

The Palestinian Strategic Report
2014 – 2015
Ch.6



Israeli Settlement Expansion in the West Bank

2014 – 2015



E-mail: info@alzaytouna.net

Website: www.alzaytouna.net

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Israeli Settlement Expansion in the West Bank 2014–2015¹

Fourth: Israeli Settlement Expansion in WB

The Israeli occupation continued its race against time in its measures and practices on the ground in the Palestinian territories, seeking to Judaize it and alter its Arab identity, in order to annex it and implement Israeli civil law on it. For a while now, Israeli authorities have worked to implement a plan prepared in the 1970s, to dismember the WB governorates by creating ghettos and cantons as the final stage of occupying and controlling the entire WB.

In 2014 and 2015 the systematic expansion of Jewish settlements in WB continued. According to statistics, the number of Israeli settlers living in settlements rose from 240 thousand in 1990 to approximately 750 thousand in 2015, living in 196 Israeli settlements and 232 settlement outposts throughout WB, including East Jerusalem.²

An official Palestinian report by the National Bureau to Defend the Land and Resist Colonial Settlements–PLO stated that more than 90% of WB lands seized by the Israelis were allocated to the expansion of Jewish settlements. The report said that the “Blue Line team,” who works for the Israeli Army’s “Civil Administration” agency, is demarcating Palestinian lands that have been seized in order to initiate planning and construction of settlements.³

Israeli settlement activity and confiscation of Palestinian land from the territories occupied in 1967 continued along the same quickened pace in 2014. In that year, Israel issued 18 orders to confiscate land, citing either security pretexts or declaring them “state land.” Through these orders, 7,262 donums

¹ This section is the approved English translation of the study: “Israeli Settlement Expansion in the West Bank,” which is the second section of chapter six of the *Palestinian Strategic Report 2014-2015*, edited by Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh. The Arabic version of this report was released in 2016 and the draft of this section was written by Dr. Ibrahim Hassan Abu Jabir.

² ARIJ, Draft Law: Application of Israeli Building and Planning Law on Israeli Settlements Built on Occupied West Bank Land, POICA, 4/11/2015, <http://www.poica.org/details.php?Article=8573> (in Arabic)

³ Madiha al-A‘raj, Israeli Interior [Ministry] Give Special Donations to Settlements and “Blue Line Team” Specializes in Stealing Lands, site of National Bureau to Defend the Land and Resist Colonial Settlements–PLO, 14/2/2015, <http://www.nbprs.ps/news.php?action=show&id=21261> (in Arabic)

(7.3 square kilometers) of land owned by Palestinians were seized, for the sake of expanding settlements.⁴

Israel also seized four thousand donums (four square kilometers) to build a new settlement west of Bethlehem and Hebron, from the villages of Nahalin, Husan, Wadi Fukin, al-Jaba'a, and Surif. Another decision was issued to seize another one thousand donums (one square kilometer) of the land of western and southern Bethlehem, according to the information center, The Committee to Resist the Wall and Settlements. Yoav Mordechai, then-Israeli coordinator of operations in WB, said the measures were taken according to a decision by the Israeli government, following the kidnapping and killing of three settlers in Hebron. Some Palestinian experts believe, however, the goal is to create contiguity between the settlements of Gush Etzion and Bethlehem on one hand, and the settlements and Jerusalem on the other. Furthermore, Israel seized another one thousand donums (one square kilometer) in Jerusalem; and handed out dozens of notices to Palestinians in southern Jenin and Tulkarem in the northern WB for the confiscation of thousands of donums of their farmlands.⁵

In December 2014, *Haaretz* published details of an Israeli plan to expand settlements at the expense of 35 thousand donums (35 square kilometers) of WB land. The newspaper report said the plan would turn land considered by the Israeli government to be "state land" into settlements. According to *Haaretz*, 99% of these state lands have been allocated to settlers. *Haaretz* said plans had been developed for 260 thousand donums (260 square kilometers) of WB, comprising settlement plans especially in the Jordan Valley and the borders of the territories occupied in 1948.⁶

According to data from the Palestinian Monitoring Group of the Palestinian Negotiations Affairs department, nearly 11,933 settlements were approved in 2014 in WB. Tenders were posted for the construction of another 5,057 units, in addition to schools, synagogues, malls, and infrastructure for Jewish settlers.⁷ Around 13,537 settlement units were built in 2014, after licenses requested in previous years were obtained.

⁴ ARIJ, Palestine Leaves 2014 With an Increasing Geo-Political Crisis in Occupied Land, POICA, 10/1/2015, <http://www.poica.org/details.php?Article=7386> (in Arabic)

⁵ Settlement and Palestinian Land Confiscation During 2014, Aljazeera.net, 22/12/2014, <http://bit.ly/1Ty9EFj> (in Arabic)

⁶ *Haaretz*, 9/12/2014, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.630680>

⁷ Settlement and Palestinian Land Confiscation During 2014, Aljazeera.net, 22/12/2014.



