



Arrested Development: The Long Term Impact of Israel's Separation Barrier in the West Bank

In its recent report¹, B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights organization, examines the ramifications of the Wall and the so-called security fence on nearby Palestinian communities. Its construction started in 2002. On July 9th, 2004, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued

an advisory opinion that Israel's building of this monstrous Wall was illegal and should be stopped immediately. For the damage done, Israel should pay reparations. The verdict was unanimous because the Wall is being built on occupied Palestinian land. As always, the Israeli governments disregarded the order of the ICJ and kept on constructing to this very day. Only a few miles are left and the Palestinian people will be totally walled in. Despite the massive breach of international law, the international community remains silent.

In five sections, the report examines the questions whether the Separation Barrier is a temporary security measure or a permanent one; it provides current data about the barrier and its impact; deals with the "Seam Zone" areas and the "permit regime" through which Israel places restrictions on Palestinian access to and presence in these areas; it surveys the long term effects of the barrier on four Palestinian communities, and surveys the infringements of Palestinians' human rights caused by the Wall.

The Israeli government says that the Wall is a "temporary measure" and that it has hindered, disrupted, and prevented the penetration of "terrorists" from the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) into Israel. Against this inhuman construction, over 150 petitions were filed in the Israel High Court. Most of these petitions were denied after the justices accepted the government's position that the Wall is temporary and solely security related. Several times, the High Court ordered revisions to the route of the Wall.

Approved by the Israeli government, the total length of the Wall or the so-called security fence is 708 km (See page 17 of the report). This is twice the length of the Green Line of 1949, which is 320 km long. The route of the Wall is long and convoluted; 85 percent running within the OPT. On the "Israeli" side of the Wall, lie 9.4 percent of the OPT, including East Jerusalem. 85 percent of the Israeli colonialists live on the "Israeli" side of the Wall.

Particularly vexatious are the "Seam Zone" and the "permit regime". 74 percent of the areas on the "Israeli" side were declared by the occupation forces "Seam Zone", i. e. a "closed military zone". Here, the Palestinians can only be present, if the military have given them authorization. "The "permit regime" is a system of orders and instructions issued by the military for the purpose of imposing control on who enters and who is present in Seam Zone areas." These administrative measures harm the ability of Palestinians to carry on with their daily lives. This "regime" was found "legal and meets the test of proportionality", so the High Court. At least, the judges admitted that things are very difficult for the residents and infringe on their rights. The case study shows that the "permit regime" serves one main purpose; to make life very difficult for the Palestinians.

¹ http://www.btselem.org/download/201210_arrested_development_eng.pdf

In the last part, B'Tselem lists a verity of human rights violations and international agreements the State of Israel has signed but violates regularly. For example, the Israeli High Court has constantly ignored the issue of the illegality of the colonies (settlements), instead, it focused on the "proportionality" of the route of the Wall and the fence. Summing up its report, B'Tselem calls for the dismantlement of the Wall that is build on OPT and demands a construction freeze.

If Israel really wants to wall itself in, then along the international recognized border, the Green Line.

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First published here² and here³.

² <http://mwcnews.net/focus/analysis/24769-arrested-development.html>

³ <http://palestinechronicle.com/arrested-development-btselem-on-the-impact-of-the-israeli-wall/>