

OCHA-oPT - the organization behind the sanctions campaign against the Israeli settlement movement



Adv. Avraham Russell Shalev

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Executive Summary

- OCHA is the UN's humanitarian arm. OCHA-oPT is the branch operating in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. In contrast to the other branches, OCHA-oPT defines its objective as lawfare against the state of Israel.
- OCHA-oPT stands behind the "settler violence" smear campaign that propelled the European Union, the US, and other states to sanction Israeli citizens and organizations. OCHA-oPT publishes biased and fabricated reports regarding "settler violence", even counting cases of Arab terror attacks on Jews as "settler violence".
- Israel must terminate all official cooperation between the state of Israel and OCHA-oPT, and refuse entry and residence visas to the organization's workers and senior officials.

OCHA-oPT (the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the occupied Palestinian territory) is the humanitarian arm of the UN Secretariat, coordinating the work of approximately 80 UN organizations and local and international nonprofits operating in Judea, Samaria and Gaza.¹ In contrast to the other 28 regions in which OCHA operates, where their focus is on supplying humanitarian aid, the branch operating in these areas defines the organization's goals to include political efforts on behalf of the Palestinians, and ensuring that "duty-bearers are held to account". In other words, conducting lawfare against the State of Israel over its alleged international law violations.²

1 Humanitarian Response Plan 2023, Occupied Palestinian Territory. <https://humanitarianaction.info/plan/1109>.

2 See UN OCHA-oPT: Exploiting Humanitarianism to Advance Political Warfare, NGO Monitor, March 2021. Page 8. https://ngo-monitor.org/pdf/UNOCHA_OPT_2021.pdf; Humanitarian Response Plan OPT, January 2023, Strategic Objectives and Response Approach. Page 12. https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/HRP_2023.pdf.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: The rights of Palestinians living under occupation, including those living under the blockade and other restrictions, are protected, respected, and promoted in accordance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Humanitarian Rights Law (IHRL), while duty-bearers are increasingly held to account.

PEOPLE TARGETED

2.1M

REQUIREMENTS (US\$)

42.3M

From: "Strategic Objectives", Humanitarian Response Plan 2023.

Location	Strategic Objective #1 (emphasis added throughout)
OCHA-oPt	<p>"The rights of Palestinians living under occupation, including those living under the blockade and other restrictions, are protected, respected and promoted in accordance with IHL [International Humanitarian Law] and IHRL [International Human Rights Law]."</p> <p>(An OCHA-oPt publication describing the 2018-2020 Humanitarian Response Plan for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, adds another clause to this objective: "duty-bearers are increasingly held to account.")</p>
Syria	"Provide humanitarian life-saving and life-sustaining assistance to the most vulnerable people with emphasis on those in areas with high severity of needs. "
Afghanistan	Lives are saved in the areas of highest need. "
Nigeria	"Save lives by providing timely and integrated multi-sector assistance and protection interventions to the most vulnerable. "
Yemen	"Helping millions of destitute Yemenis overcome hunger."
Somalia	"Reduce acute humanitarian needs and excess mortality among the most vulnerable by providing life-saving and sustaining integrated assistance. "
Central African Republic	"Save Lives"

Comparison to the organization's objectives in various regions (from "UN OCHA-oPt: Exploiting Humanitarianism to Advance Political Warfare" NGO Monitor report).

This UN office plays a decisive role in disseminating the "settler violence" libel that spurred the European Union, the US, and other states to sanction Israeli citizens and organizations, despite the fact they were never indicted for any criminal offense. OCHA-oPt officials work to spread libels against Israel around the world and unjustly do harm to Israeli citizens and organizations, taking advantage of their Israeli-issued entry and residence visas.

This brief report will describe the OCHA-oPt's structure and its ties to Palestinian delegitimization organizations and terrorist elements, and expose how its biased and even fabricated reports provide justification for the wave of international sanctions that puts not only Jewish presence in Judea and Samaria at risk, but also Israel's economic resilience.