Table 7/6: Residential Units in Israeli Settlements in WB 2014⁸

Settlements	Residential Units	Land property/ Governorate
Giv'at Hamatos	2,600	Jerusalem
Har Homa	1,970	Abu Ghuneim Mount/ Jerusalem
Ramat Shlomo	1,887	Jerusalem
Ariel	1,015	Salfit
Giv'at Ze'ev	736	Jerusalem
Gilo	708	Jerusalem
Leshem	694	Salfit
Beitar Ilit	508	South west Jerusalem
Efrat	450	Bethlehem
Elkana	452	Nablus
Shvut Rachel	350	Nablus
Talpiot	350	Jerusalem
Beit El	290	Jerusalem
Nofei Prat	256	Jerusalem
Ofra	250	Ramallah
Ramot	216	Jerusalem
Pisgat Ze'ev	178	Jerusalem
Neve Ya'akov	136	Jerusalem
Karnei Shomron	108	Nablus
Immanuel	102	Nablus
Alfei Menashe	78	Qalqilya
Adam	75	Jerusalem
Shavei Shomron	65	Nablus
Geva Benjamin	38	Jerusalem
Almog	31	Jericho
Distributed in various Jerusalem settlements	500	Jerusalem
Total	14,043	

⁸ Site of Global media organization for the Defense of Jerusalem, 4/1/2015, <http://www.al-quds.ps/prt/index.php?option.full&cid=1&nid=20259> citing the 2014 annual report of Israeli violations against the Palestinian people issued by Abdullah Hourani Center for Studies and Documentation. (in Arabic)

In 2015, settlement building and expansion, legalization of settlement outposts, and the construction of new settlements accelerated. The Israeli authorities approved plans, posted tenders, and issued permits for the construction of 17,376 residential units, 72% of which were in the Jerusalem area. Israel confiscated 3,670 donums (3.67 square kilometers) in total.⁹ By the end of 2015, the number of units had jumped to 19,822 (see table 8/6), some built and others being built or pending permits, including 2,560 hotel rooms. The distribution of residential units was as follows.

Table 8/6: Distribution of Residential Units in WB Settlements Including Jerusalem, 2015¹⁰

Settlements	Residential Units	Land property/ Governorate
Ramat Shlomo	3,391	Shu‘fat/ in Jerusalem
Jerusalem	2,200	Arab al-Sawahira
Giv‘at Ze‘ev	455	Shu‘fat/ in Jerusalem
West Jerusalem	1,400	Lifta/Jerusalem
Ramot	382	Jerusalem
Har Homa	515	Abu Ghuneim Mount/ Southern Jerusalem
West Jerusalem	330	Sheikh Jarrah/ Jerusalem
Neve Ya‘akov and Adam	114	
Nof Zion	300	Near Mukabbir Mount
West Jerusalem	192	Mamilla cemetery/ Jerusalem
West Jerusalem	480 (Hotel rooms)	Mamilla cemetery/ Jerusalem
Pisgat Ze‘ev	156	Eastern Jerusalem
Jerusalem	25	Silwan
Jerusalem	21	Herod’s Gate
Ramat HaNatziv/ Jerusalem	2,080 (Hotel rooms)	Hill of Evil Counsel/ Mukabbir Mount
Gilo	961	Near Bethlehem

⁹ ARIJ, The Israeli Violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories – Annual Report 2015, 21/1/2016, <http://www.poica.org/preview.php?Article=8887>

¹⁰ Permits and Plans to Build “17376” settlement Units Most of Them in Jerusalem and Confiscating “5416” donums, *Addustour*, 4/1/2016, <http://bit.ly/1WeHXoy> (in Arabic) Citing the 2015 annual report of Israeli violations against the Palestinian people issued by Abdullah Hourani Center For Studies and Documentation.



Elkana	156	Salfit Governorate
“Secluded” settlements	886	WB
Kiryat Arba	102	Hebron
Ma‘ale Mikmas, Rimonim and Kokhav HaShahar	2,200	WB
Modi‘in	96	Ramallah Governorate
Alfei Menashe	78	Qalqilya Governorate
Beitar Ilit	70	Bethlehem Governorate
Ariel	32	Nablus Governorate
Ma‘ale Adumim area	3,200	East Jerusalem
Total	19,822	

In 2015, the Israeli authorities issued military orders to confiscate a total of 3,670 donums (3.67 square kilometers) of Palestinian land in various parts of WB under various pretexts, but all serving to advance Israel’s settlement agenda in the occupied territories.¹¹

In the Hebron Governorate, Israeli authorities confiscated a total of 853 donums (853 thousand square meters) under various pretexts, including military and security pretexts; for the wall; state lands; military zones; and other illegitimate claims.¹²

In Ramallah and al-Bireh, Israeli authorities announced the seizure of a total of 820 donums (820 thousand square meters). Israel seized 790 donums (790 thousand square meters) of Palestinian lands in Bethlehem Governorate as part of its wider WB seizure policy¹³

It is also worth noting that the occupied Jordan Valley area continues to see repeated assaults on Palestinian villages there. Assaults have included the demolition of entire villages and housing communities, forcing their populations to evacuate, and seizing their lands for the purpose of settlement and establishing security zones, as claimed, as well as roads and streets. In addition, Arab rural communities in eastern Jerusalem saw assaults on their

¹¹ ARIJ, The Israeli Violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories – Annual Report 2015, 21/1/2016.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

tents and villages, and forced expulsion, as well as detention and banishment from the lands where they had lived for decades.

