

## **BACKGROUND: THE WALL AND INCREASED IMPOVERISHMENT OF THE PALESTINIAN POPULATION**



Even prior to the conception of Israel's Wall, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians depended on international food aid in order to survive on a day-to-day basis. With the construction of the Wall, the impoverishment of the Palestinian people has become even more severe, with almost half of the population currently living below the poverty line. Notably, the impoverishment is most severe in the communities located along the "footprint" of the Wall. The references below present a sampling of authoritative third-party witnesses attesting to the fact that, with its construction of the Wall, Israel is imposing an even deeper poverty on a vast segment of the Palestinian population.

### **United Nations General Assembly, "Report of the Secretary-General prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution ES-10/13," November 24, 2003, paragraph 25**

"Completed sections of the Barrier have had a serious impact on agriculture in what is considered the 'breadbasket' of the West Bank... In 2000, the three governorates of Jenin, Tulkarm and Qalqilya produced US\$ 220 million in agricultural output, or 45 per cent of total agricultural production in the West Bank. Palestinian cultivated land lying on the Barrier's route has been requisitioned and destroyed and tens of thousands of trees have been uprooted. Farmers separated from their land, and often also from their water sources, must cross the Barrier via the controlled gates. Recent harvests from many villages have perished due to the irregular opening times and the apparently arbitrary granting or denial of passage. According to a recent World Food Programme survey, this has increased food insecurity in the area, where there are 25,000 new recipients of food assistance as a direct consequence of the Barrier's construction"

### **The World Bank, "Disengagement, the Palestinian Economy and the Settlements," June 23, 2004, Summary, Summary, p. i, footnotes 20, 22**

"The Palestinian recession is among the worst in modern history. Average personal incomes have declined by more than a third since September 2000, and nearly a half of Palestinians now live below the poverty line."

"The deep or 'absolute' poverty line is estimated at US\$1.5 per person per day (NIS 1,235 per household of six per month – World Bank/PCBS estimates). OCHA has recently estimated that 600,000 Palestinians – some 17% of the populations – 'are depending almost entirely on outside aid.'"

"[The Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Programme...] estimated earlier this year that almost 40% of Palestinians suffer 'food insecurity' (i.e. they do not have 'sufficient, safe and nutritious food for a healthy life') while another quarter of the population is at risk of becoming food-insecure. In the West Bank, patterns of food insecurity correlate with the footprint of the Separation Barrier. WFP estimates that 40% of the population of Qalqilya are food-insecure, and that 55% of the population of Jenin District are at risk of becoming so."

### **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), "Report of the food security assessment - West Bank and Gaza Strip," March 10, 2004, Executive Summary**

"This [FAO] assessment confirmed that closures, constraints and the separation barrier had and were continuing to have a severe impact on livelihoods in both Gaza and in the West Bank although the impact has been greater in the West Bank where the restrictions on movement have been tighter, especially after Operation Defensive Shield and where the separation barrier is being constructed. After almost three years of living under strict closures, the coping mechanisms of many households have been exhausted or severely strained. The chronic poor, those who had been in a near impossible situation before closures and curfews, are now in extreme circumstances with no savings, extremely limited assets and no regular source of income. Destitution is close at hand."

**UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Mid-Year Review of the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP): Humanitarian Appeal 2004 for Occupied Palestinian Territories,” June 15, 2004**

“The underlying cause of the Palestinian humanitarian situation remains unchanged: access. Around 750 checkpoints, roadblocks, earth mounds and gates have sealed entire villages from main urban areas, people from their workplaces and patients from hospitals. The construction of the West Bank Barrier is proceeding rapidly. Its route throughout the West Bank has cut people off from their land, families, services and businesses. Until access within the occupied Palestinian territory is improved, the humanitarian situation will not improve.”

**World Food Programme, News Release “WFP Head to Visit Palestinian Territories to Assess Food Aid Operation,” June 11, 2003**

“Humanitarian needs in the Palestinian Territories have been rising sharply alongside the rapidly deteriorating economic situation. Unemployment among Palestinians now stands at 67 percent.

For the past 12 months, WFP was able to bring in nearly 45,000 tons of food to ensure the basic needs of nearly half a million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The UN food aid agency plans to extend its emergency operation after the current \$18-million programme comes to end on June 30.

Israeli security measures make WFP operations in the Territories extremely difficult. WFP has 48 national and 9 international staff members working in the Palestinians Territories.

‘Coping mechanisms are exhausted and poor families are selling vital assets such as jewellery, livestock and even land in order to purchase food and basic necessities. Many are caught in a downward spiral of indebtedness that results in a deepening poverty,’ said WFP Representative in the Palestinian Territories Jean-Luc Siblot. ‘Palestinian families have had to change their dietary habits, consuming cheaper and less protein-rich foods.’”

**United Nations Security Council, “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question,” S/PV.4861, November 19, 2003, paragraph 23**

“As we have described in previous briefings to the Security Council, the Israeli policy of restrictions on movement affects the ability of donors to carry out their work, as well as the ability of Palestinians to move freely through the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The donor Task Force on Project Implementation has prepared a paper that sets out the situation and concludes that measures taken by the Government of Israel on security grounds have greatly increased the difficulty and cost of providing social, economic and humanitarian support to the Palestinian civilian population. The operational environment has now deteriorated to a degree that many donors consider both unmanageable and unacceptable. Such measures compromise our work and have dramatically negative and indiscriminate effects on the living conditions of the civilian population.

The Government of Israel has given multiple assurances from the highest levels that donor activity and humanitarian aid will be fully facilitated. However, those assurances contrast starkly with the facts on the ground.”

**Oxford Public Interest Lawyers (OXPIIL) for the Association of Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), International Law Opinion, “Legal Consequences of Israel’s Construction of a Separation Barrier in the Occupied Territories,” February, 2004, paragraph 267**

“The right to housing is essential to realizing the right to an adequate standard of living, since it affects employment, education, health and cultural life. Israel claims that during the first phase of construction [of the Wall], ‘[n]o houses were destroyed’. In contrast, B’Tselem has documented at least 280 demolition orders which were issued in communities near the Barrier...”