

The Historical Experience of Palestinian Women in Al-Quds (2000–2022): Israeli Occupation and the Transformation of Religious, Social, and Political Life

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Abstract

The experiences of Palestinian women in Al-Quds under Israeli occupation have frequently been examined from legal and humanitarian perspectives, yet their historical experiences within the broader political, religious, social, and cultural landscape of Islamic civilization remain insufficiently documented. This study aims to examine the historical experiences of Palestinian women in Al-Quds between 2000 and 2022 by analyzing the multidimensional impacts of Israeli occupation policies on their lives. Employing a historical research approach complemented by descriptive qualitative and quantitative analyses, the study draws upon primary sources, including interviews with former female prisoners and Murabitat of Al-Aqsa Mosque, alongside official statistics, government publications, and reports from Palestinian and international human rights organizations. The findings reveal that Palestinian women have been systematically subjected to arrests, torture, deportation, residency revocation, home demolitions, restrictions on access to Al-Aqsa Mosque, and limitations on education, healthcare, and family reunification. These measures extend beyond individual violations, constituting a broader strategy to alter the demographic, religious, and socio-cultural character of Al-Quds while undermining the historical presence of its indigenous Palestinian community. The study argues that the experiences of Palestinian women constitute an important historical dimension of contemporary Islamic civilization, reflecting the intersection of political conflict, religious identity, and cultural resilience. It recommends stronger international legal accountability, enhanced protection of Palestinian women and Islamic holy sites, and continued historical documentation to preserve the lived experiences and cultural heritage of Al-Quds.

Keywords: Palestinian Women, Al-Quds, Israeli Occupation, Persecution, Displacement

Introduction

Al-Quds (Islamic Jerusalem) occupies a central position within Islamic history and civilization, serving as a focal point of spiritual devotion, cultural heritage, and socio-political development. Throughout centuries, the city's identity has been shaped not only by its religious monuments and geopolitical standing, but significantly through the lived experiences and continuous presence of its indigenous Muslim community. However, since the mid-twentieth century and escalating significantly over recent decades, the city has been subjected to intensive political conflict, military occupation, and systematic efforts to alter its demographic, religious, and historical landscape. Within this complex dynamic, Palestinian women in Al-Quds stand at the intersection of political subjugation, community preservation, and civilizational resistance.¹ While extensive scholarly literature has examined the geopolitical dimensions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the legal frameworks

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¹ Rabadi, Hiba, Shaina Silberstein Zvulun, and Ifat Maoz. "Difficulties, experiences, and feelings of the Palestinian female students from East Jerusalem regarding their intergroup encounter with Israeli-Jews in Israeli academic settings." *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 29, no. 3 (2023): 247.

surrounding the status of Jerusalem, the specific historical experiences, daily struggles, and structural persecutions faced by Palestinian women—particularly during the pivotal period between 2000 and 2022—remain insufficiently documented within contemporary historical and civilizational studies.

The Israeli Occupation Authorities continue to implement discriminatory policies, punitive measures, and human rights violations against Palestinians in Al-Quds.² Women, who are an integral part of Palestinian society and serve as vital custodians of family stability, cultural transmission, and religious identity, are subjected to various forms of abuse, including injury, arrest, displacement, forced confinement, and more.³ These practices systematically jeopardize Maqdesi women's lives, their right to security, social relationships, and economic stability, while directly disrupting the broader socio-cultural fabric of the indigenous community in Jerusalem. Despite being targeted through multifaceted state-sponsored policies, Maqdesi women actively resist these encroachments through persistent presence (Rabat), community leadership, and historical memory preservation, making their lived reality a critical area of academic inquiry.⁴

This study provides a detailed account of Israeli violations against Palestinian women in Al-Quds, offering valuable documentation for human rights advocates and academic researchers studying contemporary Islamic civilization. It includes scientifically documented events and testimonies that substantiate the Israeli occupation's violations of women's rights in the city from 2000 to 2022—a critical period marked by major political uprisings, the construction of the Apartheid Wall, intensified settler expansion, and heightened restrictions on holy sites. The study aims to document the infringements on Maqdesi women's right to life, including killings and injuries, while highlighting their suffering in the Occupation's prisons under harsh physical and psychological interrogation, medical negligence, and prolonged solitary confinement. It also addresses the impact of home demolitions carried out by the Israeli authorities as a strategic tool of demographic engineering and collective punishment, and examines the violations of Palestinian women's social, healthcare, and educational rights in Al-Quds caused by discriminatory residency revocations, the Ban on Family Unification, and physical segregation imposed by military checkpoints and the Apartheid Wall. Furthermore, the study investigates the deliberate state targeting of female religious educators and guardians—the Murabitat of Al-Aqsa Mosque—as well as female journalists who risk their lives to report these ongoing realities.

The researcher adopted a historical research approach to capture and document events accurately within their broader historical context. Additionally, a descriptive approach was utilized, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data obtained from primary sources (such as interviews with released female prisoners, including Hanadi Halwani and Khadija Khweis) and secondary sources like reports from human rights organizations (such as Addameer, B'Tselem, HAMOKED, and MIFTAH) and government data issued by the State of Palestine and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

² Shehadeh, Lana, and Samira Alayan. "Between colonialism and patriarchy: The role of agency among Palestinian women in the West Bank and East Jerusalem." *Digest of Middle East Studies* 34, no. 1 (2025): e12349.

³ Al-Zaeem, Ibrahim Saqir, Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, and Ainul Asyraf Lokman. "The Israeli blockade on Gaza: its effects and future." *Journal Al-Muqaddimah* 8, no. 1 (2020): 48-62.

