

# Scenes of Apartheid in Qalqiliya

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In 2003 Israel's Apartheid-wall enclosed the city of Qalqiliya on all sides. Today one can see the clear consequences of the enclosure and strangulation. Loss of lands, resources and freedom to move has closed down large parts of the industry and business and forced thousands to leave the city.

### Background

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2002, the Israeli government, led by prime minister Ariel Sharon, decided to build a separation-barrier on the occupied Palestinian West Bank. The “security fence”, he stated, “was a defense mechanism to halt Palestinian suicide-bombers from entering Israel”. Sharon had just one year earlier won the Israeli elections with the promise to be especially hard on “Palestinian terrorists”. He was now about to fulfill his promises and implement them with concrete structures. The structure was planned to become 703 km long, comprising 8-meter-high concrete walls, electric fences, road trenches, watchtowers, trace paths, patrol roads to accommodate armored vehicles and a network of surveillance cameras.<sup>1</sup> More and more people started using the word wall instead of security-fence. Because of its clear Apartheid-character, whereby ethnic groups are divided in isolated Bantustans, similarly to that of earlier South-Africa, the wall also became known as the “Apartheid-wall”.

### Political implications

In the words of the former Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2004, what he refers to as the “security fence” is;

[...a defensive measure, intended to protect Israelis from suicide bombings and other terrorist attacks. It is not a political act. It is not intended to be a border or to prejudice any future negotiations with the Palestinians. It has no effect on the status of the land on which it is constructed. It is simply the most effective method we have found...]<sup>2</sup>

Minister Silvan Shalom tried to assure people that the wall is not a theft of land, rather a temporary loan. Some Israeli leaders tell more

than others. On December 1<sup>st</sup> 2005, the Israeli Justice Minister Tzipi Livni told to the press that; “one does not have to be a genius to see that the fence will have implications for the future border”.<sup>3</sup> Livni’s statement clearly links the wall to Israel’s political aims, not security.

### Entrapment

In Qalqiliya, the construction of the wall was completed by July 2003. This “first phase” of the construction also stretched around the other northern cities of Tulkarm and Jenin. This phase included a 145 km long wall-structure which annexed some 3 percent of the total West Bank land. The cities, including their neighboring villages were all dramatically affected: their total population of some 500 000 lost about 60 percent of their prime agricultural lands, which amounted to 121 500 dunum (121.5 km<sup>2</sup>) of land, especially dramatic considering that these areas are economically reliant on agriculture. In Qalqiliya, the wall was built higher, closer to the city and more aggressively. Qalqiliya was to be enclosed on three sides, leaving only Israeli controlled gates as entrances for their 48 000 inhabitants. In the process of construction, Qalqiliya lost at least 15 percent of its municipal lands and over 50 percent of its agricultural lands.<sup>4</sup>

Looking at the map today, it looks like a big snake has crawled around Qalqiliya and strangled the city. In the eyes of its inhabitants, this may be a fairly accurate description of what has happened. Looking at the location of the Israeli settlements, it’s easier to understand the route. The wall elegantly passes around the two Israeli settlements of Zufin and Alfe Mensahe, leaving them on the western “Israeli side”. These, like the rest, are illegal settlements which were built in the Qalqiliya district in 1989 and 1993, around the time of the Oslo-Agreement.<sup>5</sup> At the same point, the wall makes a ‘U’-shaped slope around the neighboring

<sup>1</sup> For detailed information about the form and parts of the wall, see the general secretary’s report to the United Nations General Assembly 24<sup>th</sup> of November 2003, which followed from UN-Resolution ES 10/13.

