



## ADALAH BRIEFING PAPER

23 October 2024

### **The Israeli Knesset is back and set to advance a new wave of oppressive legislation targeting Palestinians' rights**

As the Israeli Knesset resumes its work on 27 October 2024, it is set to rapidly advance a wave of new oppressive and discriminatory laws targeting Palestinians, both citizens of Israel and residents of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), legislation that threatens to deepen systemic inequalities and rights violations, respectively, already enshrined in Israeli law. Adalah has documented over 70 laws in its [Discriminatory Laws Database](#) and the current Israeli government and legislature have aggressively pursued an agenda to heighten racial discrimination and control over Palestinians, in fulfillment of its [coalition agreements and guiding principles](#), signed in December 2022. This briefing paper outlines eight major bills that are at advanced stages of the legislative process, poised to be passed into law.

Several of the bills aim to institutionalize and legalize further aspects of the political persecution being carried out against Palestinian citizens of Israel (PCI) and Palestinian residents of occupied East Jerusalem. Following the Hamas-led attacks in Israel on 7 October 2023, and during Israel's ongoing genocidal assault on Gaza, the Knesset has exploited the wartime climate to erode fundamental rights, using the rhetoric of counterterrorism as a pretext. This reflects Israel's broader view of Palestinians as enemies, with PCI increasingly branded as a 'fifth column'.

Some of these bills revive draconian measures used during the period of military rule imposed on Palestinian citizens of the state between 1948 and 1966. Other bills seek to entrench the existing two-tiered criminal legal system—one for Jewish Israelis and the other for Palestinians subject to Israeli civilian law—by, for example, treating Palestinian children as adults in legal proceedings. Further, two bills specifically target UNRWA, the UN agency providing essential humanitarian aid to Palestinian refugees and serving as a vital lifeline for the Palestinian population in Gaza, aiming to close its headquarters in East Jerusalem and to cripple its operations across the OPT.

Most of the bills discussed below have garnered significant support from both the ruling coalition and the opposition, with only the Arab political parties consistently opposed. This division reflects a very dangerous consensus among Jewish Israeli political parties and Knesset members towards legislation designed to entrench Jewish supremacy, discrimination and other rights violations against Palestinians.

Additional legislation proposed aims to entrench the de facto annexation of the occupied West Bank, with some bills moving toward formal annexation of certain areas. A discussion of these bills is not included below as they are at earlier stages in the legislative process.

The paper is divided into the following seven sections:

- I. Expanded Use of Counterterrorism Laws to Criminalize Legitimate Speech
- II. Crackdown on Palestinian Education
- III. Palestinian Children in Israeli Detention: Legislative Amendments to Youth Laws
- IV. Stripping Parents of Convicted Palestinian Minors of Welfare Benefits
- V. Deportation as a Form of Collective Punishment
- VI. Targeting UNRWA: Undermining the Lifeline for Palestinian Refugees

### ***I. Expanded Use of Counterterrorism Laws to Criminalize Legitimate Speech***

One bill advancing in the Knesset seeks to broaden the scope of speech-related offenses under [Israel's Counter-Terrorism Law \(2016\)](#), which has increasingly been used to politically persecute PCI and residents of occupied East Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> Since 7 October 2023, PCI and Palestinian residents of occupied East Jerusalem have faced increased political repression, including a severe crackdown on their freedoms of expression and assembly. Israeli authorities have arrested and prosecuted hundreds of individuals for “identification with a terrorist organization” or engaging in “incitement to terrorism” under the Counter-Terrorism Law for [participating in anti-War protests](#) and for posts made on social media platforms. Under Article 24 of the Counter-Terrorism Law, these two offenses mandate a sentence of five years’ and three years’ imprisonment, respectively. The posts, interactions, and other means of expression in question largely fall within the right to freedom of expression under international human rights law.

Between 7 October 2023 and 14 April 2024, Israeli authorities filed 186 indictments for alleged speech-related offenses under the Counter-Terrorism Law.<sup>2</sup> Nearly all these indictments were against PCI and Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem. This wave of prosecutions represents a significant escalation, as only 84 indictments for incitement were filed during the five-year period from 2018 to 2022.<sup>3</sup>

The proposed amendment to the Counter-Terrorism Law seeks to modify Article 24(b), which addresses the offense of “incitement to terrorism”, by lowering the evidentiary threshold to establish the criminal offense. Currently, Article 24(b)(2) requires proof of a “substantial possibility” that an expression deemed as involving incitement will lead to a terrorist act. The amendment would replace “substantial possibility” with “reasonable possibility”, thus further loosening the legal requirements for prosecution. The bill also introduces a new criminal offense, punishable by up to three years in prison, for publishing any praise, sympathy, or support for individuals who committed a terrorist act resulting in death, if published with the intent to endorse said act. Crucially, this offense would not require proof of a link between the publication and the commission of a terrorist act. Like other offenses listed under Article 24, it uses vague and overly-

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<sup>1</sup> Proposed Counter-Terrorism Bill (Amendment No. 11) (Offense of Incitement to Terrorism), 5784–2024, available in Hebrew [here](#). On 24 July 2024, Adalah sent a letter conveying its position concerning this bill to the Chair of the Knesset’s Constitution, Law and Justice Committee, the Attorney General (AG), and the Legal Advisor to the Knesset; see Hebrew letter [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> Based on information obtained by Adalah through a Freedom of Information (FOI) request and its own monitoring. The FOI and the state’s response to the FOI is on file with Adalah.

<sup>3</sup> These figures are cited in a research paper published by the Knesset Research and Information Center on 23 October 2023, available in Hebrew [here](#).

broad wording, lacks legal clarity and thereby allows for discriminatory and abusive enforcement, directly threatening the freedom of speech and liberty of Palestinians specifically.

This bill follows a previous amendment to Article 24 enacted by the Knesset in late-2023, which criminalized the so-called “[consumption of terrorist publications](#)”. To the best of Adalah's knowledge, this provision has not yet been enforced, however, it has significant potential for the criminalization of passive social media use, where individuals merely view content without liking, sharing, or otherwise engaging with it.

[Adalah has consistently argued](#) that Article 24, as it stands, is unconstitutional and must be repealed. Among other things, Adalah contends that the “substantial possibility” standard in Article 24(b)(2) is insufficient to adequately protect free speech. This threshold has been repeatedly lowered, moving away from the legal standards previously set by the Israeli Supreme Court, which required a near-certainty to justify limitations on freedom of expression.<sup>4</sup> The provision as a whole criminalizes a broad range of legitimate political speech, significantly infringing on freedom of expression and creating a chilling effect on political speech by Palestinians in particular. If passed, the bill is expected to worsen this criminalization and further violate Palestinians’ rights. After passing a first reading in the Knesset Plenum, this bill is currently before the Knesset’s Constitution, Law and Justice Committee, being prepared for its second and third readings (final stages of legislation).

## ***II. Crackdown on Palestinian Education***

Another bill currently awaiting final readings aims to undermine Palestinian schools and Palestinian educators working in Israel and East Jerusalem, including those working in non-Palestinian schools.<sup>5</sup> The bill authorizes the Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Education to dismiss teachers who “publicly identify with a terrorist organization or act of terrorism and/or support them”. Additionally, it empowers the Minister of Education to revoke the funding of ‘recognized but unofficial’ schools if the minister believes that “expressions of solidarity with an act of terrorism or with a terrorist organization, or support for them, exist within the institution, and that the management of the school knew or should have known of their existence”. These schools, which are partially private and partially state-funded institutions, follow core state guidelines but maintain significant autonomy in their curriculum and administration.

The bill explicitly targets PCI and Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, as is evident from statements made by its proponents and in the explanatory notes to the bill. For example, Amit Halevi of the Likud Party, one of the drafters of the bill, stated during a committee hearing, “Today, in large parts, perhaps also in Umm al-Fahem [a Palestinian town inside Israel], but certainly in East Jerusalem, teachers with ties to

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<sup>4</sup> See Adalah’s position paper: [Israel's Counter-Terrorism Law](#), paragraphs 38-40, which analyze the threshold of substantial possibility in light of the Supreme Court’s interpretation in H CJ 73/53, *Kol Ha’am v. The Minister of Interior*.

<sup>5</sup> Bill on the Prohibition of Employment of Teaching Staff and Revocation of Funding from Educational Institutions Due to Support for an Act of Terror or a Terrorist Organization (Legislative Amendments), 5784–2024, available in Hebrew [here](#). See Knesset’s press release [Approved for second and third readings: Bill for Prohibition on Employment of Teaching Personnel and Withholding Budget from Educational Institutions due to Identification with Act of Terrorism or Terrorist Organization](#), 1 October 2024.

terrorism are entering [the schools].”<sup>6</sup> The explanatory notes further state that, “This phenomenon typically occurs in schools in East Jerusalem and constitutes incitement of minors against the State of Israel.” According to the Jerusalem Legal Aid Center (JLAC), as of August 2023 there were 105 Palestinian schools classified ‘as recognized but unofficial’ schools, together serving 44% of East Jerusalem’s Palestinian student population.<sup>7</sup> Given the large number of students who attend these schools, the bill’s passage would have far-reaching consequences.

Adalah stresses that the bill relies on overly-broad and deliberately ambiguous definitions of ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist organizations’, while granting full discretion to Education Ministry officials to dismiss teachers and cut state funding. In doing so, it introduces draconian measures that violate fundamental rights without legal checks or safeguards.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, critical decisions regarding teachers’ employment and school funding rest solely with the Israeli Minister of Education and the Director General, both political appointees susceptible to external pressures. Furthermore, the bill gives power to the Minister and Director General to determine whether a teacher has incited to terrorism or identified with a terrorist organization as defined by the Counter-Terrorism Law, however, they lack the tools to assess what constitutes criminal behavior - they are not prosecutors and judges. This arrangement not only undermines teachers’ rights to employment, but also infringes on the rights to freedom of expression of both teachers and students, potentially creating a chilling effect on political and human rights-based discourse in schools and violating students’ rights to education. Ultimately, the bill aligns with the government’s explicit agenda, as outlined in [the guiding principles document of the ruling coalition](#), which prioritizes Jewish identity within the education system.

Over the past year, several teachers have been suspended or fired for their opposition to the assault on Gaza, despite not being convicted of any offense. Notably, a 62-year-old left-wing Israeli Jewish high school teacher in Petah Tikva was dismissed for expressing his dissent regarding the war, and the Tel Aviv Regional Labor Court later ruled that his termination was unjustified.<sup>9</sup> According to media reports, in Tiberias, an Arab high school teacher was suspended for liking posts on the Instagram account Eye On Palestine, which highlighted the mass killings occurring in the Gaza Strip. In Netanya, an Arab teacher was suspended after sharing a video that compared the treatment of lightly injured individuals receiving medical care in Israel to that of severely injured Palestinians being rescued from under the rubble and treated in Gaza. In October 2023, Education Minister Yoav Kisch instructed his office staff to “address all expressions of incitement and encouragement of terrorism by teaching staff with the utmost severity”.<sup>10</sup> This context indicates that the bill will likely be used to institutionalize and legitimize the crackdown on Palestinian

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<sup>6</sup> Minutes of the hearing at the Knesset’s Education, Culture, and Sports Committee held on 6 February 2024. Available for download [in Hebrew] [here](#).

<sup>7</sup> The Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center, [Factsheet: The Israeli measures impacting Palestinian education in East Jerusalem \(August 2023\)](#).

<sup>8</sup> See Adalah’s letter sent ahead of the Knesset Committee discussion in February 2024, detailing its legal position and objections to the bill, available in Hebrew [here](#). A follow-up letter was sent to the committee on 30 September 2024.

<sup>9</sup> See more in the article from +972 Magazine, [How Israel Turned a Teacher into a Traitor](#), published on 9 February 2024.

<sup>10</sup> *Zo HaDerekh* (This Is the Way), the Hebrew-language website, reported on these cases on 27 October 2023. See the Hebrew article [here](#).

educators and schools, as well as on others who express legitimate dissent against Israel's war-related policies and actions.

### ***III. Palestinian Children in Israeli Detention: Legislative Amendments to Youth Laws***

Two pending bills threaten to further violate the rights of Palestinian children, eroding protections for those subjected to arrest and detention by Israeli authorities. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has already flagged these bills as breaches of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Israel has ratified.<sup>11</sup> The two bills propose amendments to Israel's Youth Law, which is designed to provide special rights protections for children. These amendments seek to strip Palestinian children of those protections and to treat them as adults. If passed, the bills would allow Palestinian children to be sentenced to imprisonment as early as 12 years old and to exclude them from the newly introduced protection in the Youth Law that ensures the presence of an attorney during interrogations.

The first bill, now in the final stage of legislation, would permit the Israeli authorities to sentence minors as young as 12 to imprisonment, including life sentences, if convicted of murder or attempted murder classified as a "terror act" or linked to a "terrorist organization".<sup>12</sup> Currently, Israeli law exempts minors under 12 from criminal liability, and those under 14 can only be placed in secure facilities, not imprisoned or sentenced to life. This bill would affect PCI and Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, who are overwhelmingly those accused of the offenses outlined in the legislation. In contrast, Israeli Jewish children are primarily indicted under criminal laws rather than the counter-terrorism law, whatever the nature of or motivation behind their offenses. Palestinian children living in the occupied West Bank are already subject to military law allowing imprisonment from age 12.<sup>13</sup>

The bill also stipulates that a court may order minors convicted of the aforementioned offenses to be placed in a secure facility until they turn 14, after which they will be transferred to prison. Ahead of a Knesset committee discussion of the bill, Adalah sent a letter in which it argued that the amendment targets Palestinians and is driven by motives of revenge and retribution.<sup>14</sup> This intent is evident in the bill's explanatory notes, which explicitly state that the legislation aims to "reflect the public interest and considerations of deterrence, prevention, and retribution in the most severe cases."<sup>15</sup> Adalah contends that this focus on retribution and punishment fundamentally contradicts the principles of Israel's Youth Law, which emphasizes rehabilitation rather than punitive measures for minors. On 8 July 2024, the Knesset's Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee approved the amendment to the Youth Law for its final readings.

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<sup>11</sup> Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Israel, dated 16 September 2024, Committee on the Rights of the Child, available [here](#). See Adalah's press release, [UN Committee Condemns Israel for Grave Violations of Palestinian Children's Rights in Israel and the OPT](#), 25 September 2024.

<sup>12</sup> Proposed Youth Law (Trial, Punishment, and Modes of Treatment) (Amendment No. 25 – Temporary Provisions), 5784–2024, available in Hebrew [here](#). It is also noteworthy that a similar temporary order was active in 2016, when the Knesset enacted a similar three-year temporary order.

<sup>13</sup> See Addameer, *Imprisonment of Children*, December 2017. Available at: [Children | Addameer](#).

<sup>14</sup> Adalah sent a letter to the chair of the Knesset's Constitution, Law and Justice Committee, the attorney general, and the state attorney, outlining its legal position against the bill dated 5 June 2024. The letter (in Hebrew) is available [here](#).

<sup>15</sup> The minutes of a hearing at the Knesset's Constitution, Law and Justice Committee in preparation for the first reading, held on 13 February 2024. Available in Hebrew [here](#).

The second bill, still in the pre-reading stage, excludes minors suspected of security offenses from the proposed protection granting minors the right to have an attorney present during interrogations.<sup>16</sup> This exclusion contradicts the principle of equality and constitutes illegal discrimination, as the minors accused of such offenses are overwhelmingly Palestinians. The presence of legal counsel during interrogations is critical to protect minors, given their additional vulnerabilities, and to prevent coerced or false confessions.

This legislation falls within a broader systematic approach through which Israel targets PCI and Palestinian minors from Jerusalem, reinforcing two separate legal systems—one for Palestinian children, in which they are largely treated as adults, and another for Israeli Jewish children—both governed by Israeli civilian law.

#### ***IV. Stripping Parents of Convicted Palestinian Minors of Welfare Benefits***

Another bill that seeks to curtail children’s rights, and the rights of their families, would revoke welfare benefits from the parents of children who have been convicted of security offenses, such as throwing stones or other objects at vehicles, which the courts have determined constitute terrorist acts.<sup>17</sup> Under this amendment, parents of these minors will be stripped of benefits, including child allowances, education grants, alimony payments, and additional income support during their child’s incarceration.

The amendment creates a legal distinction between minors designated as ‘security prisoners’ and ‘criminal prisoners’. In practice, this creates a distinction on the basis of nationality, as Palestinian children are predominantly the ones convicted of security offenses.

This bill was introduced in response to a 2021 Israeli Supreme Court decision that struck down a similar law in response to a petition filed by Adalah and other human rights organizations.<sup>18</sup> The earlier law, from 2015, denied social welfare benefits to parents of Palestinian minors convicted of security-related offenses or offenses committed on the basis of “nationalist motives”. In its decision—a rare instance in which the Supreme Court overturned a law that discriminates against Palestinians—the Court held that the law was unconstitutional as it violated the principle of equality.

The current bill mirrors the 2015 law but removes the “nationalist motives” requirement, instead mandating that the courts determine whether the offense in question constitutes an ‘act of terrorism’. As Adalah argued in its 2016 petition, the denial of welfare benefits constitutes a form of collective punishment, which violates fundamental rights. During discussions in the Knesset’s Labor and Welfare Committee, proponents of the bill claimed it to be primarily “declarative,” intended to send a message against terrorism. Adalah contends that this justification is a transparent attempt to circumvent the 2021 Supreme Court decision. By targeting Palestinian families, the bill imposes severe economic penalties with far-reaching consequences and is designed to exact retribution against communities already facing systemic discrimination. This intent was made explicit in the remarks of the committee chair, who stated: “Child allowances are not part of the

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<sup>16</sup> Youth Law (Judgment, Punishment, and Treatment Methods) (Amendment – Presence of a Lawyer in the Investigation of a Minor) (Temporary Provision), 2024, available in Hebrew [here](#).

<sup>17</sup> National Insurance Bill (Amendment No. 249) (Revoking Allowances for a Child Imprisoned due to Terrorist Offense), 2024, available in Hebrew [here](#). See the Knesset’s press release [Approved in First Reading—Bill for Revoking Allowances Paid to Terrorist Operatives Outside Israel and Bill for Revoking Benefits Given to Parents of Children Imprisoned for Security Offenses](#).

<sup>18</sup> H CJ 3390/16 *Adalah - The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel et. al v. The Knesset* (petition accepted 8 July 2021). Read more about the Supreme Court decision [here](#), read a summary of the decision [here](#).

punishment, except in cases of terrorism. Terrorism is war.” Such language reveals the true aim of the legislation: to deny welfare benefits as punitive measures under the guise of counterterrorism.

On 23 July 2024, the Knesset Plenum approved the 2024 bill in its first reading, and it is currently pending further deliberation before the Labor and Welfare Committee prior to its second and third readings.

### ***V. Deportation as a Form of Collective Punishment***

A further proposed bill in advanced stages of the legislative process would allow the deportation of family members of individuals designated as “terrorist operatives” by Israel.<sup>19</sup> According to the bill, the Interior Minister would have broad authority to deport family members outside Israel, the West Bank, or any other area under its control if one family member is accused, convicted of terrorism or security offenses, or held under administrative detention or as an unlawful combatant without charges or trial. The bill permits expulsion if a family member is alleged to have known about a planned act of terrorism, supported it, or publicly expressed praise, sympathy, or encouragement for the act.

Proponents of the bill argue that it aims to deter terrorism, however, Adalah has pointed out that the lawmakers' motivations appear vengeful and aim to undermine the rights of PCI and residents of occupied East Jerusalem. During a Knesset committee discussion on 15 October 2024, MK Almog Cohen stated, “I want to hurt them where it hurts the most, disproportionately. I want deterrence; they are all part of this terror.” Similarly, MK Ben Gvir has asserted, “We need to act harshly against those who are disloyal. Destroy their homes, enter, and show governance [...] I call on the Prime Minister to pass the law we proposed for deporting terrorists' families.”<sup>20</sup> This rhetoric reveals an intention to punish entire families collectively under the guise of a security measure, in clear violation of international law.

Pursuant to the bill, “terrorist operatives” include those individuals convicted of terrorism or security-related offenses, as well as those accused but not prosecuted; individuals killed while allegedly committing or preparing such offenses; those held in administrative detention; and individuals classified as unlawful combatants.<sup>21</sup> As a result, the bill targets not only the families of convicted individuals but also those detained without charges or trial, based on secret evidence, whether under administrative detention or as unlawful combatants.

If passed, the law will join a series of laws allowing for the expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland by revoking citizenship and residency, even if it leads to statelessness. Israeli law currently provides [two](#)

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<sup>19</sup> Deportation of Families of Terrorists Bill, 2023, available in Hebrew [here](#). See the latest press release by the Knesset’s House Committee: [House Committee Continues Deliberations on Deportation of Families of Terrorists Bill; National Security Minister MK Ben Gvir: Historic Proposal](#), 15 October 2024.

Initially, the Knesset committee focused on the families of terrorist operatives, but after considering speech-related offenses under Article 24 of Israel’s Counter-Terrorism Law, they reverted to targeting families of terrorists due to constitutional concerns raised by legal advisors.

<sup>20</sup> See Minister Ben-Gvir’s comments in the Hebrew article published by the media outlet HaMechadesh. Available [here](#).

<sup>21</sup> The bill relies on the definition of a terrorist operative as outlined in the Freezing of Funds Paid by the Palestinian Authority (PA) in Connection with Terrorism from Revenues Transferred by the Israeli Government Law, 5778-2018, available in Hebrew [here](#).

[mechanisms for revoking citizenship and residency](#), both of which target Palestinian citizens and East Jerusalem residents.<sup>22</sup>

Expulsion, whether targeting a citizen or a resident, effectively deprives individuals of their legal status and leads to severe, disproportionate violations of multiple internationally recognized human rights. This includes the right to dignity, and the right to freedom of movement—encompassing the right to leave and return to one’s country—enshrined in Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Additionally, it infringes on the right to work and the right to property. As a result, expulsion erases an individual’s legal status—whether citizenship or residency—along with the full range of rights and protections guaranteed under international law.

In the context of expelling Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, such actions may also constitute a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Rome Statute. Forcibly deporting inhabitants of an occupied territory is prohibited under Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and is classified as a war crime under Article 8(b)(viii) of the Rome Statute, which specifically prohibits the “deportation or transfer of all or parts of the population of the occupied territory within or outside this territory.”

The Knesset's House Committee is preparing the bill, with the next hearing scheduled for 29 October 2024. Recent committee discussions focused on whether the expulsion would be permanent or subject to a time limit, as well as the potential impact on citizenship. Adalah will continue to monitor the legislative process closely.

## ***VI. Targeting UNRWA: Undermining the Lifeline for Palestinian Refugees***

Two bills pending in the Knesset aim at crippling the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and thereby severely undermining its essential services to Palestinian refugees. The Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee [approved the bills on 6 October 2024](#) and they are awaiting final readings in the Knesset Plenum.

UNRWA, which started operating in 1950, provides basic services to registered Palestinian refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Early in 2024, Israel accused several UNRWA staff in Gaza of participating in the 7 October Hamas attacks in Israel. Shortly thereafter, [UNRWA terminated the appointments of these staff members](#) “in the interest of the Agency.”

### **The First Bill**

This bill seeks to ban UNRWA from operating anywhere in Israel’s “sovereign territory”, stating that the agency “shall not establish any representation, provide any services, or conduct any activities” within Israel.<sup>23</sup> If enacted, it would shut down UNRWA’s headquarters in occupied East Jerusalem, which serves

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<sup>22</sup> For further details, refer to [Adalah's Q&A: Israeli Supreme Court allows government to strip citizenship for ‘breach of loyalty’ Citizenship Law - Amendment No. 10](#), September 2022; [Adalah's Q&A: Law to Revoke Citizenship and Permanent Residency and Deport Palestinians Who Received Money from the Palestinian Authority in Relation to “Terrorist Acts”](#) February 2023.

<sup>23</sup> Bill for the Cessation of UNRWA Activities in the State of Israel, 5784–2024, available [here](#). Unofficial translation from the original Hebrew by Adalah, available [here](#).



as the management and administrative hub for its operations across the OPT. It would entirely halt their operations in the Shu'fat Refugee Camp, which is the only refugee camp fully inside of annexed East Jerusalem, and shut down an UNRWA health clinic in the Old City. UNRWA has long faced a campaign of incitement, particularly in Jerusalem, where [Israeli officials have openly sought its removal from the city](#). The aftermath of the 7 October attacks is now being used as a pretext to implement this long-standing agenda. Over the past year, Israeli extremists staged protests outside UNRWA facilities, culminating in an [arson attack on the compound in May 2024](#).

## The Second Bill

This bill prohibits all Israeli authorities from engaging with UNRWA. UNRWA's activities in the OPT rely heavily on constant coordination with Israeli authorities, in nearly all aspects of its work.<sup>24</sup> This coordination includes securing residence and work permits for agency staff, coordinating with the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) and military authorities on the organization's operations—such as providing humanitarian aid in Gaza—and facilitating the entry and transfer of medicines and essential supplies. The proposed law would thus severely threaten UNRWA's operations across the OPT. The bill further states that the invitation for UNRWA, based on correspondence exchanged between Israel and the agency dating back to June 1967, concerning Israel's facilitation of UNRWA's operations, will expire upon final approval of the bill in the Knesset Plenum.