1 | OCHA-oPt as the engine driving American sanctions over the “settler violence” libel

OCHA-oPt's operations are divided into work groups or clusters. The Protection Cluster defines its objective as: “Increase respect for IHL and IHRL and accountability for violations which ensures that the practices and impact of a coercive environment, displacement, and a deterioration in physical well-being due to violence and conflict are addressed”.³ The Protection Cluster's legal staff is comprised of 14 radical left, Israeli, Palestinian and international NGOs, including the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, Adalah, Addameer, Al-Haq, B'Tselem, Defense for Children International – Palestine (DCI-P), HaMoked, Ir Amim and Yesh Din.⁴ In 2021, The Ministry of Defense designated Addameer, Al-Haq and DCI-P terror organizations affiliated with The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).⁵

The Working Group describes its sub-operations: “Monitoring, documentation, and advocacy interventions will focus on IHL and IHRL violations, conflict-related violence, risk of forcible transfer, and settlement related activities including settler violence. Advocacy oriented towards accountability and respect of HRL and IHL will remain central to the Protection Cluster response.”⁶

According to OCHA-oPt, there has been a sharp rise in “settler violence” since the Hamas attack on 7.10.2023. They claim that in the period between 7.10.2023-2.9.2024, settlers committed close to 1,300 attacks against Palestinians, 120 of which resulted in death or injury.⁷ According to a report from July 2024, settlers killed 11 Palestinians since October 7, 2024.⁸ OCHA-oPt reports are quoted by leading news outlets in the US and other countries, such as NBC,⁹ Politico¹⁰ and CNN.¹¹ Reports from OCHA-oPt were also included in an alert issued to financial institutions by the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, the US Department of Treasury bureau charged with combatting money laundering and the financing of terrorism.¹²

3 Humanitarian Response Plan OPT, January 2023, Strategic Objectives and Response Approach. Page 40.

4 https://www.ochaopt.org/content/protection-cluster-partners-respond-needs-resulting-escalation-violence#_ftn1

5 Counter Terrorism Order (DESIGNATION OF A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION) (amendment), Yalkut HaPirsumim 9693, 21.10.2021.

6 Humanitarian Response Plan OPT, January 2023, Strategic Objectives and Response Approach. Page 40.

7 Humanitarian Situation Update #213 | West Bank, 04.09.24. <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-213-west-bank>

8 Humanitarian Situation Update #189 | West Bank. 10.07.24.

9 Gorani, Hala, Corky Siemaszko, and Briony Sowden. “While the World's Eyes Are on Gaza, Palestinians See a Land Grab Underway in the West Bank.” *NBC News*, NBCUniversal, 2024, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/west-bank-israel-gaza-palestinians-settlers-violence-rcna165947>

10 Ward, Alexander. “Biden Orders Top Aides to Prepare Reprimands for Violent Israeli Settlers in West Bank.” *Politico*, 18 Nov. 2023, <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/11/18/biden-orders-top-aides-to-prepare-reprimands-for-violent-israeli-settlers-in-west-bank-00127940>.

11 Khadder, Kareem, Eyad Kourdi, Benjamin Brown, and Hira Humayun. “Israeli Settlers Set West Bank Village Ablaze.” *CNN*, 15 Aug. 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/08/15/middleeast/israeli-settlers-set-west-bank-village-ablaze-intl/index.html>.

12 FinCEN Alert on Israeli Extremist Settler Violence Against Palestinians in the West Bank". 01.02.24. https://www.fincen.gov/sites/default/files/shared/FinCEN_Alert_Extremist_Violence_FINAL_2.1.24.pdf

According to an investigation by Tablet Magazine (later also published in Hebrew on *Mida*), American sanctions were issued as a result of the reports made by Lieutenant General Michael R. Fenzel, who currently serves as US security coordinator between the US, Israel and the Palestinian Authority (USSC). The USSC sends frequent reports about "settler violence" to members of Congress, policy makers and foreign forces in Israel. According to a source familiar with the details, Fenzel does not independently review the evidence of "settler violence" but simply relies on the numbers published by left wing organizations and Palestinian sources. Tablet Magazine reports that Fenzel is known to repeat data supplied by Palestinians and radical left wing organizations, "without independent verification, attribution, or contextualization". One of these organizations is OCHA-oPT, which from time to time publicizes the number of Palestinian victims they claim were killed by Israel. According to a source who spoke to Tablet: "On any given day last December, their numbers lined up exactly with whatever OCHA was posting."¹³