<sup>2</sup> Shalom, Silvan: Statement, Jerusalem 17 March 2004

<http://securityfence.mfa.gov.il/mfm/web/main/document.asp?DocumentID=50637&MissionID=45187>

<sup>3</sup> The Free Republic (December 1<sup>st</sup> 2005) Sharon Ally: Border Will Follow Barrier

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1532053/posts>

<sup>4</sup> Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) and BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights (May 2005) Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine, page 145

<sup>5</sup> B’Tselem; Settlements: Settlement Population: [http://www.btselem.org/English/Settlements/Settlement\\_population.xls](http://www.btselem.org/English/Settlements/Settlement_population.xls)

Palestinian village of Habla, making sure it stays on the eastern, "Palestinian side". The Palestinian side is, however, still utterly controlled by the Israeli military and referred to only as "disputed territories" by the Israeli government.<sup>6</sup> Compared to the UN-recognized "green-line"-boarder (the armistice line of 1949) the new "wall-boarder" leaves more land to Israel. Thus, 10 percent of West Bank land is now left on the western (Israeli) side of the wall. Combined with the annexation of Jordan Valley and other areas around Israeli settlements, 47 percent of the West Bank is then de facto annexed.<sup>7</sup>

The wall has also effectively annexed much of the land around the Israeli settlements, ideal for their expansion. One should bear in mind that Israeli authorities rarely build new settlement on Palestinian lands; instead they expand and merge already existing settlements. The Israeli government as a result claims their policy doesn't breach international law and the "Roadmap to Peace" which both clearly demand a freeze on settlement building. Like in Qalqiliya, the route of the wall tries to mainly separate Palestinian villages and Israeli settlements. As a complete demographic separation is practically impossible, there are many places where Palestinians end up at the "wrong side" of the wall, i.e. trapped between the wall and the green-line. Still, the wall in whole constitutes a population-swap, with a land-grab. Most of the land annexed by the wall is already built up with Israeli infrastructure. This shows us that this land-grab didn't start in 2002, but many years ago by starting to create "facts on the ground".

#### **Facts on the ground**

Since all the lands of Palestine have been under the control of the Israeli military (since 1948 and 1967), they have managed to change the political status to "Israeli" by

building facts on the ground.<sup>8</sup> These "facts" comprises confiscation and expropriation of property, building of settlements and civil infrastructure, military infrastructure, road-systems, demolition of Palestinian houses and general rearrangement of the geographical terrain. These continuing building- and destroying-measures have de facto expanded the Israeli state and reduced what's left of Palestine for Palestinians. These fact-buildings on Palestinian lands are, nonetheless, in violation with international law. The article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention clearly provides that any "extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity" shall be a grave breach of the convention. Furthermore, article 47 insists that the application of the conventions cannot be changes by "any annexation...of the whole part of the occupied territory".<sup>9</sup> Together, these articles clearly prohibit any annexation of occupied territory, something Israel has totally ignored ever since its creation in 1948.

One of the central figures in the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), Jeff Halper, defined the wall in the West Bank as a completion of Israel's main projects, namely a "matrix of control." The matrix of control, Halper says, "is an interlocking series of mechanisms...that allow Israel to control every aspect of Palestinian life in the Occupied Territories. In stead of defeating your opponent as in chess...you win by immobilizing your opponent."<sup>10</sup> One of these mechanisms is to maintain control over aquifers and other natural resources, something which is clearly a motive for the route of the Apartheid-wall in Qalqiliya.

#### **Land, resources and livelihood**

Qalqiliya is one of the corners of the "fertile triangle" of Palestine; a triangle between the cities of Jenin, Qalqiliya and Haifa, where land-crop, water and climate gives perfect

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<sup>6</sup> Israeli Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Feb. 2003) Disputed Territories: Forgotten Facts About the West Bank and Gaza Strip": [http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000\\_2009/2003/2/DISPUTED+TERRITORIES-+Forgotten+Facts+About+the+We.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2003/2/DISPUTED+TERRITORIES-+Forgotten+Facts+About+the+We.htm)

<sup>7</sup> Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign Fact Sheet, The Apartheid Wall (Updated 04/02/07) <http://stopthewall.org/factsheets/883.shtml>