⁴ Hamamra, Bilal, and Ekrema Shehab. "Emotional abuse, cultural norms, and psychological consequences for Palestinian women in marital and intimate relationships." *Discover Public Health* 23, no. 1 (2026): 483.

Suffering of Palestinian Women in Al-Quds from Arrests

The Israeli occupation deliberately arrests and imprisons the women of Jerusalem⁵ to undermine their sense of belonging to their land. Palestinian women are detained on various grounds, such as participating in protests against the occupation, carrying out operations against occupation soldiers, or denouncing massacres on social media.⁶ In some cases, they are arrested as a means of pressuring their husbands or sons who are prisoners or wanted. Investigations have shown that most Palestinian female prisoners are from Al-Quds. By the end of 2022, there were 32 female prisoners, with 13 of them being from Al-Quds, accounting for 41% of the total.

Examples include Shorouq Dwayat⁷, who is serving a 16-year sentence, and Fadwa Hamada⁸ and Amani Al-Hasheem⁹, who are each serving 10-year sentences. Additionally, the juvenile prisoner Nufooth Hammad, who was only 15 years old at the time of her arrest in December 2021, remains detained after being taken from her school. Palestinian female prisoners endure various forms of torture and humiliation from the moment of their arrest, throughout interrogation and prosecution, and even until their eventual release.¹⁰

Degradation of Women's Dignity During the Arrest Process

Palestinian female prisoners are degraded during the arrest process in an effort to terrorize them and their families and crush their spirits.¹¹ The Ministry of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs confirms that these women are humiliated and subjected to physical abuse, including beatings, kicking, and spitting on the way to the detention center.¹² Female prisoners also endure harsh conditions during transfer between prisons, and from prisons to courts, traveling in the iron “posta,” a vehicle notorious for being one of the most punishing and degrading forms of transport. The journey often takes 12 consecutive hours, causing physical and psychological exhaustion. During this time, the women are tied by their hands and feet, and are not allowed to bring food, water, or any personal items with them.¹³

⁵ Jerusalem is an important Arab and Islamic city, and the beating heart of Palestine. All of Jerusalem was subjected to Israeli occupation in June 1967, and since that date, the Israeli occupation has practiced various methods of repression against the Palestinians in the city, Such as killing, arrest, demolition, displacement, and preventing Palestinian family reunification in an attempt to displace Palestinians from the city of Jerusalem and create a new reality in which there is a Jewish majority in the city. Muhammad Al-Hazaima (2011). *Jerusalem in the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, dar Al-hamid, pp.190-200; Muhammad Annab (2001). *Zionist Settlement in Jerusalem 1967-1993*, bayt Al-Maqdis for Publishing and Distribution, pp. 140-145.

⁶ Lokman, Ainul Asyraf, and Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor. “New Media and Arab-Israeli Conflict: Dynamics, Impact And Challenges.” *Al-Muqaddimah: Online Journal of Islamic History and Civilization* 10, no. 2 (2022): 1-12.

⁷ Shorouq Dwayat (21 years old) was arrested on 10/7/2015 while she was heading to pray at Al-Aqsa Mosque. A settler surprised her by trying to remove her hijab. The settlers opened fire on her, injured her, and left her bleeding for 45 minutes. The occupation accused her of attempting to stab a settler, and sentenced her to 16 years in prison. Ibtisam Saimah et al (2022). *We Are Not Numbers*, p. 290.

⁸ Fadwa Hamada: (33 years old) married and mother of five children, arrested on 8/12/2017 and sentenced to 10 years in prison on charges of stabbing a settler and wounding him in the hand. Op.ct., p. 393.

⁹ Amani Al-Hashem: (35 years old) married with two children, obtained a BA in “Political Science and Diplomatic Studies” and a diploma in “Italian Language”. She is active in teaching female prisoners inside the prisons, and has published a book entitled “Determination Nurtures Hope.”. Ibtisam Saimah et al (2022). *We Are Not Numbers*, p. 360.

¹⁰ Prisoners’ Media Office, 8 female prisoners serving harsh prison sentences of more than 10 years, 2/25/2020. <https://2u.pw/rOhHLQr9>

¹¹ Shehab, Ekrema, and Bilal Hamamra. “Online aid seeking and identity management among Palestinian women during the Gaza war.” *Discover Global Society* 4, no. 1 (2026): 76.

¹² For more information, refer: <https://www.cda.gov.ps/index.php/ar/ar-prisoner-movement-2/2017-06-01-06-55-39/20951-2025-08-07-11-12-34>

¹³ Eman Abu Al-Kheir (2020). *Israeli Occupation Aggression against Women in the Occupied Palestinian Lands of 1967 (1967-2019)*, Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Center for Studies, p. 60.

Khadija Khwais, a 45-year-old teacher, was apprehended on September 5, 2017, and subsequently spent 38 days in detention. During her time in custody, she experienced significant oppression and humiliation. Within the prison environment, her hijab and jilbab were forcibly removed, and soldiers repeatedly gathered near her cell, intensifying her distress. Furthermore, she described the conditions of transportation by the postal service as more arduous than those of confinement itself. Ms. Khwais recounted two instances in which she fell while attempting to board the transport vehicle, hindered by the restraints that restricted her movement.¹⁴