► 2 | Biased, Distorted and False Data

The data OCHA-oPT publishes stands in sharp contrast to the official records of the Israel Police, the body authorized to collect evidence. In the first two months of the war there was a 50% decrease in "settler violence" incidents from the same time period in the previous year.¹⁴

OCHA-oPT uses phrases like "settler violence", "settler-related incidents" and "settler attacks", but their definition is so broad as to include cases in which Palestinians were injured or killed as a result of an attack **they committed** against Jews.¹⁵

OCHA-oPT refrains from publishing the names of the alleged victims or any details about the incidents, but what they are referring to can be deduced from cross reference with other sources, thus enabling a review of their reports. For instance, the interactive dashboard on the organization's website reports that a Palestinian was injured in an attack by a settler on 3.17.2023. The report apparently refers to the terror attack committed on the same day in Hawara, Samaria, when a terrorist fired on an Israeli couple's vehicle. David Stern was severely injured, but succeeded in firing back and hitting the terrorist.¹⁶

13 Leibovitz, Liel. "The Fraudulent Case Against 'Violent Settlers.'" *Tablet Magazine*, 2024, <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/israel-middle-east/articles/fraudulent-case-against-violent-settlers>.

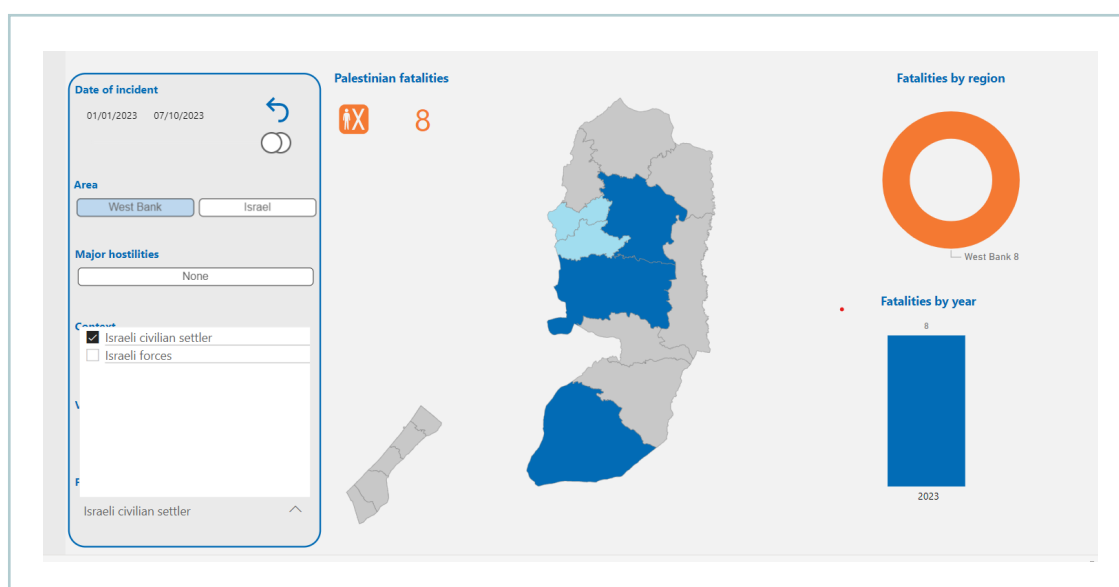
Mida, 21 Feb. 2024, <https://mida.org.il/2024/02/21/%D7%9E%D7%91%D7%A6%D7%9C%D7%9D-%D7%9C%D7%91%D7%99%D7%AA-%D7%94%D7%9C%D7%91%D7%9F-%D7%9B%D7%9A-%D7%94%D7%95%D7%A0%D7%93%D7%A1-%D7%A9%D7%A7%D7%A8-%D7%90%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%9E%D7%95%D7%AA-%D7%94%D7%9E/>