<sup>8</sup> Ingdal, Nora and Simonsen, Hege (2005): Mur – Delt landskap i Israel og Palestina, Cappelen, 15-27

<sup>9</sup> The Fourth Geneva Convention: <http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/92.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Halper, Jeff (2000): The 94 Percent Solution: A Matrix of Control, Middle East Report, No. 216

conditions for agriculture. Furthermore, Qalqiliya itself is often described as a “fruit basket” of Palestine, as being a crucial area for Palestinian self-sufficiency, supplying fruits, vegetables and olives to the rest of Palestine. The strangulation of Qalqiliya has therefore dramatic consequences for the rest of the Palestinian cities as well, especially the ones in the north.<sup>11</sup> Israeli authorities have assured Palestinian farmers and other workers that “special measurements” would be applied to assist them getting to their agricultural land and work. First of all, this concerned farmers who had lost their land on the other side of the wall. The special measurements included a theoretic possibility to enter a gate or checkpoint at a certain time of the day. In reality these measurements have been nothing but empty words. Individual soldiers have reportedly operated with their own opening- and closing-times for the gates, times that are being randomly changed without noticing the farmers and other inhabitants. Often, people trying to pass a gate have been forced to go back and wait until the next day before they were accepted to enter.<sup>12</sup>

One of the walls biggest impacts on Qalqiliya involved the water resources. The city itself sits on the main Western Aquifer, which supplies 51 percent of the West Bank’s water resources. When completed, the wall will annex most of these water resources into Israeli control, mostly used for Israeli settlements. The Palestinian Hydrology group (PHG) has listed 30 Palestinian water wells annexed in the first phase of the wall, where 14 belonging to Qalqiliya. This roughly means that 30 percent of the town’s water resources have been confiscated.<sup>13</sup> As some have put it, expropriation of lands has gone hand-in-hand

with the confiscation of underlying water supplies in the Qalqiliya area.<sup>14</sup> The losses of land and water combined have transmitted negatively onto all sectors of the society from physical health to the economy. In February 2004, reportedly 600 shops in Qalqiliya had closed down their business. This number has only continued to grow, especially since the economic blockage and isolation of the legitimate elected Hamas-governement that went into office in early 2006.<sup>15</sup> Up till now, even after four months with a Palestinian unity-government comprising both Hamas and Fatah, the economic blockage has still been in force by a majority of the western countries, including United States and the whole European Union. The last week’s new “emergency-government” appointed by President Mahmoud Abbas in only West Bank territory has gotten a preliminarily approval by the United States, as this government is Hamas-free.<sup>16</sup> Still, as this is a weak, temporary government, economic blockages are likely to continue.

#### **A new generation of refugees**

Sadly, the wall has managed not only to annex and control land and resources but also to make people flee from their lands. By adding obstacles to everyday life and taking away peoples sources of income and livelihood, many Palestinians have made the choice to move from their city of Qalqiliya to look for something better. Many people make it to neighboring Arab countries, Europe or America and apply for asylum there, but most stay within their country as internally displaced refugees. In January 2006, John Hugar, United Nations Special Rapporteur for the Situation of Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian

<sup>11</sup> Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) and BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights (May 2005), Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine, page 145

<sup>12</sup> Amnesty International report: Israel and the Occupied Territories Surviving under siege: The impact of movement restrictions on the right to work, Page 29

<sup>13</sup> PENGON, The Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign, Report no. 1, November 2002, p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) and BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights (May 2005), Ruling Palestine: A History of the Legally Sanctioned Jewish-Israeli Seizure of Land and Housing in Palestine page 92

<sup>15</sup> Report from UNCHR (27 February 2004) para. 24:  
[http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/febda3e7b77dfd4ec1256e200361ade/\\$FILE/Go411348.pdf](http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/febda3e7b77dfd4ec1256e200361ade/$FILE/Go411348.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> The Star Online ( June 17th 2007)

