Al-Aqsa Mosque,"

⁹⁵ Adam Sella, "What Does the 'Status Quo' Mean at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque?," Al Jazeera, April 11, 2023, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/11/hldwhat-does-the-status-quo-mean-at-jeruselems-al-aqsa-mosque?traffic_source=KeepReading.

⁹⁶ Zena Al Tahhan, "Who Are the Jewish Groups Entering the Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound?," Al Jazeera, April 12, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/12/who-are-jewish-groups-entering-al-aqsa-mosque#:~:text=Who%20are%20these%20groups%3F>.

⁹⁷ Al Tahhan, "Who Are The Jewish Groups."

⁹⁸ Al Tahhan, "Who Are The Jewish Groups."

unencumbered and protected access to provocatively enter the site and perform religious rituals.⁹⁹ Such transgressions, which intensify yearly during Ramadan, often lead to heightened tensions, with Israeli forces violently barring thousands of Palestinians from entering Al-Aqsa and sparking retaliatory violence against Israel. One such crucial incident sparked the Second Intifada (or Al-Aqsa Intifada), when Ariel Sharon entered Al-Aqsa in the company of over a thousand armed soldiers and police.¹⁰⁰ In the years since, such incursions have resulted in violence against Palestinians, mass arrests and military operations.¹⁰¹

5.2 Restrictions and patterns of occupation

Israeli control over Palestinian's access to Al-Aqsa is symbolic of the illegal occupation of Palestinian land and holy sites. The Israeli occupation restricts Palestinians access to Al-Aqsa through a variety of broader oppressive policies, most notably the ID-system, movement bans and the claiming of holy sites.

5.2.1 ID-system

Firstly, Israel has imposed a complex system of Identification Documents (*hawiyyah*) on the occupied Palestinian population, which limits their mobility and orders them into distinct categories. IDs are commonly distinguished based on the colour of the mandatory sleeve in which they must be carried. Israeli citizens and most Palestinians living in Israel have 'true blue' IDs, meaning they have a blue ID and Israeli citizenship. Palestinians living in occupied East Jerusalem also have a blue ID, but lack citizenship. Instead, they have a 'temporary residency', excluding them from participation in Israeli elections and politics, while simultaneously preventing them from obtaining a West Bank ID or Palestinian citizenship.¹⁰² Palestinians living in Gaza have orange IDs and West Bank residents have green ones. The type of ID determines the degree and type of access one has. Orange and Green ID-holders are denied exit from Gaza and the West Bank respectively. This means they are denied access to Israel, East Jerusalem but also internationally, since Israel controls the borders. True Blue IDs however, grant access to all of Israel, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Jerusalemites and their unique situation, require temporary Jordanian passports or Israeli-issued travel permits.¹⁰³ Consequently, West Bank and Gaza residents are barred from accessing Al-Aqsa without an Israeli permit. Contrastingly, Jewish Israelis are free to traverse occupied East Jerusalem and its many holy sites. This confusing distinction based on the access they have to different spaces, creates a hierarchal order between Israelis and Palestinians in different areas. Israel distinguishes not only 'first-class' Israeli citizens from 'second-class' Palestinians, but also fragments Palestinians into different groups. As a result, different degrees of access create a hierarchy between people, leading to feelings of superiority and envy between people, thus further dividing Palestinian society and identity.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Motassem A Dalloul, "Is Jordan Really the Custodian of Jerusalem's Holy Sites?," *Middle East Monitor*, January 19, 2023, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230119-is-jordan-really-the-custodian-of-jerusalems-holy-sites/>.

¹⁰⁰ Richard Kreitner, "September 28, 2000: Ariel Sharon Visits the Temple Mount, Sparking the Second Intifada," *The Nation*, September 28, 2015, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/september-28-2000-ariel-sharon-visits-the-temple-mount-sparking-the-second-intifada/>.

¹⁰¹ For a comprehensive overview of raids, closures and restrictions at Al-Aqsa between 2014 and 2022, see: Dalia Hatuqa and Alia Chughtai, "Timeline: Al-Aqsa Raids, Closures and Restrictions," *Al Jazeera*, April 20, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/20/timeline-raids-closures-and-restrictions-on-al-aqsa>.

¹⁰² Helga Tawil-Souri, "Uneven Borders, Coloured (Im)Mobilities: ID Cards in Palestine/Israel," *Geopolitics* 17, no. 1 (2012): 153–76, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2011.562944>, 158.

¹⁰³ Tawil-Souri, "Uneven Borders," 159.

¹⁰⁴ Peteet, *Space and Mobility*, 8.

