The Capacity to Resist
Measuring Mobilization in the West Bank

Project Background

The Palestinian experience has been defined by its ability to resist since the beginning of Zionist colonization more than a century ago. After the Israeli occupation began in 1967, nearly every aspect of Palestinian life has been controlled by the Israeli government and military. In the last 40 years, two major uprisings have significantly shifted the everyday realities for Palestinians. They are the known as the first and second intifadas, taking place from 1987-93 and 2000-05 respectively. The Israeli government’s responses to both have crippled the economy, led to the construction of elaborate military infrastructure, increased illegal settlements and severely diminished living conditions. All of this has shaped the ability of Palestinians to continue resisting today.

This project conducts an assessment of West Bank Palestinians’ capacity to resist the occupation. For this analysis, resistance should be understood as any form of nonviolent mobilization that seeks to disrupt the current status quo in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). The factors chosen to analyze resistance capacity are particular to this definition. Overall, this analysis addresses the changing conditions on the ground in the West Bank and how this affects the ability of Palestinians to continuing resisting today.

Capacity Analysis

In order to analyze resistance capacity my project assesses two major sets of factors. The first are the physical barriers. This addresses the physical infrastructure that fractures, militarizes and endangers Palestinian populations across the West Bank. The second set addresses the human capacity to mobilize. This primarily includes socio-economic but also other key factors that enable or disable a population from sustained resistance.

Results

The final composite map highlights areas in the West Bank where Palestinians have the highest and lowest capacity for resistance. By governorate, Jenin had the highest capacity for resistance while Hebron had the lowest. As can be seen though, capacity varies substantially within each governorate as well. The chart below illustrates that 65% of the population lives in areas that have a low or very low capacity to resist. On top of that, only 12% of population are within the two highest capacity ranks, with just 3% in the very highest. These results confirm the crippling effects of occupation and their effects on resistance.