Fifth: Israel’s Demolition of Palestinian Homes

Israel implements a policy of demolishing Palestinian homes and structures as a means of collective punishment against Palestinians. The goal is to prevent them from expanding to accommodate natural population growth in some Palestinian areas, especially those designated to Area C according to the second Oslo Accords signed in 1995 between the PLO and Israel. These areas remain under the full control of the Israeli authorities, which claim that homes and structures targeted for demolition are “unlicensed” by the Israeli civilian administration. Up to 488 Palestinian homes and structures were demolished by the Israeli authorities in 2014 throughout WB, including Jerusalem. Around 851 homes and structures received notices of demolition.

Table 9/6: Distribution of Demolition Operations and Orders in WB Governorates

Governorate	Demolition Operations	Demolition Orders
Jerusalem	159	120
Nablus	39	34
Jericho	32	45
Hebron	69	328
Bethlehem	16	109
Tulkarem	10	6
Tubas	117	64
Jenin	3	31
Qalqilya	5	28
Ramallah	4	54
Salfit	4	32
Total	488	851

In 2015, Israeli bulldozers demolished a total of 482 homes and structures in WB, including 281 homes and 194 other structures including animal barns, agricultural structures and commercial buildings. The largest number of demolitions took place in Tubas Governorate and the northern Jordan Valley,



where occupation bulldozers levelled 115 homes and 37 other structures.¹⁴ In the same year, Israeli authorities issued demolition orders against a total of 629 Palestinian homes and structures. The demolition orders were mostly in Hebron: 211 homes and structures; followed by Jerusalem, with 180 homes and structures; and Bethlehem, with 64 homes and structures.¹⁵

In 2011, the Israeli army declared its intention to fully depopulate the eastern surroundings of Jerusalem, home to a Bedouin population starting from the Mukhmas area north via Khan al-Ahmar and eastern mountains to al-‘Ayzariyah in the south (mostly in the area allocated by the occupation to the Adumim settlement bloc and the E-1 project linking it to Jerusalem), where Bedouin communities are estimated to number 2,300 people.¹⁶ The goal is to push them towards either al-Nuway‘imah in Jericho or al-Jabal near al-‘Ayzariyah landfill.

In 2012 and 2013, Israel carried out repeated demolitions that continued into 2014 and 2015, demolishing several homes and agricultural structures on 17/12/2014 and 12/3/2014,¹⁷ and again on 14/1/2015, when the area of Maghair al-Dair near Mukhmas was targeted for the demolition of three barns for sheep husbandry for the first time in three decades.¹⁸ In Khan al-Ahmar and al-Za‘im, 15 homes, 5 barns, and 4 public facilities were demolished on 17/8/2015, affecting 95 people.¹⁹ Barracks housing 34 Jahalin Bedouins were demolished in the Abu Nawwar community near the settlement of Ma‘ale Adumim on 6/1/2016.²⁰

In the territories occupied in 1948, the Israeli authorities demolished hundreds of homes in various areas, in the Galilee, The Triangle (*al-Muthalath*), and Negev. The demolitions targeted homes in cities like Umm al-Fahm, Baqa al-Gharbiyyeh, Taybeh, Kafr Qasim, Lod, Rahat and Lakiya. Villages in the

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ For more information on the eviction of Bedouins from the Adumim Bloc see Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2012–2013*, p. 286.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ LRC, The Israeli Occupation Demolishes 3 Agricultural Barracks in Mukhmas, POICA, 14/1/2015, <http://poica.org/poica/2015/01/the-israeli-occupation-demolishes-3-agricultural-barracks-in-mukhmas/>

¹⁹ LRC, Destruction of Bedouin Homes and Structures in Several Bedouin Communities in Khan al-Ahmar and al-Za‘im/ Jerusalem Governorate, POICA, 17/8/2015, <http://www.poica.org/details.php?Article=8340> (in Arabic)

²⁰ LRC, The Occupation Destroys 6 Structures in Abu Nawar Bedouin community, One of the Municipal Communities in Occupied East Jerusalem, POICA, 7/1/2016, <http://www.poica.org/details.php?Article=8802> (in Arabic)

Negev were repeatedly demolished, including al-Araqib, which was demolished by the occupation more than 95 times, as well as other Arab villages in the Negev that Israel describes as “unrecognized.”²¹

Sixth: The Separation Wall: Development of its Building and its Impact on the Palestinian Situation

The Separation Wall added a new and major burden for Palestinians in WB, turning the lives of many of them into a living hell. Indeed, the barrier has isolated entire villages and neighborhoods from their natural surroundings, separated families, and impeded the freedom of movement. According to Israeli sources, the total length of the Wall is 790 km. Up to 60% of it has already been built. 10% is being built, and the remaining parts are planned and poised for implementation, according to Israeli authorities.