5.1.2 Movement bans

Secondly, Israel uses targeted movement bans to restrict Palestinians' access to Al-Aqsa. Green ID holders require permits to leave the West Bank, whether for religious, medical, business or tourism reasons. Obtaining a permit from Israel is notoriously difficult and it can be revoked at the whim of the Israeli regime. Under the notion of 'security threats', the Israeli internal security service Shin Bet and Israeli police impose movement bans on Palestinians, which are often arbitrary, baseless or constitute collective punishment. For instance, relatives of arrested Palestinians often receive automatic movement bans. Additionally, activists and outspoken critics of Israel, are often targeted with bans. In many occasions, a simple Tweet or Facebook-post can lead to a ban. For Palestinians in Jerusalem, bans often take shape as house arrest or area-specific bans for the Old City or Al-Aqsa.¹⁰⁵

Fighting a movement ban is a strenuous endeavour. Appeals have to go through various government agencies, in a complex and obscure process characterised by administrative flexibility, wide discretion, conflicting decisions and changing decrees.¹⁰⁶ Israeli lawyer Yael Berda describes this process as 'effective inefficiency'; an administratively inefficient system achieving two important goals: "to create Palestinian dependency on the administrative system— to construct, maintain, and widen the scope of monitoring and control; and to create uncertainty, disorientation, and suspicion within Palestinian society."¹⁰⁷ Because of this, appeals are expensive and tedious affairs, preventing many Palestinians from even trying to appeal. As a result, many Palestinians cannot access Al-Aqsa because of movement bans and lacking permits. Importantly, this severely oppressive permit policy is judged illegal under international law, according to the OHCHR.¹⁰⁸

Moreover, Israel utilises discriminatory collective punishment to deny entire demographic categories access to Al-Aqsa. People between the ages of 12 and 50 are regularly banned altogether. Young Palestinians (chiefly males) are denied access, while children and seniors are allowed to enter. Israel tries to legitimise this measure as a security policy, grounded in unfounded claims of the violent threats posed by young Palestinians. Consequently, Israel enforces the collective punishment of an entire segment of the Palestinian population with a blanket ban. In addition, Palestine has a really young population, with people between the age of 15 and 40 making up 42.3% of the population, while the elderly (60+) only account for 5.7%.¹⁰⁹ Denying this entire age group thus effectively excludes the bulk of the Palestinian population from accessing Al-Aqsa. Amounting to collective punishment based on demographic characteristic, this policy therefore deemed illegal under International Humanitarian Law (IHL).¹¹⁰

5.1.3 Claiming holy sites

Thirdly, the Israeli regime restricts access to Al-Aqsa through claiming the holy site. While Palestinians are banned, Jewish Israelis progressively intrude Al-Aqsa, practicing their religion there and calling for the desecration and destruction of the Islamic holy site.¹¹¹ This is part of a larger trend of Israel claiming holy sites and extending exclusive Jewish Israeli control over them. For instance, Israel regularly restricts Palestinian Christians from accessing their holy sites during religious celebrations. In similar fashion to the events at Al-Aqsa during

¹⁰⁵ See for example: Hanady Halawani, "I Am a Daughter of Jerusalem - and yet I Cannot Enter Al-Aqsa Mosque," Middle East Eye, April 11, 2023, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/aqsa-mosque-how-israel-punishes-me-devotion>.

¹⁰⁶ Yael Berda, 'Yael Berda, *Living Emergency* (Stanford University Press, 2017), 35.

¹⁰⁷ Berda, *Living Emergency*, 35.

¹⁰⁸ OHCHR, "Freedom of Movement," 4.

¹⁰⁹ Upon request, the data was obtained from Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023.

¹¹⁰ OHCHR, 'Freedom of Movement', 2.

¹¹¹ "Temple Mount Groups Pledge Prizes for Animal Sacrifice at Al-Aqsa Mosque," *Middle East Monitor*, April 1, 2023, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230401-temple-mount-groups-pledge-prizes-for-animal-sacrifice-at-al-aqsa-mosque/>, and Al Tahhan, "Who Are The Jewish Groups."

Ramadan, Palestinian Christians were violently obstructed from accessing the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Old City during Easter.¹¹²

Moreover, Palestinians are concerned that the systematic restrictions and transgressions at Al-Aqsa might pave the way for a more permanent claim of the site. Fuelling fear for Al-Aqsa, the events at the Ibrahimi Mosque have set a discerning precedent. In 1994, an American-Israeli settler went into this mosque, a holy site for both Muslims and Jews in the West Bank city of Hebron, and massacred 29 Palestinians and injured 150 more.¹¹³ Following the attack, Palestinians were further victimised through a series of ‘security measures’ imposed by Israel. Israel divided the Ibrahimi Mosque, with a Muslim section and a, much larger, Jewish section. Israel also closed down the bustling city centre and its shops, forbade Palestinians from using access roads and constructed strict checkpoints.¹¹⁴ In order to access the mosque, Palestinian must cross several checkpoints, with the only remaining entrance being heavily guarded and featuring an AI-controlled machine gun.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, the mosque is frequently closed for Palestinians, to facilitate worship and celebrations for Jewish settlers. This draconian reaction to an Israeli attack on a Palestinian Islamic holy site, aimed purely at protecting the Jewish settlers, leads many Palestinians to fear the same fate for Al-Aqsa.

5.2 Human needs

Evidently, Israel restricts Palestinians’ access to Al-Aqsa in a myriad of ways, all emblematic for the broader policies of the occupation. This harmful restriction of access deprives Palestinians of several human needs. Most obviously, denying access to Al-Aqsa deprives Palestinians’ need for religion. Being such an important historic and religious site, denying access to it prevents Palestinians from practicing their religion in a place most holy them, especially during religious holidays. Moreover, the site has immense cultural and historical value in the Palestinian collective consciousness, being a national symbol and a cornerstone of Palestinian identity. As Nadda Osman notes: “For Palestinians, al-Aqsa serves more than a religious function and is the centre of the cultural life, where they go to celebrate, congregate and mourn”.¹¹⁶ Additionally, Al-Aqsa is a symbol for the Palestinian struggle, representing the deep-rooted longing for a free Palestine with East Jerusalem as its liberated capital.¹¹⁷ Restricting access for Palestinians and claiming the space for Jewish Israelis should thus be understood as a clear effort to erase Palestinian culture and identity, by severing the ties Palestinians have to the space, undermining its role in the Palestinian collective consciousness and amplifying the Jewish narrative. Access to Al-Aqsa is thus a requisite for building, maintaining and reinforcing a communal and national identity and a sense of belonging. Denying access is therefore a deprivation of Palestinians’ human need for community and identity.

¹¹² See: “Jerusalem Church Leaders Decry Israel’s ‘Heavy-Handed’ Easter Restrictions,” Middle East Eye, April 12, 2023, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-jerusalem-easter-church-leaders-decry-heavy-handed-restrictions>, and Maram Humaid, “Despite Israeli Restrictions, Christians Celebrate Holy Flame,” Al Jazeera, April 16, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/4/16/despite-israeli-bans-holy-flame-celebrated-in-jerusalem-gaza>.

¹¹³ “The Ibrahimi Mosque Massacre 29 Years Later: The Victims Are Still Paying the Price,” Wafa Agency, 2024, <https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/133561>.

¹¹⁴ Nigel Wilson, “Remembering the Ibrahimi Mosque Massacre,” Al Jazeera, February 26, 2016, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/2/26/remembering-the-ibrahimi-mosque-massacre>.

¹¹⁵ “Israel Sets up AI-Controlled Machine Gun in Occupied Hebron,” *Middle East Monitor*, September 27, 2022, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20220927-israel-sets-up-ai-controlled-machine-gun-in-occupied-hebron/>.

¹¹⁶ Osman, “Al-Aqsa.”

¹¹⁷ Cohen, “The Temple Mount,” 7-9.

5.3 Access & structural violence

Relating Israel's restrictive policies to Azar's theoretical framework, provides an interesting insight into the nature of human needs. First, with its complex ID-system, Israel orders society into different classes based on their degree of access, fragmenting one collective Palestinian identity based on their individual access. This obstructs one unified Palestinian "socially accepted and recognised communal identity"¹¹⁸, thus constituting a deprivation of Palestinians' acceptance needs. Second, movement bans target specific groups and individuals, excluding them based on criteria imposed by the Israeli regime. This exclusion bars them from effective participation, thus constituting a deprivation of access needs, as defined in Azar's model. Third, the claiming of holy sites erases Palestinian religion, culture and history. Through claiming space imbued with cultural and historical meaning, Israel severs Palestinian connection to it and replaces it with proclaimed Jewish Israeli sovereignty and ownership. Through this process, Palestinians' collective identity is erased, depriving them of their acceptance needs.

Al-Aqsa thus shows that access is not just about movement, nor does it just affect security needs such as access to land and work, but access is a requirement for constructing and sustaining a collective communal and national identity. Gathering, celebrating, mourning, worshipping and just being in a space with such a profound role in the collective consciousness, is vital for a feeling of communal belonging. Depriving access to it, therefore underlies the deprivation of the human need for participation, community and identity.

The deprivation of access to Al-Aqsa is intentional and thus avoidable. The intricate web of administrative obstacles of the ID-system and movement bans and the physical and symbolic claiming of holy sites, all work as a systematic effort to combat a collective Palestinian identity and structurally deprive Palestinians of their human needs. This means that the avoidable insults to Palestinians' human needs, constitute a structural violent practice.

5.4 Conclusion

In short, the case of Al-Aqsa shows that restricted access to Al-Aqsa is detrimental to the satisfaction of Palestinians' human needs. Through the ID-system, movement bans and the claiming of holy sites, Israel deprives Palestinians of their human need for religion, community and identity. This suggests that access concerns not just movement, but is a requirement for achieving a collective identity. This makes restricted access to Al-Aqsa a structural deprivation of Palestinians' human needs and therefore constitutes a structural violent practice.

This conclusion shows the gravity and far-reaching consequences that Israeli policy concerning Al-Aqsa has. It is more than a breach of international agreements and more than a provocation, it is a structural violent practice which deprives the occupied Palestinian population of its human needs. This insight can inform understanding of Israeli policy and the Palestinian outrage it sparks. Incursions that may seem small or arbitrary and the instances of manifest violence that often follow, can thus be better understood.

¹¹⁸ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 87.

6. Denial of foreign nationals to the oPt

Up until this point, this thesis has been focussed on restrictions of Palestinians' access within and out of the oPt. However, with the Israeli occupation in control over Palestine's borders, it also controls who can enter and stay in the oPt. To this end, in December 2022, the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) published a document detailing the procedure for long-term entry to the oPt. The 'Procedure for Entry and Residence of Foreigners in the Judea and Samaria Area' describes the procedures foreign nationals have to go through to obtaining long-term visas for visiting, working or studying in the oPt. This document codifies practices that were already in place; practices that severely limit foreign nationals' access to the oPt. It has therefore been condemned by human rights organisations, educational institutes and civil society, as it works to isolate Palestine from the rest of the world and impedes on several universal human rights.¹¹⁹ Building on this judgement, I argue that through Israel's visa procedure it restricts and denies foreign nationals' access to the oPt, fragmenting families and isolating Palestine, while simultaneously monitoring Palestinian society and extending Israeli sovereignty over Palestinian land. This results in the deprivation of Palestinians' human needs for family life, identity, education, self-actualisation and self-determination, which constitutes a structural violent practice.

6.1 Context

The new visa procedure outlines restrictions on foreign nationals' access to the oPt, preventing them from staying long-term. First, the procedure requires applicants to divulge extensive personal information. Besides regular personal details, this also includes names and contact details of relatives and acquaintances in the oPt, as well as information on land they may own or inherit.¹²⁰ Second, upon entry, applicants may be extensively and invasively interrogated by Israeli border security. These mostly target Palestinians living abroad, but also anyone with Arab names or backgrounds. These people are systematically held and questioned for hours, often facing intimidating, humiliating and inhumane treatment.¹²¹ Third, there is a considerable financial restriction. Border security may demand a bond of up to 70.000 shekel (over €17.000), to ensure visitors will leave upon expiration of their visa.¹²² Fourth, foreign spouses of Palestinians have to apply for a visa, even when their home countries have an agreed visa exemption with Israel. Once accepted, they are forced to leave the country periodically to renew their visa and lasting residence in the oPt is prohibited.¹²³ Fifth, Israel exercises control over the number, duration and type of work and study visas granted to foreign nationals. Specifically targeting academics, Israel allows a maximum 100 lecturers and 150 students from abroad, limits their duration to five non-consecutive years and decides what fields of study are

¹¹⁹ See for example: "Center for the Defence of the Individual - HaMoked to the Minister of Defense: The Revised Procedure for the Entry of Foreigners to the OPT Is Still Fundamentally Flawed and Must Be Frozen until It Is Amended," HaMoked, September 14, 2022, <https://hamoked.org/document.php?dID=Updates2327>, and "Call to Action Birzeit University Rejects Israeli Measures against Academic Freedom," Birzeit University, March 12, 2022, <https://www.birzeit.edu/en/news/call-action-birzeit-university-rejects-israeli-measures-against-academic-freedom>.

¹²⁰ Alice Speri, "Israel Tightens Restrictions on Travel to the Occupied Territories," *The Intercept*, May 13, 2022, <https://theintercept.com/2022/05/13/israel-palestine-west-bank-travel-restrictions/>.

¹²¹ Amira Hass, "What Happens at Israel's Border Crossings Is Calculated Humiliation - Opinion," *Haaretz*, August 26, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/2018-08-27/ty-article-opinion/.premium/what-happens-at-israels-border-crossings-is-calculated-humiliation/0000017f-f7e7-d460-afff-ffe70a900000>.

¹²² "Breaking down Israel's Regulations on Foreigners in the West Bank," *Al Jazeera*, September 5, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/5/israels-permit-rules-restricting-palestinian-life-explainer>.

¹²³ "The Israeli Government's New Restrictions of Entry for Foreigners into the West Bank - This Is Apartheid," *Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem (ARIJ)*, September 28, 2022, <https://www.arij.org/latest/the-israeli-governments-new-restrictions-of-entry-for-foreigners-into-the-west-bank/>.

permissible.¹²⁴ Sixth, citizens of Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Bahrein or South Sudan, are not allowed to enter the oPt. For the Palestinian diaspora in Jordan, numbering some 2 million people, this means they are officially denied access to their former homes and families still residing in Palestine. Through this plethora of procedural requirements, Israel effectively restricts foreign nationals' entry to the oPt.

In addition to these restrictions, applicants may be denied a visa for countless reasons. Volunteers of the Right to Enter campaign, a grassroots organisation working to help Palestinian families reunify, aid foreigners who are denied entry and advocate against Israel's entry procedures, describe the many reasons for denial. In their eyes, the language of the procedure is ambivalent, being strict while remaining vague, granting COGAT wide discretion, reminiscent of the 'effective inefficiency' of the permit system.¹²⁵ Visa denials are commonly based on 'risk to security and public order'. This reason is applied to many cases, but primarily targets applicants involved in activism, advocacy or engaged in the Palestinian cause in any way. Additionally, risk of 'entrenchment' and 'illegal immigration' is used to deny applications, utilised to prevent long-term residence.¹²⁶ Also, COGAT claims applicants used the 'wrong port of entry', though the right port of entry is not specified transparently in the procedure. Moreover, applicants are denied entry when they refuse to divulge sensitive personal details or are accused of lying to Israeli border security. Lastly, many applicants are never offered any explanation for their denial. As the case for many Israeli policies towards Palestinians, the visa procedure is highly obscure.

6.2 Restrictions and patterns of occupation

6.2.1 Separating the diaspora

The restrictions Israel imposes on the access for foreign nationals has impactful consequences for the Palestinian diaspora, separating and fragmenting families and Palestinian identity. Through the Nakba, '67 Naksa, two Intifadas, numerous military campaigns and the Israeli settlement project, Palestinians have lived through over 75 years of displacement, dispossession and violence at the hands of the Israeli occupation. This has led many Palestinians to flee their land in search of safety and a better future abroad. As a result, nearly 7 million Palestinians now live in other countries.¹²⁷ The new procedure cements a practice that has long been in place: Israel's systematic denial of Palestinians' right to return to their homeland. Palestinians with Jordanian papers are banned altogether, except in "exceptional and humanitarian cases".¹²⁸ As described, the other 5 million are structurally denied for a variety of reasons. Additionally, COGAT makes no provisions for lasting visits of relatives other than spouses.¹²⁹ This makes it impossible for other relatives to visit their families in Palestine long-term or attempt to reside there again. Moreover, Palestinians with foreign partners cannot be together in Palestine for an extended period of time due to the spousal restrictions. Also, the financial burden of the required bonds prevents many from visiting. Not just the bond proves expensive, but appealing the almost inevitable denial is an arduous process. An expensive lawyer is required for successful appeals, with 'success' merely being an approval of a visit, citizenship is impossible.¹³⁰ Finally, more than just the immediate restrictions, the procedure has a strong discouraging factor and psychological impact. The strenuous application process, the financial burden and the dehumanising treatment by border security,

¹²⁴ Birzeit University, 'Call to Action'.

¹²⁵ Berda, *Living Emergency*, 35.

¹²⁶ "West Bank: New Entry Rules Further Isolate Palestinians," Human Rights Watch, January 23, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/01/23/west-bank-new-entry-rules-further-isolate-palestinians>.

¹²⁷ Ola Awad, "Brief Report on the Population of Palestine at the End of 2021," Arab Center Washington DC, January 3, 2022, <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/brief-report-on-the-population-of-palestine-at-the-end-of-2021/>.

¹²⁸ HaMoked, 'HaMoked to the Minister of Defense'.

¹²⁹ "RTE Briefing on Feb 2022 Announced COGAT Procedures – April 2022" (Campaign for the Right to Enter the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), April 2022).

¹³⁰ Interview conducted with volunteers from the Right to Enter campaign on May 11, 2023.

prevent many Palestinians abroad from even attempting to visit. Moreover, the anxiety, stress and strain that separation and obstacles to unification put on Palestinians is understandably immense and detrimental to mental health and familial stability.¹³¹ In short, families spread over different countries are torn apart by Israel's restrictions of their access and the diaspora's ties to its ancestral homeland are severed, fragmenting Palestinian families and national identity.

6.2.2 Barring foreigners

Besides Palestinians living abroad, other foreign nationals are also restricted from accessing the oPt. By discouraging and obstructing long-term stays, Israel controls the flow of information in and out of the oPt and isolates Palestine. Firstly, Israel hinders foreign engagement in the Palestinian cause. By specifically targeting activists, journalists, humanitarian workers and foreign critics, Israel prevents foreign advocates from engaging in Palestinian civil society and raising awareness of the Palestinian struggle. In this determination of who can enter and what work they can do, Israel effectively exercises control over the flow of information on the Palestinian plight. Simultaneously, the regime actively strives to maintain and increase the flow of foreigners to Israel. It deliberately attracts tourists, invites foreign professionals and diplomats on whitewashing trips and draws Jews worldwide to Israel, sometimes even covering their costs through Birthright.¹³² In doing so, Israel tries to normalise its existence, foster a sense of legitimacy and garner international support for its cause. With this vigorous effort to isolate and suppress Palestine, while pushing the Israeli narrative, Israel exercises control over what the world gets to see and more importantly, what it does not.

Additionally, Israel obstructs academics from abroad from working in the oPt, effectively shaping Palestinian education and controlling their access to information. In the new procedure, COGAT holds the power to determine which fields of study it deems permissible and whether an academic will contribute "to the Area's academic education or its economy."¹³³ Also, when an applicant's visa is granted, they have to leave the country periodically to renew their visa and after 5 cumulative years, are forced to leave for at least 9 months to be allowed entry again.¹³⁴ Finally, they also have to hope to be one of only 100 lecturers allowed that year. Consequently, building a lasting academic career in the oPt is a difficult ordeal. Educational institutes depend and thrive on a flow of international staff and students and international exchange and academic freedom are essential for academic learning. Violating academic freedom and the autonomy of universities, Israel thus controls the curriculum of Palestinian students and their access to knowledge.¹³⁵ In conclusion, Israel strives to isolate Palestine from the rest of the world, by obstructing engagement in the Palestinian struggle and controlling the flow of information.

6.2.3 Monitoring and surveillance

Besides isolating Palestine, the entry procedure also works to monitor and surveil the Palestinian population, networks and land. By demanding extensive information, about the applicant, their familial and social ties to Palestinians in the oPt and ownership and possible inheritance of land, COGAT and border security gather detailed information about interpersonal networks and property in the oPt.¹³⁶ This practice is not unique, as Israel subjects Palestinians to constant invasive surveillance through policies of questioning, photographing and documenting Palestinians and their movement, and advanced technology like artificial

¹³¹ Interview with RTE.