Torture in the Interrogation Centers

Once they are brought to the interrogation center, women are subject to physical as well as psychological torture, including beating, physical restraints, forced isolation, long-term sleep deprivation, and a range of intimidation maneuvers. All this extreme mistreatment occurs without regard to the specialized needs or situation that comes with their status as women. Juvenile prisoner Nufooth Hammad recounted her experience: “I was interrogated by six or seven officers. One of them kept yelling at me and calling me names. Another hit me in the face so violently that my head hit the wall. He also kicked me in my waist and pulled my hair.” She continued, “He kept yelling at me and threatening to hold me in cells for long periods and prevent me from seeing my family. They then transferred me to another cell, where another officer threw a chair at me and threatened to get my home demolished and my parents arrested.”¹⁵

Solitary Confinement

Solitary confinement is one of the most severe and psychologically damaging methods of torture practiced by the Israeli occupation against Palestinian female prisoners, functioning as both an instrument of punitive control and a mechanism to crush their psychological resilience. Prisoners are placed in isolation as punishment, often for objecting to the guards’ actions or standing up to them in defense of their collective dignity. Solitary confinement can last for months, during which prisoners are deprived of their basic rights, such as family visits and access to the *fawra* (daily outdoor recreation time). This severe sensory and social deprivation is intentionally deployed to break the spirit of political detainees and sever their contact with the outside world. Among the Maqdesi women subjected to this practice is Fadwa Hamada, who spent 100 days in solitary confinement as a punishment for defending a fellow prisoner from an Israeli guards’ attempts to humiliate her, illustrating how administrative isolation is weaponized to suppress solidarity among incarcerated women.

Medical Negligence

In addition to harsh isolation practices, systemic medical neglect represents another major axis of suffering endured by incarcerated Palestinian women. Many female prisoners suffer from deteriorating health conditions but do not receive the necessary medical treatment, in direct violation of the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions, which guarantee prisoners’ right to medical care, access to medication, and regular health check-ups. This institutional deliberate neglect is acutely evident in the case of Israa Jaabis, a 32-year-old Jerusalemite mother serving an 11-year sentence, who was divorced while in prison. Arrested on October 10, 2015, after a fire erupted in her car, which resulted in severe, life-altering burns covering 60% of her face and body, she suffers from loss of fingers and fused skin that require multiple urgent reconstructive surgeries. Despite her constant physical pain and deteriorating health, the Occupation Authorities keep delaying her medical procedures as a deliberate policy of medical apathy. The Occupation Authorities apprehend Palestinian women based

¹⁴ Interview held by the researcher with Khadija Khwais, a female murabeta in Al-Aqsa, Al-Quds, 27/02/2018.

¹⁵ Palestinian News and Information Agency (WAFA), *Juvenile Prisoner Nufooth Hammad Describes the Details of the Violent Assault She was Subject to during her Arrest*, 15/2/2022. <https://www.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/41496>

solely on suspicion, and in instances of injury, their medical treatment is often neglected. This practice appears to be part of a broader strategy aimed at inflicting harm on these individuals to dissuade other women from engaging in resistance activities. Nevertheless, it is important to note that international law affirms the right of peoples under occupation to resist their occupier until they attain independence, framing these punitive measures as unlawful retaliations against legitimate anti-colonial resistance.

Deprivation from Visits

The Occupation often deprives the Palestinian female prisoners of meeting with their families, legal representatives, and Red Cross officials have further exacerbated the suffering of incarcerated individuals. Reports from female prisoners indicate that family visitations are subject to stringent regulations, including prohibitions on physical contact such as handshakes and hugs. These visits often occur through a glass barrier, with communication limited to telephone conversations. Intisar Al-Sayyad recounted the challenges her four children faced in obtaining visitation permits. The initial visit took place three months following her arrest, and they were permitted to interact only through the glass partition. Intisar's daughter, Malak, articulated her frustration, stating, "I could not hug or even touch my mother due to the glass barrier between us." Intisar experienced profound difficulty in seeing her children under these circumstances, yearning for the ability to hold them. While she endeavors to project strength for her children, she often finds herself in tears after each visitation.¹⁶

Targeting Female Journalists with Arrest and Killing

The Occupation Authorities specifically target female journalists with arrests and assaults to prevent them from reporting on the truth of the Occupation's violations against Palestinians, particularly in Al-Quds, where residents face the threats of eviction and land Judaization.

Givara Budeiri, a journalist for the Al Jazeera Channel, experienced this firsthand when Occupation soldiers attacked and beat her, resulting in a broken arm and multiple traumas across her body. This assault occurred to deter her from covering the events in Sheikh Jarrah in May 2021.¹⁷ She was held in custody for hours and subjected to humiliating treatment. Givara recounted, "They kicked me and treated me as a criminal."¹⁸ At other times, the Occupation deliberately kills journalists, regardless of gender, as exemplified by the case of Shereen Abu Aqleh, an Al Jazeera reporter who was killed on May 11, 2022, while covering an Israeli army raid on Jenin Camp.¹⁹ Israel's detention, torture, and degradation of Palestinian women constitute violations of international humanitarian law. Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 states, "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." Similarly, Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 reinforces this principle, declaring, "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." These violations persist largely due to the United States' bias toward Israel and its opposition to any UN resolutions that advocate for the Palestinian cause.

