

# THE ISRAEL WAR AS A SOCIAL DISASTER AND THE FORCED MIGRATION OF PALESTINIANS

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## Abstract

Some new types of modern wars, such as social disasters, affect not only the front lines but also every aspect of society. The Israel War represents one of the most typical examples of how deep and far-reaching the effects of social disasters can be. The impacts of modern wars can persist across generations, affecting everything from individual lives to global stability, and the process of social recovery can be long-term and complex. This study emphasizes that the Israel War should not be considered merely as a military and political issue but rather as a social disaster with extensive social and humanitarian consequences. The study evaluates the Israel War as a social disaster due to its mass casualties, humanitarian crisis, genocide, widespread human rights violations, displacement, and the need for emergency aid. The Nakba event, which holds a significant place in the ongoing Israel War since the establishment of the State of Israel, also represents a catastrophe. The periodic attacks carried out by Israel on Palestine since its founding have caused thousands of Palestinians to be displaced and forced to leave their homes. This study also briefly addresses the challenges faced by Palestinian refugees as a result of the Israel War.

## Keywords

Palestinian Genocide  
Israel War  
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# SOSYAL BİR AFET OLARAK İSRAİL SAVAŞI VE ZORUNLU FİLİSTİN GÖÇÜ

## Öz

Sosyal bir afet olarak yeni tip bazı modern savaşlar, sadece cephe hattında değil, toplumun her alanını etkilemektedir. İsrail Savaşı, sosyal afetlerin ne kadar derin ve geniş kapsamlı etkiler bırakabileceğinin en tipik örneklerinden birini oluşturmaktadır. Modern savaşların; bireysel yaşamdan küresel istikrara kadar her alanda etkileri nesiller boyu sürebilmekte ve sosyal iyileşme süreci uzun vadeli ve karmaşık olabilmektedir. Bu çalışma İsrail Savaşının sadece askeri ve siyasi bir sorun olarak ele alınmaması gerektiğini vurgulamakta, geniş kapsamlı sosyal ve insani etkileri olan sosyal bir afet boyutunu ele almaktadır. Çalışma İsrail Savaşının yol açtığı; kitlesel ölümler, insani kriz, soykırım, kitlesel insan hakları ihlalleri, yerinden edilme ve acil yardım nedeniyle bu savaşı sosyal afet kapsamında değerlendirmektedir. İsrail Devleti'nin kuruluş sürecinden günümüze kadar devam ederek gelen İsrail Savaşında önemli yer edinen Nakba Olayı da bir felaketi ifade etmektedir. İsrail Devletinin kuruluşundan beri periyodik olarak Filistin'e gerçekleştirdiği saldırılar, binlerce Filistinlinin evlerini terk ederek yerinden edilmesine neden olmuştur. Bu çalışma, İsrail Savaşının neden olduğu Filistinli mültecilerin yaşamış olduğu sorunlara da kısaca değinmektedir.

## Anahtar Kelimeler

Filistin Soykırımı  
İsrail Savaşı  
Filistinli Mülteciler  
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## INTRODUCTION

Until recently, the concept of disaster referred to natural events such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and floods, which caused significant loss of life and property while disrupting social order. These types of events were defined as 'natural disasters' in the relevant literature, even though human impact was present. However, over time, human-made incidents that necessitated urgent assistance-such as industrial accidents, nuclear accidents, transportation accidents and technological accidents-began to be recognized as disaster types and were evaluated within the scope of 'man-made disasters'. Moreover, events such as shifts in war strategies, new types of terrorist attacks, forced mass migrations and internal conflicts, which produced similar outcomes requiring urgent aid, have been considered as human-made 'social disasters.' (Ince, 2019, p. 3773; Shaluf, 2007, p. 705-706). At this point, disasters are categorized as either natural or human-made and are defined as phenomena that result in widespread destruction and loss, leaving significant negative marks on human life. Unlike natural disasters, wars are caused by human action, leading to large-scale destruction, loss of life, and disruption of social order.

Although wars produce outcomes similar to disasters, they have generally been excluded from the disaster category in academic studies, and the relationship between terrorism, ethnic conflict, war, and disaster has not been thoroughly explored (Boin and Hart, 2007, p. 42). According to Alexander (2022), the exclusion of wars from the disaster category is due to the potential problems that could arise from confusing these two phenomena and the practical convenience of maintaining this distinction. For example, the generalizations of one phenomenon may not be applicable to another similar phenomenon. However, certain wars, which have undergone structural change in modern times, can result in significant loss of life and the disruption of social order, similar to natural disasters, and such wars may be accompanied by humanitarian emergencies. Furthermore, unlike natural disasters, wars do not merely disrupt social order; as seen in the case of the Israel War, the use of highly destructive weapons can also devastate the environmental order. Although an entire war may not be classified as a disaster, certain aspects of the war may carry disaster-like characteristics. In this context, while efforts to understand the relationship between war and other types of disasters have increased in recent years, disaster studies focusing on war remain limited.