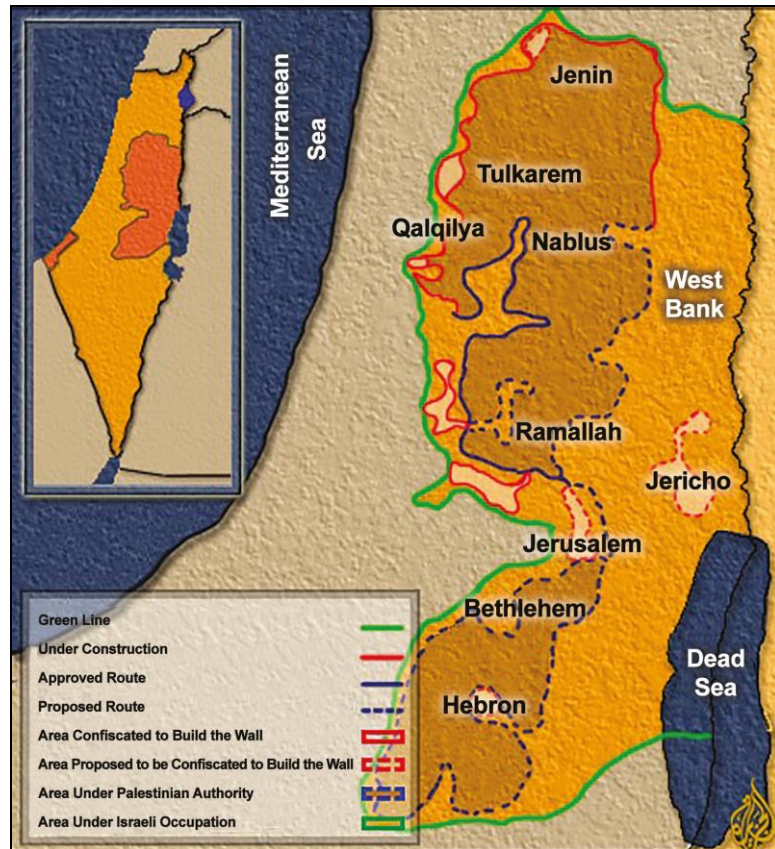
The Wall has now gone beyond the borders of the city of Jerusalem. Palestinian sources say that in August 2015, the Israeli authorities placed new markings in Palestinian territories in the area of Bir ‘Onah in the city of Beit Jala, to resume construction of the Separation Wall in the area. This took place nearly a month after Israel’s Supreme Court ruled on 6/7/2015, giving a green light to the Israeli occupation government to resume construction of the wall in the Cremisan Valley area to Tunnel’s Road in the city of Beit Jala, after years of legal battles against the decision of the Israeli government to build the wall in the area. On 29/1/2016, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled to reject all appeals, paving the way for the army to start work on the Wall in the designated site, causing the monastery to lose its geographical connection to its land, which is located behind the wall.²²

²¹ See Arabs 48, 9/3/2016.

²² ARIJ, Israeli Occupation Authorities Put New Markings on Beit Jala City Lands as a Prelude to Continue Building the Apartheid Separation Wall, POICA, 4/8/2015, www.poica.org/details.php?Article=8196 (in Arabic); and ARIJ & LRC, “Continuation of Israel’s Policy of Land Expropriation”: The Israeli Court Grants “Israel’s Defense Ministry” the Green Light to Build the Segregation Wall on Lands of Cremisan, POICA, 11/2/2016. <http://www.poica.org/details.php?Article=9008>



Map 5/6: The Separation Wall Route²³



In the same context, many marks were spotted placed by the Israeli authorities in the area known as Highway 60 (the Tunnel's Road) linking the Jerusalem settlements. These settlements are part of the Gush Etzion settlement bloc, passing through the land of Beit Jala.²⁴

The Israeli authorities intend to continue the construction of the Separation Wall in the town of Beit Jala in line with Israeli military order No. 62/60 issued on 16/3/2006. The maps attached to the military order show a section of the wall extending from the area of Cremisan Valley through the Tunnel's Road near the settlement of Gilo.

