When Many Walls Divide

More than a border

Israel’s wall separates Palestinians from agricultural land, water, education, businesses, religious sites, social and health services and community networks. Life is especially difficult for Palestinians in the “seam zone” — the area between the wall and the Green Line.

In 2002, Israel began construction of the separation barrier around the West Bank, citing the need for increased security. Today it is about 430 miles long (with many more miles under construction). The wall is twice the length of the Green Line, the internationally accepted border between Palestine and Israel.

The wall divides Palestinians from Israelis and separates Palestinians from each other. Israel says it has improved security. But the wall also enables Israel to solidify control over West Bank territory while absorbing a minimal number of Palestinians.

In 2004, the International Court of Justice ruled that the wall is illegal and violates the Fourth Geneva Convention and human rights treaties, because about 85 percent of it is inside the occupied West Bank. Israel has ignored the ruling and the call to dismantle the wall.

A Cry for Home offers stories, videos and fact sheets from MCC on Palestine and Israel. Everyone needs a home — where families are safe and secure, where their basic needs are met, where they can come and go freely, and where they can imagine a future. But that is not the reality for Palestinians – or even for some Israelis. To view other fact sheets and learn more, visit: mcc.org/cry-for-home.
Controlling the movement of Palestinians

Palestinians require permits to enter East Jerusalem and/or Israel for everything from work to worship, family visits and medical care. Many applications are denied, especially for adult males under the age of 55.

Israeli authorities use 100 types of permits to control Palestinian movement and access. Thirteen separate permits govern travel in and out of the seam zone (between the wall and the Green Line). There are 98 military checkpoints along the separation wall, and nearly 3,000 temporary ones along roads, to enforce permits. These checkpoints make life very difficult for Palestinians. At Checkpoint 300, Palestinians with permits to work in East Jerusalem or Israel wait for hours to pass through the checkpoint, even though the distance to their workplace is only a few miles.

Gaza: an open air prison

Israel first built a separation barrier around Gaza in 1996. Torn down by Gazans in 2001, the barrier was rebuilt with sections of concrete wall and electrified fences in 2001.

The blockade along Gaza’s coastline restricts fishing to six nautical miles and sometimes less. Additionally, Egypt controls its border with Gaza tightly. A one-kilometer buffer zone prohibits Palestinians in Gaza from approaching the wall. Those who do are likely to be shot.

In 2017, only 54 percent of the applications to get medical treatment outside of Gaza filed by Palestinians were approved.

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REFERENCES
2 Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War, Article 49.6.
3 This includes the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Art 12(1) (the right to liberty of movement) and the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Arts 6, 11, 12 & 13 (the rights to work, health, education, and adequate standard of living).
6 B’Tselem, “Restrictions on Movement,” 11 November 2017