



UNRWA

Case Study

Reports on the West Bank Barrier
March 2004

Isolation of two refugee-owned houses in Ras village, Tulkarm



In the southern Tulkarm area, the inclusion of Salit settlement (pop. 400) on the 'Israeli side' of the security barrier has resulted in neighbouring Palestinian villages losing large tracts of land. In Kfar Jammal, (pop. 2,415) and Kfar Sur (pop. 1,185) approximately half of the villages' land is now isolated between the barrier and the Green Line. In Ras (pop. 479), where confiscation orders were filed one week *after* bulldozers had already uprooted hundreds of trees, up to 75 percent of agricultural land is now isolated. Farmers'

access to this land is possible through an agricultural gate which opens irregularly, and is only permitted to those with Ras residency cards. Access is also possible through the village of Khirbet Jubara (pop. 309), which is one of the 16 communities now entirely isolated between the barrier and the Green Line. Access through Jubara has the advantage of bypassing the gate but necessitates passing through the Kufaryat checkpoint, now the main crossing point into Tulkarm, and if successful, entails long delays.

In Ras, the initial path of the barrier changed by 300 metres with the result that two houses are now isolated on the 'Israeli side'. Both belong to UNRWA-registered refugees, the Dumeiri and Bedarat families, who moved from Tulkarm camp in recent years and purchased agricultural land on the western slopes of the village. With the completion of the barrier both families find themselves cut off from Ras village on the 'Palestinian side' of the fence and from commercial, educational and medical services in Tulkarm. They face long delays in accessing the outside world through the gate or through Jubara. They face restrictions in using the barrier's patrol road, now the only route for vehicles, and are under night curfew. Outsiders, including close family members, require special permits to visit. Both have recently received notifications of demolition, with one order already valid.

The family of Azmi Issa Hussein Dumeiri, refugee no. 16541670, bought 13 dunums of land in 1999. The family has since unsuccessfully applied for a building permit, employing the services of an Israeli Arab lawyer. In the meantime they have constructed a two-story building which houses 12 family members. Two of the children are school going and 11-year old Abeer attends an UNRWA school in Tulkarm. Mr. Dumeiri transports both children to the gate, which is usually open at 0700 hours for half an hour. He is not allowed to take his car outside and both children must make their own way to Tulkarm beyond this point. The gate also opens for half an hour in the afternoon for the Dumeiri and Bedarat families and for children from Jubara who attend school in Ras. Mr. Dumeiri reports that since receiving the demolition order, Abeer has been unable to study and his wife in particular has been very affected.

Since March 2002, Mr. Dumeiri has received several warnings of demolition on the grounds that his house built without a permit on agricultural land. On 25 September, he was served with a final demolition order, to come into effect after three days. The demolition has not yet taken place, possibly because of the Jewish holidays and because there are currently four internationals from the International Solidarity Movement and from the International Women's Peace Service currently staying in the building. Mr. Dumeiri is adamant that he will not move, if only because he has nowhere else to move to. He will also rebuild if he can find the resources.

The family of Yousef Ali Massoud Bedarat, refugee no. 16039601, bought three dunums of land in 1994. In 1998 he paid NIS 312 to open a file to apply for a permit to build. He was required by the Israeli authorities to submit a map of the area. This map cost him Jordan Dinars 350 (JD); at today's exchange rate this would be NIS 2,200. The authorities did not approve of the colour of the map, so it cost him JD 150 to change the colour. This copy was unacceptable to the authorities and they required him to make additional changes that cost him another JD 200. He was asked to submit a map of the local area consisting of 59 dunums of land showing his portion of the area. This map cost him another JD 200. Then he was required to provide a design of the house. This cost him NIS 500.

Mr. Bedarat felt that the authorities were stalling so he commenced construction without receiving official permission. He completed the first floor in 1998, and in July 2000, he started to build a second floor so his two married sons could live with him and help cultivate the land. The second floor is still unfinished. On 7 September 2003 he received his first demolition warning which means the family should voluntarily destroy the house, or else the home will be demolished and the family charged for the cost of the demolition. Mr. Bedarat has hired a lawyer to assist him; he has already paid NIS 500. His lawyer told him he would need at least NIS 12,000 to fight the demolition order.

Mr. Bedarat is a former sanitation worker who retired because of a back problem. He now cultivates a vegetable garden and raises goats, although these can no longer roam at will and he also experiences difficulties in obtaining feed for them. Much of his time is now spent in ferrying his four youngest children to school in Ras: what was once a journey of a couple of hundred metres can now take up to several hours and ten kilometres. His five grown up children who live outside now require permits to visit. His two oldest sons live in Tulkarm, which is approximately five kilometres away. When his sons obtain a permit, it is often only valid for a few hours. Mr. Bedarat has one daughter in Hebron who has a West Bank ID and she must also obtain a permit to visit. He has two daughters who live in Beer Sheva have Israeli IDs. They can visit him more easily than their other siblings as they do not need a permit.

Mr. Bedarat says his life has become unbearable. His wife and his four children who live at home are severely depressed as they are isolated and cannot interact with friends or family. His eldest daughter who is 17 attends school in Tulkarm. Mr. Bedarat's sons, ages 14 and eight, and his 10-year-old daughter attend the PA School in Ras which they reach by passing the gate that the soldiers open twice daily. However, on occasion the Israeli authorities have kept the gate closed and the children are unable to attend the school. The family no longer visits the doctor in Ras village and now must travel through Kufaryat checkpoint to Tulkarm for all their medical needs.

Throughout January 2004, the two families have been visited frequently by the Israeli authorities, offering them land and a home in the Tulkarm area on the 'Palestinian' side of the barrier. The authorities informed the families that the homes are as good as demolished and that there was no point in remaining. On 26 February both families were visited by Israeli authorities who surveyed both houses in order to provide houses of 'equivalent size' in the area. Both families are still refusing to leave their homes.

See Map and Pictures Below:

