



## Tanks Return

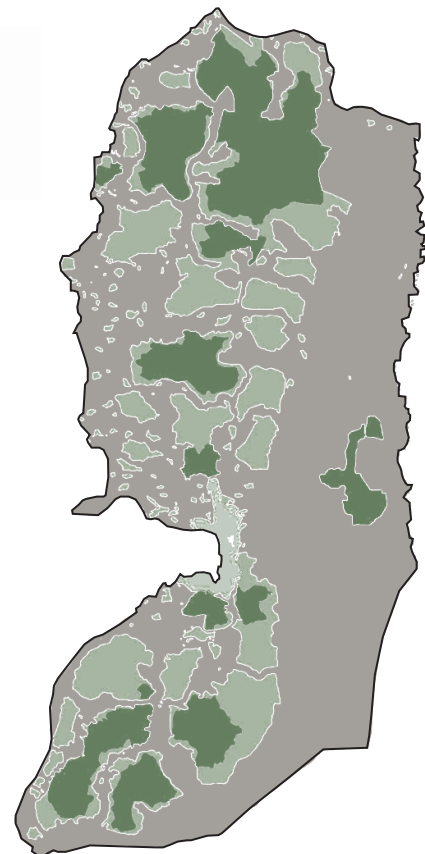
### Advancing the E1 Plan and the Demise of Palestinian Statehood Aspirations

#### Introduction

The Israeli military's incursion into the West Bank with heavy armor after more than two decades represents a turning point in Israeli settler-colonial strategy. This development must be understood not merely as a reactive security measure but as an active step in the ongoing systematic fragmentation and annexation of Palestinian territory. The deployment of war machines including tanks and armored personnel carriers coincides with the accelerated execution of the E1 Plan, a long-standing Israeli policy designed to sever Palestinian territorial continuity, thereby making a future Palestinian state geographically and politically infeasible. This bulletin critically examines the implications of Israel's renewed military presence, focusing on three key dimensions: the execution of the E1 Plan, the destruction of Palestinian refugee camps, and the broader suppression of Palestinian statehood aspirations. By situating these developments within the broader settler-colonial framework, this paper challenges dominant narratives that frame these policies as security-driven, arguing instead that they are part of a strategic blueprint for irreversible annexation.

#### The Occupied West Bank (2025)

Area A  
Area B  
Area C



Map of the West Bank, showing Areas A, B and C, after the Oslo Accords 1993.

#### Israeli Military Deployment in the West Bank

The deployment of Israeli tanks in the West Bank marks a significant escalation in the occupation state's military operations, fundamentally altering Palestine's landscape. This move represents a direct challenge to prior international agreements, including the Oslo Accords, which stipulate limitations on Israeli military presence in Areas A and B.

The immediate impact of this military escalation has been the systematic targeting of Palestinian urban centers, with refugee camps such as Jenin and Nur Shams bearing the brunt of destruction. Airstrikes, ground operations, forced-displacement, and mass arrests have resulted in significant Palestinian killings, while the infrastructure of these communities has been systematically dismantled. Moreover, the use of heavy artillery in densely populated civilian areas constitutes a blatant violation of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (ICRC, 1949).



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Yet, the occupation state has proceeded unchallenged, emboldened by a permissive international environment of impunity. Beyond the immediate violence, the prolonged military entrenchment in the West Bank has broader implications for Palestinian sovereignty, setting a dangerous precedent for future military campaigns aimed at territorial consolidation. In addition to the underreported aspect regarding the growing role of private settler militias, often armed and supported by the Israeli military, further accelerating the attacks against Palestinians and increasing the illegal forced displacement of Palestinian communities (B'Tselem, 2023).