¹³² For information on Israel's whitewashing through tourism, see for example: "Ethical Travel to Palestine & Challenging Apartheid Tourism," US Campaign for Palestinian Rights, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://uscpr.org/activist-resource/ethical-travel-to-palestine-challenging-apartheid-tourism/>.

¹³³ COGAT, 'Procedure', 21.

¹³⁴ COGAT, 'Procedure', 19.

¹³⁵ Birzeit University, 'Call to Action'.

¹³⁶ Speri, 'Israel tightens restrictions.'

intelligence, facial recognition software and large-scale camera surveillance.¹³⁷ Besides mapping Palestinian networks, the gathered data can also provide Israel with munition to blackmail Palestinians into cooperation.¹³⁸ Moreover, the collection of information on land could enable further dispossession. As described, Israel structurally steals Palestinian land through forced evictions and demolition of Palestinian structures to facilitate the construction and expansion of settlements. This causes fears that information shared about land owned by Palestinians living abroad, might lead to denial of their applications in order to pave the way for the expropriation of those lands.¹³⁹ These fears are not unfounded, since Israel has a long history of legally justifying the theft of land by the physical absence of its Palestinian owners, most notably with the infamous Absentee's Property Law.¹⁴⁰ Ergo, the demand for extensive personal information and interrogations by border security are components of Israel's policies of surveillance and dispossession.

6.2.4 Extending sovereignty

COGAT's visa procedure and the wider policy it is part of, work to expand and bolster Israeli proclaimed sovereignty over the oPt, specifically the West Bank. Many parts of the document are not new and were already common practice, but have now been explicitly codified.¹⁴¹ Exercising control over the flow of people and information into the oPt extends Israeli control and reinforces its asserted sovereignty over the oPt. This is exemplified by GOCAT's exclusive referral to the West Bank by its Israeli names (Judea and Samaria) or the 'Area', completely ignoring and erasing Palestinians' cultural and historical ties and connection to the native land and the cornerstone of their collective identity this land represents. Furthermore, the procedure formalises the separation and disparity between native Palestinians and Israeli settlers in the oPt. While foreign nationals who wish to visit, work or study in the oPt are restricted in their access, doing so in illegal Israeli settlements exempts them from the visa requirements. This segregated policy for civilians living in the same area and the deprivation of rights of one of those groups, constitutes an apartheid regime.¹⁴² Alas, the entry procedure for foreign nationals strengthens Israel's purported sovereignty over the oPt, erasing Palestinians' connection to their land and cementing their position as a separated, inferior group in society.

6.3 Human needs

Clearly, Israel restricts foreign nationals' access to the oPt in various ways, all of which have a damaging effect on Palestinians' human needs. Firstly, through Israel's restrictions imposed on the Palestinian diaspora, families are separated and Palestinian identity is fragmented. Family life is a basic human need. By separating relatives and preventing them from seeing each other for longer periods of time, this need is deprived. Stable familial bonds are hard to maintain without physical contact, gathering and simply spending time together. This does not just apply to immediate relatives, but also for the extended family and family friends, which serves as an important communal unit in Palestinian culture. Moreover, restricting access for the 7 million Palestinians in the diaspora, works to fragment Palestinian national identity. After generations of Palestinians have been forced from Palestine, they are now systematically denied their right to return to their ancestral homeland. In a culture and collective identity in

¹³⁷ Mona Shtaya, "Nowhere to Hide: The Impact of Israel's Digital Surveillance Regime on the Palestinians," Middle East Institute, April 27, 2022, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/nowhere-hide-impact-israels-digital-surveillance-regime-palestinians>.

¹³⁸ See for example: "Israel's Automated Occupation: Jerusalem," Al Jazeera, May 13, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/the-listening-post/2023/5/13/israels-automated-occupation-jerusalem>.

¹³⁹ Speri, 'Israel tightens restrictions'.

¹⁴⁰ Mustafa Abu Sneh, "Explained: How Israel's Absentees' Property Law Keeps Palestinians from Their Homes," Middle East Eye, January 22, 2022, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-palestinian-absentees-property-law-eviction-homes-explained>.

¹⁴¹ Interview with RTE.

¹⁴² ARIJ, "The Israeli Government's New Restrictions," 3.

which the occupied homeland plays such a foundational role, severing the historic and cultural ties between the diaspora and their land means depriving them of their human need for collective identity. This can once again be understood as an intentional effort to erase Palestinian presence in the occupied territory through spaciocide. Israel first made the land unliveable, whether through space annihilation and ethnic cleansing during the Nakba and the '67 war for example, or through creeping apartheid ever since, forcing people to flee. After this 'voluntary transfer'¹⁴³, refugees' right to return is systematically denied, thus erasing the Palestinian presence.

