



CLIMATE CHANGE, THE OCCUPATION, AND A VULNERABLE PALESTINE

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Climate change is among the greatest threats facing humanity. Although Palestinians and Israelis inhabit the same terrain, Palestinians under occupation will suffer the effects more severely.

Decreased precipitation is expected to be the most significant effect on Palestine-Israel over the course of this century, accompanied by a rise in average temperatures. The combination will result in a higher demand for water and could lead to water insecurity. Agriculture will also suffer as a result.

Three different and often conflicting entities govern the territory: the Israeli government, the Palestinian Authority (PA), and Hamas. This has resulted in a vast imbalance in the experiences of the effects of climate change, the ability to tackle it, and the ability to produce harmonized assessments and evaluations of its effects. Moreover, despite the effects of climate change being broadly similar across the territory, much of the political focus and available research incorrectly treats the OPT as divorced from historic Palestine.

Vulnerability to climate change is determined by a combination of climate risk and adaptive readiness – in other words, the level of risk from climate change versus the ability to carry out short- and long-term responses, which depend on socioeconomic and political conditions. In the case of Palestine-Israel, vulnerability should be understood in the context of seven decades of Palestinian displacement, dispossession, oppression, and poor governance.

The single greatest non-environmental risk facing Palestinians in the OPT is the Israeli occupation. Restrictions on the free movement of people and goods, the Apartheid Wall, land grabs, settlement expansion and settler violence, and poor PA governance all threaten Palestinian water and food security and consequently increase climate change vulnerability.

Israel has created a complicated bureaucracy of licensing, permits, and access rights designed to control Palestinians' access to groundwater. In addition to preventing enough clean water from entering the Gaza Strip, Israel hinders any attempt to build or maintain water infrastructure by restricting imports of fundamental building materials. The occupation damages Palestinian agriculture through land theft and population control.

The PA has no sovereign jurisdiction over its natural resources or large swathes of its territory, and wields no independent political will over how to manage climate risks. Yet, paradoxically, it is tasked with addressing climate change. This renders the PA's adaptive efforts largely insignificant and counterproductive.

The Israeli occupation has thus led to maladaptive policies that undermine Palestinian readiness to the threat of climate change. By contrast, Israel is well positioned to adapt to its effects and is therefore less vulnerable.

Policy recommendations

1. The international community must exert pressure on Israel to punish settler violence that damages Palestinian people and property, as well as draw a red line at settlement expansion.
2. The PA should promote and enable sustainable agriculture, agroecology, and a cooperative economy that can foster more sustainable resilience.
3. The PA and partner organizations should work toward coordinated collection, analysis, and sharing of climate-relevant information. They should also prioritize the development of policies that minimize the risks from natural disasters.
4. International donors should work with the local community to finance projects to counter or prevent the effects of climate change. However, interventions focusing on ending the occupation are paramount.
5. The foundations of Israel's resilience methods and technology should be shared with Palestinian stakeholders.