

Israel's Use of Bulldozers in Violation of International Law

Human rights organizations have documented a pattern of Israeli forces using bulldozers:

- In violation of international law in Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), Lebanon, and Syria;
- As tools to commit a range of human rights violations, including the destruction of civilian property and agricultural land;
- In the commission of the war crimes of collective punishment, forced displacement, and wanton destruction; and,
- As recently as March 31, the [Israeli Defense Minister](#) said that Israel would expand a “buffer zone” and destroy all homes near the border in Lebanon “according to the model of Rafah and Beit Hanoun in Gaza,” which would involve the use of bulldozers.

Joint Resolutions of Disapproval

On February 28, 2025, Secretary of State Marco Rubio [notified](#) a Foreign Military Sale to Israel of Caterpillar D9 Bulldozers and related equipment for an estimated \$295 million. Given the extreme risk that arms and military equipment will be used by Israel to carry out human rights violations, Congress must block such sales.

- *[Recommendation: VOTE YES on Joint Resolutions of Disapproval regarding weapons sales to Israel, including S.J. Res. 32 on bulldozers and S.J. Res. 138 on 1,000 pound bombs.](#)*

Overview of Israel's Use of Bulldozers in the Middle East

1. *Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory*

Israel implements a [myriad](#) of laws and policies to both maintain its apartheid system and to force Palestinians in Israel and the OPT into small enclaves or to leave altogether. In Israel and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israeli authorities enforce similar discriminatory planning and building regimes against the Palestinian population. This results in widespread and similar patterns of home and property demolitions, including structures directly linked to livelihoods. In the occupied Gaza Strip, Israel is [systematically](#) dismantling essential civilian infrastructure and destroying civilian property and agricultural land amid the ongoing genocide.

a. Israel

Instead of zoning [Palestinian Bedouin villages](#) in the Naqab/Negev as residential areas, Israeli authorities have zoned the villages and lands around them for military, industrial, or public use. Over the years, Israel has recognized only 11 of villages and 35 remain “unrecognized” with residents considered to engage in “illegal squatting” leaving them unable to apply for building permits to legalize their homes. As a result, the buildings of whole communities have been repeatedly demolished. In contrast, Israeli courts have retroactively approved Jewish communities built without outline plans and building permits in the same area.

In one such instance, on [May 8, 2024](#), Israeli authorities demolished 47 homes in Wadi al-Khalil, an unrecognized Palestinian Bedouin village, without proper consultation or compensation. The

demolitions amounted to the forced eviction of over 300 residents of Wadi al-Khalil. Yoav and border police units, stormed Wadi al-Khalil to bulldoze homes and confiscate residents' belongings demonstrating the ongoing human rights violations carried out by Israeli authorities against Palestinian citizens of Israel. Over the years, Israeli authorities have employed numerous pretexts to push for the displacement and segregation of the Bedouin community through the expansion of highways, building industrial zones, establishing forests for the Jewish National Fund, and the designation of military zones.

b. Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem

Since December 2025, Israeli authorities have unleashed a [series of unlawful measures](#) deliberately designed to dispossess Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and to make the annexation of the territory an irreversible reality. These measures represent an unprecedented escalation in both the scale and speed of Israel's longstanding project to expand illegal settlements and formalize registration of the land in the West Bank as Israeli state property, thereby further entrenching the illegal occupation and apartheid.

In 2025, more than 1,700 Palestinians were displaced due to lack of permit demolitions in Area C and East Jerusalem, the highest annual total on record since the [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) began to systematically document demolitions in 2009. Demolitions are typically carried out due to lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain. Additionally, [punitive demolitions](#) are routinely used to demolish the homes of relatives of Palestinians who have carried out an actual attack or alleged attacks against Israeli forces or civilians, which amounts to the war crime of collective punishment.

Amnesty International has also [documented](#) how the Israeli military has displaced tens of thousands of Palestinians by destroying homes and essential civilian infrastructure as part of its brutal military operation in the Jenin and Tulkarem refugee camps in the West Bank. Hundreds of homes in these camps and adjacent neighborhoods were destroyed during military operations and through demolition orders. In March 2025, Israel announced plans to demolish 66 homes in Jenin camp and on May 1, 2025, issued further demolition orders for 106 homes in Tulkarem refugee camps. In footage analyzed by Amnesty International, numerous structures were demolished with manually laid explosives and roads, buildings, and cars were destroyed with bulldozers. Israeli forces also appear to have conducted clearing operations, removing buildings to widen or create new roads. As part of the operation, Israeli forces also systematically destroyed critical infrastructure, including roads, water, electricity, and communications networks. These practices amount to forced displacement, which is a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and a war crime.

c. Occupied Gaza Strip

Amnesty International has documented the Israeli military's campaign to significantly expand a "[buffer zone](#)" along the eastern perimeter of the occupied Gaza Strip, which the organization determined should be investigated as the war crimes of wanton destruction and collective punishment. To create this "buffer zone," Israeli forces used bulldozers and manually laid explosives to unlawfully destroy agricultural land and civilian buildings, razing entire neighborhoods, including homes, schools, and

mosques. This expanded “buffer zone” covers approximately 58 km², which amounts to roughly 16% of the Gaza Strip.