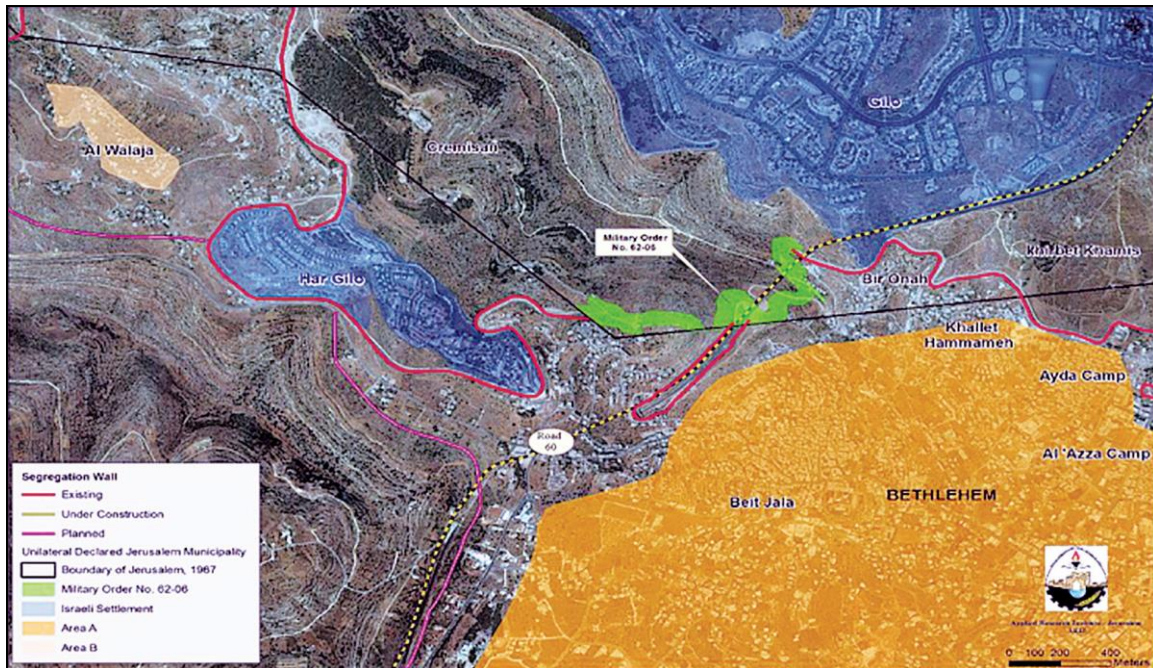
It is worth noting that if Israel completes the construction of this section of the Wall, it will complete the siege of Palestinian landowners in the town of Beit Jala, and isolate the Cremisan Valley area from the town despite it being their only outlet. The closure and isolation of the area will bring about serious economic losses to the

²³ Aljazeera.net, http://www.aljazeera.net/mritems/images/2004/2/26/1_208502_1_10.jpg

²⁴ ARIJ, Israeli Occupation Authorities Put New Marks on Beit Jala City Lands as a Prelude to Continue Building the Apartheid Separation Wall, POICA, 4/8/2015.

Palestinians there, as this area provides livelihoods for dozens of Palestinian families in Beit Jala and nearby villages.²⁵

Map 6/6: The Separation Wall Route in the Lands of Beit Jala²⁶



Israel claims that the construction of the Separation Wall in Beit Jala is needed to protect Israeli settlements from “terrorist threats.” It considers this section of the Wall to be a “front line,” especially since it falls in an area Israel considers to be the “borders of the Jerusalem municipality,” which was unilaterally and illegally redefined in 1967 following the Israeli occupation of the remaining Palestinian territories.²⁷

Israel also razed lands east of Jerusalem for the construction of another segment of the Wall to isolate it from al-‘Eizariya town. US Secretary of State John Kerry proposed to add the Palestinian neighborhoods of Jerusalem behind the Wall to what would become the capital of the future Palestinian state. Local sources reported however that Israeli forces began building the remaining part of the Wall near al-Zaytuna crossing, thus isolating al-‘Eizariya from al-Tur. The segment in question would be the last one before all of east Jerusalem becomes isolated from WB; it would become isolated from Bethlehem to the south,

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.



Ramallah to the north, and Abu Dis and al-‘Eizariya to the east, while it would be connected to Israeli-annexed west Jerusalem. Israel considers all of Jerusalem its eternal capital.²⁸

Seventh: Bypass Roads

The Israeli planned bypass roads in WB are aimed at bolstering settlements there, while undermining the peace process and the two-state solution. They violate international laws and ostensible Israeli commitments to the peace process.²⁹

By the end of 2015, bypass roads covered 770 km.³⁰ Meanwhile, Israel continued to impede the freedom of movement for Palestinians in WB through checkpoints, numbering 514 with the beginning of 2015 and 607 by the end of the same year.³¹

On 1/10/2014, the Israeli press reported that the Israeli civilian administration in WB was planning to seize 5.4 square kilometers of private Palestinian land to the west of the Israeli settlement of Adam, northern Jerusalem Governorate, to build a road only for use by Israelis.³² A few days later, *Haaretz* published a detailed report on the new bypass roads along with a map detailing its path.³³

Some of the bypass roads in WB are used by both Israelis and Palestinians, others by Jews only. One of these roads is Route 437, north of Jerusalem Governorate, linking Israeli settlements in the Jerusalem municipal area such as Pisgat Ze’ev and Neve Ya’akov settlements to the settlement of Adam (Givat Binyamin Israeli), and to the Israeli settlements built on the territory of the Ramallah Governorate, such as Beit El settlement. This road is also used by Palestinians, being the only road that links northern Palestinian governorates to southern ones.

²⁸ *Alarab Alyawm*, 8/1/2014.

