



UNRWA

UPDATE

Reports on the West Bank Barrier
June 2004

UPDATE: New Barrier Construction

The following is an overview on new developments in the Phase 3 construction of the Barrier, in the Salfit, Ramallah, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron districts. Data is taken from a number of recent reports/articles, information supplied by participants in the recent OCHA-convened Barrier meeting (16 June) and the joint OCHA/ UNRWA update 'Construction of the Barrier, Access and its Humanitarian Impact', released on 22 June.

Salfit Area

Deir Ballut enclave

- The villages of Deir Ballut, Rafat and Zawiye will become an enclave and lose most of their agricultural hinterland. Land levelling began on 7 June and protests are taking place daily. The enclave is home to around 11,700 people, approximately 780 of whom are refugees.

Ariel-Immanuel-Kedumin 'fingers'

- The Israeli authorities are using the term 'fingernails' to refer to the sections of the Barrier planned to ring large settlement blocks – Ariel, Kedumim, Immanuel and the Shomron bloc – in the Salfit and Qalqilya districts. Two weeks ago, Defence Ministry officials issued preliminary appropriation orders for a stretch 3.5 kilometres long and 100 meters wide near Iskaka. Appropriation orders for the Immanuel and Kedumim areas will be released in coming weeks. The 'fingernails' will in the future be expanded into 'fingers' - meaning these local barriers will be connected to the main Barrier. Construction of the 'fingers' is supposed to start in early 2005, according to Israeli officials, contrary to agreements reached with the US. Completion of the 'fingers' is scheduled for May 2005, according to Netash Mashiah, head of the Seamzone Administration. This would 'lead to the annexation of 150 kilometres of West Bank land to Israel territory' according to Ha'aretz (14 June).
- In response to the Ariel decision, US State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher declared that the Barrier is 'problematic because it defines permanent boundaries, confiscates Palestinian territories and makes daily life more difficult for Palestinian civilians'. Boucher said that US objections have been made clear to Israel. (Ha'aretz 16 June). However, last year it was reported that the American administration accepted Israel's position that in principle, Ariel should be included inside the main Barrier for security reasons. Under the agreed 'breach plan' compromise (today's 'fingernails' option), Israel agreed to create temporary local barriers around the settlements and to join them up to the main Barrier at a later date, after discussion by the two parties. (Yediot 23 September 2003). Sharon appears to have gone ahead with plans and timelines for the 'fingernails' and 'fingers' without consulting the US, apparently as part of an agreement with Finance Minister Netanyahu in return for the latter's support for the Gaza disengagement plan.

Ramallah/Jerusalem areas

- Israel has dropped plans to build a double Barrier east of Ben-Gurion Airport, according to Colonel Danny Tirza, the official in charge of planning the route. According to the cabinet decision of October 2003 and official map released thereafter, one Barrier was to be built along the Green Line six kilometres east of the airport, and another three kilometres east of this point, effectively creating an enclave that would enclose some 20,000 Palestinians between a double Barrier. Following negotiations with the US, Tirza reported that it was decided not to build the second Barrier east of the Green Line. 'There will be no Palestinian enclaves,' Tirza declared at a Jerusalem press briefing. (Jerusalem Post 15 June). Tirza's statement would seem to imply that a projected second enclave in the Jerusalem/Ramallah area from Beit Surik to Safa will also be built without a second eastern Barrier.

'Jerusalem Envelope'

- Dozens of high court appeals and injunctions are delaying construction: only 20 of the complete 64-kilometre section has been completed since construction began two years ago and contractors are currently only working on a 14-kilometre stretch. Supreme Court President Barak initially announced that he would rule on the first major appeal by the end of the year: under pressure this has been changed to end-June. However, the end-2004 deadline for completion of the 'Envelope' seems certain to slip.
- According to Israeli sources 50,000 Jerusalem Arab ID holders will find themselves on the 'Palestinian' side of the Barrier in five main localities: Kafr Aqab; Samir Ramis; Kalandia Camp; Shufat Camp and Anata. 180,000 residents will remain on the 'Israeli' side. In early June former Jerusalem mayor and current Minister for Industry, Trade and Labour, Ehud Olmert said that he foresaw six Arab suburbs of Jerusalem transferred to Palestinian control in the future. However, three of the localities he mentioned – Isawiya, Sur Bahir and Umm Tuba – are on the 'Israeli' side of the Barrier. At a speech inaugurating the Menachem Begin Heritage Centre on 16 June, Prime Minister Sharon pledged that Jerusalem 'will remain the undivided, eternal capital of the Jewish people', apparently contradicting Olmert's claims. (Jerusalem Post 10 June).
- The Israelis have announced that 11 checkpoints/terminals will control traffic in and out of Jerusalem. The locations are: Bidu, Beituniya, Kalandia, near Adam settlement, Shuafat refugee Camp, Al-Zeim, near Eizariya, Al-Kuds University (Abu Dis), Masmoriya (Numan), north of Bethlehem, and El-Khader. Colonel Danny Tirza says that these checkpoints will be similar to the regulations in force at Ben Gurion airport, with each terminal manned by a staff of about 12 security personnel, including Border Police, civil police and civilian security guards. Most will be operational 24 hours a day, with some open by the end of this year and the remainder by the middle of 2005. (Jerusalem Post 10 June).
- Construction has begun on the stretch between Kalandia and Ram checkpoints. The wall in this section will be 4.5 metres high, rather than the 8-metre- high columns already erected in Abu Dis. Although the precast concrete columns are already stacked by the side of the road they will apparently not be installed for some months, in anticipation of court orders and to prepare infrastructure. Kalandia checkpoint will reportedly be moved to slightly to the west onto the new Route 45 extension. (OCHA meeting).