Proponents of the bills claim wrongly and in an inflammatory manner that UNRWA is aligned with Hamas, with one Knesset committee member stating, “UNRWA has either become or seeks to become Hamas, a branch of this terrorist organization.” This rhetoric serves as a pretext to dismantle vital support for Palestinian refugees. Much of the incitement against UNRWA stems from its foundational principle: the right of return for Palestinians displaced during the 1948 Nakba, as outlined in [UN General Assembly Resolution 194](#). The UN created UNRWA to provide assistance to these refugees until their right of return is realized and the resolution is implemented.

As Adalah argued in a letter expressing strong objections to the bills addressed to the relevant Israeli authorities, these violate international law including the [United Nations Charter](#), particularly Article 2(5), which mandates that all member states assist the UN in its actions.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, they contravene Article 104, which grants the UN the legal capacity necessary to fulfill its functions, and Article 105, which ensures that the UN and its representatives enjoy the privileges and immunities essential for carrying out their mandates. Furthermore, the bills violate the [Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations](#), ratified by Israel in 1949, which provides immunity to protect the facilities and personnel of various UN bodies.

Additionally, the curbing of UNRWA's activities in Gaza violates the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the case of [South Africa v. Israel](#). On 26 January 2024, the Court issued its first provisional measure, noting that some of the actions and omissions alleged by South Africa

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<sup>24</sup> Law for the Cessation of UNRWA Activities, 5784–2024, available [here](#) Unofficial translation from the original Hebrew by Adalah, available [here](#).

<sup>25</sup> See Adalah's press release [Adalah: Knesset bills aiming to shut down UNRWA violate Israel's obligations under intl. law and must be withdrawn](#) 22 October 2024.

against Israel in Gaza may violate the [Genocide Convention](#). On 28 March 2024, the Court further held that Israel must “take all necessary and effective measures to ensure, without delay, in full cooperation with the United Nations, the unhindered provision at scale by all concerned of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance...”. UNRWA plays a critical role in delivering humanitarian aid and sheltering Palestinians in Gaza, who suffer under Israel’s policies of starvation and deprivation of essential services. By obstructing UNRWA’s operations rather than facilitating it, Israel is in breach of the ICJ’s provisional measures and may also violate Articles II(a) and II(c) of the Genocide Convention, which prohibit genocide through: (a) the killing of members of the group, and (c) deliberately inflicting conditions of life on the group that are calculated to bring about its physical destruction, in whole or in part. Ceasing UNRWA’s operations and preventing essential aid to refugees, especially in the Gaza Strip, may also amount to a war crime under Article 8(2)(b)(xxv) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which criminalizes the intentional use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare.

### ***VII. Draconian restrictions under the pretext of “fighting crime in Arab society”***

A draconian bill in the advanced stages of legislation seeks to authorize the Israeli police to request that a district court impose severe restrictions on an individual using administrative orders, based on secret evidence and/or intelligence assessments that neither the individual nor his/her lawyer can access or challenge.<sup>26</sup> The court may impose a range of extremely harsh restrictions that undermine freedom of movement and liberty, such as prohibiting entry into specific areas or towns, or requiring an individual to reside in designated locations. The court may also impose house arrest, place restrictions on driving, limit internet use, and ban travel. These measures mirror those found in the mandatory-era Emergency Defense Regulations of 1945. The restrictions may be enforced if the court believes that the individual is linked to a criminal organization, and that, given the threat they pose, such an order is necessary to prevent serious harm to a person or persons’ security. The Knesset Committee on National Security approved the law on 17 July 2024 and it now requires final approval from the Knesset Plenum.

The bill’s explanatory notes justify these measures, which specifically target Palestinians, under the pretext of “combating crime within Arab society”. It is part of a series of laws and measures promoted by Israeli authorities that exploit real concerns about organized crime in Palestinian communities in Israel as a pretext for enacting legislation that violates the rights of PCI and extends police control over them.<sup>27</sup> This bill is directly linked to the commitments made by the current government in [its coalition agreements](#). In those agreements, the government laid out measures and policies aimed at combating crime organizations in Arab society under the term “nationalist crime”. These agreements make it even clearer that the introduction of such repressive measures—designed to heighten surveillance, intensify repression, and erode civil rights—is motivated by political and ideological agendas rather than genuine concerns for public safety.

While the administrative order is in effect, the bill also grants the police broad powers, including the authority to enter an individual’s residence and conduct searches. The police may search the individual’s

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<sup>26</sup> Bill for the Protection of the Public from Criminal Organizations Law, 5784-2024, available in Hebrew [here](#).

