

Israel's Apartheid Wall Fact Sheet

By Scottish Friends of Palestine

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Imagine a concrete wall up to 1000km long, eight metres high with a round watchtower every 200 metres. Visions of a Stalag come to mind, of a huge prison camp. Such an entity cannot exist, surely, without international condemnation echoing in the halls of the good and the great throughout the world.

The 1000km does not exist, yet. However, by the end of 2002, 115km had been constructed at a cost of \$1 million per kilometre. This is Israel's very own Apartheid Wall or "Seam Zone". It is twice the height of the former Berlin Wall and could end up 30 times as long.

And yet there has been no reaction, of any consequence, from the international community.

Eventually, the 1000km may not all be solid concrete. There will be deep, impassable four metre wide trenches flanking the route, a barbed wire fence and a road patrolled by the Israeli army. In places there will be smooth stretches of sand, constantly monitored for footprints. There will be electronic sensors. All buildings within 35 metres of the Wall, on the Palestinian side, will be razed to the ground.

The Purpose

And the purpose of this monstrosity? Security according to Israel, to separate Israeli from the West Bank Palestinian. Not so, according to the Palestinian.

If you want security, end the occupation, acknowledge the rights of the Palestinian people and observe international law as it applies to the question of Palestine. The wall will entrench the occupation, squeeze the Palestinian under occupation further into their ghetto and make life more and more intolerable. It is a recipe, not for achieving security, but for guaranteeing further instability and violence in the region.

With the boundary between Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory of the West Bank being about 350km long, why does the route of the proposed wall come to 1000km? The answer lies in the route of the Wall. It is set to loop deep into Palestinian occupied territory, embracing clusters of illegal settlements, enclosing much fertile land and important subterranean water reservoirs. Every conflict in Palestine has resulted in expansion by Israel. In 1948, the nascent Israeli state expanded vastly outwith the area determined by the United Nations partition resolution. In 1967 there was further expansion into the West Bank and Gaza Strip (not forgetting the Syrian Golan). The current conflict is no exception, with the wall construction being used as an opportunity to confiscate about 10% of the West Bank.

Israel argues that the construction is temporary, contingent on the state's perception of the "security situation." Experience has long shown that, in the absence of external pressure, particularly from the United States, Israel has never relinquished any land it has occupied.

Horrific consequences - the Ghetto of Qalqilya The consequences for the Palestinian living close to the wall are nothing short of horrific.

Take the case of the once prosperous market town of Qalqilya. Already the town is surrounded on three sides by the wall. Very much as if enclosed by a bottle. The bottle-neck is the only way in and out of this town of 42 000 residents. Gates at the long neck, overlooked by a watchtower,

controls the flow in and out of the town - one person or vehicle at a time. For the residents of Qalqilya, their town can be transformed into a prison at the whim of any occupation soldier. More than 1 500 acres, one third of Qalqilya's town land has been confiscated. Forty five per cent of the district land has been similarly appropriated. A wealthy town, with about half the water resources of the West Bank, the area - the most important agricultural basket in the West Bank, producing about 42% of all its fruit and vegetable - was an exporter to Israel and the Gulf states. Now the 18 000 residents of nine villages, together with 19 artesian wells, are trapped to the west, between Israel and the Wall. Access to the rest of the West Bank will, once again, be at the whim of the occupier.

One of Qalqilya's affected villages is Jayyous, where the wall deviates up to 6 km from the Green Line (the 1948 Armistice Line). It virtually encircles about 500 homes, cutting them off from their land. In the process, an 80 metre swathe has been cut through the centuries old olive grove. Of the 960 trees owned by Mayor Salim (some 500 years old), only 50 remain.

Such circumstances are, in reality, part of the strategy leading to the slow process of ethnic cleansing in occupied Palestine. Already Palestinian businesses have relocated to the east of the Wall. Where the monthly family income in Qalqilya was once \$1 000, it is now closer to \$60.

Building for Domination - make the occupation irreversible

In tandem with the Wall project, there is the Trans-Israel Highway which runs from North to South through a 17% swathe of the West Bank. It has a buffer zone the width of three football pitches on either side. Its creation, as with the Wall, was only possible by the demolition of Palestinian homes and the virtual desertification of Palestinian land.

This Highway complements the 250 miles of the settler-only apartheid road system, which criss-crosses the West Bank. The dual effect could be to cut the West Bank into 200 enclaves. All totally reliant on Israel and injections of foreign aid - with no prospect of establishing a viable Palestinian state.

Settlements currently take up 1.6% of total land in the West Bank. Together with the road network which services the settlements, the settlers and their settlements control an effective 46% of West Bank land.

When the PLO accepted the Oslo Peace Accords, they agreed to the establishment of a Palestinian state on 22% of historic Palestine. Of this 22%, under 18% is now controlled by the Palestinian people.

In the words of Jeff Halper of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolition,

There is no intention to allow a viable Palestinian state

Sources; 1] Building a Barrier to Peace The Scotsman 31/01/03 2] Between Walls and Snipers The Jordan Times 5/12/02

<http://www.miftah.org>