¹⁶ Addamir Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association (2014). *Families of Prisoners and Detainees and Family Visits*. <https://shortest.link/qeWi>

¹⁷ It is represented by the occupation police assaulting the residents of the neighborhood and trying to evacuate their homes in favor of settlement associations that falsely claim ownership of those homes.see; Mona Al Kurd, the story of Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jE6ugMD7eOQ>

¹⁸ A video on which Givara Budeiri recounts the assault during her arrest. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=778793446332536>

¹⁹ Palestinian News and Information Agency (WAFA) (2022). *Martyrdom of Colleague Shereen Abu Aqleh*. <https://wafa.ps/Pages/Details/47532>

Deportation of Palestinian Women

The Israeli Occupation Forces implement a policy of deportation and expulsion against prominent women to undermine their sense of belonging and prevent their participation in national efforts. Maqdesi women are often expelled for trivial reasons, aimed at clearing Al-Quds and obstructing the reunification of Palestinian families. The first to be deported was Tawdud Abdul Hadi, the principal of Jenin Girls' School, who was expelled in January 1968 on charges of harboring the fedayeen and providing them with financial support.²⁰ In 2011, the Occupation Forces deported prisoner Amena Abdul Jawwad Mena²¹ from Al-Quds to Turkey.²² Amena had been released from occupation prisons with 27 other female prisoners in the "Faithful to the Free" exchange deal.²³ However, the Occupation Authorities imposed the condition of her deportation from Al-Quds as a prerequisite, undermining the joy of freedom for both her and her family. Deportation is a clear violation of international humanitarian law. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states, "Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive." Additionally, deportation constitutes a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Targeting of Murabitat²⁴ with Arrest and Barring from Al-Aqsa Mosque

The authorities occupying Israel continue to restrict the access of Palestinians to Al-Aqsa Mosque, an action aimed at diminishing their religious connection to this significant site.²⁵ These restrictions particularly affect male and female murabeteen, individuals who remain within the mosque to safeguard it. The Occupation Authorities exert pressure on these individuals and their families, effectively preventing them from staying in Al-Aqsa Mosque and from resisting the ongoing incursions by Zionist settlers. Since 2012, the occupying authorities have placed numerous Maqdesi women on a "blacklist," which serves to prohibit their access to Al-Aqsa Mosque. This list currently includes the names of 70 Maqdesi women who have been banned, among them Hanadi Al-Halawani, Zeina Amro, Ayda Al-Seidawi, Khadija Khweis, and several others dedicated to the protection of Al-Aqsa Mosque.²⁶

The experience of Hanadi Al-Halawani

Hanadi Al-Halawani is a 42 years old Jerusalemite mother of four children and a teacher of the Holy Quran at Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Occupation began targeting her in 2012. She has reported being arrested 67 times by the authorities, and soldiers have broken into her home ten times between 2019 and 2023. Each time, they confiscated all the money, laptops, and cellphones they could find, dragging her out of her home with her hands and legs cuffed in a degrading manner before her neighbors. Regarding her arrests, Hanadi recounted that the soldiers forbade her from drinking water throughout the interrogation period and subjected

²⁰Burhan Al-Dajani (1971). *The Palestine Question Yearbook for the Year 1968*, Beirut : Institute for Palestine Studies.

²¹ She was arrested in January 2001 and sentenced to life imprisonment on charges of luring a Zionist settler via the Internet and causing his death. Imtiaz Al-Nahhal Za'arub (2013). *Palestinian Women: Contemporary Female Faces*. Gaza: Author, p. 116.

²² Eman Abu Al-Kheir (2020). *Israeli Occupation Aggression*, p. 77.

²³ A prisoners exchange deal between the Islamic Resistance Movement "Hamas" and the occupation government in 2011. In the deal, 1027 male and female prisoners were released from the occupation prisons in exchange for Gilad Shalit, who was captured by the Palestinian resistance. Eman Abu Al- Eman Abu Al-Kheir (2020) *Israeli Occupation Aggression*, p.56.

²⁴ Ribat; It is a popular movement, indicates staying in Al-Aqsa Mosque to protect it from Israeli attacks. This movement began to appear in 2001. Sharif Abu Shamala, "The Popular Role in Defending Al-Aqsa Mosque: Rabat as a Model", *Journal of Jerusalem Studies*, 2021, 21 (2), 253-268 DOI: 10.31456/beytulmakdis.860606

²⁵ Alinat-Abed, Salwa. "A new struggle? Religious Muslim women's activism at al-Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem." *Contemporary Islam* 19, no. 3 (2025): 487-515.

²⁶ Eman Abu Al-Kheir (2020). *Israeli Occupation Aggression*, pp. 171-172.

her to strip searches, even though she refused to remove her hijab. She was subsequently thrown into a filthy cell equipped with three cameras and a toilet without a door, preventing her from using the facilities in privacy.

She has been subjected to repeated arrests and barred from Al-Aqsa Mosque for extended periods. Over the past seven years, the number of barring decisions against her has increased significantly, resulting in a total period of only three months when she was allowed to enter the mosque. Halawani confirmed that the cumulative time she has been barred from entering Al-Aqsa Mosque amounts to about ten years. As a consequence of these restrictions, she was unable to share in the joy of her only daughter's engagement, which was held at Al-Aqsa Mosque. As punishment for her ongoing commitment to Al-Aqsa, she has faced multiple travel bans, one of which lasted three years before 2019. This restriction prevented her from participating in numerous conferences outside Palestine, as well as from traveling to Makkah with her family to perform Umrah.

The Occupation also engages in religious persecution against female worshippers by expelling them from the mosque, fabricating charges against them, and accusing them of terrorism. Additionally, it employs legal measures to deprive them of their travel rights and imposes house arrest, all in an attempt to prevent them from worshipping at Al-Aqsa Mosque. This strategy aims to leave the mosque empty for Jewish settlers, allowing them to perform their Talmudic rituals in preparation for demolishing Al-Aqsa Mosque and building a Jewish synagogue in its place.²⁷

Suffering of Maqdesi Women from the Assaults of the Occupation Soldiers and Settlers

The suffering of Palestinian women in Al-Quds is inflicted not only by the Israeli occupation soldiers but also by the Zionist settlers, who continuously attempt to seize their houses and expel them from their neighborhood.

