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# Life Behind The Wall

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Voices of Women from the Seam Zone



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*Cover Photo: Section of the Wall in Abu-Dis by © Gerard Horton*

## About the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling

The Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) was established by a small group of women in Jerusalem in 1991 as a Palestinian, independent, non-governmental, non-profit organization. The Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling aims to address the causes and consequences of gender-based violence within the community as well as the gender-specific effects of the occupation.

WCLAC provides social and legal counseling, awareness raising programmes, offers legal and social support and training, proposes bills and law amendments, and participates in the organization of advocacy and pressure campaigns nationally and internationally on behalf of Palestinian women and the community.

WCLAC's International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law programme was established to monitor and document Israel's violations of human rights and the impact of these violations on women. WCLAC documents women's testimonies using the framework of international law and human rights, combined with a feminist vision of equality and social justice.

The programme seeks to ensure that Palestinian women's rights violations are effectively monitored, then collected through a process of documentation. The documentation is used to advocate on behalf of women in Palestine, to promote awareness of human rights violations and to work towards accountability for those responsible. The documentation also provides testimony to women's experiences of war and occupation.

WCLAC has special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

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# 1

# Introduction

*"We have no life at all here." (JM, Al-Khalayleh)*

This report is one in a series of reports published by the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), looking at the impact of Israeli policies and practices on Palestinian women. In this report we focus on the lives of women in the 'Seam Zone'; an area of the West Bank situated between the Separation Wall and the 1949 Armistice Line (also known as the Green Line). Apart from the Palestinians with East Jerusalem Identity Cards (IDs) living in this area, it is the Palestinians with West Bank IDs that are most affected by this closure regime, as they are trapped within this zone; not allowed to enter Jerusalem and cut off from the rest of the West Bank by the Separation Wall and various checkpoints. Isolated from their families and communities, the Palestinians living in the Seam Zone face poverty, loneliness and hardships.

Palestinians living in the Seam Zone are largely disconnected from the major Palestinian cities and towns that provide for vital services in health, education, employment and administration. They are, moreover, disconnected from their extended families and communities. The impact on women in these areas is particularly profound; women, especially those that do not work outside the home, are often completely isolated, bound to their homes and cut off from family, community and vital services. Palestinians' fundamental rights to adequate housing and freedom of movement and their rights to health, work, education and family life are thus routinely violated as a result of Israeli policies.

Through interviews conducted with women living in the Seam Zone, this report reveals the restrictions on their lives and the economic, social and psychological impact of living in this area. By means of this report, we hope to contribute to a greater understanding of the nature of the policies and practices discussed and their particular impact on Palestinian women. We also wish to contribute to a process of accountability for those responsible for the violations of the rights of the affected families.

The report begins with an overview of the background and the current situation in the Seam one. This is followed by a short

overview of the relevant legal principles including international human rights law (IHRL) and international humanitarian law (IHL). Successively the report continues with a descriptive section on the experiences of women, interviewed by WCLAC, who provided us with the detailed testimonies used in this report. Finally, the report concludes with recommendations for future action.



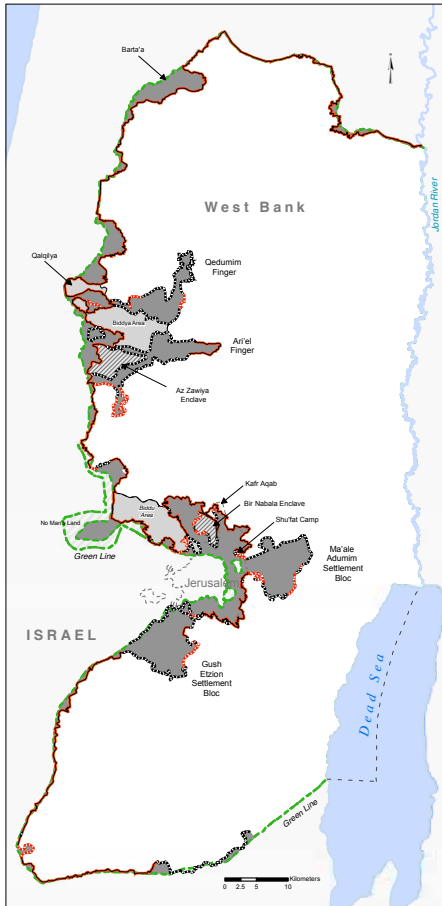




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# The Seam Zone

*Background and Context*



UNOCHA Closure Map, West Bank (UNOCHA, 2009)