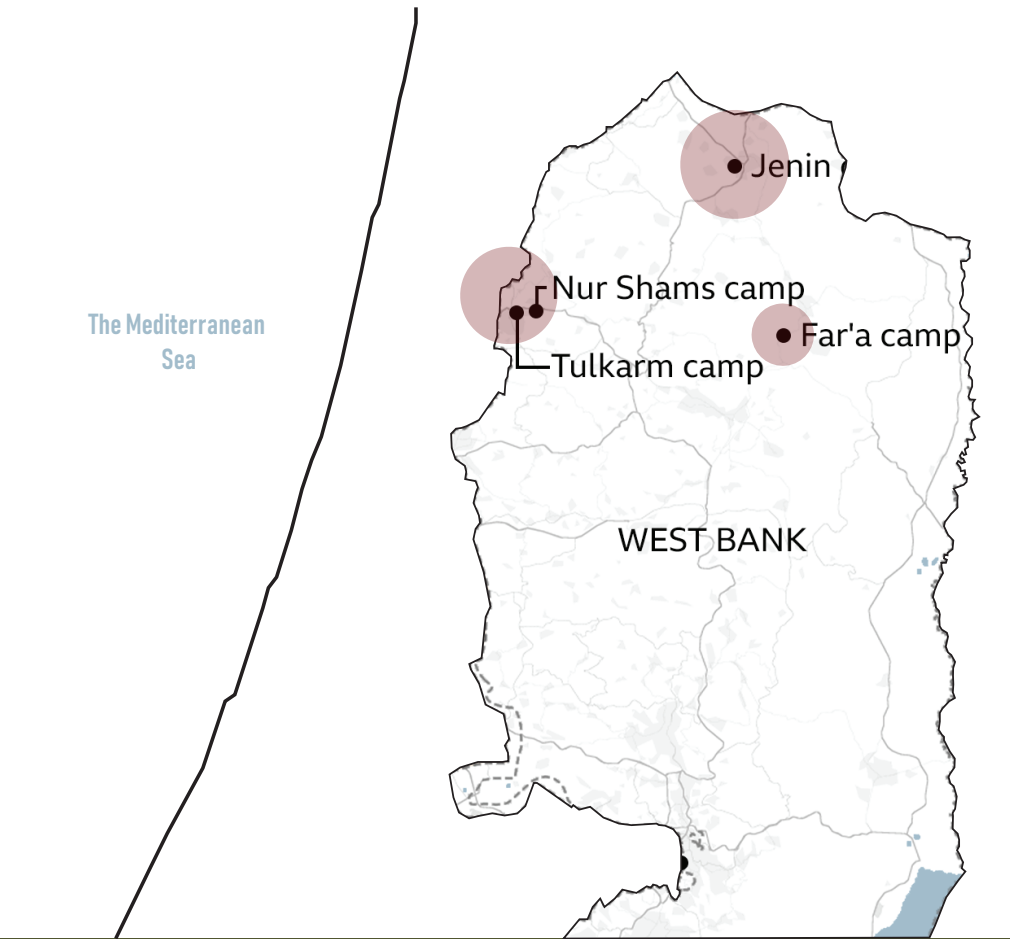
The scale of displacement resulting from these operations is unprecedented. According to recent reports, tens of thousands of Palestinians have been forced to flee their homes, seeking shelter in overcrowded schools, mosques, and relatives' homes in neighbouring areas. This mass displacement exacerbates the already dire humanitarian situation in the West Bank, with limited access to essential services such as water, electricity, and medical care. The international community's response has been largely muted, with calls for restraint overshadowed by geopolitical interests.

The strategic timing of these military operations also raises questions about Israeli long-term objectives. The concurrent implementation of settlement expansion plans, particularly the E1 area, spanning the area between Jerusalem and the illegal settlement of Ma'ale Adumim, suggests a coordinated effort to alter the demographic and geographic landscape of the West Bank irreversibly. By creating facts on the ground through military and civilian means, the occupying state of Israel aims to preclude the possibility of a contiguous and viable Palestinian state, thereby entrenching its control over the occupied territory.

In summary, the redeployment of Israeli tanks in the West Bank is not an isolated incident but part of a broader strategy to consolidate territorial gains and suppress Palestinian aspirations for statehood. The international community must recognise the gravity of this escalation and take concrete steps to hold the Israeli occupation state accountable for its actions, in line with international law and United Nations resolutions.