14 Ariel Kahana, "Why has the US accepted the anti-settler blood libel?", *Israel Hayom* 1.11.2024. <https://www.israelhayom.com/opinions/why-has-the-us-accepted-the-blood-label-against-the-settlers/>

15 "Incidents involving Israeli settlers: includes attacks and alleged attacks by Israeli settlers, as well as incidents involving access prevention, and clashes following the entry of Israeli settlers into Palestinian communities. It also includes Palestinians killed or injured during attacks or alleged attacks they perpetrated against Israeli settlers." Data on Casualties, OCHA: UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMAN AFFAIRS, <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties> (last visited 11.09.24).

16 "David Stern, ex-Marine who fired back, says surviving terror shooting was 'a miracle'", *Times of Israel*, 21.3.2023. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-american-says-it-was-a-miracle-he-survived-shooting-attack/>

According to OCHA-oPT, eight Palestinians were killed by "extremist settlers" prior to October 7 2023.¹⁷ Cross referencing this number with the data published by the B'Tselem organization reveals that it includes Palestinians who were neutralized while carrying out terror attacks,¹⁸ among them a Palestinian armed with knives and explosives who was killed while attempting to break into a farm near Karnei Shomron;¹⁹ a terrorist who was shot trying to stab a Sde Ephraim resident;²⁰ and a terrorist who was neutralized after he went on a terroristic shooting spree in an eatery near Eli, murdering four Israelis and wounding four others.²¹ All these clarify the lack of credibility and good faith that can be attributed to OCHA-oPT data.



Data on Casualties, OCHA: UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMAN AFFAIRS

- 17 Data on Casualties, OCHA: UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMAN AFFAIRS, <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties> (last visited 11.09.24) [to see, (1) choose "Palestinian casualties", (2) the required time period (01/01/2023-10/07/23), (3) choose 'West Bank' under 'Area' and (4) 'Israeli civilian settler' under 'Perpetrator'].
- 18 Main Data, "Palestinians Killed by Israeli civilians – all", B'Tselem, <https://statistics.btselem.org/en/all-fatalities/by-date-of-incident/pal-by-israel-civ/all?section=overall&tab=overview>
- 19 "We promise more painful strikes,' Hamas says as terror continues", *Israel Hayom*, 10.3.2023. <https://www.israelhayom.com/2023/03/10/we-promise-more-painful-strikes-hamas-says-as-terror-continues/>
- 20 Jack Khoury and Yaniv Kubovich, "Palestinian Shot and Killed After Attempting Stabbing Attack in West Bank Outpost", *Haaretz*, 21.1.2023. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-01-21/ty-article/.premium/palestinian-killed-by-israeli-forces-in-west-bank-palestinians-say/00000185-d378-da66-a1bf-fbfa78a60000>.
- 21 Ammar Awad, "Palestinian gunmen kill four Israelis in West Bank", *Reuters*, 21.6.2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/palestinian-gunmen-kill-four-near-west-bank-israeli-settlement-emergency-2023-06-20/>

3 | Connections to Delegitimization and Terrorist Organizations

OCHA-oPT cooperates with organizations that promote the delegitimization and boycott of Israel, as well as organizations designated terror organizations by Israeli law. The Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO), is a member of the OCHA-oPT Advisory Board, and until at least 2021 it appeared on its site as part of its executive body, responsible for distribution of funds and project management. However, OCHA-oPT has lowered its transparency in recent years.²²