Injury of Maqdesi Women due to Assault by the Occupation Soldiers

Women in Al-Quds are subjected to the assaults of the Israeli occupation soldiers, especially during military incursions and at checkpoints. These violent encounters often result in severe injuries, with some leading to fatalities. For example, an Israeli soldier attacked Rina Derbas, fracturing her skull and smashing her nasal bones while she was trying to prevent him from arresting her juvenile child.²⁸ Another example is Huda Darwish from the town of Isaweya, who suffocated from tear gas thrown by the Occupation Forces at the citizens' houses in town in October 2015. When she attempted to reach the hospital, the forces at a checkpoint denied her access, which ultimately led to her martyrdom. On March 8, 2016, while the world celebrated International Women's Day, occupation soldiers shot Fadwa Ahmed Abu Teir from Al-Quds as she was on her way to pray at Al-Aqsa Mosque. They then forbade paramedics from treating her until she succumbed to her injuries.

Injury of Maqdesi Women due to Zionist Settlers' Assaults

The Israeli occupation continues to establish more settlements on Palestinian lands to impose a de facto policy that facilitates demographic changes in favor of Zionists in Al-Quds. As of 2021, there were 151 settlements in the West Bank, with 16 located in the Al-Quds governorate. Approximately 246,000 settlers reside in the eastern part of Al-Quds.²⁹ Settlers' assaults against Palestinian women take various forms, including beatings, throwing stones, sand, garbage, water, chlorine, and empty bottles; attempts to kidnap or run them over; breaking into their homes; cutting down their fruit trees; and shooting. For instance, in the

²⁷ Interview held by the researcher with Hanadi Halawani, a female murabeta in Al-Aqsa, Al-Quds, 15/04/2023.

²⁸ Meqla Media.(2019). the Maqdesi Woman Rina Derbas.. A Testimony on Zionist Terrorism. <http://meqlamedia.com/video/507>

²⁹ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.(2022). Statistical Year Book- Jerusalem, State of Palestine, p. 163.

Silwan neighborhood of Al-Quds, settlers attacked several women, resulting in Riham Osama Al-Rujbi losing her fetus due to a head injury. Additionally, a female settler broke into the home of Ne'ma Abu Hedwan in Al-Quds, attacked her, and sprayed pepper spray while she was sleeping, causing severe burns to her face and neck.³⁰

Attempts to Take Over Palestinian Houses

The settlement associations serve as a tool for the Israeli occupation to confiscate Palestinian properties, aiming to expel residents and force them to abandon their homes. Palestinians in neighborhoods such as Sheikh Jarrah, Al-Bustan, and Batn Al-Hawa face constant threats of eviction and displacement. Fatma Salem, a resident of the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, has fought tirelessly to protect her home from settler groups attempting to take it over. In 1988, she received an eviction notice but successfully suspended the decision in court. Since then, she has battled in Israeli courts to preserve the house where her family has lived for over 73 years. In early 2022, settlers seized a piece of land owned by Hajja Salem, located near Fatma's home, and established an office for an Israeli politician on that land.³¹ Palestinian families in Al-Quds, particularly in the neighborhoods of the old city, fiercely struggle in the occupation courts to protect their estates, where they have lived for decades.³² This ongoing battle leaves them feeling unsafe in their residences, subjecting them to significant psychological and financial stress as they fear displacement by settler associations. Unfortunately, this situation has already impacted families such as the Hanouns, Al-Ghawis, and Al-Kurds,³³ and others.

Suffering of Women due to House Demolition by the Israeli Occupation

Since 1967, the occupying authorities have implemented a policy aimed at displacing Palestinian families and demolishing their homes in Al-Quds, employing various justifications such as alleged construction without permits, security concerns, infrastructure development, and land confiscation for settlement purposes. This practice frequently utilizes unlicensed construction as a pretext for the demolition of numerous Palestinian residences. As a result, Al-Quds has the highest incidence of building demolitions among Palestinian cities.³⁴ The primary objective of these demolitions is to effectuate a demographic shift within the city, thereby undermining the feasibility of establishing a Palestinian state with Al-Quds as its capital.

Recent statistics indicate that from 2007 until the conclusion of 2021, the occupying forces demolished 1,023 houses in Al-Quds, displacing 3,422 individuals, the majority being women and children. The year 2019 marked a notable escalation in the demolition of homes belonging to the Maqdesi population, during which 169 houses were destroyed. Of these, 42 were demolished by their owners, who faced exorbitant demolition fees imposed by the occupying authorities, compelling them to take matters into their own hands to avoid financial burdens.³⁵ The largest demolition operation conducted by the Israeli occupation

³⁰ Eman Abu Al-Kheir (2020). *Israeli Occupation Aggression*, p. 50.

³¹ Arabs of 1948. (2022). The Occupation Gives Fatma Salem's Family a Week to Demolish her House. <https://n9.cl/1bdpo>.

³² Abughannam, Rana, and Nuha Dandis. "Tactics of Resistance: Palestinian Women and the Reclamation of Space in the Old City of Hebron, Palestine." *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 15, no. 2 (2026): 287-314.

³³ In 2008, Um Kamel Al-Kurd's family was evacuated from their house. In 2009, the families of Hanoun and Al-Ghawis were expelled by settlers, who moved to live in their houses. The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (2009). *Annual Report on Zionist Aggressions against Al-Quds and Al-Aqsa Mosque for the year 2009*, Gaza, p. 9.

³⁴ Raed Ahmed Salha, "Morphological Luring in Jerusalem during the Democratic and Political Challenges," *Journal of Al-Mubadara* 1, no. 1 (2022): 46. <https://doi.org/10.61312/9ys89d24>.

