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Are you tired of your uncle depicting you as the “wicked child” at the Passover Seder table just because you are willing to ask the tough questions about human rights in Israel and the occupied territories? The answer is not to become the “silent child.”

B'Tselem has you covered with some answers. Here are our “four questions” and the answers that will make you the “wise child” at your Passover Seder: (If you are celebrating Easter or just enjoying the early spring, these answers will be helpful too)

**1. Why do you call it “occupation”?**

There is an international consensus that the territories that were captured by Israel in the Six Day War in 1967, including the West Bank and East Jerusalem, are occupied territories. This is also the US official position under all administrations since 1967. Even according to the Israeli domestic law, the West Bank (or “Judea and Samaria”) excluding East Jerusalem, remains under the sole control of the Israeli military. Only the Israeli military commander via military orders makes law. Any development – be it trash collection or city planning - is done under the authority of the military commander. There are those who claim that the West Bank is a disputed territory. However, there is no dispute that the legal framework, as well as the daily reality governing the West Bank in the last 44 years is one of military occupation.

**2. What’s wrong with the settlements?**

Despite the fact that international law states that an occupying country is not allowed to transfer its population to an occupied territory, there are over half a million Israelis living beyond the Green Line. The majority of human rights violations in the West Bank are a result of such Israeli enclaves and include extensive exploitation of land and water, massive military presence to protect those Israelis, a network of roads paved to serve them and them only, and the separation barrier, the route of which was largely dictated by the settlements. A radical fringe of settlers remains a source of friction and violence.

**3. The Palestinians control their own lives – don’t they have their own government and president?**

The Palestinian Authority (PA) was established in 1994 as an interim body – it is not now nor has it ever been a sovereign government. The interim period was supposed to end in 1999 with a permanent status agreement. As a result of the failure to achieve a peace agreement, however, the interim arrangement continues today. In this agreement, Palestinians have control over civil affairs in the 40% of the West Bank that was defined as Areas A and B. Israel retains complete control over the remaining 60% of the West Bank – and security control of the territory as a whole. Because Areas A and B are islands within Area C, Israel controls all movement throughout the West Bank, as well as urban development of the whole territory, the taxation system, the ability to travel abroad, the water resources, and many, many other spheres of life.

Since the 2005 Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Hamas’s takeover of the Gaza Strip in 2007, the Israeli military does not have control on the ground in Gaza. However, Israel still largely controls the borders, airspace, and sea access around Gaza, and also its population registry, tightly limiting export-import and the movement of people between Gaza and the West Bank.

**4. How can Israel ensure its own security without control over the occupied territories?**

No one can deny Israel’s security challenges. The first obligation of a state is to protect its citizens, and Israelis have been subjected to horrific attacks over the years, one particularly terrible attack killed thirty people sitting at the Seder table, in 2002, and injured another 160. Within this difficult reality it is crucial to understand what are necessary and legitimate security measures and where security concerns are exploited to advance other agendas. This is the crucial role of government watchdogs like B'Tselem, which have documented violations of Palestinians’ basic rights by abusing legitimate security measures. In fact, there is no real contradiction between respect for human rights and ensuring security – and both are in the best interest of Israel’s citizens.

So, why is tonight different than any other night? Because tonight, you are leading an honest discussion about the challenges we face in achieving a just and democratic State of Israel. Be an informed part of the discussion. To learn more, read our [latest report](#) at [www.btselem.org](http://www.btselem.org). Click here to read Uri Zaki’s op-ed in The Times of Israel, “[Four Questions About the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#).”

Next year in a Jerusalem that protects human rights and complies with its obligations under the law!

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