ANNEX A

2023 OPT HF ADVISORY BOARD

STAKEHOLDER	ORGANIZATION
Chairperson	Humanitarian Coordinator
INGO	Action Against Hunger (ACF)
INGO	International Medical Corps (IMC)
INGO	Save the Children International (SCI)
NINGO	Al Awda Health and Community Association (AWDA)
NINGO	Women's Affairs Center (WAC)
NINGO	Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC)
UN	Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
UN	United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
UN	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
Donor	Ireland/Switzerland
Donor	Germany/Norway
Donor	Italy
Observer	Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO)
Observer	Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA)
Observer	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)
oPT HF/OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

oPT Humanitarian Fund, 2023 Annual Report, p. 19. <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/occupied-palestinian-territory-humanitarian-fund-annual-report-2023>

PNGO, comprised of 142 Palestinian organizations, opposes any form of “normalization” with Israel and even drafted an ethical code for Palestinian NGOs rejecting normalization.²³ The organization also opposes the European Union stipulation that predicates association and aid on a commitment to avoid any ties to terrorist organizations.²⁴ PNGO is a member of the Palestinian BDS National

22 See UN OCHA-oPT: Exploiting Humanitarianism to Advance Political Warfare, NGO Monitor, March 2021. Page 12. https://ngo-monitor.org/pdf/UNOCHA_OPT_2021.pdf

23 "The Palestinian NGOs Code of Conduct." *National Democratic Congress*, www.ndc.ps/sites/default/files/Code-of-Conduct.pdf. Accessed 12 September 2024.

24 "Palestinian NGOs Reject EU Assistance Over Refusal to Renounce Terrorism Ties." *JNS*, www.jns.org/palestinian-ngos-reject-eu-assistance-over-refusal-to-renounce-terrorism-ties/. Accessed 12 September 2024.

Committee, the body charged with promoting the BDS campaign,²⁵ and its senior officials have been accused of ties to the PFLP. For instance, PNGO board member Walid Hanatsheh was indicted in October 2019 for leading the terror cell that murdered Rina Schnerb in a terror attack near Dolev.²⁶

OCHA-oPT also collaborates on projects with organizations tied to terror organizations. In January 2023, it published a list of the 78 organizations it planned to work with under the "Humanitarian Response Plan"²⁷ and on October 12, 2023 it launched a fundraising campaign for them.²⁸ Among these organizations are:

- **Union of Agricultural Committees:** This organization was designated a terror organization by the Ministry of Defense in 2021. Fatah and USAID treated it as the agricultural arm of the PFLP. In 2022, the Dutch government declared it would stop all funding to the organization, due to close ties between its workers and the PFLP, among them the murderers of Rina Schnerb.²⁹
- **AWDA – Union of Health Work Committee:** In 2020, AWDA was declared an illegal association, on grounds of its being an arm of the PFLP.³⁰
- **Islamic Relief Worldwide:** In 2014, Israel Minister of Defense declared the IRW an illegal association, on grounds of it raising funds for Hamas.
- **World vision:** In 2016, Gaza regional manager Mohammed Halabi was arrested by Israeli authorities for funneling approximately 50 million dollars to Hamas. In 2022 he was convicted by the Beersheba District Court for a range of serious security offenses: "The defendant, accused of 14 offenses committed during a period of approximately eleven years, aided the Hamas terrorist organization and its military wing Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades in various ways, under the guise of his position at the "World Vision" organization".³¹

25 Boycott National Committee (BNC). *BDS Movement*, bdsmovement.net/bnc. Accessed 12 September 2024.

26 Yonah Jeremy Bob, "Trial of alleged murderers of Rina Shnerb opens", *The Jerusalem Post*, 8.1.2020 <https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/trial-of-alleged-murderers-of-rina-shnerb-opens-613578>

27 Humanitarian Response Plan OPT, January 2023. List of participating organizations. Page 55

28 "OPT 2023 Flash Appeal: Escalation October 2023." *Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)*, www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/OPT-2023-Flash-Appeal-Escalation-Oct-2023.pdf. Accessed 12 September 2024; "Concerns about NGOs Listed in UN OCHA-oPt's 'Flash Appeal' on 'Hostilities in Gaza and Israel.'" *NGO Monitor*, www.ngo-monitor.org/reports/un-ocha-opts-flash-appeal/. Accessed 12 September 2024.

