



impact of the west bank barrier

In 2002, following the outbreak of the second *intifada*, 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 per cent of the Barrier's planned route has been built, and approximately 85 per cent of its route deviates away from the 1949 Armistice Line ("Green Line") and into the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Over 170 West Bank communities are currently directly-affected by the Barrier's construction (Source: UNRWA Barrier Monitoring Unit, May 2012). These communities are either isolated from the rest of the West Bank in the closed area between the Barrier and the Green Line, or have lands isolated behind 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. Many Palestinians hold a precarious residency status, and live in a state of permanent uncertainty.

barrier overview

- 1949 Armistice Line (Green Line): 320 km (excluding "No-Man's Land")
- Total planned length: 708 km
- Constructed: 438 km (61.8 per cent)
- Under construction: 58 km (8.2 per cent)

If completed according to the planned route, approximately 85 per cent of the Barrier will run inside the West Bank and effectively render about 9.4 per cent of its territory, including East Jerusalem and No-Man's Land, off-limits to West Bank Palestinians. (Source: OCHA oPt, December 2011)

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. Most children living in these areas must pass through checkpoints daily to reach their schools.

In 2007, UNRWA suspended its mobile health and distribution services to the Barta'a enclave in Jenin (population: approx. 5,000, 36 per cent of whom are 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 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. They 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 according to the current plans, approximately 25,000 Palestinians will be isolated in the closed area between the Barrier and the Green Line.

impact 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 for a permit with the Israeli authorities. 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 per cent of West Bank land is formally registered, and many land transfers go through traditional, informal 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 per cent of the permit applications rejected between 2006 and 2009 were due to difficulties in meeting the high burden of proof of a "connection to the land", rather than for security reasons.

Agricultural access is channelled through around 80 gates along the Barrier, the majority 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 realize 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. Local olive farmers report a 50 to 60 per cent 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 the necessary care and maintenance [Source: UNRWA/BMU].

the barrier in jerusalem

The construction of the Barrier severed the connection between East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank. In order to enter

Jerusalem, Palestinians living on the "West Bank" side of the Barrier must obtain permits from the Israeli Authorities to cross through four of the 16 checkpoints that control all access to the city; in contrast, Israeli settlers living in the West Bank can pass into the city easily.

Palestinians from the West Bank needing specialised treatment from one of the six East Jerusalem hospitals 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 basic services, such as health care 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, residents of Shu'fat receive a poor standard of municipal services (such as health care, rubbish collection, and road maintenance). In order to access basic services, which they are entitled to as Jerusalem residents, they must cross a checkpoint to enter the city.

icj advisory opinion

In July 2004, the International Court of Justice issued their "Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory."

The Court found the construction of the Wall, including in and around East Jerusalem, and its associated regime, 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", 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

www.unrwa.org

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.