Although disaster studies began in the military field, Meyers (1991, p. 319), focusing on the historical reasons why wars have not been categorized as disasters, places war within the sociological framework of disaster research and emphasizes the effectiveness of this framework in understanding war-related events. He also states that focusing on such events can contribute to a more comprehensive analysis of disasters. Some contemporary wars, due to their nature, may indeed be classified as disasters and may lead to other types of disasters, such as forced mass migrations, epidemics and climate change. Indeed, after many wars, the emergence of epidemics has been observed (Parıldar and Dikici, 2020, p. 5).

Historically, wars have undergone transformations in many ways, leading to the emergence of new types. "It is possible to categorize wars based on their level of analysis (interstate, civil, hegemonic, total, limited and asymmetric wars), the military elements used (conventional and unconventional), objectives (wars aimed at restricting the foreign policy behavior of the enemy state, changing the internal political structure, or for humanitarian

intervention) and the parties involved (unilateral or multilateral wars).” (Canan-Sokullu, 2019). Determining which of these war types can be classified as disasters and where the Israel War falls under these categories is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, this study focuses on the social impact of the Israel War and the humanitarian crisis it creates, considering it a social disaster.

Many of today's wars, as man-made disaster type, lead to large-scale loss of life, material damage, the breakdown of social structures and environmental destruction. Wars cause forced migration, damage to infrastructure and the economic structure, the collapse of the healthcare system, political instability, depletion of resources, disruption of education, human rights violations, global instability and many other negative consequences. The destructive power of wars is increasing today, civilians are becoming targets and the end of wars is becoming uncertain (Münkler, 2005, p. 1-12). Indeed, all these features can be observed in the Israel War. Furthermore, the long-term effects of wars include serious consequences such as social trauma, forced migration and economic collapse. The forced migrations triggered by the Israel War have resulted in the displacement of Palestinians who settled in countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and others. This displacement has led to the emergence of issues related to the transformation of social structures, demographic changes, challenges in social integration, and legal status in the host countries. When examining the Israel War, it is clear that it also leads to these kinds of social consequences. Therefore, the entire Israel War, from the establishment of the State of Israel to the present day, could be considered a human-made disaster. Moreover, each armed assault carried out by the State of Israel throughout its historical process in Palestine can also be evaluated within the scope of the disaster. Additionally, the increasing loss of life, humanitarian crisis, forced migration and infrastructure collapse in Palestine caused by the Israel War every day turn the disaster into a catastrophe.

## 1. Israel's War as a Social Disaster

The periodic attacks on Palestine since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, spanning nearly a century, should not be regarded merely as a political or military conflict. This ongoing war, rooted in deep historical contexts, should also be considered a humanitarian crisis that has caused economic, political, and cultural issues in Palestine. Furthermore, it should be recognized as a social disaster with the characteristics of a humanitarian crisis, directly threatening people's lives, security, and fundamental rights while necessitating urgent intervention (Ince, 2022, p. 89). The ongoing war, which has continued intermittently since that time, has transformed into a persistent issue both in Palestine and the broader Middle East, resulting in the deaths and injuries of thousands of people. Israel's intermittent attacks on Palestine have normalized disaster in Palestine, making it a constant rather than an exception. The following sections outline the findings as to why Israel's war should be considered a social disaster.

### 1.1. Casualties Caused by Israel's War

In traditional warfare, military and security targets were prioritized and casualties largely comprised fighting soldiers. However, in modern wars, civilians also become targets, resulting in civilian casualties equaling or even surpassing military losses. In this context,

modern wars significantly harm both military personnel and the civilian population (Durmus and Sezer, 2023, p. 102). The Israel war, which targets civilians, spans a long duration and employs the most dangerous weapons technology offers, has caused an increase in casualties, massacres and humanitarian crises. Israel's attempts to expand its borders by occupying new territories in Palestine, beyond the borders established in 1948, are a decisive factor in the increase in casualties (Robinson, 2013, p. 160). Historical examination of Israel's armed assault in Palestine highlights certain notable events. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be historically categorized into key turning points, including the 1948 establishment of the State of Israel and the Nakba, the 1967 Six-Day War, the 1987-1993 First Intifada, the 1993-2000 Oslo Process, the 2000-2005 Second Intifada, the 2006-2014 Gaza Wars, the 2015-2022 settlement expansion and status quo, and the 2023 Al-Aqsa Flood and new conflict dynamics.

