

Ten Plagues of the Occupation

As we read each of the ten plagues, spill a bit of the wine out of your cup.

1. **Poverty** (from The Canadian International Development Agency) Almost 58 percent of Palestinians live in poverty, and about half of this group lives in extreme poverty. About 50 percent of Palestinians experience or risk experiencing food insecurity. Food insecurity is particularly severe in Gaza, where the majority of the population relies on humanitarian assistance to survive.

2. **Restrictions on movement-** In addition to more than 100 permanent checkpoints and the separation wall that snakes throughout the West Bank, the IDF has erected hundreds of physical obstacles: flying checkpoints, concrete blocks, dirt piles, boulders, trenches, and more to block roads and prevent movement between Palestinian communities.

3. **Water shortage** (from B'tselem)- Israel's citizens, like those of developed countries worldwide, benefit year-round from unlimited running water to meet their household needs. On the other hand, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians suffer from a severe water shortage throughout the summer. This shortage of water affects every function that water plays in human life: drinking, bathing, cleaning, and watering of crops and animals. The shortage drastically affects the residents' health and economic well-being. The shortage of drinking water can cause dehydration and the inability to maintain proper hygiene and thus lead to illness. Failure to water crops and animals affects the livelihood of the residents. The water shortage violates the basic human rights of Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories such as the right to health, to adequate housing, to equality, and to benefit from their natural resources. This harm results from Israeli policy, in effect since 1967, based on an unfair division of resources shared by Israel and the Palestinians.

4. Destruction of Olive Trees-Olive trees have long been a symbol of Palestinian culture and livelihood. Israeli military and settler violence and the construction of the Wall have destroyed hundreds of thousands of Palestinian olive trees since 2000, and more than a million since 1967.

5. Home demolitions-Since 1967, over 18,000 Palestinian homes have been demolished in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, leaving tens of thousands of families traumatized and without shelter. Under the Fourth Geneva Convention, all occupying powers are prohibited from destroying property or employing collective punishment. Israel's policy of house demolitions seeks to confine Palestinians to small enclaves, leaving most of the land free for Israeli settlement.

6. Settlements- Illegal settlements and the network of "bypass roads" that connect them, continue to claim Palestinian land and escalate violence against Palestinian communities with the complicity of Israeli military. Under article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Israel is prohibited from establishing settlements.

7. Political prisoners (from www.jvp.org)- Palestinians who are struggling for their freedom are increasingly joined by Israelis and internationals inspired by the Palestinian model of unarmed resistance to occupation and discrimination. But the Israeli government has responded to this hopeful movement with a brutal crackdown on human rights advocates. While many internationals and Israeli Jews work with great passion for human rights for all peoples, it is Palestinian advocates who are typically targeted by the government with the greatest intensity. Palestinians like Abdallah Abu Rahmah, who was convicted in an unfair trial and sentenced to a year in prison for organizing protests in Bil'in against the theft of the village's land, then saw his sentence extended 2-3 months after the Israeli military appealed to make it harsher. He was finally released after serving 16 months.

8. Division of the People - Palestinians are now referred to by many different names. Gazans, Arabs, East Jerusalemites, refugees, Jordanians, and Israeli-Arabs. Using this terminology instead of the word Palestinian is a way to deemphasize the shared culture of the Palestinian people and a way to emphasize the divisions among Palestinians, rather than the things that bind them together as a people.

9. Denial of the Right of Return

The original Palestinian refugees and their descendants are estimated to number more than 6.5 million and constitute the world's oldest and largest refugee population. Israel implements a Law of Return giving every Jewish person rights to settle in Israel as a citizen and denies Palestinians the Right of Return guaranteed under international Law. Recently, the largest Palestinian refugee community in Syria came under attack in their neighborhood of Yarmouk, Syria. Rapes, murders, and starvation plague this community which has now become double refugees.

10. Erasing histories- Many Jewish schools and communities wrongly teach that in 1948 Palestine was “a land without a people for a people without a land.” Yet the place where Israel was founded was never empty or barren, it was home to almost one million Palestinians living in over 700 villages and cities, who share a vibrant history and culture. Most of these villages and cities were depopulated and renamed during and after 1948, as part of the still ongoing efforts to undermine and disavow Palestinian identity and history.

WHO IS HANDALA?

From approximately 1975 through 1987 Naji Al-Ali created cartoons that depict the complexities of the plight of Palestinian refugees. These cartoons are still relevant today and Handala, the refugee child who is present in every cartoon, remains a potent symbol of the struggle of the Palestinian people for justice and self-determination.

