



لمناصرة وتعزير حقوق المرأة الاقتصادية وحقوقها في العمل اللائق



مركز الديمقراطية وحقوق العاملين
Democracy and Workers' Rights Center

Field research on:

The impact of the war on the Gaza Strip, and the Israeli occupation practices in the West Bank, including collective punishment measures, military operations, settler violence and colonialism, on the labor and economic rights of persons with disabilities in Palestine

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This study was produced within the framework of the project "Supportive and Inclusive Workplaces for All," implemented by the Democracy and Workers' Rights Center in cooperation with the National Coalition "My Right" along with organizations and activists advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities, and with the support of the International Development Programme of the Government of Ireland.

The ideas, opinions, and comments therein are entirely the responsibility of the Democracy and Workers' Rights Center in Palestine and do not necessarily represent or reflect the policy of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

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Table of Contents

Item	Page Number
Executive summary	4
Introduction	6
Field research objective	7
Research methodology	7
Research tools	8
Chapter One: Brief Presentation of the Conceptual Framework for the Right to Decent Work of Persons with Disabilities	8
1.1. International Conventions	8
1.2. The rights of persons with disabilities in Palestinian legislation.	10
1.3. Sustainable Development Goals 2030	13
1.4. National plans	13
1.5. International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions	14
Chapter Two: The situation of the Palestinian Economy following the start of the war on the Gaza Strip	16
2.1. Unemployment	16
2.2. Decline in GDP	17
2.3. The situation of public finances	18
Chapter Three: Results and Analysis of the Field Study (Questionnaires and Interviews)	19
3.1. Fields of study	19
3.2. Demographic variables data for the study sample.	20
3.3 Results and analysis of survey fields	23
3.3.1. The impact of the war on the Gaza Strip, the occupation in the West Bank, measures of collective punishment, military operations, settler violence and colonialism on the labor and economic rights of persons with disabilities in the West Bank.	24
3.3.2. The impact of the war on the Gaza Strip on the labor and economic rights of persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip.	35
Chapter IV: Policy Papers and Recommendations	44
4.1. Proposed policy papers	44
4.2. Recommendations	44
Sources and references	46

Glossary

Term	Explanation
Persons with disabilities¹ (UN definition)	Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
Compound disability²	It is a condition where a person experiences more than one disability simultaneously.
Qualification³	A set of social, psychological, medical, educational and vocational services, activities and aids that enable persons with disabilities to live their lives independently and with dignity.
Reasonable accommodation⁴	“Reasonable accommodation” means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. In the workplace, it may mean making changes to the work environment to allow persons with disabilities to work safely and productively.
Economic rights⁵	Rights of a special nature, those existence is associated with human activity and work. It is a set of rights related to economic activity in all its aspects and fields, its work, and its quest to achieve a decent life, and resulting material or other wealth. Economic rights include: the right to work, the right to social security, the right to property “ownership”.
Work⁶	All mental or physical efforts made by a worker in return for a wage, whether this work is permanent, temporary, occasional, or seasonal.
Disabled⁷ according to Palestinian law	A person with a stable, total or partial disability, which may be congenital or not, affecting any of their senses or physical, psychological or mental abilities to the extent that this limits the possibility for them of fulfilling normal life requirements in the same circumstances as their counterparts without disability.
Harmonization⁸	Render public spaces and workplaces suitable for the use of the persons with disabilities
Integrated Harmonization⁹	Working to remove obstacles and ensure full access for persons with disabilities, so that disability does not have any negative impact. When institutions provide integrated adaptation, persons with disabilities can participate in all community institutions, and not only certain institutions.

1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article (1)

2 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article (1)

3 Law No. 4 of 1999 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 1

4 Employers' Handbook for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ILO Publications, 2018.

5 Al-Manama, Ashraf (2022) “Economic and Social Rights in the Amended Palestinian Basic Law 2005 «A Comparative Study», African Journal of Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

6 Palestinian Labor Law No. 7 of 2000, Article 1.

7 Law No. 4 of 1999 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 1

8 Law No. 4 of 1999 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 1

9 Guide to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society, Center for Development Studies / Birzeit University, 2014.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this research was to investigate and analyze the impact of the war on the Gaza Strip and the Israeli occupation practices in the West Bank, including measures of collective punishment, military operations, settler violence and colonialism, on the labor and economic rights of persons with disabilities in Palestine. It also aimed to propose topics for policy papers, and practical recommendations to support and promote the labor and economic rights of persons with disabilities in Palestine. The research adopted a descriptive analytical approach, and included a review of the theoretical framework, previous literature, and relevant statistics.

It also involved designing and distributing a questionnaire as a study tool targeting workers with disabilities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, conducting focused interviews with stakeholders (workers with disabilities, the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Social Development, trade unions, NGOs working with persons with disabilities), and summarizing the results of the field research, including the implications for and demands of persons with disabilities. Finally, it also sought to issue practical and applicable recommendations, including policy and fact sheets for strengthening the labor and economic rights of persons with disabilities in Palestine, and discuss the draft research with stakeholders.

The first chapter of the research reviews international conventions and national legislations, which emphasized the right to work of persons with disabilities without discrimination, and related rights, including: equal opportunities and treatment, providing a favorable and inclusive work environment, enabling persons with disabilities to undertake productive and independent work, promotion of their employment in the public and private sectors, the right to equal employment opportunities, the right to protection from discrimination, the right to a comfortable work environment, the right to vocational rehabilitation, the right to access supportive services, the right to join trade unions, and the right to economic and social security. The second chapter presents the situation of the Palestinian economy, which has been exposed to a sharp setback due to Israel's war on the Gaza Strip, and the Israeli occupying power's practices in the West Bank that include collective punishment measures, military operations and settler violence. This has led to a decline in the Gross Domestic Product, exacerbated unemployment rates, and caused loss of employment for hundreds of thousands of workers, including persons with disabilities. It created a complex reality and difficult conditions that negatively affected the labor and economic rights of persons with disabilities.

The third chapter deals with the analysis of the field study (questionnaires and interviews). A questionnaire was prepared for male and female workers with disabilities in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip comprising several fields related to economic rights. The questionnaire was distributed to a selected representative study sample. The completed questionnaires, valid for analysis, were from 195 individuals from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including 129 persons in the West Bank, and 66 persons in the Gaza Strip. In order to enrich the study, 14 extensive interviews were held with representatives of competent authorities and other relevant actors, including: the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Labor, Stars of Hope Association, Palestinian Federation for the Deaf, Stars Mountain Rehabilitation Center, Qader for Community Development, National Society for Rehabilitation – Gaza Strip, Palestinian General Union of Persons with Disabilities, National Center for Community Rehabilitation - Gaza, and activists for persons with disabilities.

The study resulted in the elaboration of six policy papers on the following topics: commitment to a minimum employment quota of 5% for persons with disabilities; social inclusion of disability issues through an inclusive environment to reinforce the right to work of persons with disabilities; activating the private sector's social responsibility towards supporting and empowering persons with disabilities in the labor market; providing a unified database for persons with disabilities, including all relevant details about the labor market; developing vocational and technical education and training for people with disabilities; and launching economic empowerment project packages (micro-grants) for persons with disabilities to overcome mobility and accessibility limitations.

The research also concluded with a number of recommendations, the most important of which are: enforcing the policy papers that emerged from the study findings, updating legislation concerning the issues and rights of persons with disabilities, and addressing the gaps in the legislation in force in order to strengthen workers'

rights and economic services for persons with disabilities (specifically the Disability Rights Law, the Labor Law, the Civil Service Law, and the Security Sector Service Law); creating partnerships between institutions that deal with disability issues in the public and private sectors to create jobs and interventions to support the economic and labor rights of persons with disabilities; issuance of Palestinian legislation obliging all productive sectors to employ at least 5% of persons with disabilities among their teams, and imposing a fine based on the estimated value of wages persons with disabilities would have earned if the private sector refuses to comply, which shall be transferred to a National Fund for Economic Empowerment of People with Disabilities; targeting persons with disabilities through the Palestinian Employment Fund's projects and loans; the activation of a labor complaints system for persons with disabilities to ensure the follow-up of their complaints regarding labor rights; commitment of local authorities to implement a package of development projects dedicated to persons with disabilities; the necessity of adopting the economic and labor rights of persons with disabilities as a policy priority in national plans and with donors; providing accessible arrangements in various institutions to facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities in decent work; encouraging productive institutions to employ persons with disabilities through a package of incentives, such as tax breaks and other benefits; the necessity of adopting a national integrated approach to the inclusion of disability issues, rather than a separate one, through a cross-sectoral strategic plan; providing interest-free, commission-free loan programs to finance small grants for persons with disabilities; ensuring a commitment to providing free health insurance services for persons with disabilities, regardless of the degree of disability; activating the customs exemption for vehicles for people with disabilities for all types of disabilities, and not solely motor disabilities; and ensuring the commitment of the Ministry of Social Development to paying the cash assistance entitlements of persons with disabilities regularly, regardless of the Palestinian Authority's financial crisis, given the precarious economic situation of families of persons with disabilities. The study also recommended launching a campaign to raise awareness of the economic rights of persons with disabilities, especially in light of their exploitation by some employers, and launching a national dialogue to discuss and enact the Social Security Law, given its role as a legislative framework and institutional body that safeguards the economic and labor rights of all groups, including persons with disabilities. Finally, it stressed the need to provide responsive evacuation plans for persons with disabilities in the workplace.

Introduction

Crises and wars directly affect all segments and groups of society, but their impact is more severe on vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities. Wars and crises have a multidimensional impact on persons with disabilities. On one hand, wars increase the number of persons with disabilities and disability rates among the general population. On the other hand, they negatively affect the human, economic and social rights of persons with disabilities.

There is no doubt that Israel's war on the Gaza Strip and the practices of the Israeli occupation authorities in the West Bank that include measures of collective punishment, military operations, settler violence and colonialism, have greatly affected labor and economic rights in general, and the rights of persons with disabilities in particular. This is especially true since workers have been most affected by Israel's genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, and the silent war in the West Bank. According to data from the International Labor Organization (ILO), about 201,000 jobs have been lost in the Gaza Strip due to the ongoing war, while in the West Bank 306,000 jobs have been lost¹⁰. More than a third of total employment in the West Bank, where the economy has been severely affected, has been lost. This means a loss of about 507,000 jobs in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Since the outbreak of war in October 2023, the unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip has reached a staggering 79.1%. In the West Bank, which has also been severely affected by the crisis, unemployment stood at 32%, raising the average unemployment rate to 50.8% in the two areas of the occupied Palestinian territory. However, unemployment rates and figures do not take into account those, who have left the workforce, because job opportunities are no longer available to them. Thus, the actual number of those who have lost their jobs is higher than the unemployment figures indicate¹¹.

The war on Gaza was accompanied by the fragmentation of the West Bank through about 898 military gates and checkpoints, which have impeded internal trade movements and raised the cost of various services, such as costs for individual movement and transportation, or for the transport of various goods and commodities. In addition, Israeli settlers and extremists have been given free rein to attack Palestinian cities and villages without any restraints or consequences. Furthermore, collective punishment measures and military operations in various areas of the West Bank, especially in the north, have negatively affected the labor and economic rights of all citizens in Palestine, including persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are among vulnerable and marginalized groups most affected by the security and field conditions, the closure of roads, and the deterioration of economic conditions, whether in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip.

Field Research Objective

Investigate and analyze the impact of the war on the Gaza Strip, occupation practices in the West Bank, collective punishment measures, military operations, settler violence and colonialism on the labor and economic rights of persons with disabilities in Palestine, and elaborate policy papers and practical recommendations to support and promote the labor and economic rights of persons with disabilities in Palestine.

10 UN report on the war in Gaza <https://news.un.org/ar/interview/2024/04/1129706>

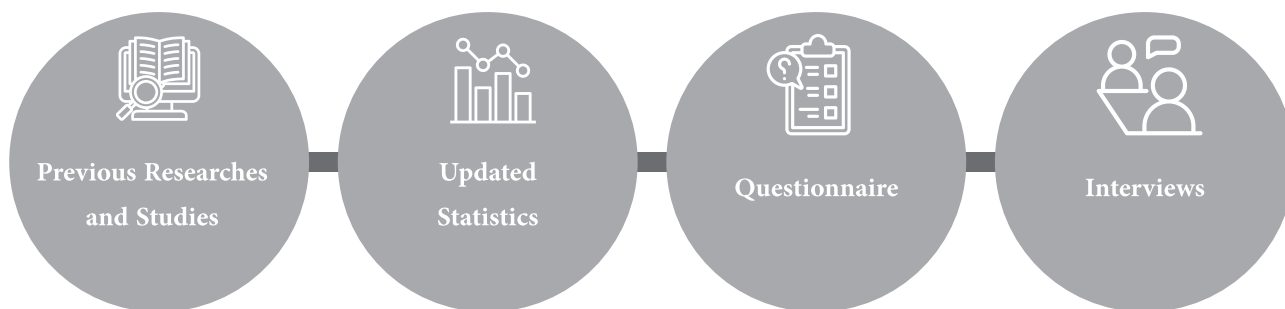
11 ILO, report: War raises unemployment to nearly 80 percent and GDP shrinks by 83.5 percent in the Gaza Strip, <https://www.ilo.org/ar/resource/news/alhrb-trf-nsbt-albtalt-aly-ma-yqarb-80-balmayt-wtqls-alnatj-almhly-alajmaly>

Research methodology

A descriptive analytical approach was adopted to carry out the research, through:

- Reviewing the theoretical framework, previous literature, and relevant statistics.
- Designing and distributing a questionnaire as a study tool in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, targeting male and female workers with disabilities.
- Conducting focused interviews with stakeholders (workers with disabilities, the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Social Development, trade unions, NGOs working with persons with disabilities, etc.)
- Summarizing the results of field research, including the implications for and demands of persons with disabilities.
- Drafting practical and applicable recommendations, including policy papers and factsheets, to promote the labor and economic rights of persons with disabilities in Palestine.
- Preparing a draft field research.
- Discussing the research with relevant parties through a workshop
- Preparing the final version of the field research in light of the feedback, recommendations and observations of the participants in the workshop.

Research tools used



- Chapter One -

Brief presentation of the conceptual framework for the right to decent work of persons with disabilities

1.1. International conventions

The international community has shown clear attention to persons with disabilities and their economic and social rights through declarations, resolutions and conventions that have conferred a global dimension and special importance to the protection of persons with disabilities. Many legislations and laws have been issued for this category, including those issued by the United Nations General Assembly: resolution 2856 of 1971, resolution 3447 of 1975 on the equal rights of persons with disabilities with other human beings, and resolution 37/52 of 1982 on the World Program of Action for Persons with Disabilities. In addition, the period 1982-1992 was proclaimed as the International Decade of Disabled Persons through resolution 48/96 of 1993, on specific rules for the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities, and other declarations.

Article V of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 1975 affirms that “persons with disabilities shall have the right to measures designed to enable them to attain the greatest possible degree of autonomy”. To this end, article VII stipulates that “persons with disabilities have the right to economic and social security and an adequate standard of living, and shall have the right, according to their ability, to obtain and retain employment, to engage in a useful, profitable and remunerative profession, and to belong to trade unions”. In its resolution 82/31 of 13.12.1976, the United Nations recommended that “all States parties should take into account the rights and principles enshrined in the Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities when establishing their policies, plans and programs, and that all relevant international organizations and agencies should include in their programs provisions guaranteeing the effective application of these rights and principles.”

• **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:**

The purpose of the Convention according to its article one is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment by persons with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

According to the convention, “Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”¹²

Article (3) of the Convention also includes the general principles of the Convention, which are:

- a. Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one’s own choices, and independence of persons;
- b. Non-discrimination;
- c. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;
- d. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;
- e. Equality of opportunity;
- f. Accessibility;
- g. Equality between men and women;
- h. Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.”¹³

¹² United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article (1)

¹³ United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article (3)

Article 4 includes the general obligations of the Convention for signatory states, including Palestine:

“1. States Parties undertake to ensure and promote the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability. To this end, States Parties undertake:

- a) To adopt all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention;
- b) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices that constitute discrimination against persons with disabilities;
- c) To take into account the protection and promotion of the human rights of persons with disabilities in all policies and programmes; [...]

2. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, each State Party undertakes to take measures to the maximum of its available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international cooperation, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of these rights, without prejudice to those obligations contained in the present Convention that are immediately applicable according to international law.”¹⁴

Article 9 on “Accessibility” stipulates that:

“1. To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas. These measures, which shall include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility, shall apply to, inter alia:

- a) Buildings, roads, transportation and other indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, housing, medical facilities and workplaces;
- b) Information, communications and other services, including electronic services and emergency services.

2. States Parties shall also take appropriate measures:

- a) To develop, promulgate and monitor the implementation of minimum standards and guidelines for the accessibility of facilities and services open or provided to the public;
- b) To ensure that private entities that offer facilities and services which are open or provided to the public take into account all aspects of accessibility for persons with disabilities;
- c) To provide training for stakeholders on accessibility issues facing persons with disabilities;
- d) To provide in buildings and other facilities open to the public signage in Braille and in easy to read and understand forms;
- e) To provide forms of live assistance and intermediaries, including guides, readers and professional sign language interpreters, to facilitate accessibility to buildings and other facilities open to the public;
- f) To promote other appropriate forms of assistance and support to persons with disabilities to ensure their access to information;
- g) To promote access for persons with disabilities to new information and communications technologies and systems, including the Internet;
- h) To promote the design, development, production and distribution of accessible information and communications technologies and systems at an early stage, so that these technologies and systems become accessible at minimum cost.”¹⁵

The Convention also includes a number of articles affirming the rights of persons with disabilities, especially to work and access to work, such as: article 19 on independent living and integration into society, article 20 on personal mobility, article 24 on education, article 27 on work and employment, and article 28 on adequate standard of living and social protection¹⁶.