One of the events carried out by Israel in Palestine is the incident known in history as Deir Yassin. About a month before Israel declared its independence, on April 9, 1948, Jewish militants carried out an armed attack in the village of Deir Yassin, located on the western outskirts of Jerusalem, where between 100 and 250 Palestinian civilians, mostly women and children, were killed (Radai, 2021, p. 4). Another significant event related to Israel's war is the Nakba. The term Nakba, meaning 'the great catastrophe,' is used to describe the events during the Zionist-Arab conflict that began with the United Nations Partition Plan on November 29, 1947, and continued until the end of the war in January 1949. As a result of this war, a large portion of the Palestinian population was displaced and dispossessed. Thousands of Palestinians were killed, and those who remained in Israel became a minority. The residents of Palestinian areas under Arab control were separated from the rest of the country (Flores, 2016, p. 387). During the Nakba, Israelis killed around 15,000 Palestinians, displaced 800,000 and took control of 774 towns and villages, of which they destroyed 531 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2024).

A key turning point in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was the Six-Day War. In 1967, this conflict resulted in Israel's victory over Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. During the war, Israel destroyed the Egyptian Air Force and occupied several strategic territories, including the Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula, West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. This development not only shifted the regional power balance but also set the stage for future conflicts. Additionally, the occupation of these territories led to forced population displacements among Palestinians, leaving long-lasting impacts on the Palestinian population (Al-Rodhan et al., 2011, p. 99).

In 1987, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict took on a new dimension with the outbreak of the First Intifada, a popular uprising against Israeli occupation in Gaza and the West Bank. This civil resistance was met with harsh measures by Israeli forces, leading to intensified clashes. Israel's interventions were not confined to Palestinian territories but extended to attacks in Lebanon, including the Sabra and Shatila massacres. These events demonstrated the regional scope of the conflict and highlighted the international resonance of Palestinian resistance. On June 6, 1982, under the command of then Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, Israeli forces launched a military operation in southern Lebanon, quickly occupying the region. Later, from September 16 to 18, Israeli forces surrounded the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps, sealed off all exits and, at the request of the far-right Christian Phalangists, used flare

signals to illuminate the night, facilitating the infrastructure for a major armed assault. Over three days, Phalangists, with the support of Israeli forces, carried out ruthless executions, killing between 1,700 and 3,500 Palestinian refugees, mainly women and children, whom Israel had displaced to Lebanon (Shlewet, 2020, p. 77).

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict entered a negotiation phase during the Oslo Peace Process (1993-2000), but this period proved to be short-lived. The outbreak of the Second Intifada (2000-2005) marked a return to intense violence, leading to escalated clashes. During this time, Israel conducted large-scale military operations in Palestinian cities, further deepening tensions between the two sides. An essential component of Israel's war consists of its intermittent violent assaults on Gaza. Using weapons banned in modern warfare, Israel's military operations in Gaza have resulted in the deaths of thousands of Palestinians. During the 2008–2009 Gaza conflict, the Israeli military fired approximately 50,000 tank and artillery shells and carried out over 6,000 airstrikes on the Gaza Strip. These attacks claimed the lives of 1,462 Palestinians, mostly civilians (Finlay, 2018, p. 3). Israeli military assaults on Gaza in 2012 also claimed numerous lives, with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) reporting that 50 of those killed were children (UNICEF, 2012). Again, during Israel's 2014 assault on Gaza, around 2,000 Palestinians were killed, a significant portion of whom were children (Pennington, 2020, p. 365). In 2021, Israel launched another military operation on Gaza, resulting in the deaths of thousands of Palestinians. From 2008 to 2021, Israel's periodic attacks on Palestine led to the deaths of over 5,000 Palestinians and left thousands more injured (Elessi, 2023, p. 1522).

On October 7, 2023, Hamas's military wing, al-Qassam Brigades, initiated the Al-Aqsa Flood operation, which was grounded in the principles of self-determination for Palestine and resistance against Israel's occupation. In response, the Israeli military launched an extensive and unprecedented assault on Palestine. The scale of this retaliation was exceptionally destructive and comprehensive. Israel employed prohibited weapons, bombed hospitals, imposed a blockade on Gaza, creating a famine, and engaged in actions that have been considered genocidal. These events led to growing international criticism, highlighting Israel's alleged war crimes, including targeting civilians and critical infrastructure, resulting in a major humanitarian crisis (Sadeghi, 2024, p. 257).