<sup>27</sup> See, for instance, the [Combating Illegal Weapons Law \(Legislative Amendment and Temporary Order\)](#), 2023; the [government decision](#) to assign General Security Service (Shin Bet or Shabak) agents and military forces to operate in Palestinian towns and neighborhoods; the expansion of [mandatory minimum sentences](#) that primarily affect Palestinians; and [the establishment of paramilitary undercover units](#) that operate exclusively in Palestinian towns and villages.

person if there is reasonable cause to believe they are in possession of items related to violations of the order or other criminal offenses. Additionally, they may access the individual's computer to extract data or make copies. The bill seeks to establish an alternative mechanism that bypasses the criminal justice system and the standard rules of evidence established in Israeli law. It allows proceedings to take place without the suspect or their lawyer being informed of the allegations against them, and permits police to carry out searches without a specific judicial order, relying solely on the administrative restriction order. The restrictions set forth in the bill constitute a grave violation of individuals' fundamental rights to freedom of movement, personal liberty, and due process. By relying on secret evidence and evading regular legal safeguards, the bill erodes the principle of due process and creates a dangerous precedent for expanding the use of administrative measures to curtail civil liberties without judicial oversight.

The administrative restriction order would be valid for up to two months, with the court able to extend this period for up to six months. For orders imposing partial or full house arrest, the court can initially approve them for up to 45 days, with extensions possible for up to three months.

The bill seeks to reintroduce the tools previously employed by the military rule that was imposed on PCI after the founding of the state from 1948 until 1966. According to Akevot – The Institute for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Research, a 1963 manual signed by the Military Advocate General details the provisions within the Emergency Regulations that were used against Palestinian citizens of Israel.<sup>28</sup> The manual states that, “personal restrictions orders [...] may be used to prohibit an individual's presence in a certain area, require them to notify the authorities of their movements, restrict possession of certain items (such as a car), prohibit employment, limit business affairs, or restrict social connections, or all of the above.”

Furthermore, it notes that an order of police supervision—under separate Regulation No. 110—“allows placing an individual under ‘all or any’ of the following restrictions, as per the decision of the Military Governor: a person may be exiled from their home to another part of the country; prohibited from leaving the area of a village, town, or district without permission from the police district commander; required to report to a police station at any time; and prohibited from leaving their home after dark.”

As these passages reveal, the restrictions and authority granted under the bill mirror those enforced decades ago by the Israeli military government against PCI.

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<sup>28</sup> Akevot, File GL-17005/6: the reordering of control over Palestinian citizens of Israel at the late stages of the Military Rule, Document 1: The Defence (Emergency) Regulations 1945 - Provisions and Functions. Available [here](#).

## Conclusion

The new bills set to pass in the upcoming Knesset session will further institutionalize racial discrimination, rights violations, and Israeli control over Palestinians. Having received the backing of a broad consensus within the Israeli legislature, they threaten to further entrench the legal framework that systematically oppresses Palestinians and denies them fundamental rights. Key elements include:

- **Legalization of Political Persecution using Counter-Terrorism Laws:** Proposed laws aim to institutionalize the political persecution of PCI and Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem under the pretext of counterterrorism, allowing law enforcement to further criminalize legitimate political speech, including opposition to the war on Gaza.
- **Revival of the Use of Draconian Military Regulations on PCI:** The introduction of oppressive measures parallel to those imposed under military rule on PCI from 1948 to 1966 stands to further consolidate the state's control over them.
- **Expansion of Two-Tiered Law Enforcement, One for Israeli Jews and the Other for Palestinians:** These bills will intensify the oppressive two-tiered legal system, establishing one set of laws for Jewish-Israelis and another, with inferior rights, for Palestinians subjected to Israeli civilian law. This legislation seeks to treat Palestinian children—both citizens of Israel and residents of East Jerusalem—as adults in criminal legal proceedings.
- **Crippling UNRWA Assistance to Palestinian Refugees:** The bills targeting UNRWA represent a concerted effort to block essential aid and assistance from reaching Palestinian refugees across the OPT, particularly egregious in Gaza due to Israel's ongoing genocidal assault and the resulting humanitarian catastrophe. These bills violate international law.

If passed, these laws will join [over 70 existing laws](#) that target Palestinians, affecting every aspect of their lives. They give Israel's law enforcement authorities more far-reaching powers, erode the rights of individuals and families, and severely restrict political freedoms, further entrenching racial discrimination in Israel's legal system, in violation of international law.