Israeli machinery maneuvers during an Israeli operation in Jenin, in the occupied West Bank, February 23, 2025. RANEEN SAWAFTA/ REUTERS



### The E1 Plan: Redrawing the Palestinian Map

The execution of the E1 Plan, a long-standing Israeli strategy aimed at consolidating its control over the West Bank, has reached a critical juncture. The plan's primary objective is to connect the Ma'ale Adumim settlement bloc to Jerusalem, effectively severing the northern from the southern parts of the West Bank. This would result in the irreversible fragmentation of Palestinian territory, rendering any future Palestinian state geographically non-contiguous and therefore nonviable. Therefore, the accelerated implementation of the E1 Plan, coupled with the deployment of military infrastructure, suggests that the occupying state of Israel is moving beyond the legalisation of settlements and toward the annexation of entire cities and regions. Legal scholars have warned that the E1 Plan represents a violation of the Rome Statute, potentially constituting a war crime under the ICC's jurisdiction (ICC, 2021). This legal dimension is crucial in understanding the broader consequences of illegal Israeli settlement expansion.

The E1 area covers approximately 12 square kilometers (4.6 square miles) of land, most of which the occupation state declared as "state land" in a legally dubious procedure during the 1990s (B'Tselem, 2012). The occupying state of Israel's overall plan for E1 consists of 3,910 illegal settlement housing units, 2,152 illegal hotel rooms, and an illegal industrial zone. In effect, a police station and some infrastructure have already been built as first steps, with approximately 3,700 Palestinians facing the threat of being forced from their homes by the E1 Plan (Institute for Middle East Understanding, n.d.). Ergo, the geopolitical implications of this plan extend beyond the West Bank. The formalisation of the E1 Plan would establish a legal and territorial precedent for similar illegal annexationist policies across the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and additional parts of the West Bank.



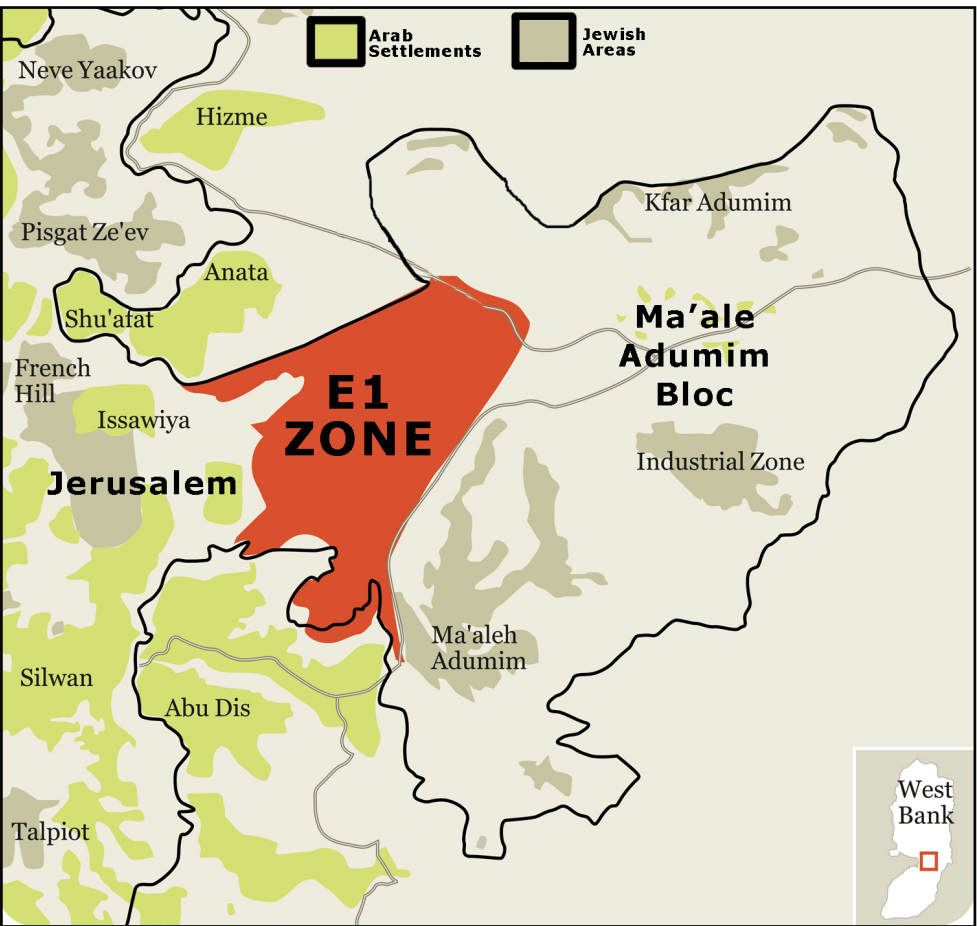
Moreover, the formalisation of the E1 Plan establishes a legal and territorial precedent for similar annexationist policies across the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and additional parts of the West Bank. This reflects a broader Israeli strategy of gradually applying annexation tactics to consolidate control over Palestinian occupied land, while resting assured there won't be any international backlash. The expansion of illegal settler infrastructure under the guise of security concerns masks a broader demographic agenda: the systematic erasure of Palestinian land ownership in favor of illegal settler entrenchment.