29 "Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC)." *NGO Monitor*, www.ngo-monitor.org/ngos/union_of_agricultural_work_committees_uawc/. Accessed 12 September 2024.

30 Judea and Samaria Area, Proclamations, Orders and Appointments 252, Order 9631 declaring an illegal association - Union of Health Work Committee.

31 **SCrimC (Beersheba) 12074-08-16** *Israel v. Mohammed Halabi*.

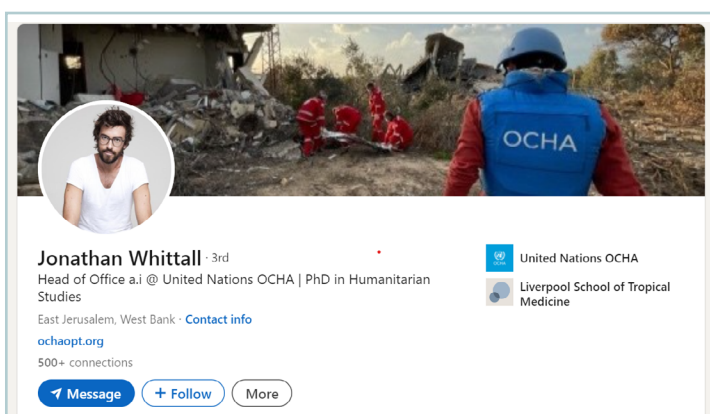
4 | Recommendations

The state of Israel must reevaluate all official cooperation with OCHA-oPT and consider denying the organizations' senior members entry and residence visas. In August 2024, for instance, Israel refused to renew head of OCHA-oPT Andrea De Domenico's visa, but localized measures are insufficient.³²

The OCHA-oPT head office is located in the UN building in Armon Hanatziv. Israel should consider removing all of the organization's workers from the premises.

As illustrated, the "settler violence" libel is based on biased and fabricated data. This smear campaign is greatly damaging to Israel's image around the world. Based on OCHA-oPT data, the US issued sanctions against 13 Israeli citizens and 10 other entities, without bothering to gather evidence or hold a fair trial. The UK, France, New Zealand, the EU, Canada and Australia have all declared sanctions against "extremist settlers" as well. Sanctions against citizens of a democracy and an ally is globally unprecedented, and represents a draconian measure that severely violates individual rights to reputation protection and employment. If Israel does not take action to stem the tide of sanctions, the phenomenon may well expand, with sanctions issued against the settler movement leaders, active army officers in Judea and Samaria or even banks that provide mortgages for homes in Judea and Samaria.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Inter-Cluster Coordination Group List includes national and sub-national coordinators/focal points and national/West Bank-level standing invitees Last updated: 9 August 2024				
2	Cluster coordinators and IMO				
3	Cluster / Sector	Name	Title	Organization	E-mail
4		Connie Pedersen	Cluster Coordinator (all oPt)	OHCHR	connie.pedersen@un.org
5		Michelle Rice	Cluster Coordinator (all oPt)	OHCHR	Michelle.rice@un.org
6		Amira Mohana	GBV SC Coordinator	UNFPA	mohana@unfpa.org
7		Jessica Dixon	Child Protection Coordinator	UNICEF	jdixon@unicef.org
8		John Edwards	Mine Action Co-Coordinator	Humanity and Inclusion	j.edwards@hi.org
9		Lorene Giorgis	Mine Action Co-Coordinator	UNOPS	loreneg@unops.org
10	Protection	Nour Alhaj Ali	Child Protection IM	UNICEF	nalhaj@unicef.org



The names of coordinators in the "Protection Cluster" responsible for the "settler violence" libel. From the OCHA-oPT website

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1C7Wp-wh9PUauPP8Orm6uOcWNMz24U1r/edit?gid=2064900134#gid=2064900134>

32 The New Arab Staff. "Israel Refuses to Renew Visa of Head of UN OCHA Agency in Palestine." *The New Arab*, 2 Aug. 2024, www.newarab.com/news/israel-refuses-renew-visa-head-ocha-palestine. Accessed 15 Oct. 2024.