²⁹ ARIJ, Israel Confiscates Palestinian Lands of Hizma Village to Build a Road for Israeli Settlers, POICA, 8/10/2014, <http://www.poica.org/details.php?Article=7057> (in Arabic)

³⁰ PIC, 19/1/2015, <http://bit.ly/21Hf5oQ>

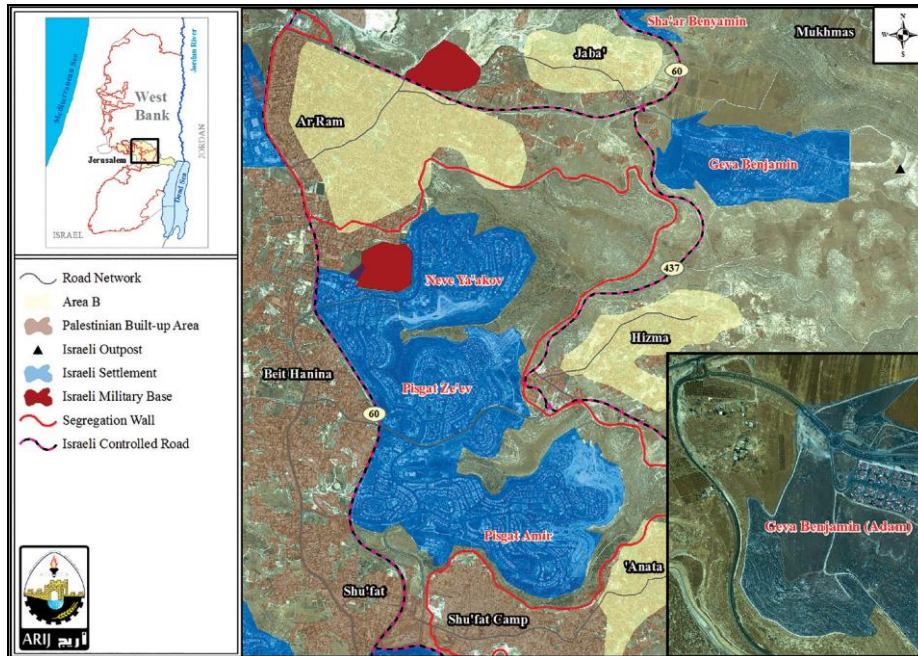
³¹ ARIJ, The Israeli Violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories – Annual Report 2015, 21/1/2016.

³² ARIJ, Israel Confiscates Palestinian Lands of Hizma Village to Build a Road for Israeli Settlers, POICA, 8/10/2014.

³³ *Ibid.*

Route 437 terminates at the western entrance of the settlement of Adam, linking to settler Highway 60 (northern highway) that accesses Israeli settlements to the north of the West Bank³⁴ (See map 7/6).

Map 7/6: Bypass Road Network North of Jerusalem³⁵



On 13/6/2014, the Subcommittee on Settlements of the Supreme Planning Council of the Israeli Civil Administration posted an announcement in *al-Quds* Newspaper about the deposit of four detailed master plans of a road network that only serves the Israeli settlements east of Jericho.³⁶ According to the plans, the main purpose is to organize roads linking Israeli settlements in the area to serve different expansion works.³⁷

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ LRC, Advertisement About Depositing Master Plans for Opening a Road Network, POICA, 13/6/2014, <http://poica.org/poica/2014/06/advertisement-about-depositing-master-plans-for-opening-a-road-network/>

³⁷ Ibid.



Table 10/6: Plan Numbers of Deposited Plans and the Targeted Locations³⁸

Plan No.	Type & road no.	Blocks no./ location	Beneficiary settlement
1/936	Regional road/ No. 449	Blocks 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26 & 44, of al-‘Auja, north of Jericho	Mevo’ot Yericho and Rimonim
2/822	Local road/ No. 4499	Blocks 4, 17, 19, 20, 41, 43 of al-‘Auja, north of Jericho	Yetav
2/936	Regional road/ No. 449	Nu‘eima–Jericho lands within block no. 1	Na‘omi
1/934	Regional road/ No. 460	Blocks 20, 25 & 44 of al-‘Auja	Na‘omi

Israeli authorities also built a bypass road in the northern side of the town of Salfit, to link the Ariel settlement to the Israeli power plant near Salfit built near bypass road no. 05. The road in question is two kilometers long, cutting through the land of the town of Salfit in the area known as al-Fraise northwest of the town.

Eighth: Israeli Attacks on Palestinian Agriculture and Water Resources

The Israeli authorities continued to seize Palestinian farmlands, inflicting severe damage on the livelihoods of Palestinian farmers. An Israeli press report revealed that thousands of donums seized by the Israeli army in WB for “military purposes” as “firing zones,” were actually handed over to settlers to cultivate or use for cattle grazing, while preventing their original Palestinian owners from approaching them. According to the report, military zones 903 and 904 in the Jordan valley were allocated to settlers under official agreements. For example, the lands allocated to the settlements of Ro’i, Beka’ot and Gitit in the Jordan valley are defined as “firing zones,” part of them being private Palestinian property. According to the report, in 2014 Israeli authorities made 169 expulsions of Palestinians who attempted to farm their lands, and issued 105 evacuation and cessation orders regarding agricultural activities.³⁹

In GS, the minister of agriculture in the Palestinian government of national consensus, Shawqi ‘Issa, stated that the total agricultural losses during the 2014 Israeli war on GS was about \$500 million in value, excluding losses to livestock

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ *Al-Ayyam*, Ramallah, 12/5/2015.

or fisheries. Israel bombed more than 70% of the farmed land, claiming they were positions used by the Palestinian resistance to fire rockets. The Ministry of Agriculture in GS said that the total value of agricultural, animal stock, and fish stock losses as well as losses to factories that use crops as raw material was \$780 million.⁴⁰

The Israeli occupation also adopted a scorched-earth policy. According to Palestinian sources, on 19/5/2015 the Israeli army set fire to grazing lands in Khamat al-Ras al-Ahmar, east of the town of 'Atuf in Tubas Governorate, in the northern West Bank. Citizens and civil defense crews were prevented from putting out the fires. In the same context, more than two square kilometers of pasture were burned in Umm al-Qaba near al-Maleh.⁴¹

The goal behind this policy of the occupation is to cut off the livelihood of Palestinians and force them to leave their land and allow settlers to replace them. Furthermore, Israeli officers and settlers routinely uproot fruit trees and olive trees, which are the main source of livelihood for thousands of Palestinian families.