³⁵ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2022). *Statistical Year Book- Jerusalem*, State of Palestine, p. 168.

since the destruction of Al-Magharba neighborhood in 1967 was the collective demolition of citizens' properties and buildings in Wadi Al-Homus neighborhood in Zur Baher. On July 22nd, 2019, the Occupation demolished 11 buildings with 72 apartments.³⁶ The latest count of demolished houses and buildings until mid-2019 exceeded 59 houses in Al-Quds alone. The year 2018 witnessed (215) demolitions in the city.³⁷ Women bear the brunt of this policy, which disrupts their stable lives and forces them into displacement. It deepens the economic crisis, leading to the loss of livelihoods, properties, and personal privacy for Palestinians.

One woman profoundly affected by this situation is Yaqout Muhammad Abu Rmeila. She began building on her land in Isawiya in 2006, with construction continuing for four years without any inspections from the Occupation's municipal authorities in Al-Quds. Just as she and her nine children were preparing to move into their new home, the Occupation's bulldozers demolished the house without warning, claiming the land was classified as green space by the municipality. The shock was too much for Yaqout; she fell unconscious and was taken to the hospital. This demolition not only shattered her dreams but also wiped out her savings and plunged her into debt.³⁸ Examining the stories of other women whose houses were demolished by the Occupation reveals a troubling pattern: the Occupation Forces often wait until a building is nearly complete before destroying it. This strategy aims to inflict the greatest possible losses on the owners and deprive them of the opportunity for reconstruction.

Demolishing as a Punishment

The Israeli Occupation Authorities implement a policy of demolishing and sealing the homes of Palestinians accused of carrying out operations against the Occupation Forces. This tactic serves as a form of collective punishment aimed at the families of martyrs and prisoner.³⁹ One notable case is that of Nadia Abu Jamal, a widow living in the Jabal Al-Mukabber neighborhood of Eastern Al-Quds. Her home was demolished following the actions of her husband, Ghassan Abu Jamal, who was killed on November 18, 2014, after carrying out an attack on a synagogue in the Har Nof neighborhood of the occupied village of Deir Yaseen.⁴⁰ The demolition of houses constitutes a clear violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Article 53 explicitly states that "Any destruction by the Occupying Power of real or personal property is prohibited." Additionally, Article 33 prohibits all forms of collective punishment against civilian inhabitants, forbidding the punishment of individuals for acts they did not commit and prohibiting any acts of vengeance against them or their properties.

Suffering of Women at the Social, Healthcare, and Education Levels

Palestinian women encounter substantial obstacles stemming from Israeli discriminatory laws, such as the Ban on Family Unification, which effectively isolates Al-Quds from other Palestinian cities. This circumstance denies these women their rights to social and economic security, ultimately leading to the fragmentation of Palestinian families.

Ban on Maqdesi Families' Unification

Family unification represents a significant concern for Palestinians residing in Al-Quds. Every married couple seeking to establish residency in Al-Quds is required to submit a "family unification" application to the Ministry of Interior of the occupying authority.

³⁶ The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy-MIFTAH (2019). *Effect of House Demolition on Women of Al-Qud Fact Sheet*, p. 4.

³⁷ MIFTAH (2019). *Effect of House Demolition*, p. 4.

³⁸ Eman Abu Al-Kheir (2020). *Israeli Occupation Aggression*, p. 144.

³⁹ XINYU, YE, and PABIYAH HAJIMAMING. "Trauma among Palestinian Women: Coping with Shuhada'in Their Struggle for Resistance in Kanafani's Work." *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 28 (2025).

⁴⁰ B'TSELEM (2015). *Demolition of Homes of Operation Executors: Continuation of the Israeli Government's Policy of Taking Revenge from Innocent under Approval of the Supreme Court of Justice*. https://www.btselem.org/arabic/press_releases/20151007_punitive_demolitions_in_jm

Acceptance of this application is limited to women aged 25 years and older and men aged 35 years and older. The applicants undergo comprehensive investigations concerning their place of residence and security conduct. To secure approval for the application, individuals must have resided in Al-Quds for a minimum of two years and must provide a variety of documentation, including national insurance certificates, utility bills (for water and electricity), birth certificates, educational certificates, and other pertinent paperwork.⁴¹ According to statistics from the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling, applications for family unification from approximately 40,000 Palestinian families in Al-Quds have faced rejection. This situation is largely attributed to the Israeli Citizenship Law of 2003, which prohibits the unification of Maqdesi individuals with spouses originating from the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Consequently, numerous women encounter considerable difficulties in cohabitating with their husbands who possess Al-Quds identification. Moreover, if a woman holding an Al-Quds ID chooses to relocate with her spouse who holds a West Bank ID, she risks losing her identification entirely. Such a loss would lead to the forfeiture of her rights to healthcare, education, and social security.⁴² Women without residency status in Al-Quds often experience significant stress and anxiety regarding their future and that of their families. For example, Eman Abdul Aziz Hababa, a resident of Beit Exa village in the West Bank, is married to a resident of Al-Quds. Due to her lack of a residency permit, she finds herself largely confined to her home, apprehensive about facing serious consequences if she is discovered outside. This circumstance has led to considerable psychological distress, causing her to perceive her situation as akin to living in a prison.⁴³

Deportation of Women for Not Having a Reunification Permit

The Occupation Authorities in the region deported Mariam Al-Ajlouni from the Bab Al-Magharba neighborhood in Al-Quds several years ago, following the rejection of her husband's family unification application. This decision resulted in the disintegration of their family unit, leading to the separation of Mariam from her husband and their four children.⁴⁴ The Israeli prohibition on family unification, in conjunction with various discriminatory laws, has rendered the residence of spouses in their own homes legally untenable. Consequently, numerous Palestinian couples are compelled to live apart or to emigrate from Al-Quds. This situation reinforces the objectives of the Occupation, which aims to displace the city's original inhabitants, a phenomenon frequently characterized as "silent" or "calm" displacement.

