

## **Occupational Rights Violations**

### **Introduction**

Occupational Justice is a form of social justice that assures the right of all individuals to engage in meaningful occupations of their choice to meet personal and inclusion needs (Wilcock & Townsend, 2009). Indicators of occupational justice include practicing occupational choice, involvement in a range of occupations that are meaningful, and removing barriers to fair inclusion (Wilcock & Townsend, 2009). There are structural and contextual factors that can restrict participation in occupations of choice and, therefore, create conditions for occupational injustice (Townsend & Polatajko, 2013). Ending with the current Gaza Strip genocide 2023-2024, the Israeli Colonial Regime (ICR) created a multilayered context over 76 years in Palestine that restricts participation and violates the right to occupation.

### **Occupational deprivation and eliminating the right of occupational choice**

It is well-known that the ICR controls all the borders and whatever enters or exits from the Gaza Strip and, therefore, restricts resources to limit or eliminate aspects of education, healthcare services, employment, development, importing, exporting, communication, technology, security, and travel. On October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the ICR paralyzed all life domains in the Gaza Strip and forced people under military pressure and massive killing to leave their homes, cities, jobs, schools, shops, and neighbourhoods and forced into severely underdeveloped areas near the sea (Mawasi) that lack basic infrastructure and resources that sustain life, have severe weather, and poor sanitation. It is well-known that the Mawasi is not a place human beings can live. It is a triangle of death: bombing, hunger, and diseases. The ICR continues to control and restrict humanitarian aid, food, water, electricity, fuel, medications, and communications. On top of that, the ICR attacked and killed many workers from different nationalities while they were trying to provide humanitarian aid in the so called safe zones. As a result, the people of Gaza lost choice and opportunities for meaningful occupations and are forced to do compulsory actions to stay alive (daily actions of resistance), e.g., collecting water and wood, finding food, making fire, fixing their tent, fighting insects, and protecting family from injuries and infections. Resistance doesn't necessarily mean using weapons and guns against an enemy, and it is not merely limited to those on the front lines of battles. Women, children, parents, healthcare professionals, drivers, retailers, bakers, and so many others engage in important and well-acknowledged acts of resistance during wars. Hosting displaced families, challenging context, pursuing safety, surviving despite oppression and threats, and resisting being anonymous when being killed are daily actions of resistance. We have to walk in destroyed streets, use animals for transportation, collect and carry water from far places, make fire to cook, wear old and ruined clothes, and resist poverty, cold, hunger, diseases, poor sanitation, insecurity, and illiteracy of our children. We have to share our homes with homeless people who lost their homes and hopes in life either by bombing or arson. We have to seek hope for a better future. All these are new meanings of daily actions of resistance the Palestinians found during the current genocide. On the other hand, participation in education, social activities, play, leisure, work, shopping, driving and using transportation, and many other occupations were severely restricted or eliminated, manifesting occupational imbalance.

## **Experiencing occupational imbalance**

The current emerging daily actions of resistance replaced the accepted daily life activities yet never became alternatives to meaningful occupations of choice. For example, waiting in long queues for several hours to obtain one or two gallons of water became a daily challenging routine. Also, this action is not problem-free. People are angry, feel oppressed, and their mental health is severely tested, so, for any simple reason, a fight may happen. Their current daily routine doesn't fulfil their occupational needs, interests, or expectations. People are always challenged by ongoing, intensifying, and irremovable barriers to participation, e.g., lack of basic life essentials and limited resources.

## **Undergoing occupational apartheid**

A defence minister in the ICR described Palestinians as "human animals" and another asked the army to use a nuclear bomb in the Gaza Strip. The people of Gaza Strip were forced to be displaced several times, a Gazan said that he and his family moved eight times from north to south and back to the middle of the Gaza Strip and faced death. Can you imagine experiencing that over and over again? Massive killing of innocent civilians where nearly 37 thousand have been killed, 70% of them are children and women, according to director of the World Health Organization. Nearly 90,000 have been injured. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres says there is no safe place in the Gaza Strip. Government Media Office reports that 70% of homes in Gaza have been destroyed and became unsuitable for living. Destruction in the Gaza Strip included houses, streets, hospitals, schools, universities, places of worship, historical sites, libraries, ministries, public spaces, stores, farms, and border entries. The Minister of National Security Ben Gvir, and the Minister of Finance, Smotrich, in the ICR encouraged Palestinians to migrate to other countries and leave Palestine forever. Numerous humanitarian aids workers were targeted for killing by the ICR army, despite appropriate measures to identify themselves as aid workers and easily recognizable signs of their agencies. Many healthcare workers, nearly 300, were arrested and killed while being on duty. Many premature children in incubator chambers were killed, about 40-50. Nearly 400 people died of severe hunger, especially in the north of Gaza Strip. The ICR army used mass destruction, weapons from around the world, and bombs in this genocide. These weapons were sponsored by the taxes payers in the USA, UK, Germany, France, Canada, Australia, and other countries. The ICR army in the current war arrested and detained more than six thousand Palestinians for several months without trial and nearly 200 were killed in prison as the spokesman Hagari said. Taking people's life without reason, depriving others from life basic needs, e.g., safe shelter, water, food, medications, fuel, and communications is a crime and a manifestation of occupational apartheid.

## **Ensuring occupational rights**

When it comes to justice, there is no grey area between white and black colours, either you stand with justice or against justice. Here are some tips to practice occupational justice and support the Palestinian occupational rights.

- ✓ Call for and support an immediate ceasefire and the flow of humanitarian aid.
- ✓ Bring awareness to the violation of rights in Palestine, including the genocide. Use social media, protest, lectures, and writing.

- ✓ This must include documentation of genocide from different aspects and joining South Africa in the ICC.
- ✓ Boycott brands, companies, universities, and other entities that violate Palestinian rights and provide arms and funding to Israel.
- ✓ Put pressure on politicians to acknowledge Palestinian equitable rights including an independent Palestinian State.
- ✓ Adopt and support initiatives that help to rebuild the Gaza Strip and rehabilitation for civilians and victims.

## References

Townsend, E. & Polatajko, H. (2013). *Enabling occupation II: Advancing an occupational therapy vision for health, well-being, & justice through occupations* (2nd ed.). Ottawa: CAOT Publications ACE.

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