Secondly, through Israel's restricted access for foreigners it isolates Palestinian society and controls Palestinians' education, depriving their human need for self-determination, national identity, education and self-actualisation. Isolation of Palestinian society means no international collaboration, advocacy and engagement, hindering self-determination and connectedness to the world. In our globalised society, international cooperation is essential, restricting it holds Palestine back and deliberately keeps it small and isolated. Moreover, control over the flow of information in and out of Palestine prevents meaningful international awareness and engagement, losing legitimacy and sovereignty over Palestinian land and support for the Palestinian cause. Meanwhile, the Israeli narrative is pushed vigorously onto the international and geopolitical stages. This process further erases Palestinian identity and their struggle at the international level. In addition, Israeli control over students, teachers and their curriculum obstructs Palestinians' access to education and information. Academic freedom and the autonomy of universities are violated, depriving Palestinians of their human need for education. In turn, their potential for self-actualisation and self-determination are also deprived.

Thirdly, Israel's extensive monitoring and surveillance violate Palestinians' privacy and facilitate dispossession which deprives Palestinians' human need for collective identity. While privacy may not be theorised as an inherent human need, it is a fundamental human right, as codified in Article 12 of the UDHR¹⁴⁴, that underlies the human need for dignity and control.¹⁴⁵ In addition, dispossession through visa denials sever Palestinians' ties to their ancestral homeland. The Palestinian cause and Palestinian collective identity are deeply interwoven with their native land, so cutting people off and stealing their land deprives them of their human need for collective identity.

Fourthly, extending Israel's asserted sovereignty over the oPt deprives Palestinians human need for identity. In claiming sovereignty over native land that has been inhabited by Palestinians for generations, Israel further erases Palestinian historic and cultural ties to their land and obstructs their national and communal identity, replacing it with the settler colonial state and the Israeli narrative.

6.4 Access & structural violence

In terms of Azar's theorising of human needs, Israel's restriction of foreign nationals' access to the oPt impacts Palestinians' acceptance and access needs. Fragmenting families and communities and denying the diaspora's right of return, hinders their familial, communal and national identity, thus depriving them of their acceptance needs. Isolating and segregating Palestine through restricting foreigners' access suppresses and erases Palestinian identity, again constituting a deprivation of acceptance needs. Obstructing Palestinians' access to education and knowledge, obstructs their autonomy, self-actualisation and self-determination, thus depriving their access needs. Israel's surveillance and dispossession of Palestinian land, hinders Palestinians' right to privacy and need for human dignity and need for collective identity, comprising a deprivation of their acceptance needs. Finally, extending Israeli

¹⁴³ Hanafi, "Spaciocide", 107.

¹⁴⁴ UDHR art. 12.

¹⁴⁵ "Data Protection | European Data Protection Supervisor," European Data Protection Supervisor, February 28, 2024, https://www.edps.europa.eu/data-protection/data-protection_en#:~:text=What%20is%20Privacy%3F.

sovereignty over the oPt deprives Palestinians' need for collective identity, meaning acceptance needs.

Israel's restrictions on the entry of foreign nationals illustrates how access is not just about movement or security, but an important requisite for collective identity and self-determination. Open access for Palestine to the outside world and vice versa is necessary for satisfying many human needs, since in today's globalised society, isolation and fragmentation severely harms numerous aspects of Palestinians' lives. Again, this shows how access can underly other human needs.

The restriction of foreigners' access to the oPt and the resulting deprivation of Palestinians' human rights is the consequence of official Israeli policy, and therefore avoidable. Even though these practices have long been the de facto reality for foreigners and Palestinians, they have now been cemented in procedure, suggesting a deliberate effort to restrict foreign nationals' access to the oPt. This makes the effects of the procedure systematic avoidable insults to human needs, constituting a structural violent practice.

6.5 Conclusion

To sum up, this case demonstrates that restricted access of foreign nationals to the oPt has a destructive effect on Palestinians' human needs. Restricting the diaspora deprives Palestinians' need for family and collective identity and limited access for foreigners deprives Palestinians' need for self-determination, collective identity, education and self-actualisation. In addition, surveillance and dispossession deprive Palestinians of their need for dignity and collective identity and extending sovereignty also deprives this collective identity need. These results reveal that besides movement, access also concerns the possibility to achieve self-determination and collective identity. This means restricted access of foreign nationals to the oPt is a systematic deprivation of Palestinians' human needs and thus a structural violent practice.

These findings can inform popular understanding of the Palestinian struggle, Israeli occupation and its extensive control over Palestinian life, as well as the detrimental effects of restricted access into the oPt. Most importantly, it could provide insight into the ongoing destruction of Gaza. Since the launch of its military campaign, Israel has continuously obstructed the entry of humanitarian aid, targeted journalists and censored reporting¹⁴⁶ and hindered international institutions from documenting the ongoing violence and assisting the victimised population of Gaza. The findings presented in this chapter show that these developments are not unprecedented or arbitrary, but rather are rooted in long-standing Israeli policy aimed at controlling the narrative and depriving Palestinians' human needs.

¹⁴⁶ AJLabs, "Israel-Hamas War," and "Israeli Authorities Raid al Jazeera after Shutdown Order," *Reuters*, May 5, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-cabinet-moves-close-al-jazeeras-local-operations-2024-05-05/>.