Between October 7 and August 22, Israel, with the support of the United States, launched attacks on Palestine that claimed the lives of over 42,000 Palestinians, with thousands buried under rubble, over 99,735 injured and more than 10,000 missing. Over 16,765 of those killed were children (Al Jazeera, 2024). With Israeli attacks ongoing, these numbers continue to rise. In conclusion, since before Israel's founding, Israeli assaults on Palestine and refugee camps in other countries where Palestinians sought refuge have led to the deaths of thousands of Palestinians. Although 99% of those killed since the beginning of the Israel war have been Palestinians and civilians, international reports frequently evaluate the situation in favor of Israel (Finlay, 2018, p. 3). This suggests that Israel has not only extended its control over Palestinian lands but also over international institutions and organizations. Given the historical process, it is predicted that as long as countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and France continue to support Israel, and Islamic countries fail to provide a

sufficiently strong response, these types of conflicts, humanitarian crises, and Palestinian casualties will persist throughout Israel's existence.

## 1.2. Humanitarian Crises Caused by the Israel War

The examination of literature on crises reveals the existence of various types, including economic crises, political crises, migration crises, and legitimacy crises. Modern warfare exacerbates these crises, deepening inequality, reinforcing injustice, and undermining trust. These processes, which threaten the social structure and order, are defined as social crises. Furthermore, in modern wars, where civilian populations are widely affected, these crises often interact and overlap, escalating into humanitarian crises. In such cases, societies face the inability to meet basic needs and the emergence of emergency relief situations. A humanitarian crisis is typically defined as a situation arising from one or more events that severely disrupt the basic living conditions of a population, such as access to essential resources like water, food, shelter, healthcare, and education. These crises pose significant threats to the long-term health, security, and stability of affected communities, often requiring immediate and coordinated intervention to mitigate adverse outcomes and promote recovery (Malteser International, n.d.). The Israel War, ongoing since 1948, has destroyed fundamental life resources such as security, healthcare, housing and education in Palestine. The conflict has resulted in the collapse of infrastructure, economic deterioration, violations of international human rights resembling genocide, psychological trauma, cultural losses, environmental damage and forced displacements. The Israel War intermittently causes humanitarian crises in Palestine (Bouri and Roy, 2024). A humanitarian crisis refers to a situation where people cannot meet their basic needs and face significant threats to accessing healthcare, housing, security and human rights.

Wars generally lead to the collapse of healthcare systems, complicating the treatment of not only the wounded but also patients requiring routine care. However, the war Israel has waged against Palestine stands out in human history by directly targeting hospitals where severely ill patients are treated with medical devices, without regard for any humanitarian rules, by bombing them. The fact that hospitals, typically one of the safest spaces in wars, have become death traps in the Israel War signals that no place in Palestine is safe.

The attacks launched by Israel on Gaza on October 7, 2023, which later spread to other parts of Palestine, have led to the collapse of healthcare services in the region. Kooli and Kooli (2024, p. 1) describe this situation as "The Tragic Collapse of Gaza's Health System". According to these authors, while hospitals and healthcare workers in Gaza should be protected, their direct targeting in the attacks highlights the brutality of the Israeli military. It constitutes a violation of international law, leading to a horrifying humanitarian crisis. Doctors Without Borders published a report titled *Enduring the Unthinkable: Gaza's Healthcare Workers Grapple with the Mental Health Impact of an Unyielding War*, emphasizing the adverse conditions faced by healthcare workers in Gaza. This report states that healthcare workers live in constant fear, stress and anxiety. In Palestine, healthcare professionals are forced to amputate limbs without anesthesia, while the wounded lie on hospital floors due to a lack of space (Doctors Without Borders, 2024). Doctors tear their gowns to treat patients because they lack gauze and cannot wash their hands after surgeries due to the lack of water (BBC News, 2023).

As a result of Israel's almost daily attacks on various parts of Palestine, thousands of people are wounded, overwhelming the remaining hospitals, which must operate well beyond their capacity with limited resources. According to a report (World Bank, 2024) by the World Bank and the UN, 84% of Gaza's health facilities have been destroyed. The health facilities that remain have insufficient water and electricity to operate. In Gaza, where water and sanitation services have collapsed, access to healthcare, medication and life-saving treatments has become almost impossible for the public. The ongoing attacks, especially targeting Gaza, by the State of Israel have caused an unprecedented global health and humanitarian crisis. The collapse of the healthcare infrastructure in Palestine, combined with humanitarian crises in other sectors, has led to dire consequences (Kooli and Kooli, 2024, p. 2). The collapse of healthcare services in Palestine has made it necessary to transfer patients to other countries. As a social disaster, the Israel War also triggers new disasters like polio in Palestine (Shorrab et al., 2024, p. 8).