Revocation of Residency in Al-Quds

According to the Center for the Defense of the Individual (HAMOKED), the Occupation Authorities have revoked the residencies of thousands of Palestinian residents of Al-Quds since 1967. Between 1967 and the end of 2022, a total of 14,808 Palestinians lost their residency permanently. In 2022 alone, the IDs of 81 Palestinians were withdrawn⁴⁵, including 42 women. One notable case is Nadia Abu Jamal, whose residency was revoked by the Occupation Authorities, leading to her deportation from Al-Quds. This decision separated her from her three children, who cannot choose to live with her without risking the loss of their own residencies in Al-Quds. Consequently, Nadia endures significant psychological distress, while her children experience deep nostalgia for their mother. This action was taken as a punishment against the family of Ghassan Abu Jamal, who carried out an operation in an

⁴¹ Eman Abu Al-Kheir. (2020) *Israeli Occupation Aggression*, pp. 97-98.

⁴² Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling (2021). *Family Rights of Women in Al-Quds under the Israeli Discriminatory Policies*, (Factsheet), Ramallah: Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling, p. 2.

⁴³ Eman Abu Al-Kheir (2020). *Israeli Occupation Aggression*, p. 102.

⁴⁴ Palestine Online (2022). *The Occupation Decides to Expel a Mother of Four from Al-Quds*. <https://felesteen.news/p/73918>

⁴⁵ Center for the Defence of the Individual website on Facebook (2022). <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063528790778>

Israeli synagogue in Al-Quds on November 11, 2014.⁴⁶ This constitutes a form of collective punishment, which is prohibited under international law. The deprivation of an individual's right to residency directly contravenes international humanitarian law, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 15 explicitly states, "No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality."

Effect of the Apartheid Wall and the Annexation on the Women's Social Rights

The Occupation Authorities commenced the construction of the apartheid wall and implemented annexation and expansion plans in 2002. They persisted in these actions despite the International Court of Justice's ruling, which declared the wall's illegitimacy. Approximately 85% of the wall encroaches upon West Bank territory, isolating 9.4% of the land, including Eastern Al-Quds. As a result, it obstructs citizens from accessing their lands and obtaining essential services such as education, healthcare, and even water.⁴⁷ The wall has severely impacted the lives of Palestinian women, restricting their movement and hindering communication with their families and relatives. Data indicate that 21.4% of families in Al-Quds are separated from their first-degree relatives.⁴⁸ One example is Fatma Oda Khalfa, a resident of the Al-Khalayla neighborhood in Al-Quds. Her family can no longer visit her because the Occupation Forces permit only area residents to pass. Her parents, brothers, and sisters, who live on the other side of the wall, are unable to visit her, despite the fact that the journey to her home used to take just five minutes before the wall's construction. Fatma is also unable to visit them due to the challenges posed by checkpoints and a lack of transportation on her side of the wall.⁴⁹ As a result, the Occupation separates Palestinian women from their husbands and denies them social visits due to the barriers imposed between Palestinian cities and villages. The apartheid wall not only isolates these communities but also denies residents access to essential services such as education and healthcare, depriving Palestinian women of their right to a natural family life.

Effect of the Wall and Barriers on the Health Conditions of Women in Al-Quds

The dignity of Palestinian women has been profoundly undermined at Israeli checkpoints, particularly in the aftermath of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000. A particularly concerning aspect of this degradation is the obstruction faced by women attempting to access hospitals for childbirth, which has resulted in many giving birth at checkpoints under conditions that lack even the most basic safety measures. Among these women are:

- Anwar Al-Refa'i, a resident of Anata town in Al-Quds. On March 6, 2006, she gave birth to her daughter Dareen at Al-Zaytoun Crossing in the apartheid wall. Occupation soldiers denied her passage to the hospital, resulting in her delivering her child at the barrier.
- Wudian Abu Rumi, a resident of Abu Dis town in the occupied city of Al-Quds, faced a harrowing experience on September 7, 2007. Occupation soldiers denied her passage across the barrier to reach the nearest hospital in Al-Quds, claiming that Abu Dis was outside the borders of the apartheid wall. After enduring hours of suffering, she ultimately delivered her baby at the crossing.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Minbar Al-Aqsa Association (2020). *Suffering of Nadia Abu Jamal of Al-Quds*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5ikidc42Q8&list=PLCrFGtYrL9HIxA10VKbdjzrIamCMUVAi9&index=2>

⁴⁷ Richard Folk (2014). *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967*, (Human Rights Council, United Nations), Document no.: A/HRC/25/67, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights- Badil (2006). *Displaced by the wall Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights*, Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights- Badil, p.33.

⁴⁹ Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling (2021). *Family Rights of Women in Al-Quds*, p. 35.

⁵⁰ Eman Abu Al-Kheir (2020). *Israeli Occupation Aggression*, p. 114.

- Mervat Al-Shweiki's experience on January 13, 2009, further illustrates the dangers posed by these barriers. An Israeli soldier stopped the car transporting her to the hospital for inspection and disregarded her companion's pleas about her urgent situation. While waiting at the barrier, Mervat experienced increased labor pains and bleeding, ultimately delivering her son, Ramez, in the car at the Al-Zaeem military barrier.⁵¹

The Israeli apartheid barrier has significantly affected the health of Maqdesi communities by isolating regions such as Anata village, Kafr Aqeb, and Sha'fat camp from vital healthcare facilities in Al-Quds. This situation has led to serious consequences for pregnant women and their newborns.