Israeli illegal settlement expansion policies have seen a dramatic increase in recent years. In 2023 alone, the occupying state of Israel approved the construction of over 13,000 new illegal settlement units in the West Bank, the highest number recorded in a single year (Peace Now, 2023). Currently, illegal Israeli settlements cover approximately 42% of the West Bank, with over 700,00 Zionist settlers residing in these areas (B'Tselem, 2023). These settlements, deemed illegal under international law, directly contravene the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the transfer of an occupying power's civilian population into occupied territory.

The impact of the E1 Plan on Palestinian mobility and daily life is profound. As the plan would permanently sever the connection between the northern and southern West Bank, making movement between major Palestinian cities like Jenin and Nablus in the north, Ramallah in the middle, and Bethlehem and Hebron in the south, highly restricted. This fragmentation would further erode the possibility of a sovereign Palestinian state and exacerbate economic and social disconnection and disintegration. Hence, the completion of the E1 Plan would also force the displacement of thousands of Palestinian Bedouin communities, particularly in Khan al-Ahmar, an area repeatedly threatened with demolition by the Israeli occupation state (Amnesty International, 2022).

Furthermore, the expansion of illegal settlements under the E1 Plan also has severe environmental implications. The illegal construction of new roads, security barriers, and residential buildings has led to significant deforestation, soil degradation, and water resource depletion in Palestinian land. Since the Israeli occupying state has diverted nearly 85% of West Bank water resources for illegal settler use, it leaves Palestinian communities with severe water shortages as one example (Al-Haq, 2023). This environmental apartheid further entrenches illegal settler dominance over Palestinian land, making everyday life increasingly difficult for the indigenous Palestinian population.

In summary, the execution of the E1 Plan represents one of the most aggressive attempts to redraw the Palestinian territorial map in favor of Israeli illegal settler expansion and further annexation of Palestinian land. This policy not only violates international law but also creates insurmountable obstacles to Palestinian self-determination. Without a significant international response, the occupying state of Israel will continue to implement similar policies, further entrenching its illegal settler-colonial regime in Palestine.



Understanding Israeli Interests in the E1 Area: Contiguity, Security, and Jerusalem. Jewish Virtual Library, 13-3-2025, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/understanding-israeli-interests-in-the-e1-area-contiguity-security-and-jerusalem>

## Annihilation of Refugee Camps: The End of the Palestinian Right of Return?

The destruction of Palestinian refugee camps is a central element of the Israeli strategy to eliminate the Palestinian right of return. These camps, which serve as living testimonies to the Nakba and the enduring Palestinian displacement, have become primary targets for Israeli military operations. Here we can say that the objective is clear: to dismantle these spaces both physically and symbolically, erasing the historical and political significance of Palestinian refugees. As the destruction of refugee camps is also part of an Israeli effort to push for alternative definitions of Palestinian refugees that strip them of their inherited refugee status, this is a move that is actively lobbied for in hegemonic political spheres (UNRWA, 2025).