14 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article (4)

15 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

16 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The most important provisions of the Convention regarding the labor and economic fields stipulate the following: recognition of the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others; prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability in relation to all work-related matters, including: conditions of employment, professional advancement, safe working conditions, ensuring equal access to productive and paid work in the open labor market, providing accessible and reasonably arranged workplaces, supporting self-employment, establishing businesses, cooperatives, ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to vocational and technical training, employment opportunities, and career guidance services.

1.2. The rights of persons with disabilities in Palestinian legislation

The following Palestinian laws and regulations guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities.

• Palestinian Basic Law:

Article No. (9) on “Equality before the law and the judiciary” stipulates that:

“Palestinians shall be equal before the law and the judiciary, and there shall be no discrimination between them on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, political opinion, or disability¹⁷”.

Article (10) on “Protection of Human Rights” stipulates:

“1. Human rights and fundamental freedoms are binding and must be respected.

2- The Palestinian National Authority shall work without delay to accede to regional and international declarations and covenants that protect human rights¹⁸ .”

Article 22 on “Social Insurance Services and Care of the Families of Martyrs” stipulates:

“1. The law shall regulate social and health insurance, disability and old-age pensions.

2. Caring for the families of martyrs and prisoners and caring for the wounded, affected and disabled is a duty regulated by law, and the National Authority shall guarantee them education, health and social insurance services¹⁹ .”

• Law No. 4 of 1999 on Disability Rights:

The Palestinian National Authority has issued a special law on the rights of persons with disabilities, consisting of four chapters containing (20) articles.

A “disabled person” is defined as “**a person with a stable, total or partial disability, which may be congenital or not, affecting any of their senses or physical, psychological or mental abilities to the extent that this limits the possibility for them of fulfilling normal life requirements in the same circumstances as their counterparts without disability**”.²⁰

Article 2 of the law, entitled “Rights and Duties of the Disabled”, explicitly stipulates that “a disabled person has the right to enjoy a free life, decent living and various services like other citizens, who have the same rights and duties, within the limits of their abilities and potential²¹.”

Article 3 on the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities stipulates that “the State shall protect the rights of the disabled and facilitate their access, and the Ministry shall coordinate with the concerned authorities to prepare awareness programs for them, their family and their environment in all matters related to rights stipulated in this law²² .”

17 Palestinian Basic Law Amended 2003, Article (9).

18 Palestinian Basic Law Amended 2003, Article (10)

19 Palestinian Basic Law Amended 2003, Article (22)

20 Law No. 4 of 1999 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 1

21 Law No. 4 of 1999 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 2

22 Law No. 4 of 1999 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 3

In terms of specific rights, article 10 on “Areas of care and rehabilitation of the disabled” stipulates that: “The Ministry shall be responsible for coordinating with all concerned authorities to work on the care and rehabilitation of the disabled, **including the field of rehabilitation and employment, as follows:**

- (a) Forming qualified technical personnel to work with various categories of persons with disabilities.
- (b) Guarantee the right to enroll in rehabilitation and vocational training facilities in accordance with the laws and regulations in force and on the basis of the principle of equal opportunities, and provide vocational training programs for persons with disabilities.
- (c) Compelling governmental and non-governmental institutions to recruit disabled persons so that they constitute at least 5% of the number of employees commensurate with the nature of work in those institutions, while making workplaces apt for their employment.
- (d) Encouraging the employment of persons with disabilities in private sector establishments by deducting a percentage of their salaries from the income tax of those establishments.

The third chapter addressed the topic of “**harmonization of public places for the disabled**”. Article (12) on “Objectives of Adaptation” stipulates that “Adaptation aims to achieve a suitable environment for the disabled that guarantees them ease and independence of movement, transport and safe use of public places²³ “, while Article (14) on “Securing the needs of the disabled in places of education” stipulates that “the Ministries of Education and Higher Education shall ensure an environment commensurate with the needs of the disabled in schools, colleges and universities²⁴ “.

Article No. (15) on “The responsibility of the Ministry of Local Government” stipulates that “in coordination with the concerned authorities, the Ministry of Local Government is responsible for obliging governmental and private agencies to meet the technical, engineering and architectural conditions and specifications that must be met in old and new public buildings and facilities to serve the disabled²⁵ .”

Article 16 on “The Responsibility of the Ministry of Transportation” stipulates that “the Ministry of Transport shall work to create the appropriate environment to facilitate the movement of the disabled, in addition to granting special discounts in public transportation for them and their companions²⁶ .”

•**Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 40 of 2004 on the Executive Regulations of Law No. 4 of 1999 on Disability Rights:**

The regulation included detailed explanations of the law, the most important of which concern specific rights of persons with disabilities. It stipulated that:

“The Ministry of Social Affairs, in coordination with the competent authorities, works to care for and rehabilitate the disabled in several areas, including:

- **Field of Education**

The Compulsory Education Law shall be applied within the philosophy of the Ministry of Education, taking into account the situation of the disabled child and his mental, motor, sensory and psychological abilities.

- Universities, institutes and educational centers must give equal access to persons with disabilities within the framework of the established curriculum.

- The Ministry of Education should support specialized education only in cases where education cannot be secured within the normal environment.

23 Law No. 4 of 1999 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 12.

24 Law No. 4 of 1999 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 14.

25 Law No. 4 of 1999 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 15.

26 Law No. 4 of 1999 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 16.

- Disability in itself does not constitute a ground for rejection of an application for admission to or entry to any public or private educational or educational institution.
- The Ministry of Education should raise the issue of persons with disabilities in the application for civic education programs in all schools.
- Applying counseling campaigns within secondary educational institutions to guide students to the required specialization in the field of disability.
- The Ministry of Education must adapt schools, centers and educational institutions to suit persons with disabilities.
- The establishment of a special department in the Ministry of Education to pay attention to the needs of persons with disabilities and to develop special educational programs and curricula in line with the philosophy of public education and the rights of individuals to education.
- Development of vocational training centers to receive persons with disabilities as their right to training.
- Curriculum for the disabled person with large fonts or Braille.
- The mission of universities, through continuing education programs and educational courses, is to develop systematic programs on disability and special training programs for technical cadres working in this field to raise the level of services.
- Develop missions dedicated to creative cadres capable of training and education at the university level.

- Field of rehabilitation and employment

1. All governmental and non-governmental institutions shall accommodate a number of disabled persons not less than 5% of the number of their employees commensurate with the nature of work in those institutions.
2. The Ministry of Labour and the concerned authorities shall provide areas of work for trained disabled persons and follow up and count disabled persons who have completed rehabilitation and training.
3. The Ministry of Labour shall develop vocational training programs aimed at qualifying work according to the needs of persons with disabilities.
4. The Ministry of Social Affairs, in coordination with the local community, should encourage employers and disabled persons to open up job prospects to them in order to avoid the fear of not knowing how to deal with the disabled person, to avoid the fear of ineffectiveness or slowness that leads to low production, and to avoid fear of costs that may arise (sickness, absence, accidents) all by raising awareness to employers, persons with disabilities and their families on the importance of working for persons with disabilities and reducing fear of their employment.
5. Any company or institution that does not employ persons with disabilities in accordance with paragraph (c) of Article (10) of Law No. 4 of 1999 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities shall pay the salary allowance of the disabled according to the minimum amount to a special fund for the disabled established by a decision of the Minister of Social Affairs in the Ministry to be allocated for the disbursement of assistance for the benefit of non-working disabled persons.”

- Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 146 of 2004 concerning the Employment of Persons with Disabilities in Ministries and Governmental Institutions:

Article (1) of the decision on “Raising the percentage of workers with special needs” stipulates that “ministries and governmental institutions must abide by the provisions of Article (10/4/c) of Law No. (4) of 1999 on the rights of the disabled, and take the necessary measures to raise the percentage of workers with special needs to 5% of the total employees in them and according to their needs”²⁷ .

²⁷ Cabinet Resolution No. 146 of 2004 Concerning the Employment of Persons with Disabilities in Ministries and Governmental Institutions, Article (1)

-Governmental Health Insurance System for Persons with Disabilities No. (2) of 2021,

The Cabinet issued the Governmental Health Insurance System for Persons with Disabilities No. (2) of 2021, which stipulates in its third article that it that aims to achieve the following:

“1. Ensuring the right of persons with disabilities and their families to universal and free health insurance. 2. Provide a basket of decent health services for persons with disabilities and their families. 3. Respect the diversity of Palestinian society, and promote equal values and rights and autonomy for persons with disabilities. 4. Provide health services without discrimination on the basis of disability”²⁸ .

1.3. Sustainable Development Goals 2030

In 2015, the international community adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On January 1st, 2016, work began on the implementation of the seventeen SDGs adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at a historic United Nations summit for combatting inequality and tackling climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. The SDGs build on the success of the Millennium Development Goals and aim to move forward to eradicate poverty in all its forms. The new goals are unique in that they call on all countries – poor, rich and middle-income – to take action to boost prosperity while protecting the planet. These goals recognize that poverty eradication must go hand in hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs, including These include education, health, social protection and employment, while tackling climate change and protecting the environment, including the tenth goal of “reducing inequalities”.²⁹

During the ninth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities held under the title “Implementing the 2030 Development Agenda for All Persons with Disabilities: Leaving No One Behind”, it was emphasized that more effort should be made to ensure that persons with disabilities around the world enjoy their rights and benefit from sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is another indication of the international commitment to ensure that persons with disabilities are not excluded from development. Countries’ commitment to the rights of persons with disabilities is deeply rooted in the Charter of the United Nations, which is clearly reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the SDGs, the issue of disability is not about needs, but about rights and empowerment. Persons with disabilities have been given special importance across a range of goals as well as in terms of collecting and monitoring other goals.”³⁰

Various countries, including Palestine, have worked to lead the process, by developing a national framework to achieve the 17 goals of sustainable development 2030. Palestine formed the National Team for Sustainable Development, and the Steering Committee for the Sustainable Development Goals, to follow up on the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

1.4. National plans

• National Development Plan 2021-2023:

The eighteenth Palestinian government approved the National Development Plans 2021-2023, as a complement to the National Policy Agenda. The National Development Plan 2021-2023 included the second axis under the title “Excellence in Serving the People”, which included the fourth national priority “Government at the service of citizens”,³¹ and the seventh and eighth national policies under the title “Enhancing the response of local authorities, and upgrading the level of public services provided to citizens.” It also included the

28 Governmental Health Insurance System for Persons with Disabilities No. (2) of 2021.

29 Sustainable Development Goals 2030 website www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/ar/development-agenda

30 Sustainable Development Goals 2030 website www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/ar/development-UN calls for more to be done to support inclusion of persons with disabilities in sustainable development -agenda

31 National Development Plan 2021-2023, Public Policies, p. 52.

seventh national priority, which stipulated “the law is above everyone to achieve social justice”, which included, among other policies, “social inclusion and providing job opportunities for marginalized groups: persons with disabilities, youth, women, and released prisoners”.³² Policy No. (18), which provides for the provision of social protection to the poor and marginalized groups, and its policy interventions include: developing appropriate and progressive social protection systems and floors and giving priority to persons with disabilities and the elderly³³ .

“We are committed to providing quality gender-sensitive social services aimed at achieving social justice and protecting children, the elderly and people with disabilities³⁴ .”

• **Sectoral Strategy for Social Development 2021-2023:**

The sectoral strategy for social development carried a vision that states “a resilient, solidarity, and productive Palestinian society, which provides a decent and sustainable life for all families and individuals, liberates their energies, and believes in rights, equality, justice, partnership and inclusion.

The strategy included three strategic objectives:

1. Reducing poverty in its multiple dimensions.
2. Effective national and local social protection measures that protect poor and vulnerable groups, men and women, including the elimination of all forms of marginalization, violence, exclusion, shocks, trauma and disasters in Palestinian society.
3. Enhancing governance, integrity and transparency standards.

The second strategic objective included: Eliminating all forms of discrimination in social, economic, cultural, sports and political rights against marginalized groups, including the poor, women, children, young men and women, elderly men and women, and persons with disabilities, and their access to resources and social, political and economic participation, for reasons related to discrimination on the basis of religion, or color, or sex, or disability, or age, or geographical location, or political beliefs. This goal also focuses on the principle of accountability of duty-holders in all fields and activating the role of institutions, local leaders and representatives of rights holders, female and male citizens, and empowering them in this process³⁵.

• **National Development Program 2025-2026**

The Palestinian government launched the National Program for Development 2025-2026, which included 7 strategic development initiatives, including the fourth initiative for enhancing the fairness and inclusiveness of the social protection system, and the seventh initiative on education for development, which includes developing the quality of vocational education and training by increasing the number of schools, specializations and vocational centers in various regions, overcoming societal stereotypes about vocational education in all its branches, and developing a specialized career guidance system based on an analysis of the situation and needs of the market³⁶ .

1.5. Conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO)

Relevant ILO conventions include:

- **Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation Convention: No. 111 (1958)**, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability³⁷ .

32 National Development Plan 2021-2023, Public Policies, p. 85

33 National Development Plan 2021-2023, Public Policies, p. 86.

34 National Development Plan 2021-2023, Public Policies, p. 59.

35 Sectoral Strategy for Social Development 2021-2023, p. 62

36 National Program for Development and Development 2025-2026, p. (14)

37 ILO Convention No. 111 concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation, 1958.

- Convention No. 159 (1983) concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities: this convention compels States parties to take measures to enable persons with disabilities to obtain decent work commensurate with their abilities³⁸ .
- Recommendation No. 168 (1983) on vocational rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities calls for vocational training and support in working environments³⁹ .

Business Owners' Guide to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,

Developed jointly by the United Nations and ILO Global Compact, under the title “Guide for business on the rights of persons with disabilities - How business can respect and support the rights of persons with disabilities and benefit from inclusion”, this guide presents concrete steps and actions that companies can take to implement good practices that are inclusive of persons with disabilities in the workplace, marketplace and in the community - in alignment with relevant UN conventions and frameworks⁴⁰ .

Summary of Chapter One

International conventions, including ILO conventions, and national legislation affirm the right of persons with disabilities to work without discrimination, their rights to equality of opportunity and treatment, as well as the necessity of providing an accessible and inclusive work environment, enabling persons with disabilities to work productively and independently, and encouraging their employment in the public and private sectors. They also affirm their right to access equal employment opportunities, the right to protection from discrimination, the right to a comfortable working environment, the right to vocational training, the right to accessibility support services, the right to join trade unions, the right to economic and social security, and the right to have the special needs of persons with disabilities taken into account at all stages of economic and social planning.

38 ILO Convention No. 159 of 1983 concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Persons with Disabilities).

39 ILO Recommendation No. 168 of 1983 concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities.

40 International Labour Organization, Guide for business on the rights of persons with disabilities, 2018.

- Chapter Two -

The situation of the Palestinian economy in the context of the war on the Gaza Strip

2.1. Unemployment

According to ILO data, some 201,000 jobs have been lost in the Gaza Strip due to the ongoing war, and 306,000 jobs, or more than a third of total employment, have been lost in the West Bank, where the economy has also been severely affected. The sectors most affected in the West Bank were the construction sector, with a decrease in added value by 27%, followed by the industrial sector, with a decrease in added value by almost 24%, the services sector with a decrease of about 21% in added value, and finally the agriculture sector, with a decrease in value added by 12%.

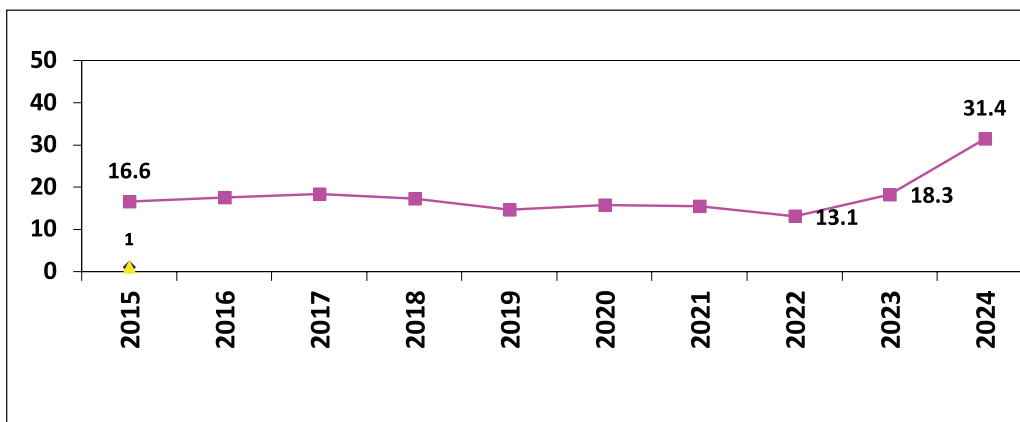
The sectors most affected by job losses in Gaza are the construction sector, which recorded the largest decline by about 96%, followed by the agricultural sector by about 93%, the industrial sector by 92%, and the services sector by about 77% in the last quarter of 2023⁴¹.

Since the outbreak of the war in October 2023, the unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip has reached a staggering 79.1%. In the West Bank, which has also been severely affected by the crisis, unemployment stood at 32%. These figures raise the average unemployment rate to 50.8 per cent in the two areas of the occupied Palestinian territory. However, unemployment rates and figures do not take into account those who have left the workforce because job opportunities are no longer available to them. The actual number of those who have lost their jobs is therefore higher than the unemployment figures indicate⁴².

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) indicated in its report on the results of the labor force survey in the Gaza Strip in 2024 that unemployment rates increased to about 68%, and the results showed that youth aged (15-29) years were significantly affected, as about three quarters of the youth (74%) are out of education, training and the labor market.

This impact was not limited to the Gaza Strip, but also reflected on the West Bank, although to a lesser extent, as there was a significant impact of the Israeli occupation aggression on the Gaza Strip, and the subsequent repercussions in the West Bank, represented in tightening the noose on West Bank governorates, cutting off communication between them, and preventing workers from reaching their workplaces inside Israel. These measures taken by the Israeli occupying power and other factors led to paralyzing economic movement, which had a direct impact on the characteristics of the workforce in the West Bank. Accordingly, unemployment rates among individuals participating in the labor force in the West Bank increased in 2024 to about 31% compared to about 18% in 2023. At the gender level, the unemployment rate for men in the West Bank reached 31.7% compared to 30.1% for women in 2024.

