



Impact of the West Bank Barrier

In 2002 the Israeli Government approved the construction of a Barrier in the northern West Bank. In 2003 it approved construction throughout the rest of the West Bank. To date over 60 percent of the Barrier's planned route has been built and approximately 85 percent of its route deviates from the 1949 Armistice Line ('Green Line') into the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Currently, over 170 West Bank communities are directly impacted by the Barrier's construction (UNRWA/BMU). These include communities isolated from the rest of the West Bank by being 'stuck' between the Barrier and the Green Line and communities situated on the 'West Bank' side of the Barrier but whose lands and interests have been cut off by the construction of the Barrier. Those living within East Jerusalem and its surrounding areas have been particularly impacted by the Barrier as it obstructs thousands of Jerusalem residents from accessing services such as health and education, and with many Palestinians holding precarious residency status' living in a state of constant uncertainty.

Barrier Overview

- 1949 Armistice Line (Green Line): 320 Km
- Barrier Total Planned Length: 708 Km
- Constructed: 438 Km (61.8%)
- Under Construction: 58 Km (8.2%)
- Planned: 212 Km (30%)

If constructed according to current plan, approximately 85% of the Barrier will deviate from the Green Line and cut through the West Bank and isolate approximately 9.4% of its territory, including East Jerusalem and No-Man's Land.

Communities in the Closed Area

In October 2003 the Israeli authorities declared some areas between the Barrier and the Green Line in the northern West Bank a 'closed military area'. In 2009 these closed areas were extended to other parts of the West Bank. Today, an estimated 6,500 Palestinians live in closed military areas, with those over 16 years of age requiring permits to continue living in their own homes.

The Barrier cuts off these communities' access to services. Ambulances cannot pass through checkpoints to reach patients in these areas without prior coordination from the Israeli authorities, thereby delaying medical assistance. Many children living in these areas must also pass through checkpoints to reach their schools.

In 2007, UNRWA suspended its mobile health and distribution services to the Barta'a enclave in Jenin (pop.≈ 5,000, 36 percent UNRWA registered refugees) due to persistent demands to search its vehicles prior to crossing the checkpoint. The search of UN property, including vehicles, contravenes the 1946 UN Convention on Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, to which Israel is a signatory without reservation.

Those living in closed military areas have also become socially isolated with relatives and friends being unable to visit without permission from the Israeli Civil Administration,

which is rarely granted. As a result, families living in these areas are prohibited from carrying out the ordinary functions of their daily lives, such as hosting religious holidays, weddings and funerals together with other family members and are therefore often compelled to move such events from the family's home to the 'West Bank' side of the Barrier. If the Barrier is completed in accordance with current plans, approximately 25,000 Palestinians will be isolated between the Barrier and the Green Line.

Impacts on Rural Livelihoods

The Barrier has a detrimental economic impact on rural communities, such as majority refugee communities in the Biddu enclave with a population of 6,800, by cutting them off from their lands. Farmers seeking to access their lands must register their names at a specific gate, for which they need prior approval or apply to Israeli authorities for a permit. This usually requires land taxation or ownership documents to prove a 'connection to the land'. Many farmers are unable to meet this burden of proof as only 33 percent of West Bank land is formally registered and many land transfers go through informal, traditional channels. For refugees, these negative impacts are compounded by the fact that they tend to lack security of tenure and endure higher rates of unemployment and food insecurity. It is reported that over 90 percent of permit applications were rejected between 2006 and 2009 due to an inability to adequately prove a 'connection to the land' rather than for security considerations.

There are 66 agricultural gates along the Barrier, 44 of which are opened only during the annual olive harvest, and generally only for short periods two or three times per day. These restrictions on access and the limited opening times of the gates are insufficient for farmers to realise the full productive potential of their land.

The olive industry, which provides a quarter of the gross agricultural income in the occupied Palestinian territory, is a vital source of income for rural communities. However, construction of the Barrier has resulted in the uprooting of olive trees in many communities and isolated countless trees behind the Barrier. Many olive farmers have reported a 50-60 percent decline in yields from the harvest of olive trees behind the Barrier due to the lack of regular access to the trees in order to carry out necessary care and maintenance (UNRWA/BMU).

The Barrier in Jerusalem

Since the construction of the Barrier, East Jerusalem's connection with the rest of the West Bank has been severely obstructed. Palestinians living on the 'West Bank' side of the Barrier must obtain permits from the Israeli authorities in order to enter Jerusalem through four of the 16 checkpoints that

control all access to the city, while settlers living in the West Bank pass easily into the city.

Palestinians from the West Bank needing specialised treatment from one of the six East Jerusalem hospitals because such treatment is not available in the rest of the West Bank, must endure a complicated and lengthy permit application process. Furthermore, the Barrier severely inhibits the daily access to Jerusalem's holy sites for Muslim and Christian Palestinians living in the rest of the West Bank, even during religious feasts such as Ramadan and Easter.

Conversely, there are approximately 1,600 Palestinians with West Bank identity cards that are isolated on the 'Jerusalem' side of the Barrier. These Palestinians endure a state of permanent uncertainty as they cannot be formerly employed in Jerusalem or access the city's services, such as healthcare and education, while also being cut-off from employment and services in the rest of the West Bank by the Barrier.

Over 55,000 Palestinians holding Jerusalem ID cards and living within the Israeli defined Jerusalem municipal area have been cut off from the rest of the city by the Barrier, including those in Shu'fat refugee camp. Despite living within the municipal boundary, they receive poor municipality services, such as healthcare, rubbish collection and road maintenance. In order to access basic services, to which they are entitled as Jerusalem residents, they must cross a checkpoint to enter the city.

ICJ Advisory Opinion

In July 2004 the International Court of Justice issued an Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The Court found that the construction of the wall, including in and around East Jerusalem, and its associated régime, to be contrary to international law.

The Court also found that Israel is under an obligation "to cease forthwith the works of construction of the wall" and to "dismantle forthwith the structure therein situated, and to repeal or render ineffective forthwith all legislative and regulatory acts related thereto" (para. 163).

The Court stated that "all States are under an obligation not to recognize the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the wall" and not "render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by such construction" (para. 159).

Israel is further obliged to compensate those who suffered material damage as a result of the Barrier.



united nations relief and works agency
for palestine refugees in the near east

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UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection to a population of some 5 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip to achieve their full potential in human development, pending a just solution to their plight. UNRWA's services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.