Over the decades, Israeli forces have repeatedly targeted refugee camps in Jenin, Balata, and Nur Shams, resulting in the massive destruction of homes, schools, and infrastructure; illegally forcibly displacing thousands of Palestinians. Since October 2023, over 8,000 Palestinian structures have been demolished in the West Bank, displacing at least 13,000 people (OCHA, 2024). The escalation in military raids has resulted in an unprecedented number of Palestinian deaths; between January 2023 and January 2024, at least 540 Palestinians, including 130 children, have been killed in the West Bank alone; needless to mention the implicitly ongoing genocide in Gaza (Human Rights Watch, 2024).



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As explained above, the destruction of refugee camps aligns with the Israeli broader effort to eliminate the Palestinian right of return. By forcibly displacing refugee populations and erasing the physical remnants of their communities, the occupying state of Israel seeks to erase the legal and political claims of millions of displaced Palestinians. The demolition of these camps is accompanied by increased restrictions on UNRWA, the UN agency responsible for Palestinian refugees. Since 2023, the occupation state has pressured international donors to cut funding to UNRWA, significantly reducing humanitarian assistance for refugees and holding the Palestinian refugee status at a direct threat (UNRWA, 2024).

Beyond the immediate humanitarian crisis, the systematic destruction of refugee camps undermines the collective Palestinian identity. These spaces are not merely places of residence but historical markers of Palestinian resistance and resilience. Their destruction represents an attempt to rewrite history by physically removing the evidence of forced displacement. This strategy, combined with increasing restrictions on Palestinian movement, aims to force Palestinian communities into permanent exile or subjugation under colonial Israeli rule.

Furthermore, the forced displacement of refugees exacerbates regional instability. As neighboring countries such as Jordan and Lebanon host millions of Palestinian refugees, who are increasingly marginalised due to the Israeli continuous expansionist policies. The destabilisation of these populations could lead to broader geopolitical consequences, with host countries struggling to accommodate further waves of displaced persons. The elimination of refugee camps thus extends beyond the immediate Palestinian context, influencing regional security dynamics and international humanitarian law obligations.

In conclusion, Israeli systematic destruction of Palestinian refugee camps is a direct assault on the Palestinian right of return. By erasing these historical spaces and undermining international refugee protections, the occupying state of Israel is attempting to permanently alter the demographic and legal landscape of the Palestinian struggle for liberation and self-determination. Ergo, the international community must recognise this strategy as part of a broader plan to dismantle Palestinian identity and statehood aspirations.

## Conclusion

The recent escalation in the West Bank, marked by the redeployment of Israeli tanks and the intensification of illegal settlement expansion, crossing the implementation of the E1 Plan, represents a direct threat to Palestinian sovereignty. This military and demographic aggression, coupled with the systematic destruction of refugee camps, is designed to cement Israeli control over Palestinian land while eradicating Palestinian national aspirations. As this bulletin has demonstrated, these policies are not isolated acts of military aggression but part of a broader colonial strategy of annexation and demographic engineering.

The international community's response has remained largely inadequate, despite clear violations of international law, including UNSC Resolutions 242, 237, and 2334, as well as the Fourth Geneva Convention (ICRC, 1949). Without urgent international intervention and accountability mechanisms, the Palestinian landscape will be irreversibly altered, leaving no viable path for Palestinian self-determination. Ergo, it is imperative for global actors to move beyond rhetorical condemnations and take substantive measures to challenge the occupation state's expansionist policies. Failure to do so will not only embolden further annexationist efforts but will also set a dangerous precedent for the erosion of international law in zones of struggle worldwide.



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