Figure (1): Unemployment Rate among Labour Force Participants aged 15 Years and over in the West Bank, 2015-2024



41 UN report on the war in Gaza <https://news.un.org/ar/interview/2024/04/1129706>

42 ILO, report: War raises unemployment to nearly 80 percent and GDP shrinks by 83.5 percent in the Gaza Strip, <https://www.ilo.org/ar/resource/news/alhrb-trf-nsbt-albtalt-aly-ma-yqarb-80-balmayt-wtqls-alnatj-almhly-alajmaly>

The number of Palestinian workers from the West Bank employed in Israel decreased significantly between 2023 and 2024 by about 85,000 workers as a result of the tight closures imposed by the Israeli occupying power following the aggression on the Gaza Strip, bringing the total number of workers in Israel to about 21,000 workers in 2024, compared to about 107,000 workers in 2023. The number of workers in Israeli settlements has also decreased from about 16,000 in 2023 to 15,000 in 2024.

Less than half of wage employees in the private sector in the West Bank obtain their rights.

The data also indicated that less than half of wage employees in the private sector in the West Bank obtained their rights, as about 43% of wage employees in the private sector obtained some basic rights (pension financing / end-of-service indemnities, in addition to paid annual leave, and paid sick leave), while 51% of salaried working women received paid maternity leave in 2024⁴³.

2.2. Decline in GDP

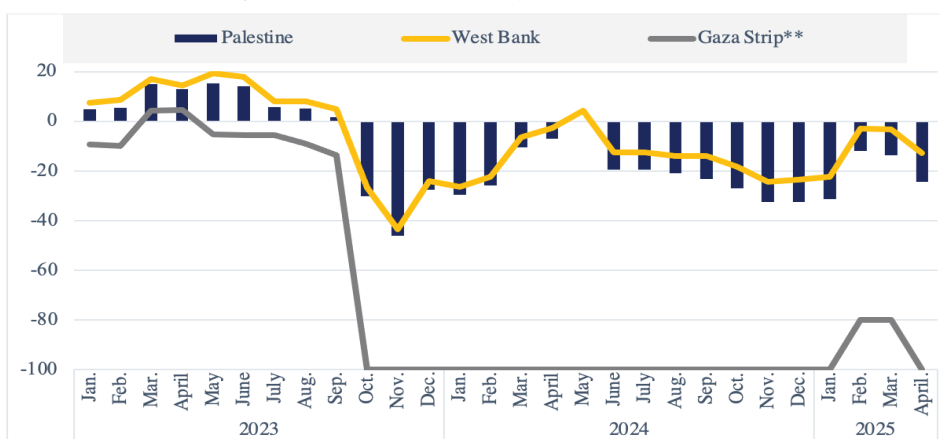
Following the start of Israel’s war on the Gaza Strip, the imposition of collective punishment measures and implementation of extensive military operations in the West Bank, Palestine faced an economic, social, humanitarian, environmental, health, educational and food catastrophe that has led to a shrinking of the productive base and the distortion of the economic structure of Palestine. By the end of 2024, it is estimated that the unprecedented sharp contraction in the GDP in the Gaza Strip will continue, resulting in a 28% decline in the Palestinian economy⁴⁴.

Business Cycle Index

The results of the “PMA Business Cycle Index” showed a significant decline in the overall index of Palestine, during the month of April 2025, to approximately -24.4 points, compared to -13.4 points during March 2025. This decline is attributable to growing uncertainty in the region and the continuation of unprecedented Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

In the West Bank, the overall index fell sharply from -3.0 points in March 2025 to -12.6 points in April 2025. Overall, owners of targeted establishments in the West Bank reported a decline in production, sales and inventory levels, along with a negative outlook for production and employment over the next three months. In the Gaza Strip, the collapse of the ceasefire and the renewed Israeli aggression have led to a new wave of killings and destruction, and almost complete paralysis of all economic activities. Given the difficult economic conditions, the index in the Gaza Strip is expected to fall to its lowest levels again, to around -100 points⁴⁵.

Figure (2): PMA Business Cycle Index 2023-2025



Source: PMA (2025). PMABCI, March 2025.
 * The index ranges from a maximum of +100 (indicating favorable economic conditions) to a minimum of -100 (indicating severe economic downturns).
 ** The Gaza Strip index figures from the onset of the Israeli aggression in early October 2023 until the end of March 2025 are estimated values.

43 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Labor Reality in Palestine for the year 2024 on the occasion of the International Workers’ Day (May 1), 1/5/2025.

44 The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and the Palestine Monetary Authority, the Palestinian economic harvest for the year 2024, and economic forecasts for the year 2025.

45 Palestine Monetary Authority, PMA Business Cycle Index Results, April 2024, released 1/5/2025.

2.3. The situation of public finances

Following the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip in October 2023, the Israeli Ministerial Council for Political and Security Affairs (the expanded cabinet) decided to deduct from the clearance funds collected by the Israeli occupying power on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, and to only transfer the funds to the Palestinian Authority after deducting the amounts allocated to the besieged Gaza Strip, as well as to the families of martyrs and prisoners detained in Israeli prisons. This led to the deduction and withholding of millions of shekels per month, amounted to about 7 billion shekels, which plunged the Palestinian Authority into a severe financial crisis, whose features appeared in the inability of the Palestinian Authority to pay the salaries of public sector employees in full, its inability to pay the debts and arrears of suppliers and the private sector, and to implement development projects. The financing gap in the general budget for 2025 amounted to (6.9) billion shekels, out of (20.6) billion shekels⁴⁶.

Freedom of movement in the West Bank

Since the seventh of October, 2023, Israel has adopted a policy of siege and economic strangulation in the West Bank, through imposing a tight siege on all Palestinian cities, villages and camps. The number of checkpoints and iron gates erected by the Israeli occupation army in the West Bank reached 898 military checkpoints and iron gates, including 18 iron gates erected by the Israeli occupation since the beginning of this year 2025, and 146 iron gates erected by the Israeli occupying power after October 7, 2023, according to the Colonization & Wall Resistance Commission⁴⁷.

Summary of Chapter Two

The Palestinian economy has suffered a severe setback due to Israel's war on the Gaza Strip, and the Israeli occupying power's practice of imposing collective punishment measures in the West Bank, military operations and settler violence. This exacerbated unemployment rates, and caused the loss of hundreds of thousands of job opportunities for male and female workers, including persons with disabilities, who are among the vulnerable groups that are greatly affected by economic decline. This created a complex reality and difficult conditions that negatively affected the labor and economic rights of persons with disability.

⁴⁶ Law by Decree No. (8) of 2025 on the General Budget for the Fiscal Year 2025.

⁴⁷ Wafa Official News Agency (Occupation suffocates the West Bank with 898 military checkpoints), Posted On 22/1/2025, <https://www.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/112372>

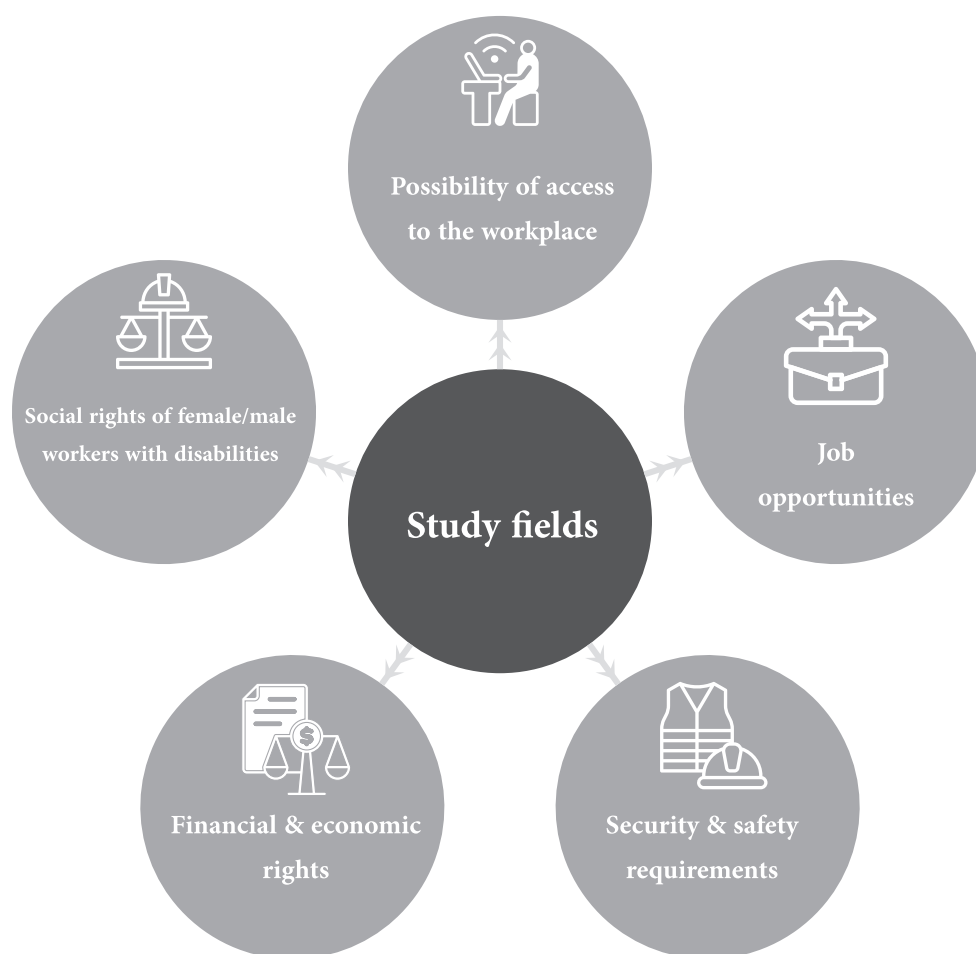
- Chapter Three -

Results and analysis of the field study (questionnaires and interviews)

3.1. Field of study

To achieve the main objective of the study of identifying the impact of the war on the Gaza Strip and the Israeli occupation practices in the West Bank, including collective punishment measures, military operations, settler violence and colonialism, on the labor and economic rights of persons with disabilities in Palestine, questionnaires and focused interviews were used as research tools. A questionnaire was elaborated for male and female workers with disabilities in the West Bank, and another for male and female workers with disabilities in the Gaza Strip. Each questionnaire included the demographic variables of the study sample, in addition to five areas of study:

Figure (3): Study fields



Study Population: The study population consisted of relevant persons working and/or of working age in Palestine (West Bank and Gaza Strip).

Study sample: A representative sample was selected for the study to distribute the questionnaire, consisting of 195 persons for the West Bank and Gaza Strip areas, of which 129 were in the West Bank, and 66 were from Gaza Strip.

In order to enrich the study, 15 focused interviews were held with stakeholders, including: the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Labor, the Stars of Hope Society, the Palestinian Union for the Deaf, the Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center, Qader for Community Development, the National Society for Rehabilitation – Gaza Strip, the General Union of Persons with Disabilities, the National Center for Community Rehabilitation / Gaza, activists with disabilities. The details of these bodies are attached in the annexes.

3.2. Demographic variables data of the study sample

Table No. (1): Distribution of valid questionnaires by numbers, geographical region and sex

Region	Male	Female	Total
West Bank questionnaires	60	69	129
Gaza Strip Questionnaires	31	35	66
Total	91	104	195

Table No. (2): Percentage of valid questionnaires by geographical region and sex

Region	Male	Female	Total
West Bank questionnaires	46.5%	53.5%	100.0%
Gaza Strip Questionnaires	47.0%	53.0%	100.0%
Total	46.7%	53.3%	100.0%

Figure No. (4): Distribution of questionnaire by geographical region and sex

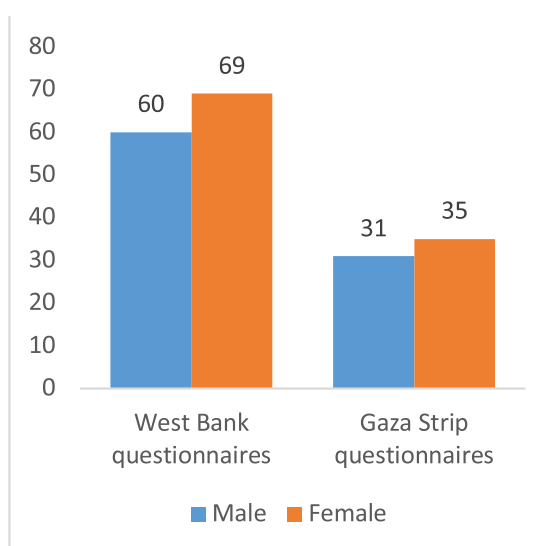


Figure No. (5): Distribution of questionnaires by geographical region and sex (in percentage)

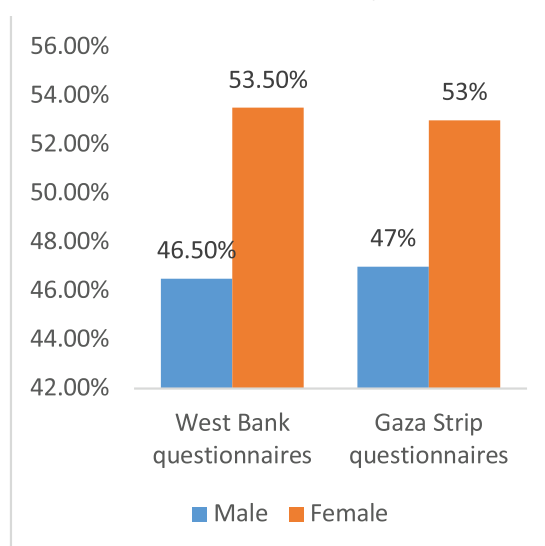


Figure (6): Distribution of the Study Sample in the West Bank by Place of Residence (by percentage)

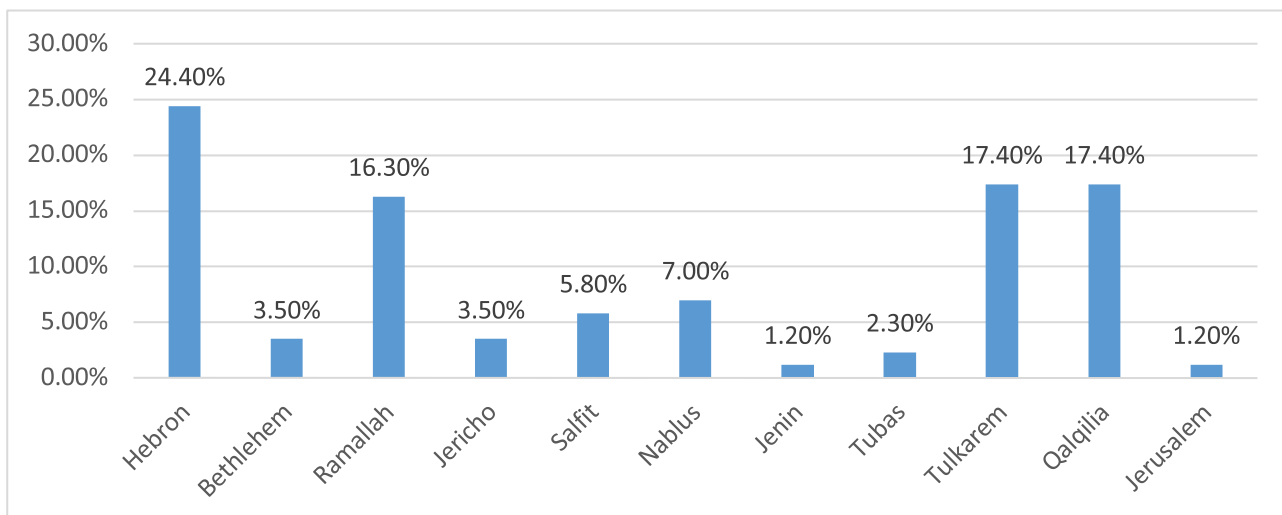


Figure (7): Distribution of the Study Sample in the Gaza Strip by Place of Residence (by percentage)

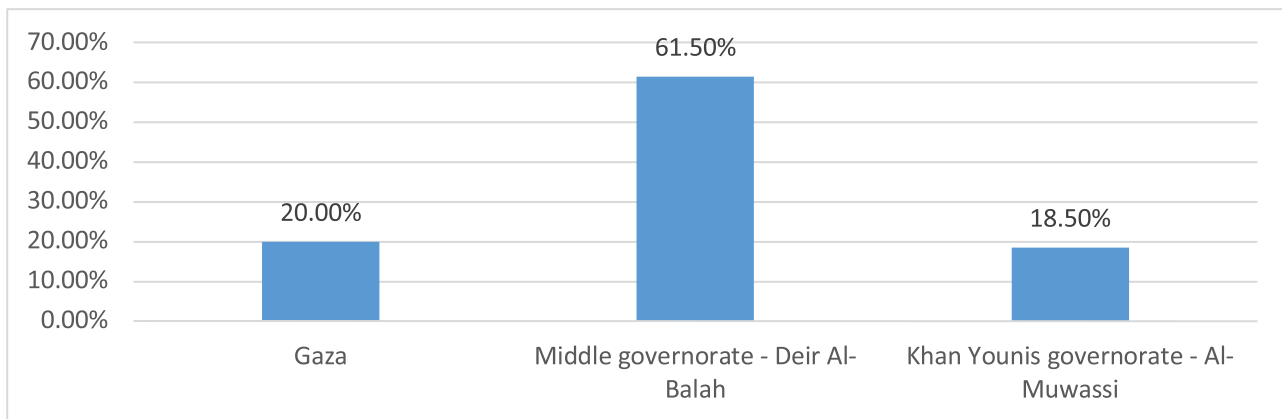


Figure (8): Distribution of the study sample in the West Bank by time-period when the disability occurred