Another major issue caused by the Israel War in Palestine is housing. The housing problem has become a humanitarian crisis, particularly in Gaza and generally in Palestine. The intense bombardment and violent attacks launched by the Israeli army on Gaza after October 7, 2023, destroyed the homes of thousands of civilians, displacing millions of people. According to a report (World Bank, 2024) by the World Bank and the UN, over a million people are homeless in Gaza and 75% of the population has been displaced. This number increases daily depending on the course of the conflict. The targeting of sacred places such as mosques and churches by the Israeli army makes it impossible for the public to access safe housing. According to a report (2024) by The Wall Street Journal, almost all homes in Gaza have been destroyed, leading to destruction on a scale comparable to the most devastating urban wars in modern history. Furthermore, reports (2023) compiled by Al Jazeera indicate that Israeli attacks do not only destroy hospitals, mosques, churches and schools but have also obliterated over 200 cultural and archaeological sites. Additionally, the Israeli attacks have caused significant environmental damage. It is stated that since October 2023 alone, the Israeli attacks have left behind 26 million tons of debris and rubble (World Bank, 2024). Studies on this matter show that the preparations for conflict made by the State of Israel since its establishment, the explosives used, the debris generated and unexploded ordnances have caused significant harm to the environment (Qumsiyeh, 2024, p. 977). It is believed that the ecological damage caused will have long-term, irreparable consequences for biodiversity and the climate.

The targeting of civilians in modern wars seriously hinders access to education for individuals in conflict zones, further deepening the humanitarian crisis (Dupuy and Peters, 2009, p. 1-18). Israeli attacks have significantly shaped the education system in Gaza and the West Bank. Israel's disregard for international law and the rules of war, its direct targeting of civilians and educational institutions, its destruction of infrastructure, its long-term perpetuation of fear, stress and insecurity and its difficulty in accessing educational resources and teacher shortages have led to thousands of Palestinian children growing up without receiving regular education (Hussein et al., 2024). A World Bank report (2024) states that 100% of school-aged children in Gaza are unable to continue their education. Considering the long-term effects of the conflicts, it is assessed that irreparable damage will be left on the future of Palestinian society.

Another humanitarian crisis caused by wars is the destruction of essential life resources, leading to the collapse of infrastructure and deeply shaking the economic structure. Since its establishment, the State of Israel has periodically maintained a war environment in Palestine, leading to the destruction of infrastructure, the closure of many businesses and the halting of production in Palestine. The Israel War has caused the collapse of the economy in Palestine, an increase in unemployment rates and a decline in living standards. This situation has placed an additional burden, especially on specific segments of society. According to Khalidi and Iwidad (2024, p. 80), the heavy bombardment launched by Israel in 2023, particularly in Gaza and generally in Palestine, destroyed an already devastated economy and severely harmed its recovery. Israel's deepening occupation of Palestine has further destabilized an already unstable economy and hindered civilians' access to essential life resources. In Gaza, where electricity is cut off, transportation services are also disrupted. Since 92% of the roads have been destroyed in the attacks, transportation services cannot be provided on these roads (World Bank, 2024). In this context, the ongoing occupation policy endangers livelihoods and infrastructure services, causing significant harm to the economy.

In a report published by the World Bank and the UN on April 2, 2024, it was stated that the damage caused by Israeli attacks to physical structures as of the end of January 2024 was estimated at 185 billion dollars. This damage corresponds to 97% of the total GDP of the West Bank and Gaza in 2022. Given that these conflicts and violent attacks, which affect almost all sectors in Palestine, are ongoing, the damage is believed to be far beyond this figure. According to the relevant report, more than half of Gaza's population stands on the brink of famine and the entire population faces acute food insecurity and malnutrition. Over a million people are homeless and 75% of the population has been displaced. The attacks are causing cumulative physical and psychological effects. The Israel War has had significant psychological impacts on civilians living in conflict zones like Gaza, especially children. The constant use of banned bombs by the Israeli State, attacks and uncertainty create high levels of trauma and stress in society. This situation has profound effects, especially on vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly, leading to long-term trauma for survivors and an increase in disorders like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Thabet et al., 2008, p. 193).