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), once completed, the total length of the new Wall route will be 709 km long.<sup>1</sup> Only 15 percent of the total length runs along the Green Line; the rest of the Wall cuts through Palestinian territory, as indicated by the black and red lines on the UNOCHA map.<sup>2</sup>

Due to the construction of the Wall inside Palestinian territory, many Palestinians have found themselves caged between the Wall and the Green Line, in an area called the "Seam Zone". This area consists of around 10 percent of the total area of the West Bank and has been declared a closed military zone for Palestinians.<sup>3</sup> Palestinians aged 16 and above, residing in this area, therefore, require a permit from the Israeli

authorities in order to continue living in their homes. Furthermore, family members without permits are not allowed to pass through

1. According to UNOCHA, 408 km, which is approximately 58 percent of the Wall, has already been completed.
2. UNOCHA, 'West Bank Wall Projections', July 2009, p1
3. Bimkom, 'The Prohibited Zone: Israeli Planning Policy in the Palestinian Villages in Area C', June 2008, p.19

the checkpoints into the area for family visits or gatherings. In addition, Palestinians owning land inside this area have to obtain a 'visitor's' permit to access their farming land and water resources through a particularly designated gate.

If the Wall is completed as planned, approximately 33,000 Palestinians holding West Bank ID cards in 36 different communities will be located between the Wall and the Green Line and are, thus, expected to face the above mentioned restrictive permit system. Meanwhile there are currently 7,800 Palestinians already living in the closed area, thus, suffering an isolated existence.<sup>4</sup>

Likewise, the majority of Palestinians with East Jerusalem ID cards will reside between the Wall and the Green Line thus facing similar restrictions. Inside the Jerusalem municipality Palestinians from Kafr Aqab and Shu'fat are already separated from East Jerusalem. Moreover, the Wall exacerbates the pre-existing restrictions on West Bank Palestinians' access to Jerusalem. In 1993,

Israel introduced a permit regime that obliged all Palestinians without residency permits in East Jerusalem or Israeli citizenship to apply for a permit to access Jerusalem. This applies to all cases whether medical or humanitarian, whether family or work related. The process of acquiring a Jerusalem permit is complicated and time consuming, and refusals are common: young men between 15 and 30 are particularly unlikely to receive permits. In medical cases, patients often travel on their own as it is difficult for family members to receive a permit in order to accompany them to an East Jerusalem health service center. Finally, various Jewish religious holidays frequently cause complete or partial closures into and out of East Jerusalem affecting all Palestinian permit-holders.<sup>5</sup>

Most of the Seam Zone areas is classified as area C and is thus subject to Israeli planning and zoning laws. For instance, Palestinian construction is prohibited in 70 percent of Area C, in the remaining 30 percent a range of restrictive policies makes it virtually impossible

4. UNOCHA, 'The Impact of the Barrier on Health', Special Focus, July 2010, p.4

5. Ibid, p.9

to obtain a building permit. Accordingly, UNOCHA stated that, in practice, the Israeli Civil Administration only allows construction in less than one percent of Area C, much of which is already built.<sup>6</sup> Thus, Palestinians living in the Seam Zone are unable to construct new homes or extend or improve existing homes. Consequently, many Palestinians living in the Seam Zone live either in inadequate and overcrowded housing conditions or decide to build illegally and therefore risk demolition of their homes and eventual displacement.

Conversely, Israeli settlements, built on the lands of Palestinian Villages, are filled with new and modern villas. In addition, the route of the Wall itself de facto annexes most of the large settlements and the areas designated for settlement expansion. In the area surrounding the Ariel settlement for example, the route of the Wall extends 22km east of the Green Line. Similarly it extends 13km east of the Green Line around the Ma'ale Adummim settlement.<sup>7</sup> This gives away Israel's claim of security to the reality that the route of the Wall is to enable the expansion of Israeli settlements<sup>8</sup> and ultimately their annexation into Israel proper. Meanwhile, the humanitarian consequences for the Palestinians living in the Seam Zone are so severe that they are at grave risk of forcible displacement.