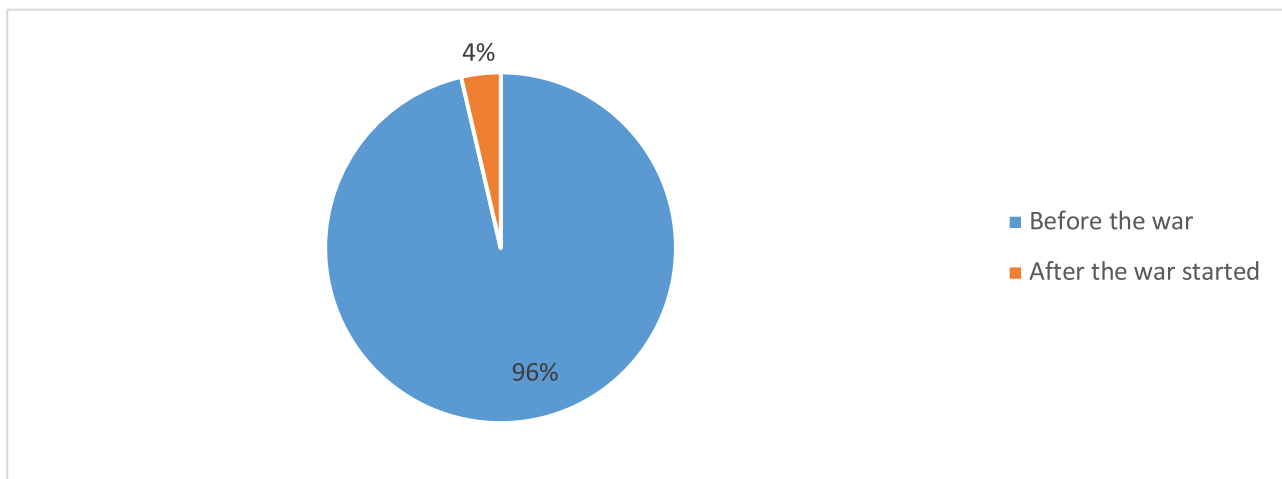


Figure (9): Distribution of Study Sample Percentages in Gaza Strip by Disability Time

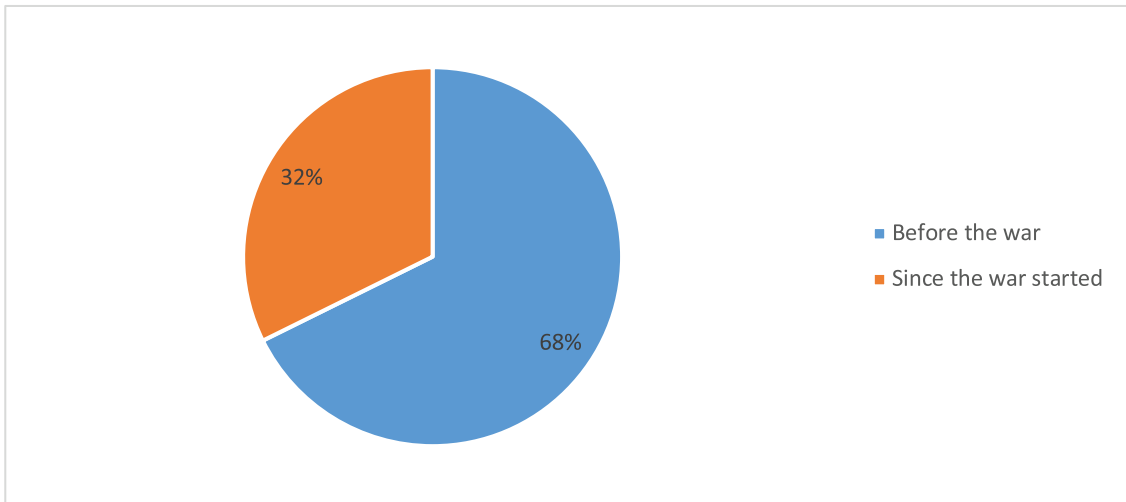


Figure (10): Distribution of Study Sample Percentages in the West Bank by Type of Disability

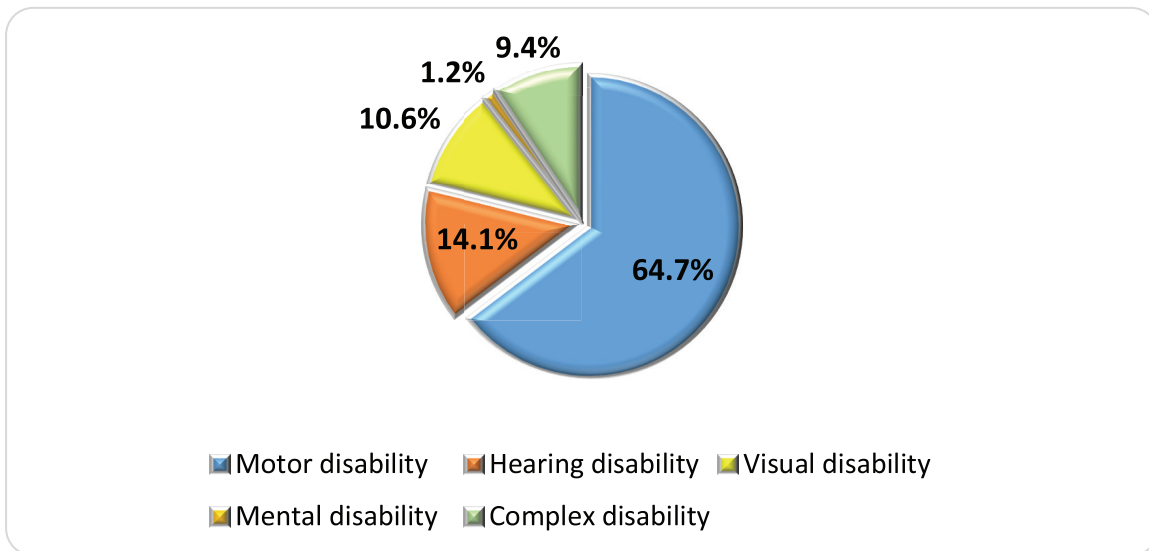


Figure (11): Distribution of Study Sample Percentages in Gaza Strip by Type of Disability

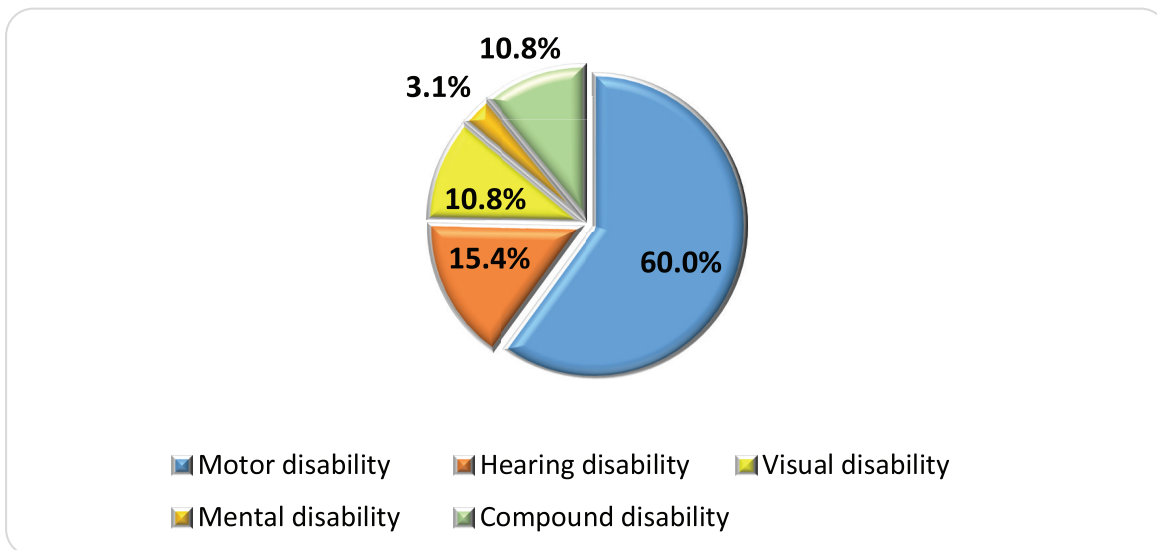


Figure (12): Distribution of the Study Sample in the West Bank by Age

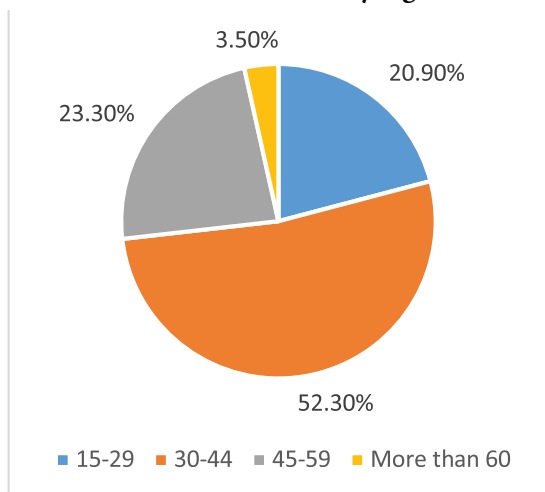


Figure (13): Distribution of Percentage of Study Sample in Gaza Strip by Age

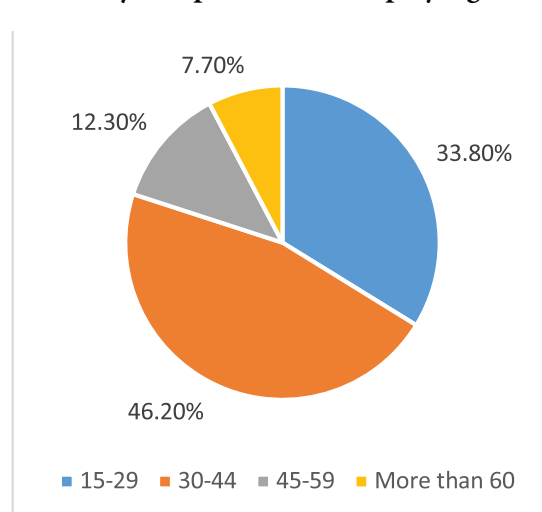


Figure (14): Distribution of the study sample in the West Bank according to the nature of work

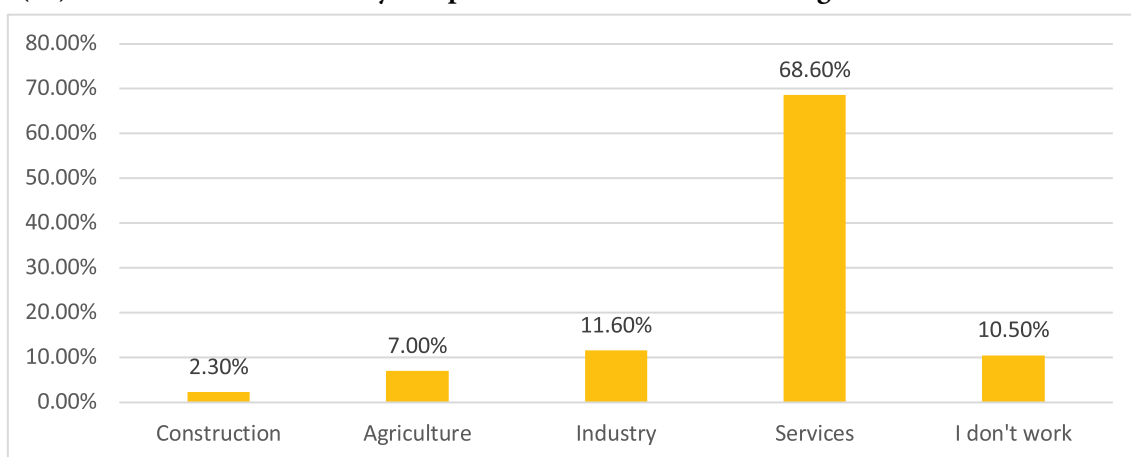
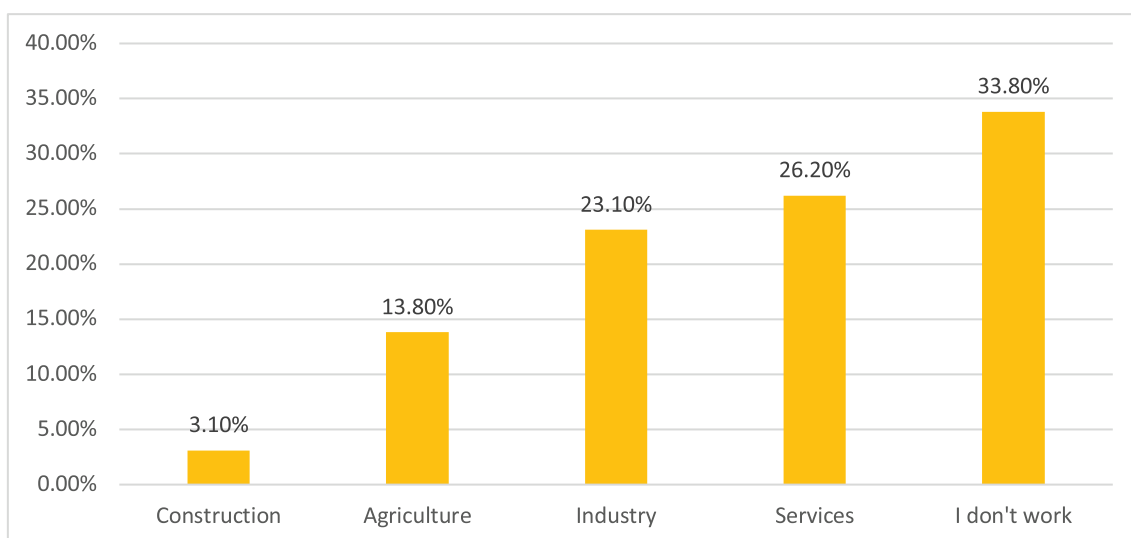


Figure (15): Distribution of the study sample in the Gaza Strip according to the nature of work



3.3. Results and analysis of survey fields

The results and analysis of the five areas of study will be presented in two sections, the first for the West Bank and the second for the Gaza Strip.

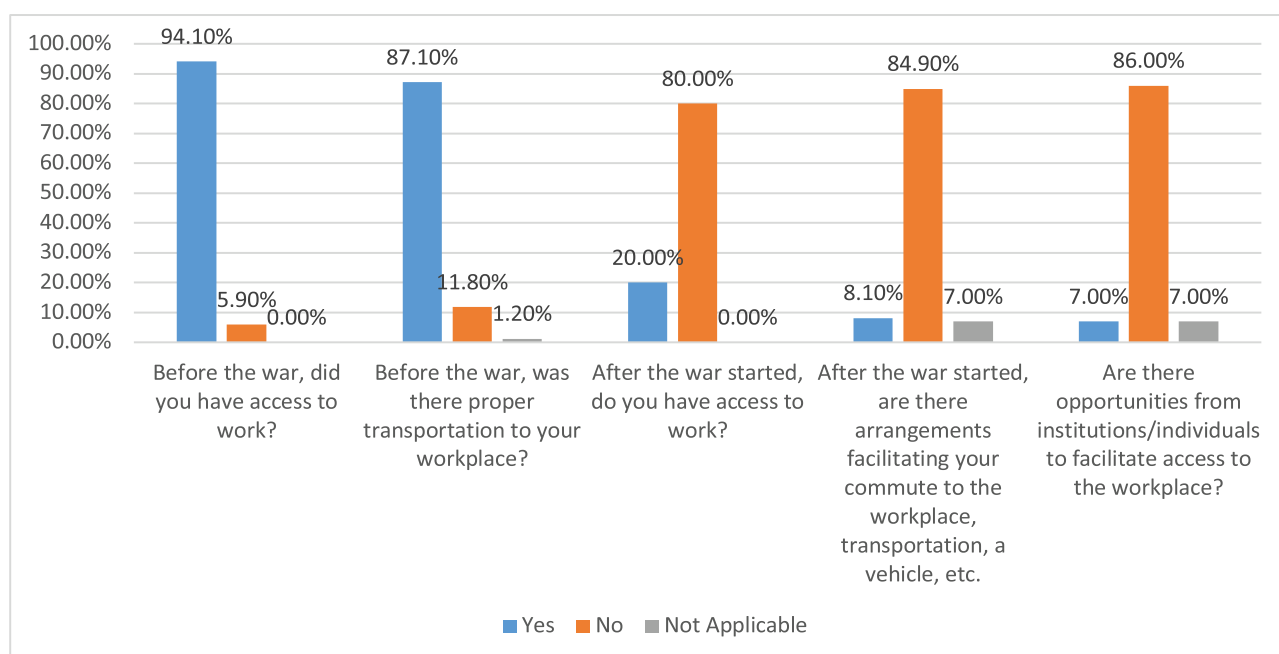
3.3.1. The impact of the war on the Gaza Strip, and collective punishment measures, military operations, settler violence and colonialism by the Israeli occupying power on the labor and economic rights of persons with disabilities in the West Bank.

3.3.1.1. Workplace Accessibility in the West Bank

Table No. (2): Workplace Accessibility in the West Bank

No.	Item	Yes	No	Not applicable	Total
1	Before the war, did you have access to work?	94.1%	5.9%	0.0%	100%
2	Before the war, was there proper transportation to your workplace?	87.1%	11.8%	1.2%	100%
3	After the war started, do you have access to work?	20.0%	80.0%	0.0%	100%
4	After the war started, are there arrangements facilitating your commute to the workplace, transportation, a vehicle, etc.	8.1%	84.9%	7.0%	100%
5	Are there opportunities from institutions/ individuals to facilitate access to the workplace?	7.0%	86.0%	7.0%	100%

Figure No. (16): Workplace Accessibility in the West Bank



The following can be noted from table (2) and figure (16):

- The study sample indicated that the opportunity to reach work was good before the war and associated Israeli occupying power practices in the West Bank, but it decreased significantly since the war started, as only (20%) of the study sample indicated the availability of access to work after the war.
- As for the availability of means of access to the workplace, such as appropriate transportation or vehicles, the study sample indicated that the vast majority of them (84.9%) do not have supportive means to access workplaces after the war started and collective punishment measures were imposed in the West Bank.
- (86%) of the study sample indicated that there are no opportunities from institutions or individuals to facilitate access to the workplace for persons with disabilities after the war started.