Another humanitarian crisis caused by Israel's attacks on Palestine is human rights violations and genocide. The indiscriminate attacks carried out by the Israeli military on Palestine violate international law and universal human rights norms. Although Israel systematically violates the basic rights and freedoms of the Palestinian people, the lack of response from international institutions deepens the conflicts. According to Warraich et al. (2024, p. 45) human rights violations in Palestine date back to the establishment of Israel. In just the 2000s, with the support of the U.S., the Israeli military has violated human rights on a mass scale by mainly targeting vulnerable civilians, deepening the atrocities in Palestine. According to Ismawati and Setiyono (2024, p. 541), Israel's deliberate attacks on hospitals, repression of journalists and cruelty against children are forms of human rights violations from an international law perspective and, therefore, constitute genocide against the Palestinian people. In fact, the International Criminal Court's ruling after the October 2023 Israeli attacks on Gaza that members of the Israeli War Cabinet had committed genocide in Gaza supports this view (Law for Palestine, 2024).

## 2. Palestinian Refugees and the Hope of Return: Hidden Keys

The emergence of security issues during wars, the collapse of infrastructure and the destruction of shelters and livelihoods lead to the displacement of millions, creating humanitarian crises. As a social disaster, since the beginning of the Israeli War, military operations carried out by the Israeli army have forced millions of Palestinians to abandon their homes, displacing them both within the country and abroad (Almassri, 2023, p. 5). Palestine has become one of the regions with the highest number of emigrants in recent history. The bombings carried out by the Israeli army have caused the number of Palestinian refugees to increase continuously. This situation causes significant social and economic problems for both the Palestinians experiencing the war and the countries accepting Palestinian refugees. Displaced Palestinians face difficulties accessing basic life necessities like shelter, healthcare and food in their new settlements, experiencing integration issues, which adds a new burden to the social fabric (Sabatinelli et al., 2009, p. 1063). Some Palestinian refugees are unable to find stable camps or accommodations in the countries they migrate to, resulting in a double displacement process (Feldman, 2012, p. 155). In fact, some Palestinian refugees from countries like Syria, where intense conflicts began in 2011, are forced to migrate to a second country. However, denying, ignoring, or overlooking the issue of Palestinian refugees has been the fundamental approach of most Israeli governments since the establishment of Israel (Bocco, 2009, p. 229).

The Palestinian refugee community, affecting neighboring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, constitutes one of the largest and longest-standing refugee groups worldwide (Feldman, 2012, p. 155). The expulsion of Palestinians began during the establishment of the State of Israel and the Nakba event. Ethnically, Palestine, which was mostly composed of Arabs, was part of the Ottoman Empire until World War I. After the Ottoman Empire's defeat in World War I, Palestine was placed under British Mandate and occupied by the British. According to Kastan (2012, p. 1800), Britain made great efforts to establish a Jewish state in Palestine and encouraged Jews from different parts of the world to migrate to this region. Despite all incentives, when the State of Israel was established, the population of Palestine consisted of 1,250,000 Arabs and 650,000 Jews. In the region where the State of Israel was first established, Arabs made up one-fifth of the population. However, the establishment of the State of Israel and its ongoing territorial expansion efforts led to the Israel-Arab war. As a result of the 1948 Israel-Arab War, more than 700,000 Palestinians were forced to migrate, with 400 to 600 Palestinian villages damaged. While some migrants headed towards the West Bank and Gaza Strip, others sought refuge in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon (Almassri, 2023, p. 11). This exile began to be referred to as the Nakba, meaning catastrophe. At the time of the Nakba, the Palestinians, who were suddenly exiled and became stateless, took the keys to their homes with them, hoping to return one day. However, over time, the hope of return diminished and the hidden keys of their homes became a symbol of the Nakba event. Almost every Palestinian family in exile began passing down the old keys, symbols of their lost nation, from generation to generation. In other words, the hidden keys of their homes turned into objects embodying loss for Palestinians in exile (Nashef, 2018, p. 2).

The conflict that began in Palestine in 1948 and the subsequent pressures became one of the fundamental reasons for the ongoing Palestinian refugee problem (Almassri, 2023, p. 5).

In 1967, after the recurring Israel-Arab War, Israel expanded its occupation by 3.5 times. Over time, with every repeat of the Israel-Arab War, Israel continued to expand its territory and displaced Palestinians continued to migrate both within and outside the country (Kastan, 2012, p. 1801). According to 2023 data from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), there are 5,973,022 registered Palestinian refugees. With this number, Palestinian refugees make up the largest refugee group in the world. Of these refugees, 2,393,135 live in Jordan, 493,201 in Lebanon and 586,842 in Syria. Even after nearly a century, they still reside in 'temporary' refugee camps. There are 12 refugee camps in Syria, 12 in Lebanon and 10 in Jordan. A portion of the displaced Palestinians has also spread to various other countries around the world. Within Palestine, 912,879 displaced Palestinians live in the West Bank and 1,586,965 live in the Gaza Strip. The Gaza Strip has eight refugee camps, while the West Bank has 19 (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East [UNRWA], 2024a). However, in the attacks on refugee camps initiated and continued by Israel in 2023, some refugees lost their lives and some of the camps were either destroyed or heavily damaged.