- Ram, which has 62,000 inhabitants, 80 percent of whom are Jerusalem ID holders, is not listed as a location for one of the 11 official crossing points in the Jerusalem area. Therefore, vehicles exiting Ram will have to drive north through Kalandia checkpoint before turning south to enter Jerusalem, according to some Israeli report. The 'Bir Nabala enclave' containing 15,100 residents, in 5 villages, will be fenced in and cut off from Ram, which many of its residents depend on for services. An exodus of Jerusalem ID card holders is already taking place from this enclave. A tunnel will reportedly be built to link the enclave with Ramallah through the village of Rafat. The enclave has not yet been issued with requisition orders. (OCHA meeting).
- Anata Village and Shu'fat refugee camp have been issued with orders for the requisition of land encircling this area on three sides. According to the planned path, the Barrier will only be open on the West Bank side, separating these communities from Jerusalem. A petition to the High Court to re-route this area was rejected. The residents petitioned to relocate the Barrier east of the current route, closer to the Jerusalem Municipality border. No construction has yet begun in this area. This area has a total population of more than 20,000 Jerusalem ID card holders. Shu'fat refugee camp is located within the Jerusalem municipal boundary and has about 10,000 UNRWA registered refugees with Jerusalem ID cards. Anata is located mostly on West Bank land and most residents have West Bank ID cards, with the exception of Al Salam, a Jerusalem neighborhood. Al Salam residents have Jerusalem ID cards. (OCHA/ UNRWA update)
- A gap exists in the 'Jerusalem Envelope' between Shuafat Camp and Al Ezariya. Officially the Israeli authorities have not said if they intend to include the Ma'ale Adumim bloc within the Barrier. However, before departing for the US to discuss the disengagement plan in April Prime Minister Sharon gave an address in the settlement in which he announced that it would be included in the 'Jerusalem Envelope' plan.

Bethlehem

- On 14 June Defence Minister Mofaz toured the Etzion Bloc and requested that the Gush Etzion Regional Council present a comprehensive plan within 90 days for expanding the settlements in the Etzion Bloc. The settlers have already planned for the construction of some 5,300 housing units throughout the Gush Etzion Regional Council area, including 2,500 new housing units in the area of Nokdim, which is on the 'Palestinian' side of the Barrier. Their plan calls for expanding the Gush Etzion Regional Council by an additional 10,000 dunums of land, on which another 7,500 housing units are to be built. Also on 14 June, Mofaz informed the YESHA Council officials that construction permits would be processed soon in the major settlement blocs as a counterweight to the disengagement plan. Mofaz is expected to tour the settlement blocs around Maale Adumim and Ariel in the next weeks, and examine possibilities of building additional housing units there. Officials in the Prime Minister's Bureau confirmed that 'in the wake of the disengagement plan, settlement blocs, including the Etzion Bloc, would be strengthened.' (Maariv 15 June).
- Officially, the US is opposed to moving Gaza settlers into settlements in the West Bank. "Moving settlers from Gaza to the West Bank is not part of the road map and lacks any logic," said an American official. "The evacuees should be resettled inside the Green Line and not in the territories," he said, adding that the U.S. will oppose any expansion of settlements in the West Bank, even after the Gaza withdrawal. Nonetheless, there are discussions underway between Israel and the US administration about redefining the boundaries of all the settlements in the West Bank and determining where it will be possible to continue construction. The contacts are between U.S. Ambassador Dan Kurtzer and Brig. Gen. Baruch Spiegel on the Israeli side. (Ha'aretz 16 June).

Hebron

- In the southern Hebron area, there is a campaign to move Bedouins who reside in the area on the projected 'Israeli' side of the Barrier north to the 'Palestinian' side. Although officially these Bedouins number 700, in reality there may be as many as 4,000 -5,000.

General

- Netzah Mashiah, who heads the Defense Ministry's Seamzone Administration, reported that the entire Barrier will be completed by the end of 2005, its length will be about 700 meters, and that its overall cost will be between 8 and 9 billion shekels. (Yediot 17 June).
- Defence Minister Mofaz and Finance Minister Netanyahu have authorised an additional budget of NIS 300 million to fortify settlements which will remain on the Palestinian side of the Barrier. This budget is in addition to the 'regular' Barrier budget. (Ha'aretz 15 June).
- There is no indication as to when the ICJ's 'advisory opinion' will be delivered. The PLO's Negotiation Affairs Department (who attended the OCHA meeting) is the focal point on the Palestinian side for any follow-up questions/clarifications which The Hague judges might have: they've heard nothing since the oral hearings finished end-February. They are supposed to receive ten days notice before the opinion is delivered: again they have not been informed.

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