In this context, the Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry of Labor, Mr. Rami Mahdawi, pointed out that the genocidal war on the Gaza Strip and the unprecedented Israeli occupation measures in the West Bank have exacerbated the problems faced by persons with disabilities in accessing job opportunities, despite their limited availability⁴⁸.

Mr. Ajaj Ajaj, Director General of the General Department of Persons with Disabilities at the Ministry of Social Development, pointed out that the war on Gaza and the Israeli measures in the West Bank have greatly affected the overall economic and social scene in Palestine, and exposed all citizens to the repressive occupation measures, including persons with disabilities. These measures have had a double impact on persons with disabilities as they are among the vulnerable groups, which were greatly affected by the contraction of the economy and Israeli measures, such as the closure of areas and separating cities, villages and camps from each other. This caused parents to fear that their children with disabilities would be exposed to harm when commuting to work under these conditions, and the lack of possible arrangements to facilitate their transportation⁴⁹.

Mr. Majdi Marei, Secretary-General of the Palestinian Union for Persons with Disabilities, stressed that there were problems related to the access of persons with disabilities to the labor market before the war, and that these problems increased as a consequence of the war and Israeli occupation measures, calling for the inclusion of disability issues in laws and regulations instead of issuing specific legislation in order to create an inclusive environment for persons with disabilities⁵⁰.

Mrs. Abeer Hamad, Rehabilitation Programs Officer at Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center, believes that the effects of the war and Israeli measures in the West Bank have restricted the accessibility of persons with disabilities to the workplace, due to barriers and closures, long distances, and parents' fear for their children, in addition to the lack of safe transportation and adaptation to the needs of people with disabilities, in addition to the risks that people with disabilities can be exposed to during movement, especially those with intellectual disabilities⁵¹.

In the same context, Mrs. Kifah Abu Ghosh, Executive Director of the Stars of Hope Association for the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities, pointed out that the war imposed additional costs and challenges for the accessibility of persons with disabilities to the workplace, especially women, due to the occupation measures and multiple checkpoints, the weak movement of public transportation, and the danger that people with disabilities can be exposed to while moving, in addition to the anxiety and fear of the people⁵².

Mr. George Mansour, Director of Programs at Qader Foundation for Community Development, stressed that the war has greatly affected the overall economic and social scene in Palestine, and exposed all citizens to the repressive occupation measures, including persons with disabilities, such as the blockade, the high costs of transportation and the danger in it, the decline in the ability of employers to provide job opportunities, and the limited ability of persons with disabilities to reach and move to their places of work due to the measures of the occupation authorities and the restrictions on movement between governorates, cities and towns. in the West Bank⁵³.

For his part, Mr. Walid Nazzal, coordinator of the Palestinian Union for the Deaf, stressed that people with hearing disabilities, especially the "deaf", are greatly affected by the war on Gaza, like the rest of society, and doubly, especially in the accessibility of workplaces in the West Bank, due to the closure of Palestinian cities and villages, and for fear of moving between cities due to the attack of Israeli

48 Interview with Mr. Rami Mahdawi, Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry of Labor.

49 Interview with Mr. Ajaj Ajaj, Director General of the General Department of Persons with Disabilities at the Ministry of Social Development.

50 Interview with Mr. Majdi Marei, Secretary General of the Palestinian Union for Persons with Disabilities.

51 Interview with Mrs. Abeer Hamad, Rehabilitation Programs Officer at Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center.

52 Interview with Ms. Kifah Abu Ghosh, Executive Director of the Stars of Hope Association for the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities.

53 Interview with Mr. George Mansour, Director of Programs at Qader Foundation for Community Development.

soldiers, or settler violence. For persons with hearing disabilities, the risk becomes doubled, especially in the context of limited use of sign language in Palestinian society, which would make it difficult to communicate in case of any emergency situation, or the extent to which persons with hearing disabilities would be able to interact with warnings or danger situations that include audio instructions or audible signals⁵⁴ .

Mr. Osama Fawadleh, Director of Vocational Training Programs at Jabal Al-Najma Center, stressed that the war and occupation measures have negatively affected the ability of persons with disabilities to access workplaces or vocational training, due to the occupation measures in the West Bank, the number of checkpoints and the cost of movement, and the danger of this to persons with disabilities, explaining that the government's role is limited in supporting access to job opportunities for persons with disabilities⁵⁵.

For her part, disability activist Mrs. Hadeel Shehadeh stressed that the Israeli checkpoints and obstacles have greatly affected the access of persons with disabilities to their places of work, for multiple reasons, including the lack of adequate means of transportation, including fear of movement under the occupation measures and settler violence, including raising the cost of transportation, including the special needs of people with disabilities in light of waiting for hours at checkpoints, which creates health and societal problems for them, such as the need to relieve themselves, and others⁵⁶.

Mr. Bayan Tabib, a member of the General Secretariat of the General Union of the Palestinian Handicapped, pointed out that the possibility of accessing the workplace after the occupation practices in the West Bank has become very complex, unsafe, and expensive for people with disabilities, and exposes them to danger, especially with the presence of hundreds of Israeli checkpoints and gates, pointing out that the war has contributed to more social isolation for people with disabilities, who already suffer from isolation and societal marginalization⁵⁷.

3.3.1.2. Job Opportunities in the West Bank

Table No. (3): Job Opportunities in the West Bank

No.	Item	Yes	No	Not applicable	Total
6	Did you have a job opportunity before the war?	91.8%	8.2%	0.0%	100.0%
7	Have you lost your job since the war on Gaza started?	77.6%	22.4%	0.0%	100.0%
8	Do you currently have a job opportunity?	23.3%	76.7%	0.0%	100.0%
9	If you have a job opportunity, is it a fixed "permanent" position?	16.5%	37.6%	45.9%	100.0%
10	If you have a job opportunity, are financial returns sufficient?	11.8%	40.0%	48.2%	100.0%
11	If you have a job opportunity, is it appropriate for the nature of your disability?	20.9%	53.5%	25.6%	100.0%

54 Interview with Mr. Walid Nazzal, Coordinator of the Palestinian Union for the Deaf.

55 Interview with Mr. Osama Fawadleh, Director of Vocational Training Programs at Star Mountain Center.

56 Interview with disability rights activist Hadeel Shehadeh.

57 Interview with Mr. Bayan Tabib, member of the General Secretariat of the General Union of the Palestinian Handicapped.

Figure (17): Job Opportunities in the West Bank

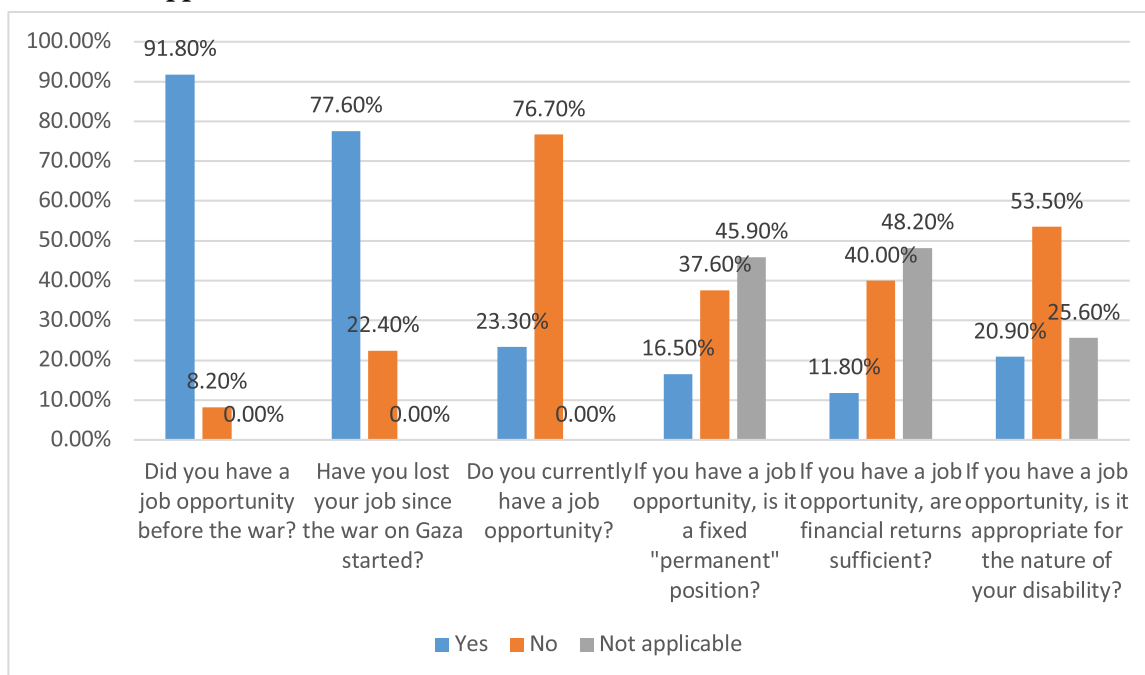


Table 3 and figure 17 indicate the following:

- The vast majority of the study sample of persons with disabilities from the West Bank had access to employment opportunities before the war, and 77.6% of them lost their employment opportunities since the war started.
- Only 23.3% of the study sample of persons with disabilities in the West Bank have access to job opportunities after the war started, and only 16.5% of the study sample have stable job opportunities.
- Only 20.9% of the study sample of persons with disabilities in the West Bank indicated that the available job opportunity is suitable for the nature of their disability, while 11.8% indicated that the job opportunities available to them generate sufficient financial returns.

In this respect, the Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry of Labor, Mr. Rami Mahdawi, explained that the genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, and the measures of the Israeli occupying power in the West Bank, have negatively affected the labor market. They caused high unemployment rates, and the contraction of the business cycle, including job opportunities for people with disabilities, especially in light of the increase in the percentage of disability [in Palestinian society] due to Israel's war. It is estimated that the war caused about 75 thousand disabilities. He pointed out that the Ministry of Labor has worked on a number of interventions to support persons with disabilities in the labor market, including strengthening governmental policies to employ persons with disabilities in the public sector, contributing to the employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector, and strengthening partnerships with the private sector in launching initiatives to provide job opportunities and micro projects targeting persons with disabilities. These include a partnership with the Bank of Palestine in providing a soft financing portfolio for persons with disabilities worth one million dollars, benefiting 116 people with disabilities, supporting and targeting persons with disabilities through the executive branches of the Ministry, specifically the Palestinian Employment Fund through its various programs and initiatives, and the Cooperative Work Authority, and giving priority to persons with disabilities in enrolling in the Ministry's vocational training centers, and working to adapt these centers to the needs of people with disabilities, and working to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on disability in the labor market⁵⁸.

Mr. Walid Nazzal, coordinator of the Palestinian Federation for the Deaf, pointed out that there were limited

⁵⁸ Interview with Mr. Rami Mahdawi, Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry of Labor.

job opportunities for people with hearing disabilities before the war, but that these opportunities decreased after the war started, especially in light of the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities in dealing with emergency situations, such as sirens, in addition to the tendency of employers to hire persons who speak, because they do not want to take risks related to the presence of persons with hearing disabilities⁵⁹.

Mr. Osama Fawadleh, Director of Vocational Training Programs at Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center, pointed to the decline in job opportunities for persons with disabilities due to the war and occupation measures in the West Bank, especially with the private sector's layoffs of some workers, the scarcity of employment in the public sector, the decline in funding for civil society institutions, and the lack of sufficient governmental programs to create job opportunities for persons with disabilities⁶⁰.

Mr. George Mansour, Programs Manager at Qader for Community Development, explained that the availability of job opportunities has decreased in general in Palestine, and that persons with disabilities have been affected due to the inability of employers to provide jobs, and also due to the lack of a legal framework that protects persons with disabilities in the labor market. He called for addressing gaps in legislation, updating the law on the rights of people with disabilities and the labor law, ensuring equal wages, and providing job opportunities for persons with disabilities⁶¹.

In this context, Mr. Ajaj Ajaj, Director General of the General Department of Persons with Disabilities at the Ministry of Social Development, indicated that the Ministry launched an emergency response plan for persons with disabilities from the beginning of the war. Although the ministry is not the primary competent authority with regard to work, it launched the "Himmam" program for the economic empowerment of persons with disabilities through soft loans and a revolving portfolio to expand its benefit. The program was implemented through the Social Development Ministry's directorates in the different governorates. The Ministry of Social Development has also worked with partners to provide grants for persons with disabilities, such as the Wafa Foundation, and vocational training has been provided for persons with disabilities to engage in the labor market through the Sheikh Khalifa and Sheikha Fatima Vocational Rehabilitation Centers⁶².

Disability rights activist Hadeel Shehadeh pointed out that the decline in the economic situation in the West Bank and the high unemployment rate have multiplied the impact on persons with disabilities, as many of them lost job opportunities. Those still in employment suffer from complex working conditions and low salaries, whether they are governmental or private sector employees⁶³.

In this context, Mrs. Kifah Abu Ghosh, Executive Director of the Stars of Hope Association for the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities, pointed out that the situation of the war imposed a decline in job opportunities for women with disabilities. She explained that the association works on the economic empowerment of women with disabilities in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, within the economic empowerment program, which aims to improve opportunities for women with disabilities to access empowerment in all its forms and increase their economic participation based on human rights and inclusive principles, in pursuit of achieving a better and fairer life for them. The association is also supporting women entrepreneurs with disabilities with financing opportunities for small projects, and providing temporary employment opportunities that give women with disabilities real practical experience, which contributes to increasing their chances of obtaining permanent jobs. She noted that the association worked to provide funding and grants for women with disabilities in light of the war to create job opportunities for them, while

59 Interview with Mr. Walid Nazzal, Coordinator of the Palestinian Union for the Deaf.

60 Interview with Mr. Osama Fawadleh, Director of Vocational Training Programs at the Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center.

61 Interview with Mr. George Mansour, Director of Programs at Qader for Community Development.

62 Interview with Mr. Ajaj Ajaj, Director General of the General Department of Persons with Disabilities at the Ministry of Social Development.

63 Interview with disability rights activist Hadeel Shehadeh.

providing technical support by experts accompanying the projects to ensure their optimal implementation, and ensuring follow-up and technical support for targeted women. In addition to providing temporary employment for women with disabilities in displacement centers in the Gaza Strip, the association is also working to target women with disabilities in the West Bank, within the grants and temporary employment tracks for economic empowerment⁶⁴.

Mr. Bayan Tabib, a member of the General Secretariat of the General Union of Persons with Disabilities, explained that job opportunities have decreased for persons with disabilities due to the contraction of the economy and the financial crisis faced by the Palestinian Authority, which resulted in the freezing of new recruitment, except in specific contexts. She called for making an exception for persons with disabilities and affirmative action for them. At the same time, she called for compensating for the loss of job opportunities for persons with disabilities in the public sector through a complementary role of private sector establishments and civil society organizations in providing job opportunities for persons with disabilities, activating the social responsibility of the private sector and directing it towards providing job opportunities or projects for persons with disabilities⁶⁵.

In this context, Mr. Muhannad Al-Shafei, coordinator of the Disability Adaptation Unit in Ramallah Municipality, calls for the need to provide economic empowerment programs for persons with disabilities, as they are a major catalyst for the economy and provide social protection for them, especially in light of the high unemployment rates after the war, proposing the issuance of Palestinian legislation that obliges all productive sectors to employ at least 5% of persons with disabilities, and in the event that the private sector refuses, a fine will be imposed on the value of the estimated wage for persons from People with disabilities to reach 5%, and these fines are transferred to a national fund dedicated to the economic empowerment of people with disabilities⁶⁶.

Mrs. Abeer Hamad, Rehabilitation Programs Officer at Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center, pointed out that the war, Israeli measures in the West Bank, and the decline in the economy have greatly affected job opportunities for persons with disabilities. She said that it exacerbated their unemployment rate and their lack of sources of livelihood, especially with the problems of movement in the West Bank, the security situation on the roads, and the lack of facilitation measures to support the movement of persons with disabilities⁶⁷.

3.3.1.3. Safety and Security Requirements in the West Bank

Table No. (4): Safety and Security Requirements in the West Bank

No.	Item	Yes	No	Not applicable	Total
6	Before the war, were security and safety requirements guaranteed in the job opportunities available to you?	80.2%	15.1%	4.7%	100.0%
7	In the wake of the war, if job opportunities are available, are security and safety requirements fulfilled?	8.1%	72.1%	19.8%	100.0%
8	If you have job opportunity, does the work environment take into account the nature of your disability?	14.1%	47.1%	38.8%	100.0%
9	If you have a job opportunity, are there special measures at work to protect employees from Israeli military operations?	3.5%	55.8%	40.7%	100.0%
10	If you have a job opportunity, is it safe to commute to and from work?	8.1%	51.2%	40.7%	100.0%

64 Interview with Ms. Kifah Abu Ghosh, Executive Director of the Stars of Hope Association for the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities.

65 Interview with Mr. Bayan Tabib, member of the General Secretariat of the General Union of Persons with Disabilities.

66 Interview with Mr. Muhannad Al-Shafei, Coordinator of the Disability Adaptation Unit at Ramallah Municipality.

67 Interview with Mrs. Abeer Hamad, Rehabilitation Programs Officer at Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center.

