

# irini

Peace and conflict analysis



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*The Wall around Qalqilya*  
*Ingrid Fiskaa on Afghanistan*  
*In the Field: Practical conflict research*  
*Interventionism : The ideology of Empire?*

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# Scenes of Apartheid in Qalqiliya

*By Magne Hagsæter  
Tear Down the Wall/Riv Muren - Bergen*

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)

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