New Abbas Palestinian government opens door to aid [http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2007/6/17/worldupdates/2007-06-17/174745Z\\_01\\_NOOTR\\_RTRMDNC\\_o\\_-303464-7&sec=Worldupdates](http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2007/6/17/worldupdates/2007-06-17/174745Z_01_NOOTR_RTRMDNC_o_-303464-7&sec=Worldupdates)

Territories, referred to a “new generation of internally displaced persons,” this time not because of war or expulsion, but because of the wall.<sup>17</sup> A comprehensive study was carried out by the Palestinian Central Bureau for Statistics (PCBS) in May 2005, where 145 localities that the wall passes were researched. The study estimated that 14,364 persons had already been displaced in these localities.<sup>18</sup> Numbers from 2004 showed that over 6000 Palestinians had fled the city of Qalqiliya alone, which meant 14 percent of the city’s population, which used to be 42 000.<sup>19</sup> With a lack of up-to-date-data, we can only expect the numbers to be much higher now, three years on. Many also fear that this problem will only escalate for years to come. The Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem has earlier estimated that as many as 90 000 Palestinians altogether will be threatened by displacement because of the wall.<sup>20</sup>

#### **Resisting the Apartheid-Wall**

Qalqiliya shows some of the worst consequences of the Israeli Apartheid-wall. The International Court of Justice in The Hague, Netherlands, stated the on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July 2004 that the wall is illegal, that it should be dismantled, confiscated land should be handed back and that compensation should be paid to victims of the wall. Furthermore, the court clearly said that the international community has a duty to work against the building of the wall. This means that it’s every national governments duty to divest and boycott companies involved with the construction of the Apartheid-Wall.

The Norwegian state has invested large amounts - through the Norwegian State Pension Fund – in the American bulldozer-company Caterpillar. This company delivers bulldozers and other truck-equipment that are being used by the Israeli Occupation Force.

Caterpillar-bulldozers are well-known in demolishing Palestinian houses, destroying agricultural fields and olive-trees and to make way for-, and involve in the actual building of the wall. The company is so well known for its crimes that a boycott-Caterpillar-campaign was recently set up.<sup>21</sup> It should also be obvious for the Norwegian state that its investments contribute to these crimes.

Three years have passed and little has been done by any foreign countries to put pressure on Israel to stop the wall. Palestinians themselves have worked within the The Palestinian Grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall-Campaign, which have very successfully mobilized large amounts of Palestinians to organize demonstrations and other forms of resistance along the path of the construction. A few successful actions of sabotage has managed to delay and complicate the Apartheid-project on a small-scale. However the Israeli Occupation army has applied extensive and brutal forms of violence to crush any form of resistance to their Apartheid-project. Israel’s illegal policies should be confronted by the outside world. The impotence and cowardness of the international community to put any pressure on Israel requires that people act and mobilizes to build an international anti-Apartheid movement - similar to the one that contributed to the fall of South-Africa’s Apartheid-Regime. Israel’s wall-project is a project more inhuman and vicious than even many of the earlier South-African acts of Apartheid. Let’s work to make the apartheid-wall fall!

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<sup>17</sup> Report by UNHCR ( 17 January 2006), para. 20

<sup>18</sup> Palestinian Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) ( September 2005), Survey on the Impact of the Expansion and Annexation Wall on the Socio-Economic Conditions of Palestinian Localities which the Wall passes through: [http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/\\_pcbs/PressRelease/Socioeconomic\\_June\\_e.pdf](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Socioeconomic_June_e.pdf),

<sup>19</sup> Report by UNHCR (27 February 2004) para. 24

<sup>20</sup> B’Tselem (2003) New orders in Barrier Enclaves: 11,400 Palestinians need permits to live in their homes : <http://www.btselem.org>

<sup>21</sup> For more information about the campaign against Caterpillar, see <http://www.catdestroyshomes.org/>





