

BACKGROUND: THE WALL AND THE DESTRUCTION OF PALESTINIAN JOBS AND LIVELIHOODS



The Wall that Israel is building has wrought havoc on the ability of average Palestinians to carry on their jobs and livelihoods. Palestinians living in the vicinity of the Wall – hundreds of thousands of them – are being prevented from getting to jobs, businesses, and cultivated farmland. The references below present a sampling of third-party witnesses to the collective punishment Palestinians suffer – due directly to the Israeli Wall – in the loss of employment, and livelihoods.

United Nations General Assembly, “*Report of the Secretary-General prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution ES-10/13,*” November 24, 2003, paragraphs 25-26

“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 Qalqiliya 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 Barrier's route through Jerusalem will also severely restrict movement and access for tens of thousands of urban Palestinians. A concrete wall through the neighbourhood of Abu Dis has already affected access to jobs and essential social services, notably schools and hospitals. The northern section of the Barrier has harmed long-standing commercial and social connections for tens of thousands of people, a phenomenon that will be repeated along much of the route through Jerusalem. The residences of some Jerusalem identity card holders are outside the Barrier, while those of some West Bank identity card holders are inside the Barrier. This raises concerns about the future status of residency for Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem under current Israeli laws.”

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “*OCHA Report 2003-12,*” December 15, 2003

“More than 400,000 other Palestinians living to the east of the Wall will need to cross it to get to their farms, jobs and services...”

“Little consideration appears to have been given by the Israeli Government to the Wall's impact on Palestinian lives. More people, unable to reach their land to harvest crops, graze animals or have the money to buy food, will be hungry. The damage caused by the destruction of land and property for the Wall's construction is irreversible and undermines Palestinians' ability to ever recover even if the political situation allows conditions to improve. Residents risk being cut off from schools, universities and specialized medical care.”

The World Bank, “*Disengagement, the Palestinian Economy and the Settlements,*” June 23, 2004, p. 3 with footnotes

“The population [in the Occupied Palestinian Territories] as a whole has reduced its per capita food consumption by 30-35% since 1999, and were it not for donor assistance (food aid having increased five-fold since 2000), malnutrition would be at levels associated with much poorer countries. Donor and Palestinian Authority observers have predicted the demise of Palestinian coping mechanisms on several occasions, and caution is called for – but time series data from 2001 to 2003 indicate that the number of the poor who have savings has fallen from 70% to 13% and that a third now depend on cash from friends

or relatives, compared to almost none in 2001. The latest University of Geneva Perceptions Survey shows that 30% of Palestinians have exhausted all financial means, and another quarter expect this to occur 'soon.'”

“In the West Bank, patterns of food insecurity correlate with the footprint of the Separation Barrier. The World Food Programme 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.”

B’Tselem, “*Behind the Barrier: Human Rights Violations as a Result of Israel’s Separation Barrier*,” April 2003, pp. 10, 15, 16

“Residents of dozens of Palestinian communities east of the main barrier or the depth barrier will be separated from a substantial portion of their farmland, which will remain to the west of the barrier. This separation will harm these residents, who have already lost land that was seized on which the barrier itself will be erected. The number of residents who will be directly affected by being separated from their land due to the placement of the barrier depends of the number of Palestinians who own land on the other side of the barrier. This category contains thirty-six communities, in which 72,200 people reside.”

“The planned barrier is expected to separate tens of thousands of Palestinians from their workplace. Even if the barrier does not create total isolation, it will clearly reduce the ability of many residents to work and earn sufficient income to ensure a minimum standard of living.

The farmland of residents of the enclaves created west of the barrier will remain for the most part also west of the barrier. Although the barrier is not expected to harm their access to these lands, the ability of these farmers to market their produce elsewhere in the West Bank will be affected. Even assuming that the agricultural crossings will be operational, the crossing process will likely increase transportation costs and reduce profits. Farm production will likely be harmed due to the irregular supply of inputs and materials (such as, seeds, fertilizer, machines, and spare parts), because Palestinians from other areas of the West Bank will generally not be allowed to enter these enclaves.”

“The restrictions on movement are also expected to harm people who work in sectors other than farming, whose workplace lies outside their community. The barrier will turn Tulkarm and Qalqilya into enclaves that are detached from nearby villages that relied on these centers for services on a daily basis.”

“This problem is especially grave in villages near the Jerusalem envelope (if a contiguous barrier is indeed constructed) because, unlike in the north, most of the residents are not engaged in farming and are dependent, directly or indirectly, on work in East Jerusalem.”

UN Commission on Human Rights, Report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, John Dugard, “*Question of the Violation of Human Rights in the Occupied Arab Territories, including Palestine*,” February 27, 2004, paragraph 8

“Most of the Wall is built in Palestinian territory. Where the Wall penetrates Palestinian territory it snakes around villages, separating villages and people from agricultural land... It is difficult to resist the Palestinian claim that the Wall has been built in this way in order to put agricultural land out of the reach of farmers – and within the reach of settlements adjacent to these lands. Israel clearly wants land, not people. Hence the construction of the Wall around villages, leaving land on its westward side to Israel.”

UN Commission on Human Rights, Report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, John Dugard, “*Question of the Violation of Human Rights in the Occupied Arab Territories, including Palestine*,” September 8, 2003, paragraph 10

“Palestinians, unconvinced by Israel’s assurances that they will be allowed to pass through the crossings to be erected in the Wall, are moving from their homes in the affected areas to the security of what remains of Palestine. It is reported that already some 600 shops and enterprises have closed in Qalqilya as a result of the construction of the Wall. The Wall will therefore create a new generation of refugees or internally displaced persons.”