7. Conclusion

The research presented in this thesis offers some important insights into the topic of access to Palestine and the conceptual nature of access in relation to human needs. Through three distinct case studies, I have argued that Israel imposes a wide array of restrictions on access on Palestine, each leading to a systematic deprivation of Palestinians' human needs and therefore constituting structural violent practices.

The first case about Huwara shows how physical closure restricts access to work, physical security, education, family and community. The resulting separation and fragmentation of Palestinian space, restricts access to self-determination and collective identity. This suggests that closure is about than just freedom of movement; it is in fact a requisite for human life. This makes closure not just a preventive security measure, but a conscious deprivation of Palestinians' access to their basic human needs and is therefore in and of itself, a structural violent practice.

The second case concerning access to Al-Aqsa, demonstrates that the ID-system, movement bans and claiming of holy sites deprive Palestinians of their human need for religion, community and identity. This indicates that beyond merely movement, access is a requirement for achieving a collective identity. This makes restricted access to Al-Aqsa a structural deprivation of Palestinians' human needs and therefore constitutes a structural violent practice.

Finally, the third case covering the access of foreign nationals to the oPt, reveals that separating the diaspora deprives Palestinians' need for family and collective identity and limited access for foreigners deprives Palestinians' need for self-determination, collective identity, education and self-actualisation. In addition, surveillance and dispossession deprive Palestinians of their need for dignity and collective identity and extending sovereignty also deprives this collective identity need. This signifies that besides movement, access also concerns the possibility to achieve self-determination and collective identity. This means restricted access of foreign nationals to the oPt is a systematic deprivation of Palestinians' human needs and thus a structural violent practice.

These findings provide some important insights into the use of access as a conceptual focus for academic research. It proves that access should be understood in a much broader sense than just a term for freedom of movement or economic participation. The cases presented in this thesis indicate that access can underly many other human needs vital for humans to survive and thrive. It enables not just physical security, but also communal life, collective identity, self-actualisation and self-determination. Therefore, access does not just mean having the free movement to reach a certain space, but having the capacity to access the things required for satisfaction of your human needs. Ergo, having access to your needs. This is apparent when considering access to information, interpersonal connection, to history and to culture. All these things are required for humans to function and achieve their full potential. Crucially, this thesis shows that access is something that can be taken away. Depriving access means depriving human needs and is therefore inherently violent. This is an important conceptual distinction and the most notable way in which this research can contribute to academic research.

In addition to its academic relevance, the results of this research can also inform societal debate. In general, this thesis provides insights into the Palestinian struggle and the power dynamics between Israel and Palestine. It demonstrates that violence in the Israel-Palestine conflict is about more than just episodes of intense manifest violence, but has a long history of violent structures that Palestinians have been subjected to for over 75 years. This informs understanding and can help steer societal debate on the current war away from short-sighted interpretations beginning on October 7th. Moreover, it helps understand Palestinian opposition to the Israeli occupation as a reaction to systems of oppression and subjugation. A simple fence may carry a deeper meaning than just one fence, a walk around a mosque may be more than just a visit and a visa may be more than just a document. These things are part of larger invisible structures that have a very real impact on people living under their influence. In the seemingly endless war in Israel and Palestine, societal commentary often remains stuck in empty phrases such as tensions, clashes and flare ups, but it is important to zoom out and

consider historical trends and contextualise actions by individuals and groups in society. Furthermore, this thesis stresses that Palestine is larger than Gaza and the effects of Israeli occupation affect more than just Gazans. Popular analyses recently tend to focus almost exclusively on Gaza, almost as if it were some separate independent entity that is seemingly always at war. This thesis demonstrates that this notion is actually the result of deliberate policies to fragment Palestine. Analyses of the conflict should thus be based on an understanding that whether living in Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Israel or the diaspora, Palestinians are all affected by the Israeli occupation and, together, form one entity with one Palestinian identity. Finally, the broader understanding of access can and should inform societal debate about the ongoing war in Gaza. With Gaza being closed off from the rest of the world, with little to no option for entry of humanitarian aid, medical workers and journalists, understanding the need for access is of vital importance. Where access is lost, a veil of darkness falls, creating space for horrible atrocities to be committed, of which the effects will only become apparent to the world when it's too late.

Building on the findings of this thesis, more questions should be raised concerning access (in Palestine). Firstly, access in Gaza has been touched upon, but has mostly been left out of the scope of this research. Ironically, this decision was informed by my own lack of access to Gaza. However, as mentioned, the current restrictions on Gaza are detrimental to the Gazan population. Using the broader understanding of access argued for in this thesis, access in Gaza requires more academic research. Moreover, the conceptual shift that this thesis suggests should be tested in different (historical) settings. Furthermore, the legal perspective of access and needs deprivation has also been consciously beyond the scope of this research. However, my findings raise questions on this topic. For example, considering the international treaties Israel is party to, what are ways to legally enforce access? Finally, on a more positive note, research should be done on how this understanding of access can be used towards peaceful resolution? How can protecting free access inform or even be centred in policy or peace processes? All of these questions could and should be asked, not just as an academic exercise, but as a conscious effort to support and liberate the Palestinian people.

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