The displacement process of Palestinians in Palestine continues due to the attacks by the Israeli army. The Israeli army's attacks, which began on October 7, 2023, by land, sea and air, continue with full force. Displaced Palestinians, just like in the Nakba event, take the keys to their homes with them with the hope that 'one day I will return'. The keys, taken with them in every displacement process, symbolize resistance to occupation and oppression and carry the hope of returning one day (Raydan, 2024). However, according to data compiled by UNRWA (2024b) from various sources, in Gaza alone, 370,000 homes were damaged and 79,000 were completely destroyed in the October 7 attacks. Therefore, even if displaced Palestinians return one day, they will not find the door their key unlocks, the home where the door was located, or even the street where the house once stood.

Due to the destruction of homes and the degradation of security and infrastructure, at least 1.9 million people have been displaced in the Gaza Strip alone. In other words, 9 out of 10 people in the Gaza Strip have been forced to migrate (Raydan, 2024). A significant portion of the displaced people continue to live under threat in the areas they migrate to, often being forced to relocate repeatedly from one part of Palestine to another. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 1.9 million displaced people in occupied Gaza are unable to access shelter, food, life-saving medical services, clean water, education and livelihoods due to Israel's policies severely restricting the entry of essential resources (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], 2024).

## 2.1. The Legal and Social Issues of Palestinian Refugees

Due to the ongoing Israeli War, Palestinian refugees, who are constantly displaced within Palestine or have migrated abroad to live in refugee camps or other countries, face various challenges. Internally displaced Palestinians primarily suffer from the urgent lack of security, shelter, healthcare and food issues commonly encountered in disaster situations. In contrast, Palestinian refugees abroad grapple with problems like legal status, economic difficulties, social integration, discrimination, access to public services, inadequate camp

conditions and double displacement (Feldman, 2012, p. 161). The nature and severity of these issues vary depending on the country the Palestinian refugees are residing in.

For instance, in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, where Palestinians have sought refuge, the level of political, economic and public service access, as well as the legal frameworks of these countries, differ, leading to varying living conditions for Palestinian refugees. In Lebanon, for example, while Palestinian refugees are exempt from the tax system, they are denied social security services and restricted from practising many professions (Sabatinelli et al., 2009, p. 1063). Lebanon, which has been hosting Palestinian refugees since 1948, has been reluctant to treat them as permanent residents. The issue of granting Palestinian refugees citizenship continues in Lebanon. Refugees who are unable to return to Palestine and are marginalized by the host community remain trapped in legal uncertainty. Palestinian refugees living outside of camps in Lebanon and who are marginalized by society, tend to live on the fringes of the host community, often in conflict-ridden environments (Knudsen, 2007, p. 1).

Jordan is the country with the highest population of Palestinian refugees. In Jordan, access to public services is shaped by citizenship status. While some Palestinian refugees in Jordan have acquired citizenship, it is estimated that hundreds of thousands are living undocumented (Ozcan and Senses-Ozcan, 2022, p. 19). Palestinian refugees in Jordan who do not have citizenship face various restrictions in accessing public services, such as being evaluated in a different category when applying for higher education (Sabatinelli et al., 2009, p. 1063).

Another country where many Palestinian refugees reside is Syria. After the conflicts began in Syria in 2011, some Palestinian refugees, like the local population, were forced to migrate to other countries, undergoing a process of double displacement. While Palestinian refugees in Syria have access to some public services, they are not considered citizens (Sabatinelli et al., 2009, 1063). Palestinian refugees in Syria possess rights to reside, move freely, work and trade, as well as access public services. However, they are not allowed to vote, work in public services, own agricultural land, or possess more than one residence (European Union Agency for Asylum [EUAA], 2024).