Figure (18): Safety and Security Requirements in the West Bank

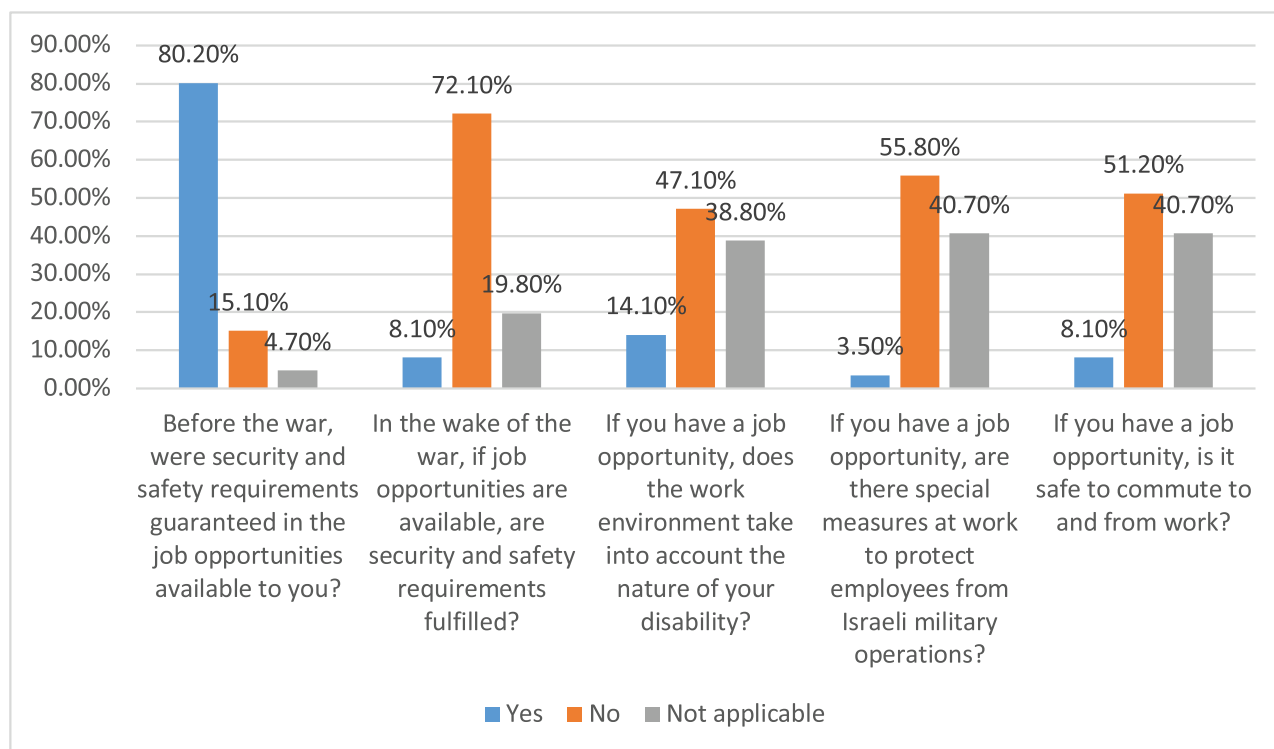


Table 4 and figure 18 indicate the following:

- A good majority of the study sample of working persons with disabilities indicated the availability of security and safety requirements in the job opportunities available to them before the war, but that percentage decreased to (8.1%) after the war, due to Israeli measures.
- (14.1%) of the study sample indicated that if there is a job opportunity, the work environment suits the nature of their disability, while (47.1%) indicated that the post-war work environment is not commensurate with the nature of their disability.
- Only 3.5% of the study sample indicated that if a job opportunity is available, there are special measures at work to protect against Israeli military operations, while 55.8% indicated that there are no special measures at work to protect against Israeli military operations.
- Only (8.1%) of the study sample indicated that if there is a job opportunity, the road to and from work is safe, while (51.2%) indicated that the road to and from work is unsafe.

In this context, the Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry of Labor, Mr. Rami Mahdawi, pointed out that despite the war and the Israeli measures, the Ministry of Labor continues its inspection campaigns in the West Bank to ensure occupational safety conditions in the workplace, including the needs of people with disabilities⁶⁸.

Mr. Walid Nazzal, coordinator of the Palestinian Union for the Deaf, pointed to the problems related to security and personal safety facing persons with hearing disabilities in the labor market after the war and occupation measures, as the deaf are a group in need of special measures to ensure security and safety, such as their inability to hear sirens, or shooting, etc., which endangers their safety and security⁶⁹.

Mrs. Abeer Hamad, Rehabilitation Programs Officer at Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center Center, pointed out that security and safety measures in the workplace were available at a good rate before the war, but then

68 Interview with Mr. Rami Mahdawi, Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry of Labor.

69 Interview with Mr. Walid Nazzal, Coordinator of the Palestinian Union for the Deaf.

challenges and problems increased, especially in light of the repeated Israeli incursions, in addition to the decline in the production rates of institutions, which also affected the levels of security and safety⁷⁰.

Mrs. Hadeel Shehadeh, a disability rights activist, pointed out that security and safety measures declined after the war and after the Israeli measures. She said that there are real risks to the movement of persons with disabilities, especially with the decline in inspections and follow-up, and the need for persons with disabilities to work⁷¹.

3.3.1.4. Financial and Economic Rights

Table No. (5): Financial and Economic Rights in the West Bank

No.	Item	Yes	No	Not applicable	Total
17	Have you received pension benefits after losing a job in the wake of the war?	1.2%	77.6%	21.2%	100.0%
18	Have your received end-of-service indemnities after losing a job in the wake of the war?	7.0%	72.1%	20.9%	100.0%
19	Do you have a source of income from the state, such as a cash assistance program or fixed aid?	14.1%	85.9%	0.0%	100.0%
20	Do you have a source of income from anyone else?	9.3%	90.7%	0.0%	100.0%
21	Can you cope financially since the war started?	16.7%	83.3%	0.0%	100.0%

Figure (19): Financial and Economic Rights in the West Bank

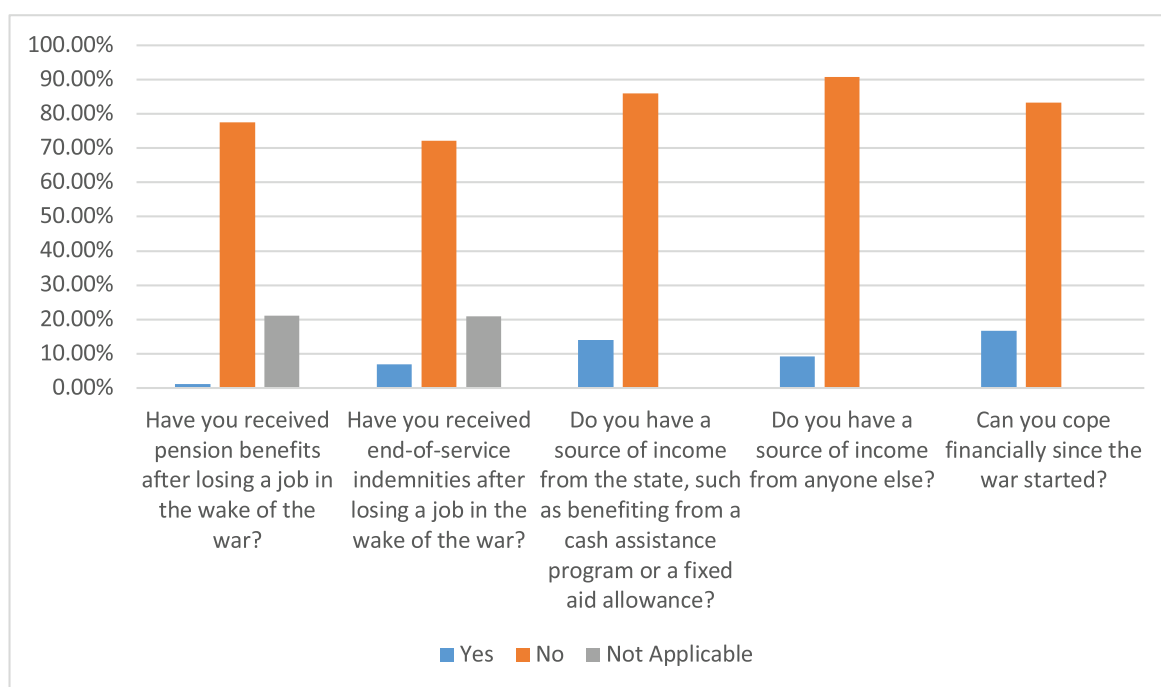


Table 5 and figure 19 indicate the following:

- A very small percentage (1.2%) of the study sample of working persons with disabilities indicated that they received pension benefits after losing their employment opportunity after the war started.
- (7%) of the study sample indicated that they received their end of service indemnities after losing their

70 Interview with Mrs. Abeer Hamad, Rehabilitation Programs Officer at Stars Mountain Rehabilitation Center.

71 Interview with disability rights activist Hadeel Shehadeh.

job opportunity due to the war, while (72.1%) indicated that they did not receive their end of service indemnities after losing their employment.

- (14.1%) of the study sample indicated the availability of a source of income from the state, such as the cash assistance program or fixed assistance, while (85.9%) indicated that there is no source of income from the state, such as the cash assistance program or fixed assistance.
- (9.3%) of the study sample indicated that they have a source of income from other parties, while (90.7%) indicated that they do not have a source of income from any other party.
- (16.7%) of the head sample indicated that they can manage their financial affairs after the war, while (83.3%) indicated that they are unable to manage their financial affairs after the war.

In this context, Mr. Ajaj Ajaj, Director General of the General Department of Persons with Disabilities at the Ministry of Social Development, pointed out that the ministry has approved a disbursement of an allowance for each person with disabilities as part of the cash assistance program, of an amount of 250 shekels per month. He added that if there is more than one person in the family, the amount is doubled, and that the number of beneficiaries of this assistance is about 17 thousand in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, while the situation of the war in the Gaza Strip, and the need for functioning banks and other issues, hindered regular work in the Gaza Strip⁷².

Mr. Rami Mahdawi, Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry of Labor, pointed out that the Ministry of Labor has worked on a number of measures to support the labor and economic rights of persons with disabilities, support persons with disabilities to engage in the labor market, and follow up on complaints about the labor and economic rights of persons with disabilities⁷³.

For his part, Mr. Majdi Marei, Secretary-General of the Palestinian Union for Persons with Disabilities, indicated that the Union works to follow up on any labor issue, or violation of the economic and social rights of persons with disabilities that reaches the Union through its referral and follow-up with the relevant authorities, and through its extensive network of relations⁷⁴.

In this context, Mr. Bayan Tabib, member of the General Secretariat of the General Union for People with Disabilities, stresses the need to raise awareness among workers with disabilities of their financial and economic rights within the law, in order to prevent their exploitation, and in order to enforce their rights guaranteed by Palestinian law, recommending the need to hold workshops and invest in social media to reach the largest possible segment of persons with disabilities⁷⁵.

Mr. George Mansour, Director of Programs at Qader for Community Development, pointed out that Qader has worked to provide a social legal helpline for persons with disabilities, including their financial and social rights⁷⁶.

As for Mrs. Abeer Hamad, responsible for rehabilitation programs at the Jabal Al-Najma Center, she points out that many workers suffer from the digestion of their labor rights after the war and its economic repercussions, and the dismissal of many business establishments for employees and workers, explaining that many workers with disabilities went to the Jabal Al-Najma Center for Legal Support and Guidance to collect their dues and financial rights, and currently the center is working to support the claims of male and female workers, and communicate with the relevant authorities⁷⁷.

Walid Nazzal, coordinator of the Palestinian Federation for the Deaf, pointed out that there is no application and end-of-service payment for the deaf because they do not know labor rights, and for fear of dismissal and dismissal from work if he is in the job, as we mentioned, unemployment among the deaf increased after the war and the prevailing economic conditions in the West Bank.

72 Interview with Mr. Ajaj Ajaj, Director General of the General Department of Persons with Disabilities at the Ministry of Social Development.

73 Interview with Mr. Rami Mahdawi, Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry of Labor.

74 Interview with Mr. Majdi Marei, Secretary General of the Palestinian Union for Persons with Disabilities.

75 Interview with Mr. Bayan Tabib, member of the General Secretariat of the General Union for People with Disabilities.

76 Interview with Mr. George Mansour, Director of Programs at Qader for Community Development.

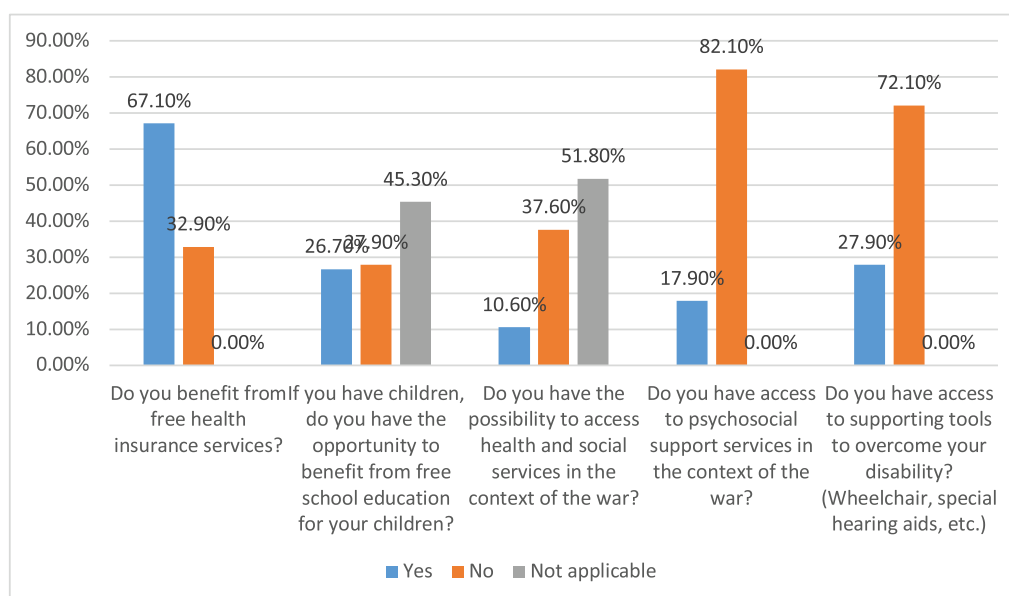
77 interview with Mrs. Abeer Hamad, Rehabilitation Programs Officer at Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center.

3.3.1.5. Social Rights of Workers with Disabilities

Table No. (6): Social Rights of Workers with Disabilities in the West Bank

No.	Item	Yes	No	Not applicable	Total
22	Do you benefit from free health insurance services?	67.1%	32.9%	0.0%	100.0%
23	If you have children, do you have the opportunity to benefit from free school education for your children?	26.7%	27.9%	45.3%	100.0%
24	Do you have the possibility to access health and social services in the context of the war?	10.6%	37.6%	51.8%*	100.0%
25	Do you have access to psychosocial support services in the context of the war?	17.9%	82.1%	0.0%	100.0%
26	Do you have access to supporting tools to overcome your disability? (Wheelchair, special hearing aids, etc.)	27.9%	72.1%	0.0%	100.0%

Figure (20): Social Rights of Workers with Disabilities in the West Bank



The following can be noted from table (6) and figure (20):

- 67.1% of the study sample of working persons with disabilities indicated that they have free health insurance services, while about a third of the study sample does not have free health insurance services.
- 26.7% of the study sample who had children in schools indicated that they have the opportunity to free education in schools for their children in schools, while (27.9%) indicated that they do not have the opportunity to free education in schools for their children in schools.
- 10.6% of the study sample indicated that they have access to health and social services during the war, while 37.6% indicated that there is no access to health and social services during the war, while (51.8%) indicated that these services are available with difficulty.
- 17.9% of the study sample indicated the availability of psychosocial support services during the war, while 81.1% indicated the lack of psychosocial support services during the war.
- 27.9% of the study sample indicated the availability of supporting tools to overcome disability (wheelchair, special hearing aids, etc) while 72.1% indicated that there are no supporting tools to overcome their disability

In this context, Mr. Ajaj Ajaj, Director General of the General Department of Persons with Disabilities at the Ministry of Social Development, explained that according to the Cabinet Resolution regarding the Government

Health Insurance System for Persons with Disabilities No. (2) of 2021, all persons with disabilities obtain free health insurance. Furthermore, if the head of the family is a person with a disability, health insurance covers the entire family. As for schools, every person with disabilities, registered with the Ministry of Social Development, receives an exemption from school fees⁷⁸.

Although the governmental health insurance system for persons with disabilities No. 2 of 2021 stipulates that disability is the criterion of entitlement, the Health Ministry still applies the threshold of a disability rate of 60% as a criterion for entitlement to health insurance for persons with disabilities. This means dealing with the concept of disability from a medical perspective determined by a disability estimated by the medical committee, while the human rights concept of disability refers to the fact that disability itself in all its different types and degrees determines the entitlement to health insurance and all other rights of persons with disabilities stipulated in the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁷⁹.

The disability rights activist, Mrs. Hadeel Shehadeh, pointed to the difficulty of accessing health and psychological services for persons with disabilities due to the closure of cities and villages, the decline of these programs, and their lack of availability in all regions, which created sufferings for people with disabilities⁸⁰.

Walid Nazzal, coordinator of the Palestinian Federation of the Deaf, pointed out that the social rights of people with disabilities are not enforced, and there is not enough attention to these rights before and after the war. He also indicated that persons with hearing disabilities are exploited at work and they are deprived of obtaining their labor rights for fear of dismissal from work, and because of the lack of knowledge of persons with hearing disabilities about their labor rights, and the lack of a common language of understanding between them and employers in sign language⁸¹.

For her part, Mrs. Abeer Hamad, Head of Community Rehabilitation Programs at Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center, pointed out that there are major challenges related to providing social and logistical support to workers with disabilities, especially with the deterioration of the economic situation, the weak funding of NGOs, and the financial crisis of the Palestinian Authority, which limited its funding for service purchase programs or the provision of supportive devices and tools for persons with disabilities⁸².

78 Interview with Mr. Ajaj Ajaj, Director General of the General Department of Persons with Disabilities at the Ministry of Social Development.

79 Analytical paper: The social and economic cost of disability resulting from the war on the Gaza Strip, published by the Social and Economic Policy Observatory and the Stars of Hope Association for the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities 2024.

80 Interview with disability activist Hadeel Shehadeh.

81 Interview with Walid Nazzal, coordinator of the Palestinian Federation of the Deaf.

82 Interview with Mrs. Abeer Hamad, Rehabilitation Programs Officer at Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center.