Effect of Israeli Violations on the Maqdesi Girls' Right to Education

The Maqdesi population encounters significant challenges due to the Israeli occupation's efforts to integrate pro-Israeli narratives into the educational curricula within the holy land, an action that undermines the Palestinian national identity. Numerous educational institutions in Al-Quds have been rendered inoperable as a result of the construction of the apartheid wall and ongoing expansion initiatives. Students frequently experience assaults from occupation soldiers and consistently miss classes due to the obstacles presented by their commuting routes. Additionally, female students are subjected to harassment and assaults at military checkpoints. According to a factsheet developed by the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), interviews conducted with Maqdesi female students and their families indicate that a substantial number of the respondents have experienced various forms of harassment from occupation soldiers and settlers while commuting to school. Approximately 23% of the students and 30% of the parents reported incidents of physical harassment by occupation soldiers within the streets of the Old City in Al-Quds. Furthermore, about 50% of the students and 82% of families and experts confirmed that female students encounter multiple forms of harassment at military checkpoints and on the streets, primarily perpetrated by both soldiers and settlers.⁵²

Conversely, the barrier has effectively separated female students from the schools in Abu Dis, Al-Eizariya, and Al-Sawahra Ash-Sharqiya, impeding their access to educational institutions in Beit Exa, situated in the northwest of Al-Quds. Furthermore, certain female educators encounter challenges in reaching institutions in the Arab Al-Jahaleen area, located in the Al-Jeeb region, which is also positioned in the northwest of Al-Quds.⁵³ The Occupation policies in Al-Quds can be characterized as a violation of human rights, as they systematically oppress the Palestinian population.⁵⁴ The Statute of the International Court of Justice delineates the components associated with the crime of persecution against any group based on political, ethnic, national, cultural, or religious grounds. The collective punishment policy implemented by Israel toward the Palestinians in Al-Quds incorporates all these elements, aligning with the legal definition of the crime against humanity categorized as persecution.

⁵¹ Land Research Center. (2009) *The Child Ramez Al-Shweiki, Another Child Born at Al-Zaeem Military Barrier*. <http://poica.org/2009/02/>

⁵² MIFTAH (2022). *Effect of Israeli Violations on the Girls' Right to Education in Al-Quds* (Factsheet). [Factsheet Education Rights250522Ar.pdf](#)

⁵³ Basem Uraiqat. (2012). "Effect of the Wall on the Educational Process", *Al-Quds Papers Series vol. 5*, Palestinian Liberation Organization, Jerusalem Affairs Department. p. 137.

⁵⁴ Lokman, Ainul Asyraf, and Mohd Roslan Mohd Nori. "Navigating Peace: Al-Qaradawi's Critique of Arab-Israeli Relations in the Trump Era." *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 25 (2024): 1-14.

Conclusion

In summary, the comprehensive historical documentation of the period between 2000 and 2022 demonstrates that the ongoing Israeli occupation results in significant violations against Palestinian women in Al-Quds, constituting clear breaches of international humanitarian law as well as various international human rights agreements. Through a systematic combination of state policies and military actions, women residing in Al-Quds experience continuous physical and psychological assaults perpetrated by Israeli soldiers and settlers. Additionally, the Occupation involves the deliberate and targeted arrest of Maqdesi women, who are subjected to various forms of torture and degradation—ranging from severe physical violence during transport to harsh interrogation tactics and prolonged isolation—during their imprisonment, with the aim of suppressing their involvement in national activities and severing their connection to their land. In an effort to diminish their spiritual and cultural roles, women are also expelled from Al-Aqsa Mosque, subjected to house arrest, and prohibited from traveling internationally and domestically. Furthermore, Palestinian women face the profound consequences of discriminatory Israeli laws, such as the restrictions on family unification and the arbitrary revocation of residency IDs. They encounter considerable challenges due to the physical barriers and the apartheid wall, which hinder their access to essential healthcare facilities—often forcing women to endure dangerous childbirth at military checkpoints—and educational services. Taken as a whole, the Occupation employs policies of displacement and fragmentation among Palestinian families in Al-Quds, resulting in the demolition or seizure of their homes for the benefit of settlers, ultimately seeking to displace the original inhabitants of the city and alter its demographic and civilizational identity. Thus, the lived historical experience of Maqdesi women reflects a profound intersection of political conflict, religious preservation, and enduring resilience within contemporary Islamic civilization.

To address these persistent violations and safeguard the historical presence of the indigenous community, several urgent legal and political measures must be pursued. First and foremost, Israeli soldiers and settlers who engage in actions that constitute violations against the Palestinian population should be subject to prosecution in prominent international courts. It is imperative that rigorous legal measures are initiated by international bodies and human rights organizations to ensure accountability for these actions. In parallel with legal accountability, the international community must apply consistent pressure on the occupying forces to adhere to the resolutions of the United Nations and the International Court of Justice. Specifically, this includes demands for the dismantling of the apartheid wall and the cessation of settlement construction on Palestinian territory. Furthermore, and to prevent further humanitarian and socio-cultural degradation, it is critical for the international community to adopt proactive measures aimed at safeguarding the rights and well-being of Palestinians in Al-Quds. This entails advocating for an immediate end to ongoing violations against the Maqdesi residents and ensuring their unhindered access to essential services, fundamental human rights, and religious sites.

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