The Israelis carried out dozens of assaults on Palestinian farmers and their crops. In 2014, Israeli forces and settlers uprooted 10,596 fruit trees, mostly in Ramallah (5,325); 2,059 in Bethlehem; 1,332 in Hebron. In 2015, 13,671 trees were uprooted. The Israeli authorities also systematically seized underground water in WB, consuming most of the water resources of the Palestinians there, while denying them their basic needs. Israel even sells back stolen water to Palestinians.⁴²

In January 2015, Israeli forces uprooted 5,655 trees located in various parts of WB. The most affected governorate was Ramallah, where more than 5,120 trees were uprooted, followed by Hebron with 4,150 trees. In Tubas Governorate, Israeli authorities uprooted more than 1,500 trees that were serving as a nature reserve there.⁴³

Many WB villagers faced problems and irregular delivery of drinking and irrigation water because of Israeli policies and racist laws. Israel previously

⁴⁰ *Raialyoum*, 30/8/2014.

⁴¹ Quds Press, 19/5/2015.

⁴² ARIJ, Palestine Leaves 2014 With an Increasing Geo-Political Crisis in Occupied Land, POICA, 10/1/2015; and ARIJ, The Israeli Violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories – Annual Report 2015, 21/1/2016.

⁴³ ARIJ, The Israeli Violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories – Annual Report 2015, 21/1/2016.



seized all water aquifers in the occupied territories, preventing farmers from digging water wells and destroying others.

As a result of Israel's depletion of Palestinian groundwater aquifers, and because of restrictions on Palestinian construction and repair of wells, the water extracted by Palestinians decreased to less than the levels stated in the Oslo Accords. In 1999, the Palestinians extracted 138 Million Cubic Meters (MCM) of groundwater in WB, compared to 103.8 MCM in 2014.⁴⁴

In the coastal aquifer, the water extracted in Gaza was 100.8 MCM in 2013, compared to 88.5 MCM in 2014. This quantity is considered an over-extraction, because the basin's sustainable yield should not exceed 50–60 MCM a year, meaning that more than 90% of water pumped from the coastal aquifer does not satisfy the water quality standards of the World Health Organization (WHO).⁴⁵

A February 2014 report by B'Tselem—The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, confirmed the existence of discrimination when it comes to the quantities of water allocated to Palestinians per capita compared to those allocated to Israelis. According to the Israeli National Water Company (Mekorot), the average household water consumption in Israel is between 100 and 230 liters per person per day, compared to the average daily consumption among Palestinians connected to a running-water network, which is about 73 liters. Additionally, 113 thousand Palestinians living in 70 communities (50 thousand in Area C) are not connected to the water supply network. The report also said that the average consumption per capita in GS is 70–90 liters per day, but that the water quality was extremely poor.⁴⁶

In GS, 70% of water facilities have been disrupted as a result of Israeli targeting or because of fuel shortages caused by the Israeli blockade, leading to a 70–80% shortage, exacerbating water, environmental and health conditions in the

⁴⁴ PCBS, Water Produced per Basin in the West Bank (Wells and Springs) 2014, http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_Rainbow/Documents/water-E10-2014.htm

⁴⁵ PCBS, The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) and the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) Issue a Press Release on the Occasion of World Water Day 22/3/2015, <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1347&mid=3171&wversion=Staging>; and PCBS, Water Produced for Domestic Use from the Coastal Aquifer in Gaza Strip by Governorate, 2014, http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_Rainbow/Documents/water-E11-2014.htm

⁴⁶ Press Statement, Undeniable discrimination in the amount of water allocated to Israelis and Palestinians, site of B'Tselem - The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, 12/2/2014, http://www.btselem.org/press_releases/20140212_discrimination_in_water_allocation

Strip.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the Israeli assault on GS in the summer of 2014 led to the destruction of sewage systems, causing waste water to flood into the clean water networks and the natural environment, worsening the risks to public health. This compounded the fact that the Strip was already discharging 98 thousand cubic meters of waste water a day into the sea.⁴⁸

As for WB, the Israeli authorities draw their water and supply their own cities while selling the surplus to the Palestinians. The quantity of water purchased in 2014 from Mekorot was 63.5 MCM (with the exception of the parts of Jerusalem annexed by Israel after 1967), compared to 57.4 MCM in 2009.⁴⁹