When examining the situation of Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, one of the most significant issues they face is the ambiguity of their legal status. In other words, insecurity and legal flexibility exacerbate the other problems Palestinian refugees encounter. Despite meeting the refugee criteria defined in the 1951 Geneva Convention, Palestinian refugees are not evaluated within this scope and they are not included in the refugee count registered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Officially, the status of Palestinian Refugees is determined by UNRWA, which was established for a temporary period with the mission of providing assistance to those forcibly displaced due to the Israeli War in Palestine (Ozcan and Senses-Ozcan, 2022, p. 22). According to Akram (2002, p. 36), this situation has turned the Palestinian refugee crisis into one of the longest-standing refugee crises in the world. In this context, the Palestinian refugee issue is not just a political matter but also a legal distortion problem. While all other refugee groups are under international protection, Palestinian refugees are excluded from these protection mechanisms. The exclusion of Palestinians from the refugee status under the 1951 Geneva Convention, as well as from international protection mechanisms, renders the position of millions of

Palestinians in different countries insecure (Khalil, 2011, p. 681). The Palestinian refugee crisis continues to grow with new conflicts that began in 2023 and the UN has been unable to find a solution to this issue. The failure of the UN to find a solution to the Israeli war and the Palestinian refugee crisis has led to questions about its relevance.

According to Amnesty International Turkey (2024) Palestinian refugees in countries such as Iraq, Egypt and Libya often face poverty and systematic human rights violations. The process of exile and becoming refugees, which began with the Nakba event, embodies an unending story of dispossession for Palestinians. Displaced and losing not only their homeland but also their job opportunities, many Palestinian refugees find it difficult to work in the public sphere in the countries they have migrated to. A significant portion of Palestinian refugees has continued to live in crowded, poor conditions in camps for nearly a century. The reluctance of host countries to integrate Palestinian refugees into society, despite the long history, the fact that many refugees still live in "temporary camps," legal limitations and restricted access to public services, contribute to the economic, political and social problems faced by Palestinian refugees who have migrated abroad.

## CONCLUSION

The study highlights that since the establishment of the State of Israel, periodic attacks involving the use of prohibited weapons have resulted in the deaths of thousands of Palestinians. It has been emphasized that the casualties in Palestine have continued to increase, particularly following the Al-Aqsa Flood on October 7, 2023, escalating to what can be described as genocide. Among the victims, children, the elderly, women, and socially vulnerable groups have been disproportionately affected, bearing the heaviest humanitarian cost of the conflict. Furthermore, it has been observed that these attacks not only cause individual casualties but also profoundly impact the social and economic structure, while leading to environmental problems.

The destruction of health infrastructure, restrictions on access to clean water, disruptions in food supply chains, and the deterioration of the security environment have created a humanitarian crisis. It has been noted that Israel's military actions periodically target essential resources for living, such as housing, healthcare, security, and food, exacerbating the existing humanitarian crisis left by previous attacks in the region. In this context, the targeting of civilians and the destruction of basic life resources by the Israeli War have been identified as creating an immediate need for humanitarian aid, leading to the conclusion that these events constitute a disaster impact and can be evaluated within the framework of social disasters. As a social disaster, the Israeli War has not only negatively affected daily life in Palestine but has also brought long-term problems.

The forced migrations caused by heavy attacks since the start of the Israeli War have been identified as an additional dimension of the crisis. It has been observed that refugees compelled to migrate from Palestine to neighboring countries due to the conflict face significant challenges in accessing basic services, such as shelter, healthcare, and education, in their new locations. This situation has further increased regional instability and revealed that migrants struggle with long-term economic and psychological issues. Additionally, it has been concluded that the forced migration of Palestinians places a burden on the host countries.

Within this scope, the Israeli War has been shown to cause socio-economic, humanitarian, and political crises not only for the Palestinian people but also for the Middle East as a whole.

The study has reached several solutions to end this humanitarian crisis. In the short term, it was suggested that the support given by dominant powers to the State of Israel should be withdrawn to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has been ongoing for nearly a century and that actors involved in Israel's war crimes should be tried in international courts. In the long term, it is recommended that the social structure in Palestine be strengthened, international support should be increased, and effective international social policies should be implemented. It is expressed that economic aid and social integration programs provided by the international community will play a critical role in starting the rebuilding process in Palestine. Once the appropriate conditions are established in Palestine, the voluntary return of Palestinian refugees from other countries should be facilitated.

### **Ethical Principles and Publication Policy**

We declare that we have obtained the data, information and documents we present in this study within the framework of academic and ethical rules, and that I have given all information, documents, evaluations and results in accordance with the rules of scientific ethics and ethics, that I have cited and referenced all the works I have used in the study and that the study is original. Otherwise, we declare that we accept all loss of rights that may arise against me.

### **Authors' Contribution Rates to the Article**

This article has been created by a single author. The author's decision and writing are present in all parts of the article.

### **Ethical Committee Approval**

Ethical committee approval is not required for this article. A signed consent form indicating that ethical committee approval is not necessary is included in the article processing files in the system.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

There are no conflicts of interest in this study.

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