3.3.2. The impact of the war on the Gaza Strip on the labor and economic rights of persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip

3.3.2.1. Workplace Access in the Gaza Strip

Table No. (7): Workplace Accessibility in the Gaza Strip

No.	Question	Yes	No	Not applicable	Total
1	Before the war, did you have access to work?	73.8%	26.2%	0.0%	100.0%
2	Before the war, was there proper transportation to the workplace?	78.8%	21.2%	0.0%	100.0%
3	After the war started, is there access to work?	15.2%	84.8%	0.0%	100.0%
4	After the war started, are there facilities to get to the workplace, transportation, a moving vehicle, etc.	16.7%	77.3%	6.1%	100.0%
5	Are there opportunities from institutions/ individuals to facilitate access to the workplace?	10.6%	80.3%	9.1%	100.0%

Figure (21): Workplace Accessibility in the Gaza Strip

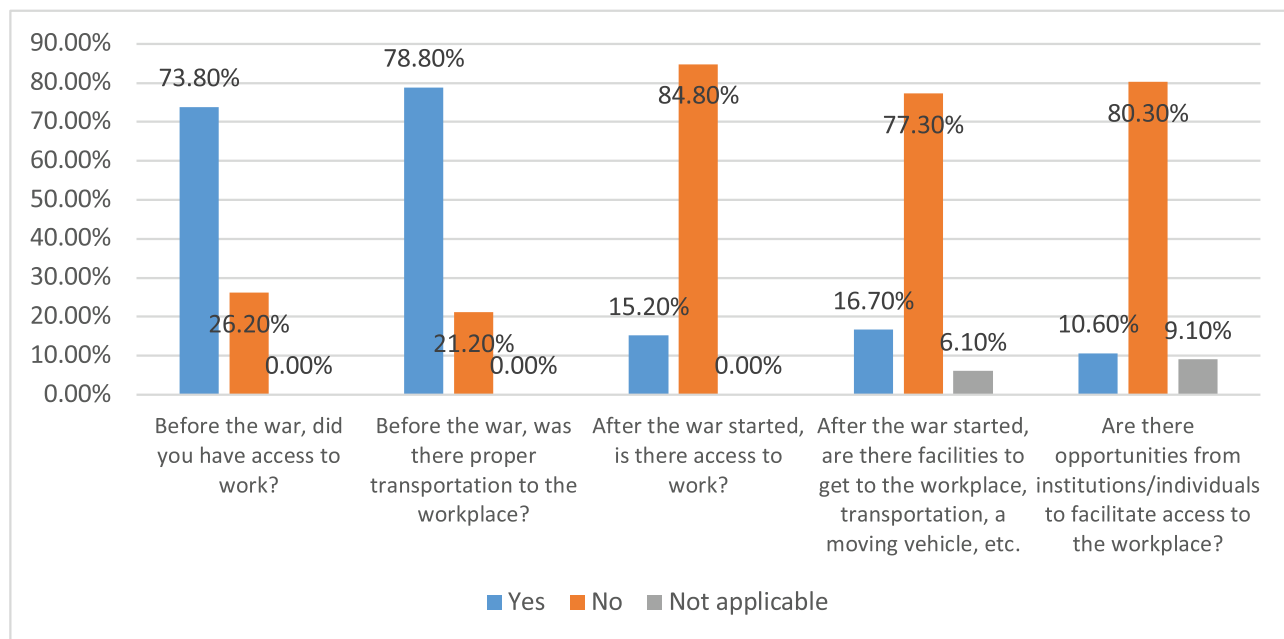


Table 7 and Figure 21 indicate the following:

- The majority of the study sample, 73.8%, indicated that the opportunity to reach work was good before the war on Gaza, but that it decreased significantly after the war started, as only 15.2% of the study sample indicated the availability of access to work since the war started.
- As for the availability of means to reach the workplace, such as appropriate transportation or vehicles, the study sample indicated that the vast majority (77.3%) do not have means of assistance to their workplace since the war started, while these means are available only to 16.7% of them.
- 80.3% of the study sample indicated that there are no opportunities from institutions or individuals to facilitate access to the workplace for persons with disabilities since the war started, while these opportunities are available only to 10.6%.

In this context, Mr. Hussam Al-Sheikh Yousef, Project Coordinator at the National Society for Rehabilitation in the Gaza Strip, pointed out that the war has significant effects on the situation of labor and economic rights for persons with disabilities. He indicated that all sectors of production, work and economic services have disappeared as a result of the Israeli occupation's destruction of factories, companies and institutions, in addition to the scarcity of job opportunities for persons with disabilities as a result of donor agencies' greater focus on humanitarian response projects that meet basic needs. He also pointed to other factors such as the weakness of representative bodies of persons with disabilities in defending the rights of persons with disabilities to the right to work, in addition to the lack of access to available workplaces due to the war⁸³ .

Mrs. Sawsan Al-Khalili, Secretary of the Palestinian General Union of Persons with Disabilities in the Gaza Strip, pointed out that many persons with disabilities have lost the ability to access the workplace due to the environment that is not suitable for their employment, difficulty in their movement and movement, and the division of the Gaza Strip into northern and southern Gaza, which affected the labor and economic rights of people with disabilities⁸⁴ .

Dr. Wael Abu Rezeq, Executive Director of the National Center for Community Rehabilitation in the Gaza Strip, pointed out that before the war there was a safe environment to reach the workplace with some difficulties, but after the war things became more difficult, and there is no safe environment to work or live under the war⁸⁵ .

3.3.2.2. Job Opportunities in the Gaza Strip

Table No. (8): Job Opportunities in the Gaza Strip

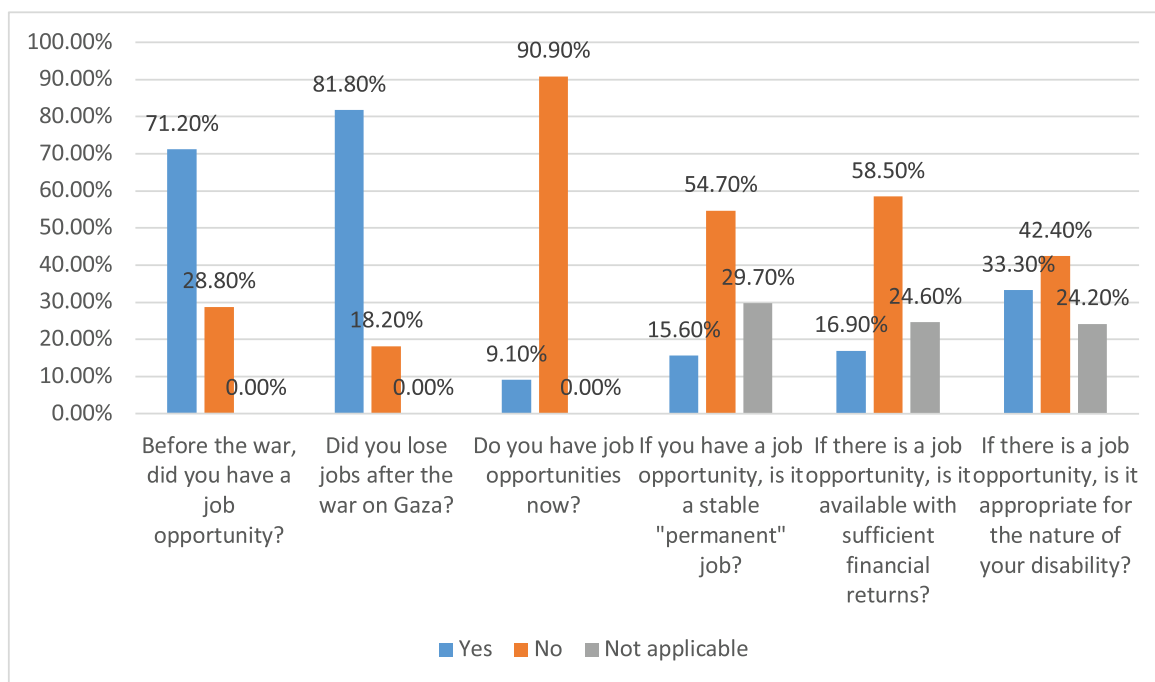
No.	Question	Yes	No	Not applicable	Total
6	Before the war, did you have a job opportunity?	71.2%	28.8%	0.0%	100.0%
7	Did you lose jobs after the war on Gaza started?	81.8%	18.2%	0.0%	100.0%
8	Do you have job opportunities now?	9.1%	90.9%	0.0%	100.0%
9	If you have a job opportunity, is it a stable "permanent" job?	15.6%	54.7%	29.7%	100.0%
10	If there is a job opportunity, is it available with sufficient financial returns?	16.9%	58.5%	24.6%	100.0%
11	If there is a job opportunity, is it appropriate for the nature of your disability?	33.3%	42.4%	24.2%	100.0%

83 Interview with Mr. Hussam Al-Sheikh Yousef, Project Coordinator at the National Rehabilitation Society in the Gaza Strip.

84 Interview with Mrs. Sawsan Al-Khalili, Secretary of the Palestinian General Union for Persons with Disabilities in the Gaza Strip.

85 Interview with Dr. Wael Abu Rezeq, Executive Director of the National Center for Community Rehabilitation in the Gaza Strip.

Figure (22): Job Opportunities in the Gaza Strip:



The following can be noted from table (8) and figure (22):

- The vast majority of the study sample of persons with disabilities from the Gaza Strip had access to employment opportunities before the war, and (81.8%) of them lost their employment opportunities after the war started.
- Only 9.1% of the study sample are persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip who have access to post-war job opportunities, and only (15.6%) of the study sample have stable job opportunities.
- Only 33.3% of the study sample of persons with disabilities in the West Bank indicated that the available job opportunity is appropriate to the nature of their disability, while only (16.9%) indicated that the job opportunities available to them have sufficient financial returns.

In this context, Dr. Wael Abu Rezeq, Executive Director of the National Center for Community Rehabilitation in the Gaza Strip, pointed out that the war has negatively affected persons with disabilities, prompting a significant collapse of economic conditions, which led to the deterioration of the living and psychological conditions of persons with disabilities, and the loss of their opportunities to work⁸⁶.

Mrs. Kifah Abu Ghosh, Executive Director of the Stars of Hope Association for the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities, pointed to the difficulty of providing job opportunities for women with disabilities in the Gaza Strip after the war started, the decline in the role of the government, and the great destruction of the economy. She noted that the association worked to target women with disabilities in displacement centers with economic empowerment projects and through financial grants with technical follow-up from consultants and experts to ensure the optimal implementation of projects, which achieved sustainability and success for those projects. She stressed the importance of investing in food projects and alternative energy, in addition to providing temporary employment projects targeting women with disabilities⁸⁷.

For his part, Mr. Hussam Al-Sheikh Yousef, Project Coordinator at the National Society for Rehabilitation in the Gaza Strip, explained that before the war, there were limited employment opportunities for persons with disabilities through the following sectors:

⁸⁶ Interview with Dr. Wael Abu Rezeq, Executive Director of the National Center for Community Rehabilitation in the Gaza Strip.

⁸⁷ Interview with Ms. Kifah Abu Ghosh, Executive Director of the Stars of Hope Association for the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities.

- **In the NGO sector based on temporary projects** such as temporary employment opportunities for persons with disabilities for a limited period, and support for some small income-generating projects.
- **In the governmental Sector:** The General Personnel Bureau in Gaza launched an initiative to provide permanent job opportunities for persons with disabilities, who hold university degrees, within specific conditions of passing an interview and examinations while granting them some privileges in application of Law No. 4 of 1999.
- **In the local community sector,** in workshops, factories and service institutions, but in a limited number.

Al-Sheikh Yousef pointed out that opportunities for safe access before the war were below average, but that they completely disappeared after the war started. Workplace access is now completely unsafe, in addition to the scarcity and decline of job opportunities available to persons with disabilities⁸⁸.

For her part, Mrs. Sawsan Al-Khalili, Secretary of the Palestinian General Union for Persons with Disabilities in the Gaza Strip, explained that the war affected human rights in general and the rights of persons with disabilities in particular, including the labor and economic rights of people with disabilities, as many persons with disabilities lost their jobs due to the war on Gaza for many reasons, including the bombing of workplaces, or the difficulty of accessing workplaces due to the environment that is not suitable for their employment and the difficulty of their movement. In addition, she said that the closure of the crossings negatively affected the owners of small enterprises due to the lack of availability of some raw materials or the significant increase of prices by traders and the lack of cash liquidity. She added that there are examples of job losses, such as fishermen with mild disabilities, who stopped working due to the war and repeated targeting [of fishermen] by the Israeli occupation.

Law No. 4 of 1999 and the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stipulated the employment of 5% of persons with disabilities, both in government and private institutions, but unfortunately, before the war, this article was not activated in the prolonged manner, and the percentage of employees with disabilities is very low, and the opportunities for temporary employment were non-existent, in addition to the fact that workplaces are not adapted to welcome workers with disabilities. Thus, many people with disabilities relied on small projects before the war, but the war caused the destruction of most of these projects and left their owners without work.⁸⁹

3.3.2.3. Security and Safety Requirements in the Gaza Strip

Table No. (9): Safety and Security Requirements in the Gaza Strip

No.	Question	Yes	No	Not applicable	Total
12	Before the war, were security and safety requirements guaranteed in the job opportunities available to you?	83.3%	12.1%	4.5%	100.0%
13	In the wake of the war, if job opportunities are available, are security and safety requirements fulfilled?	24.2%	65.2%	10.6%	100.0%
14	If you have a job opportunity, does the work environment take into account the nature of your disability?	36.4%	42.4%	21.2%	100.0%
15	If you have a job opportunity, are there special measures at work to protect employees from Israeli military operations?	12.3%	64.6%	23.1%	100.0%
16	If you have a job opportunity, is it safe to commute to and from work?	13.8%	64.6%	21.5%	100.0%

88 Interview with Mr. Hussam Al-Sheikh Yousef, Project Coordinator at the National Rehabilitation Society in the Gaza Strip

89 Interview with Mrs. Sawsan Al-Khalili, Secretary of the Palestinian General Union for Persons with Disabilities in the Gaza Strip.

Figure (23): Safety and Security Requirements in the Gaza Strip

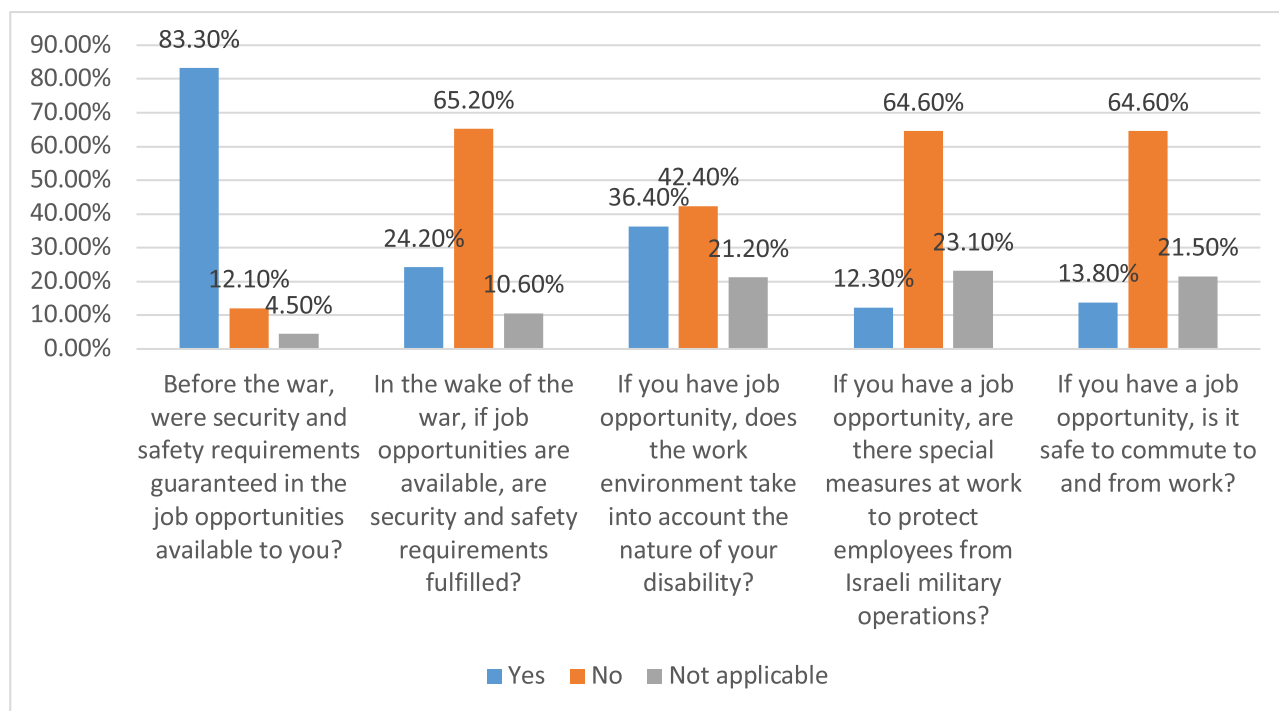


Table 9 and figure 23 indicate the following:

- A majority of the study sample (83.3%) of working persons with disabilities indicated that security and safety requirements were present in the job opportunities available to them before the war, but this percentage decreased to 24.2% after the war started.
- 36.4% of the study sample indicated that if a job opportunity is available, the work environment takes into account the nature of their disability.
- Only 12.3% of the sample indicated that if a job opportunity were available, there are special measures at work to protect employees from Israeli military operations, while 64.6% indicated that there are no special measures at work to protect personnel against Israeli military operations.
- Only 13.8% of the study sample indicated that if a job opportunity were available, the commute to and from work would be safe, while 64.6% indicated that the commute to and from work would be unsafe.

In this context, Mrs. Sawsan Al-Khalili, Secretary of the Palestinian General Union for Persons with Disabilities in the Gaza Strip, pointed out that safety and security requirements may be available in some workplaces, but not in all workplaces, and not to the required extent or to a sufficient level⁹⁰.

Hussam Al-Sheikh Yousef, project coordinator at the National Society for Rehabilitation in the Gaza Strip, pointed out that before the war, there were some occupational safety and work security requirements for persons with disabilities. He said that after the war started, things deteriorated significantly, which affects the occupational safety of workers with disabilities⁹¹.