In four areas investigated by Amnesty International, the destruction was carried out after the Israeli military already had operational control over the area, meaning that the destruction was not caused by direct combat between the Israeli military and Hamas or other Palestinian armed groups. Structures were deliberately and systematically demolished by Israeli forces. In Shuja’iya, one of Gaza City’s largest neighborhoods, more than 750 structures were severely damaged or destroyed between November 26, 2023, and January 6, 2024. Additionally, in Central Gaza, the area around Al-Bureij and Al-Maghazi refugee camps was razed between late December 2023 and January 2024 destroying villages and agricultural land, including more than 1,300 structures.

In a [follow-up investigation](#), analysis of satellite imagery and verification of video footage revealed how Israeli forces completely razed what remained of the town of Khuza’a, including some of Gaza’s most fertile agricultural land, over the course of two weeks in May 2025. The organization again determined these actions should be investigated as the war crimes of wanton destruction and collective punishment. Images analyzed by Amnesty showed how Khuza’a had been entirely reduced to rubble in less than two weeks after a significant part of the town had already been destroyed in 2024. The scale of this destruction far exceeded any conceivable military necessity and pointed to a deliberate campaign by Israeli forces to render the area uninhabitable.

According to the [UN Food and Agriculture Organization](#), around 87 percent of Gaza’s agricultural land has been damaged or destroyed as of September 2025. The destruction of land essential to the production of food must be understood in the context of Israel’s use of starvation as a method of warfare. As a result of blocking humanitarian aid coupled with mass forced displacement and the destruction or denial of access to sources of food production, Israel has engineered an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe, which is part and parcel of the genocidal conditions of life it has imposed on Palestinians in Gaza.

2. Lebanon

A ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hezbollah went into effect on November 27, 2024. Since then, the [Israeli military](#) has maintained its presence in southern Lebanon and continued to carry out near-daily attacks and large-scale destruction of civilian property and infrastructure. In response to rocket attacks by Hezbollah on northern Israel on [March 2, 2026](#), Israel has significantly escalated its attacks in Lebanon, which has included signals from Israeli officials of plans to expand a “[buffer zone](#)” up to the Litani River.

Amnesty International has [documented](#) how the Israeli military has carried out extensive and deliberate destruction of civilian property and agricultural land across almost the entire Lebanese border with Israel and concluded that these actions should be investigated as war crimes. The report covered a four-month period between October 1, 2024, and January 26, 2025, and revealed that more than 10,000 structures were heavily damaged or destroyed, with much of the destruction taking place during the ceasefire. Homes, mosques, cemeteries, roads, and parks have been damaged or destroyed.

In doing so, the Israeli military has made extensive use of manually laid explosives and bulldozers, which by their nature require access and control of the area.

In Kfar Kila, more than 1,300 structures and 133 acres of orchards were heavily damaged or destroyed between September 26, 2024, and January 27, 2025. [Lebanese media](#) reported on 29 demolitions in the town carried out by Israeli forces using manually laid explosives and bulldozers resulting in the destruction of houses, roads, olive crops, and a football field. Twenty-six of the demolitions occurred during the ceasefire. In Aita Ash-Shaab, the Israeli military destroyed 1,000 buildings, including four mosques, between September 26, 2024, and January 30, 2025, mainly using manually laid explosives and bulldozers.

3. Syria

Israel has occupied part of the [Syrian Golan](#) since 1967 and illegally annexed it in 1981. Similar to the West Bank, Israel has expanded [illegal settlements](#) in the territory and demolished homes and property. As of [December 2024](#), Israel has pushed into the UN-monitored demilitarized zone and established nine military posts in Syria from Mount Hermon through Quneitra city to parts of western Daraa.

[Human Rights Watch](#) (HRW) has documented abuses carried out against people in Syria as Israel has expanded its occupation of southern Syrian territory. These abuses include forced displacement, which is a war crime, as well as the seizure and demolition of homes and the denial of access to property and livelihoods. HRW described these actions as “pages right out of the playbook used in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and other parts of the region, stripping residents of basic rights and freedoms.”

In al-Hamidiya, Israeli forces demolished at least 12 buildings and bulldozed surrounding land displacing eight families on June 16, 2025. In another example, Israeli forces constructed a military installation and cleared large swaths of land in Jubata al-Khashab, including a forest reserve more than a century old. Displaced residents told HRW that Israeli forces bulldozed and fenced off farmland, grazing areas, and tree groves. HRW assessed that Israeli forces appear to have cleared and destroyed homes as part of a broader strategy to entrench their military presence and that the demolitions, construction of fixed military infrastructure, and access restrictions make near-term return effectively impossible for residents and undercut any claims that the displacement is strictly temporary.