This is not to mention the unequal distribution of water between Palestinians and Israelis, all in the context of a surplus of water in Israel, according to *Haaretz*.⁵⁰ According to the PA in Ramallah, Israel deliberately impeded more than 120 Palestinian strategic projects in 2010–2014 related to waste water treatment plants, water well drilling, and water infrastructure systems.⁵¹

Ninth: Military Checkpoints in WB

Israeli military checkpoints have turned large areas of WB into ghettos. Their numbers increased following the eruption of the Jerusalem *Intifadah* from 514 in early 2015 to 607 by the end of the year.⁵²

According to OCHA-oPt data, Israeli forces intensified their presence and checking procedures at WB checkpoints. 16 out of 25 checkpoints across WB, which were previously only occasionally staffed, became regularly staffed and additional ad-hoc (flying) checkpoints were deployed in 152 locations.⁵³

Observers and analysts say that Israeli forces never abandoned any of their checkpoints even at the height of negotiations progress with the Palestinians.

⁴⁷ *Al-Ayyam*, Ramallah, 25/7/2014.

⁴⁸ Gaza: Damaged water and sewage systems pose health danger, site of International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 13/10/2014, <http://blogs.icrc.org/ilot/2014/10/13/gaza-rehabilitation-of-vital-infrastructure-is-urgent/>

⁴⁹ PCBS, Selected Indicators for Water Statistics in Palestine, 2009–2014, http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_Rainbow/Documents/water/water-E-main.htm

⁵⁰ Yuval Elizur, Over and Drought: Why the End of Israel's Water Shortage Is a Secret, *Haaretz*, 24/1/2014, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.570374>

⁵¹ *Al-Ayyam*, Ramallah, 15/4/2014.

⁵² *Al-Ayyam*, Ramallah, 2/1/2016, http://www.al-ayyam.ps/ar_page.php?id=10567e45y274103877Y10567e45

⁵³ OCHA–oPt, Protection of Civilians Weekly Report, 6–12/10/2015, <http://www.ochaopt.org/content/protection-civilians-weekly-report-6-12-october-2015>



Military checkpoints were kept in place near towns and villages, sometimes without stationing forces and others with soldiers who do not intercept the movement of citizens, while keeping the infrastructure of checkpoints and watchtowers.⁵⁴

At the end of 2015, the Israeli army operated 27 permanent staffed checkpoints, conducting mandatory inspection of Palestinians, many of whom are stopped and delayed. It operates 26 checkpoints that are the last checkpoint between WB and Israel. Some of these checkpoints are situated on the Green Line, and some are gates in the Separation Wall. Meanwhile, there are 12 checkpoints in Hebron at places where there is friction between settlers and Palestinians. These checkpoints are permanently staffed, and persons who cross are checked.⁵⁵

Summary

Over the years considered in this report, we can see in Jerusalem, the central arena of the conflict, many trends directly linked to the more general trends of the conflict. These include the change in the Israeli political system towards the religious-nationalist camp; increased Israeli adoption of Jewish religious rhetoric and prophecies as a motive for political action; the increasing importance of the status of Israeli settlers as a colonial arm that is now the spearhead of the expansion of the Israeli state. Indeed, it is the settlers that are pushing forward an agenda of division and organizing raids at *al-Aqsa* Mosque, where they are funding and operating excavations. Settlers are leading the battle to seize the homes of Palestinian Jerusalemites in the old town and the surrounding neighborhoods. They are leading assaults on these residents too, triggering an uprising in 2014 with the murder of the child Muhammad Abu Khdeir, which evolved into a full scale war on GS in the summer of that year.

These extremist settlers triggered another popular Palestinian uprising in 2015, the Jerusalem *Intifadah*, following attempts to divide *al-Aqsa* Mosque. Israeli authorities protected and supported this agenda by deploying its forces to take part in the clashes settlers had instigated and then to steer events from that point

⁵⁴ Na'ilah Khalil, West Bank Checkpoints: Occupation Made Ghettos, *The New Arab*, 30/10/2015, <http://bit.ly/1NmDZYn>

⁵⁵ Statistics on Checkpoints and Roadblocks, B'Tselem, 1/1/2016, http://www.btselem.org/freedom_of_movement/old/copy%20of%20checkpoints

forward. Although the Jerusalem *Intifadah* disrupted the agenda of dividing *al-Aqsa* Mosque, Judaization projects continue apace, aimed at altering the cultural and visual identity of Jerusalem.

During the period covered by this report, Israeli authorities continued their aggressive policies, confiscating Palestinian lands in WB and expanding settlements with the construction of thousands of residential units, continuing the construction of the Wall, and continuing the construction of bypass settler roads to dismember WB. In addition, hundreds of checkpoints were established, impeding the freedom of movement of Palestinians and their economic and political activities. Israeli authorities also continued their policies of consolidating their hold on most parts of WB under Area C, while stealing Palestinian water resources and selling the surplus back to Palestinians.

Thus, the Israeli side is actively working to alter the identity of the land and the population, without regard to the peace accords it signed and its commitments to the PA, let alone international laws and conventions. This will lead to the death of the peace process and the two-state solution and make the return of Palestinians to resistance in a broader and stronger manner likely.



التقرير الاستراتيجي الفلسطيني

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الفصل السادس

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