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Am I Not a Human?

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The Suffering of the **Palestinian Patient** *under the Israeli Occupation*



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Chapter 8: Israeli Checkpoints

The roadblocks and checkpoints set up by Israel in the WB at the entrances to Palestinian towns and villages are catastrophic, increasing the suffering of Palestinian citizens. They are among the worst human rights violations that can be carried out in occupied lands and impact on all aspects of civilian life.

Israeli military checkpoints at every Palestinian exit and crossing are a harsh collective punishment and a symbol for people's continued catastrophic suffering. This suffering is exacerbated by the provocative practices of Israeli soldiers at the checkpoints.

In spite of the peace agreements and truce signed between the PA and Israel, the Israeli army continues to establish military roadblocks to divide regions and turn them into closed military zones. Palestinians are routinely treated inhumanely at these roadblocks including the arbitrary prevention of ambulances from transferring the sick to hospitals.



A crippled lady in a wheelchair being helped to pass through an earth mound in Hebron.

Military checkpoints have restricted the Palestinians' movement, imposing restrictions on East Jerusalem and impeding the citizens of the WB and GS from reaching the city except in accordance with special permits issued on special occasions. These roadblocks, which take a variety of forms such as mobile, fixed, earth mounds, iron gates, borders, crossings and the Separation Wall, are one of the most dangerous, aggressive and lethal methods used around the clock by the Israeli army.

The military checkpoints are provided with electronic devices and sniffer dogs to carry out security checks on baggage, individuals and vehicles.¹³⁷

These roadblocks impose exhausting waiting periods on Palestinians and force them to walk long distances in difficult weather conditions. They also impede the access of ambulances to transfer the sick and wounded or move patients from one ambulance to another. This has led to a deterioration in the Palestinians' physical health.

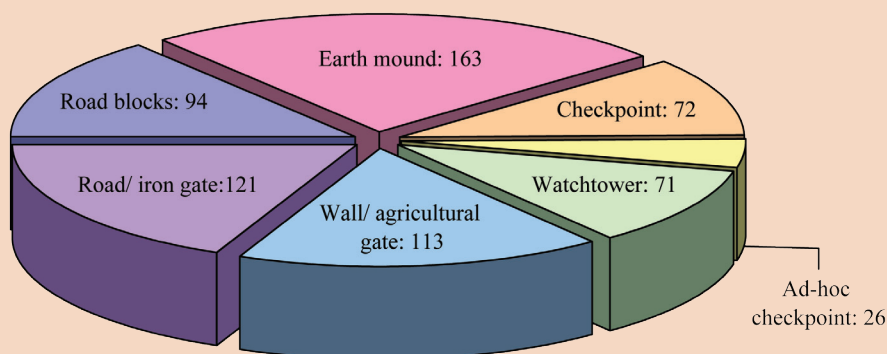
The number of Israeli closure obstacles reached 660 roadblocks in 2011. They are distributed as follows:¹³⁸



Table 9: Closure Obstacles in WB 2011

Type of obstacle	Number	Percentage (%)
Checkpoint	72	11
Ad-hoc checkpoint	26	4
Watchtower	71	11
Wall/ agricultural gate	113	17
Road/ iron gate	121	18
Road blocks	94	14
Earth mound	163	25
Total	660	100

Closure Obstacles in WB 2011



The obstacles to movement described above have had serious impacts on all aspects of Palestinian life, including health and humanitarian conditions. They have negatively affected Palestinian public health, converting traveling between villages and cities from a routine matter to an urgent and anxious journey for treatment.





The closure obstacles stand as a stumbling block in the way of Palestinian children, pregnant women and elderly patients, leading to the death of many patients and abortion of dozens of unborn babies, while the Israeli soldiers are watch on. From the beginning of *al-Aqsa Intifadah* on 28/9/2000 until May 2007, 69 pregnant women were forced to give birth at the checkpoints in front of the Israeli soldiers who chose not to let them reach maternity clinics to receive the necessary care; as a result 35 babies and five women died.¹³⁹ This is a conspicuous breach of the provision of Article 12/2 of the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, which clearly states:

“State Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.”¹⁴⁰

As a result of the checkpoints, since *al-Aqsa Intifadah* in 2000 and up until the beginning of 2007, 10% of pregnant Palestinian women wanting to give birth in a hospital were delayed on the road between two to four hours before reaching health facilities, while 6% took more than four hours for the same journey. However, it took 15–30 minutes to reach the hospital before *al-Aqsa Intifadah*.¹⁴¹

As a result of Israel’s practices, the number of home deliveries has increased from 8.2% before the *Intifadah* to 14% during the *Intifadah*. In addition, the number of women benefiting from postnatal care has fallen from 95.6% before the *Intifadah* to 82.4%.¹⁴²



Death at the Huwara Checkpoint

My first baby girl was born in my seventh month of pregnancy and she was fine. In my second pregnancy, and after seven months, I had sharp stomach pains and I started to bleed badly, and the pains got worse. I asked my husband to take me to the hospital, and my mother-in-law went with us, too.

When we got to the Huwara checkpoint, the soldiers said we didn't have a permit to cross by car. The pain got worse. I was really worried about the fetus, and couldn't stop thinking that I'd have to give birth in the car while the soldiers watched. I kept screaming and crying and calling for help when suddenly I felt the fetus coming out. I asked my mother-in-law her to pull him, and she said, "Breathe! Push!" I don't remember exactly what happened then, but I didn't feel the baby moving any more. The medics took away the dead baby and took me to the hospital.

It hurts me a lot when I remember how the baby moved inside me and what happened to him. What did he do wrong? I also gave birth to my daughter in my seventh month, and now she is healthy. This poor baby died because there wasn't anybody to help me deliver him.

- B'Tselem, Testimony: Soldiers prevent pregnant, bleeding woman from crossing checkpoint and she gives birth to a stillborn baby, September 2008, http://www.btselem.org/testimonies/20080904_nahil_ridah_ridah_forced_to_give_birth_at_checkpoint

From the beginning of the *Intifadah* in 2000 until 31/01/2011, the number of death at checkpoints totaled 401,¹⁴³ a direct result of the Israeli army preventing patients from accessing hospitals, despite their deteriorating health. For example, in February 2009, Fawzia al-Darak, 59, started to experience severe chest pains. The Israeli army stationed on the checkpoint prevented the ambulance from entering her village. The woman's family put her in a private taxi and tried to take her to





the ambulance to reach a hospital in Tulkarem. However, the Israelis prevented the vehicle from passing through the checkpoint despite being informed of the woman's deteriorating condition. The ambulance was waiting on the other side of the checkpoint; but the troops did not allow it to pass. The family was forced to attempt to take the woman back to a private physician in the village but she died of a heart attack before being able to receive treatment.¹⁴⁴

The suffering of Palestinian patients was not limited to delays at checkpoints, but went as far as forcing them to leave buses or cars and walk while they are in a critical state of health, unable to walk, or prohibited from walking, thus aggravating their condition. Sometimes, patients are forced to accept their illnesses, abandoning hope of treatment because of the burden of complex procedures, long delays at checkpoints, and the costs arising as a result. This trend is exacerbated by the consequent closures of barriers for successive days during Jewish holidays and days of heightened security alerts, which further put the lives of patients at risk.¹⁴⁵ In addition, in 2009 for example, PRCS recorded 440 incidents in which its ambulances were delayed or denied access.¹⁴⁶



A member of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society helps an old Palestinian woman to cross Surda checkpoint, which extends 700m.



A cancer patient is being transferred to another ambulance at the Qalandiya checkpoint on her way to the Augusta Victoria Hospital.







The Suffering of the Palestinian Patient under the Israeli Occupation

معاناة المريض الفلسطيني
تحت الاحتلال الإسرائيلي

This Book

The Suffering of the Palestinian Patient exposes the brutality of the Israeli occupation. Its measures make, almost, no difference whether the patient is a man, a woman, a child or an elderly person. Even critical cases were not spared from such sufferance. The various Israeli actions against Palestinian patients constitute unequivocal breaches of basic patient rights under occupation.

This book is the eleventh in the Am I Not a Human? series, in which al-Zaytouna endeavors to present to its readers the full and complete picture of the suffering of Palestinians, under Israeli occupation. It tries its best to address the hearts and minds with the most accurate, concrete and documented information. The authors tried to convey the different aspects of the suffering of the Palestinian patient under Israeli occupation.



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