

# Stocktaking of Security Sector Roles in Climate and Environmental Security

Report on the occupied Palestinian Territory



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## Acknowledgements

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## Executive Summary

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The occupied Palestinian Territory is facing a range of climate and environmental risks which directly affect human security. From rising temperatures and increasing aridity to water scarcity and widespread pollution, the combined effects of climate change and human pressures on the environment are contributing to local tensions and increasing the fragility of both communities and local ecosystems in the West Bank, which was the geographic focus of this study.

While many of these risks require a response which extends well beyond the security sector, security institutions have an important and perhaps underappreciated role to play in this context. It is also worth noting that government responses (or lack thereof) to these risks – complicated by Israeli-Palestinian relations – clearly affect perceptions of the state and present an opportunity for security institutions to play a role in addressing human security concerns which matter greatly to local communities.

As climate change increases the risk of flooding, fires and other disasters, the role of the Palestinian Authority Security Forces in disaster risk reduction (DRR) will be increasingly important and offers a valuable opportunity for institutions including Civil Defence to work closely with communities as well as local government in order to better analyse and mitigate the risks of both sudden and slow-onset disasters. Likewise, the Environmental Police, Customs Police and Public Prosecutor have the potential to play a stronger role in preventing and prosecuting environmental crimes and other forms of harm to the environment. There are important links between these two functions, as problems such as illegal waste disposal not only have serious public health consequences, but also contribute to slow-onset disasters. This directly affects the health and resilience of the local environment upon which Palestinians depend for food and increasingly limited water supplies.

Overall, this stocktaking study has found significant potential for SSG/R programming to improve service delivery of security institutions with regards to mitigating the impact of climate and environmental risks on communities and the environment, as well as strengthening social cohesion and contributing to sustainable peace. While international partners in their SSG/R programming tend to not yet fully maximize the potential of this area, findings place SSG/R's role on climate and environmental security at the heart of the



Photo: DCAF

triple nexus between humanitarian needs, development and security. Moreover, working at this nexus is relevant in the context of the sustaining peace and prevention agenda, commitments to mainstream DRR into all sectors under the Sendai Framework, as well as the Paris Agreement's Global Goal on Adaptation.

In addition to the more practical recommendations for international donors as well as the Palestinian Authority which are included in the report, there are several conclusions that have broader relevance for SSG/R programming across a range of regional, environmental and security contexts, and will be further explored in the remaining countries in the stocktaking study:

### Main Findings

- ▶ The Occupied Palestinian Territory is facing a range of multidimensional risks at the intersection of environmental and human security and across both the Prepare and Protect dimensions of this study. These risks interact in a way which continues to increase the vulnerability of Palestinians to the consequences of a changing climate for human security.

- ▶ In the area of waste disposal and pollution, violations of existing legislation are in some cases inextricably linked with community livelihoods. Even if law enforcement in this area is strengthened, harm to the environment is unlikely to cease without a focus on creating alternative, clean options for income generation.
- ▶ The Palestinian Authority has a relatively large number of security forces, with mandates which are not always entirely clear or distinct. There appear to have been specific disagreements, for example, as to the respective roles and functions of institutions including the Customs Police and the Environmental Police, as well as an absence of leadership and coordination on complex issues such as illegal waste disposal. In a context of many needs and limited resources, both gaps and overlapping mandates undermine the ability of state institutions to deliver the security services communities need most under the Prepare and Protect dimensions of this study.
- ▶ The political situation in the West Bank – and specifically restrictions on the movement and jurisdiction of security institutions – limits the ability of the security sector to realize its full potential in responding to climate and environmental (security) risks.

## Entry points for SSG/R

- ▶ **Recognising and reinforcing climate security roles:** From a human and planetary security perspective, the international community should recognize the security sector's role in mitigating climate and environmental risks as a top priority for engagement.
  - This means a shift from the **delivery of humanitarian aid by the international community towards empowering national partners** to be the main service provider, and adopting a broader definition of the security sector that also includes institutions working on civil protection.
  - To be translated into SSG/R programming, relevant security sector functional areas should be included conceptually in thematic strategies and could become a focus for support in **country or regional engagement strategies** and through **multilateral missions**, such as UN and CSDP missions. In this regard, the EUPOL COPPS mandate on environmental crime is a unique pilot

with the potential to combine the mission's political access and support with technical capacity building, and would benefit from a lessons learning exercise in order to inform future missions.

- As this is an emerging area of focus for SSG/R, it will be important for future programmes to collect additional **data which can inform design and implementation** in areas including the link between security sector roles, peacebuilding and social cohesion.

- ▶ **Mandates and priorities:** It is clear that security institutions can do more to contribute to both DRR and environmental protection **within existing mandates**. Focusing on these areas also offers a new entry point to orient security institutions toward improved service delivery. The challenge may be to consider how these issues can be **prioritised** relative to other risks security institutions must manage, and how adequate resources can be dedicated to related tasks.

- It is also worth considering how taking on **less traditional tasks** might positively influence relationships between security institutions and local communities – for example, mitigating resource-related conflicts, contributing planning skills and methodologies to climate change adaptation efforts, raising awareness of environmental legislation and regulations, and supporting environmental remediation.

- ▶ **Waste disposal and pollution: Waste disposal and pollution are human security issues** which are likely to become more important in the coming years as climate change and demands for natural resources continue to put greater pressure on ecosystems. In addition to affecting public health, polluted land and water supplies diminish both food and water security. In a global context of tightening environmental regulations, security institutions in many regions may also need to strengthen their understanding of the transnational dimensions of illegal waste disposal.

- ▶ **Emphasising prevention:** A longer-term focus on **prevention** is critical for both DRR and environmental protection. **Risk-informed planning** of infrastructure and housing, for example, can make a significant contribution to mitigating future disaster risks but is not always well integrated with DRR functions. Here too, security institutions can offer scenario-based planning and other methodologies which may not



be commonly used across all sectors. Additionally, beyond being an environmental crime, widespread pollution is a **slow-onset disaster**, with potentially catastrophic consequences for future food and water security. A preventive approach is also essential in enforcing environmental legislation, as communities can ill afford the **loss of productive agricultural land, reduced supplies of clean drinking water**, and other consequences of environmental degradation.

➤ **Coordination & integration:** Tackling environmental crime and analysing disaster risks requires specific technical skills (for example in the area of environmental sampling to detect crimes) and its complexity requires especially **close coordination between security institutions and environmental and other government agencies** which may not traditionally work together. Integrated approaches are also essential; at the community level **environmental harm is often linked with livelihoods** and solutions which focus solely on enforcement are unlikely to succeed.

➤ **Comprehensive donor approaches:** Working effectively on DRR, environmental protection, and more broadly on the triple nexus, also requires donors to adopt a comprehensive approach. This means developing innovative funding instruments that can cover several hitherto separate sectors and policy areas, as well as the ability and willingness to engage with a wide range of national counterparts across sectors.

➤ **Supporting capable communities:** Working at the intersection of the environment and security – particularly in contexts of widespread challenges and limited security sector resources – also requires a realistic analysis of **what communities themselves can do as a first line of defence**, and where security institutions must play a role. In the West Bank, this is made even more important by the movement and jurisdictional restrictions which limit the ability of security institutions to respond to disasters and environmental harm.



SSG/R needs to mainstream climate and environmental risks so security sectors can help protect people, planet and peace

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