Dr. Wael Abu Rezeq, Executive Director of the National Center for Community Rehabilitation in the Gaza Strip, stressed that the security and safety requirements were available to some extent before the war, but that in the context of the war, there is no safety or security opportunities for persons with disabilities at work, if any⁹².

90 Interview with Mrs. Sawsan Al-Khalili, Secretary of the Palestinian General Union for Persons with Disabilities in the Gaza Strip.

91 Interview with Mr. Hussam Al-Sheikh Yousef, Project Coordinator at the National Rehabilitation Society in the Gaza Strip.

92 Interview with Dr. Wael Abu Rezeq, Executive Director of the National Center for Community Rehabilitation in the Gaza Strip.

3.3.2.4. Financial and Economic Rights

Table No. (10): Financial and Economic Rights in the Gaza Strip

No.	Question	Yes	No	Not applicable	Total
17	Have you obtained pension benefits after losing a job in the wake of the war?	1.5%	89.4%	9.1%	100.0%
18	Have you received end-of-service indemnities after losing a job in the wake of the war?	1.5%	87.7%	10.8%	100.0%
19	Do you have a source of income from the state, such as benefiting from a cash assistance program or a fixed aid allowance?	4.5%	95.5%	0.0%	100.0%
20	Do you have a source of income from anyone else?	9.1%	90.9%	0.0%	100.0%
21	Can you cope financially since the war started?	6.2%	93.8%	0.0%	100.0%

Figure (24): Financial and Economic Rights in the Gaza Strip

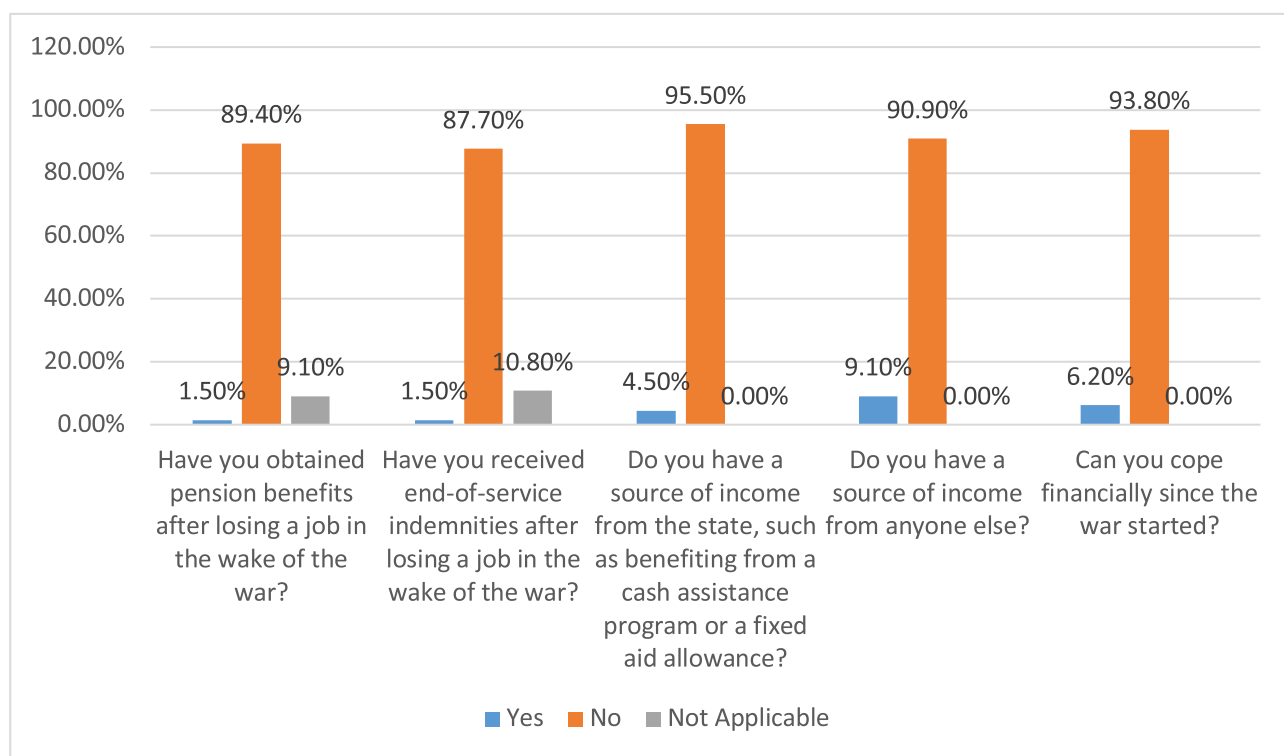


Table 10 and Figure 24 indicate the following:

A very small percentage (1.5%) of the study sample of working persons with disabilities indicated that they received pension benefits after losing their employment opportunity after the war had started.

A very small percentage (1.5%) of the study sample indicated that they received their end of service indemnities after losing their employment after the war started, while 87.7% indicated that they did not receive their end of service indemnities after losing their job.

Only 4.5% of the study sample indicated the availability of a source of income from the state, such as the cash assistance program or fixed aid, while 95.5% indicated that they do not have such a source of income.

9.1% of the study sample indicated that they have a source of income from other parties, while 90.9% indicated that they do not have a source of income from any other party.

Only 6.2% of the study sample indicated that they can cope financially after the war started, while 93.8% indicated that they are unable to manage financially.

In this context, Mr. Hussam Al-Sheikh Yousef, Project Coordinator at the National Society for Rehabilitation in the Gaza Strip, pointed out that before the war, there was some degree of commitment to ensure that persons with disabilities received their full rights through employment contracts and a fixed salary, and were paid end-of-service indemnities by employers like other employees. However, some employers failed to pay these entitlements to evade payment, and there was a lack of oversight from the Ministry of Labor. However, as a result of the war, the situation in the Gaza Strip has deteriorated, and there is no commitment from employers due to the absence of a supervisory governmental role and union institutions, and the absence of a judicial system to uphold labor and economic rights⁹³.

Mrs. Sawsan Al-Khalili, Secretary of the Palestinian General Union for Persons with Disabilities in the Gaza Strip, pointed out that the commitment to paying end-of-service indemnities by employers is partial, and that small businesses destroyed by the war have not been compensated, especially those that are not officially registered, as registration requires the payment of fees⁹⁴.

Dr. Wael Abu Rezeq, Executive Director of the National Center for Community Rehabilitation in the Gaza Strip, explained that labor and economic rights are linked to the workplace and the nature of the employment contract⁹⁵.

3.3.2.5. Social Rights of Workers with Disabilities

Table No. (11): Social Rights of Workers with Disabilities in the Gaza Strip.)

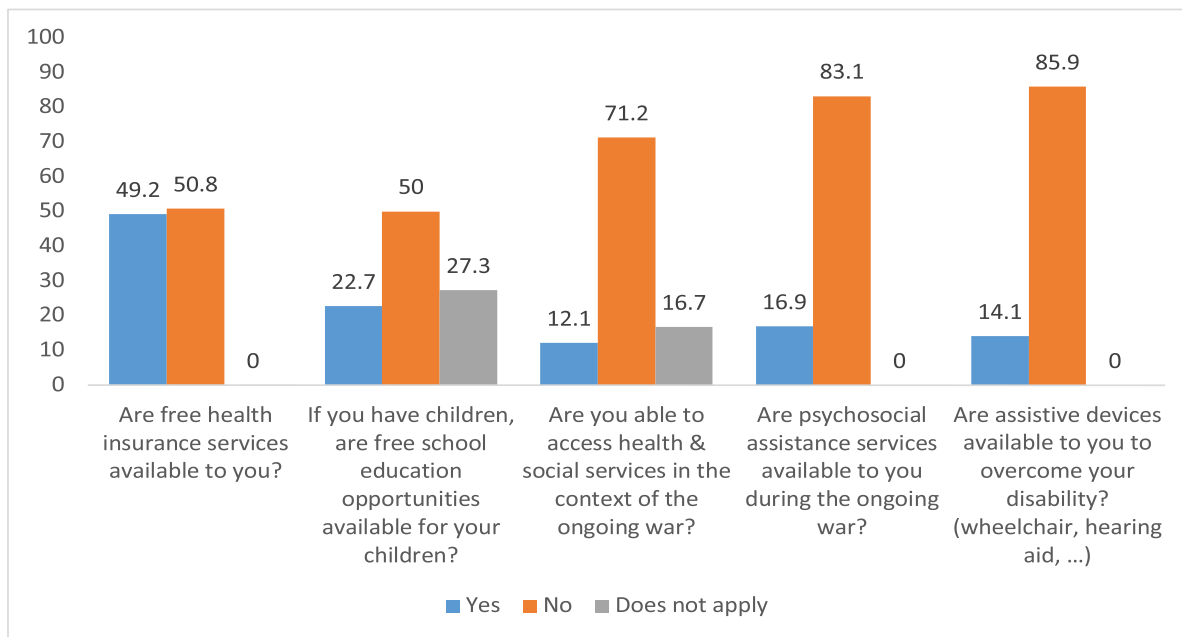
No.	Item	Yes	No	Not applicable	Total
22	Do you have free health insurance?	49.2%	50.8%	0.0%	100.0%
23	If you have children, do you have the opportunity for free school education for your children?	22.7%	50.0%	27.3%	100.0%
24	Do you have access to health and social services during war?	12.1%	71.2%	16.7%*	100.0%
25	Are psychosocial support services available to you during the ongoing war?	16.9%	83.1%	0.0%	100.0%
26	Are assistive devices available to you to overcome your disability? (Wheelchair, hearing aid, etc.)	14.1%	85.9%	0.0%	100.0%

93 Interview with Mr. Hussam Al-Sheikh Yousef, Project Coordinator at the National Rehabilitation Society in the Gaza Strip.

94 Interview with Mrs. Sawsan Al-Khalili, Secretary of the Palestinian General Union for Persons with Disabilities in the Gaza Strip.

95 Interview with Dr. Wael Abu Rezeq, Executive Director of the National Center for Community Rehabilitation in the Gaza Strip.

Figure (25): Social Rights of Workers with Disabilities in the Gaza Strip



The following can be noted from table (11) and figure (25):

-Less than half of the study sample (49.2%) of working persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip indicated that they have free health insurance services, while about half of the study sample does not have free health insurance services.

-22.7% of the study sample, who have children in schools, indicated that they have the opportunity to get free education in schools for their children, while 50% indicated that they do not have the opportunity to obtain free education in schools for their children of school age.

-12.1% of the study sample indicated that they have access to health and social services during the war, while 71.2% indicated that there is no access to health and social services during the war, and 16.7% provide these services with difficulty.

-16.9% of the study sample indicated the availability of psychosocial support services during the war, while 83.1% indicated the lack of psychosocial support services during the war.

-Only 14.1% of the study sample indicated the availability of assistive devices to overcome disability (wheelchair, hearing aid, etc.), while 85.9% indicated that there are no assistive devices.

In this context, Mrs. Sawsan Al-Khalili, Secretary of the General Palestinian Union for Persons with Disabilities in the Gaza Strip, pointed out that many people without disabilities are deprived of these social rights and privileges. There is even greater deprivation for persons with disabilities, as they were very lacking access to these rights both before the war and after the war started due to their lack of awareness of their labor rights, so work must be done to educate workers about their rights and duties⁹⁶.

Dr. Wael Abu Rezeq, Executive Director of the National Center for Community Rehabilitation in the Gaza Strip, explained that workers with disabilities used to obtain their social rights to a good extent, but that they have significantly decreased due to the war. There is a severe shortage of assistive devices, while psychological and health services are somewhat available⁹⁷.

Mr. Hossam Al-Sheikh Youssef pointed out that the social rights of male and female workers with disabilities in the governmental sector and civil society institutions at an average or below-average level. This is due to the nature of the projects or the applicable laws. However, in the private productive sector, there was a near absence of these rights.⁹⁸

96 Interview with Mrs. Sawsan Al-Khalili, Secretary of the Palestinian General Union for Persons with Disabilities in the Gaza Strip.

97 Interview with Dr. Wael Abu Rezeq, Executive Director of the National Center for Community Rehabilitation in the Gaza Strip

98 Interview with Mr. Hussam Al-Sheikh Youssef, Project Coordinator at the National Rehabilitation Society in the Gaza Strip.

In the Gaza Strip today, the health system in general suffers from a shortage of medical supplies, medicines, and equipment due to the deliberate targeting of the health sector and the impact of the Israeli occupation even before the recent war, due to the continuous siege imposed on the Gaza Strip. Prior to the war, there was a shortage of many medicines for people with disabilities, which were not available to the Ministry of Health. During the war, the Israeli occupying power has also prevented a number of assistive devices and equipment from entering the Gaza Strip. These circumstances exacerbate the challenges faced by people with disabilities during and after the war, especially given the Ministry of Health's limited capacity to fulfill its role and manage the additional costs of disability as the number of persons with disability have increased due to ongoing wars⁹⁹.

99 Analytical Paper: The Social and Economic Cost of Disability Resulting from the War on the Gaza Strip, published by the Social and Economic Policy Observatory and the Stars of Hope Association for the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities, 2024.

- Chapter Four -

Recommendations

4.1. Proposed policy papers

Based on the research findings, the following policy papers are recommended:

- First paper: Commitment to a minimum employment quota of 5% for persons with disabilities.
- Second paper: Social inclusion of disability issues through an inclusive environment to reinforce the right to work of persons with disabilities
- Third paper: Activating the private sector's social responsibility towards supporting and empowering persons with disabilities in the labor market
- Fourth paper: Providing a unified database for persons with disabilities, including all relevant details about the labor market.
- Fifth paper: Developing vocational and technical education and training for people with disabilities.
- Sixth paper: Launching economic empowerment project packages (micro-grants) for persons with disabilities to overcome mobility and accessibility limitations.

4.2. Recommendations

- Enforcement of policy papers that emerged from the findings of the study.
- Updating legislation related to the rights and issues of persons with disabilities and addressing gaps in existing legislation in order to strengthen the labor and economic rights of persons with disabilities, specifically: the Disability Rights of Law, the Labor Law, the Civil Service Law, and the Security Sector Service Law.
- Commitment to a minimum employment quota of 5% for persons with disabilities across various productive sectors.
- Social inclusion of persons with disabilities through an inclusive environment, in order to provide opportunities for people with disabilities to integrate into the labor market.
- Activating the social responsibility of the private sector towards supporting and empowering persons with disabilities in the labor market.
- Providing a unified database for persons with disabilities, including all details relevant to the labor market.
- Developing vocational and technical education and training for persons with disabilities, to provide a catalyst for development and ensure suitable employment opportunities for them.
- Launching small grants for economic empowerment projects for people with disabilities to overcome mobility and accessibility limitations.
- Creating the need for partnerships between institutions dealing with disability issues and the public and private sectors to create job opportunities and interventions to support the economic and labor rights of persons with disabilities.
- The issuance of Palestinian legislation obliging all productive sectors to employ persons with disabilities so that they constitute at least 5% of their workforce. In the event that the private sector refuses, a fine equivalent to the estimated wage of a person with a disability will be imposed to achieve the 5% quota. These fines will then be transferred to a national fund dedicated to the economic empowerment of people with disabilities.

- Targeting the persons with disabilities through the Employment Fund's projects and grants.
- Activating a dedicated labor complaints system for people with disabilities to ensure their labor rights complaints are addressed.
- Commitment by local authorities to implementing a package of development projects specifically for people with disabilities.
- The need to adopt the economic and labor rights of persons with disabilities as a policy priority in national plans and with donors.
- Providing accessible arrangements in various institutions to facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities in decent work.
- Encouraging productive institutions to employ persons with disabilities through a package of incentives, such as tax breaks and other benefits.
- The necessity of adopting a national approach to the inclusion of disability issues, rather than a segregated one, through a cross-sectoral strategic plan.
- Providing interest-free, commission-free loan programs to finance small grants for persons with disabilities.
- Ensuring a commitment to providing free health insurance services for persons with disabilities, regardless of the degree of disability.
- Activating the customs exemption for vehicles for people with disabilities for all types of disabilities, and not solely motor disabilities.
- Ensuring the commitment of the Ministry of Social Development to paying the cash assistance entitlements of persons with disabilities regularly, regardless of the Palestinian Authority's financial crisis, given the precarious economic situation of families of persons with disabilities.
- Launching an awareness campaign among persons with disabilities about their economic rights, particularly in light of their exploitation by some employers.
- Launching a national dialogue to discuss and enact the Social Security Law, given its role as a legislative framework and institutional body that safeguards the economic and labor rights of all groups, including persons with disabilities.
- Providing accessible evacuation plans in workplaces that are responsive to disability issues, especially in light of the unstable political and security conditions.

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Study interviews:

1. Interview with Mr. Rami Mahdawi, Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry of Labor.
2. Interview with Mr. Ajaj Ajaj, Director General of the General Department of Persons with Disabilities at the Ministry of Social Development.
3. Interview with Mr. Majdi Marei, Secretary General of the Palestinian Union for Persons with Disabilities.
4. Interview with Mrs. Abeer Hamad, Rehabilitation Programs Officer Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center.
5. Interview with Ms. Kifah Abu Ghosh, Executive Director of the Stars of Hope Association for the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities.
6. Interview with Mr. George Mansour, Director of Programs at Qader Foundation for Community Development.
7. Interview with Mr. Walid Nazzal, Coordinator of the Palestinian Union for the Deaf.
8. Interview with Mr. Osama Fawadleh, Director of Vocational Training Programs at Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center.
9. Interview with disability activist Hadeel Shehadeh.
10. Interview with Mr. Bayan Tabib, member of the General Secretariat of the General Union of the Palestinian Handicapped.
11. Interview with Mr. Muhannad Al-Shafei, Coordinator of the Disability Adaptation Unit at Ramallah Municipality.
12. Interview with Mr. Hussam Al-Sheikh Yousef, Project Coordinator at the National Rehabilitation Society in the Gaza Strip.
13. Interview with Mrs. Sawsan Al-Khalili, Secretary of the Palestinian General Union for Persons with Disabilities in the Gaza Strip.
14. Interview with Dr. Wael Abu Rezeq, Executive Director of the National Center for Community Rehabilitation in the Gaza Strip.