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6. UNOCHA, Special Focus, 'Restricted Space: The Planning regime applied by Israel in Area C of the West Bank', December 2009, p.1, p.6. They include the following issues as reasons for this: lack of detailed plans for Palestinian villages, the Israeli Civil Administration's restrictive interpretation of outdated plans that do exist and difficulties Palestinians face in providing ownership of land.

7. Bimkom, The Prohibited Zone: Israeli Planning Policy in the Palestinian Villages in Area C, June 2008, p.19

8. B'Tselem and Bimkom, Under the Guise of Security: Routing the Security Barrier to enable the Expansion of Israeli Settlements in the West Bank, December 2005.



# 3

## International Legal Framework

That the Wall is contrary to international law is now established. In 2004, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued an advisory opinion on the Legal Consequences of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory<sup>9</sup> and stated that the sections of the Wall which ran east of the green line, including East Jerusalem, together with the associated gate and permit regime, violate Israel's obligations under international law.<sup>10</sup> The Court noted that the construction of the Wall which led to the destruction and requisition of properties, contravened Article 46 and 52 of the Hague Regulations of 1907 and Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention<sup>11</sup>, which provides that any destruction of private property is prohibited except where rendered absolutely necessary by military operation<sup>12</sup>. The Court also found that the demographic changes brought about by the construction of the Wall and its associated regime, contravene Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention which prohibits the occupying power from deporting or transferring parts of its own civilian population into territories it occupies.<sup>13</sup>

The Court further condemned the impact of the Wall on Freedom of movement<sup>14</sup> and the resulting restrictions on access to land and agriculture, to water resources, to health services and to education.<sup>15</sup> The ICJ called on Israel to cease construction of the Wall, including in and around East Jerusalem; dismantle the sections already completed; to "make reparations" for the "requisition and

9. Advisory Opinion Concerning the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, International Court of Justice (ICJ), 9 July 2004

10. Ibid, para. 141

11. Ibid, para. 133

12. Note that the ICJ found in paragraph 135 that: "on the material before it, the Court is not convinced that the destructions carried out contrary to the prohibition in Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention were rendered absolutely necessary by military operations". For the ICRC commentary on this section see <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/COM/380-600060?OpenDocument>

13. Advisory Opinion Concerning the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, International Court of Justice (ICJ), 9 July 2004, para. 134-135

14. Ibid, para. 133

15. Ibid, para. 133-134



destruction of homes, businesses and agricultural holdings” and “to return the land, orchards, olive groves, and other immovable property seized.”<sup>16</sup> The ICJ also obligated member states not to recognize the illegal situation created by the Wall and to ensure Israel’s compliance with international law.<sup>17</sup>

In August 2010, the UN Human Rights Committee, a UN body that monitors compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) reconfirmed the ICJ’s opinion and its own previously expressed observations. The Committee expressed concern about the restrictions to freedom of movement imposed on Palestinians. It stated that such restrictions affected “in particular persons residing in the “Seam Zone” between the Wall and Israel”, and that the restrictions included “frequent refusal to grant agricultural permits to access the land on the other side of the wall or to visit relatives, and the irregular opening hours of the agricultural gates.”<sup>18</sup> The Committee also expressed concern about the continuation of settlement building in the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT). Hence, the Committee concluded that:

**“The State party should comply with its previous concluding observations and take into account the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice and stop the construction of a “Seam Zone” by means of a wall, seriously impeding on the right to freedom of movement, as well as to family life. It should cease all construction of settlements in the occupied territories.”<sup>19</sup>**

As the Human Rights Committee identifies, the existence of the Wall and its associated regime causes the violation of many human

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16. Advisory Opinion Concerning the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, International Court of Justice (ICJ), 9 July 2004, paras. 152-3

17. Ibid, para. 158

18. Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee, 99th Session, 12-30 July 2010, CCPR/C/ISR/CO/3, para.16

19. Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee, 99th Session, 12-30 July 2010, CCPR/C/ISR/CO/3, para.16

rights, such as freedom of movement,<sup>20</sup> and the right to family life.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, various other economic and social rights are denied or violated, including the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health,<sup>22</sup> the right to education<sup>23</sup>, the right to work<sup>24</sup>, and the right to an adequate standard of living<sup>25</sup> as provided by the International Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights (ICECSR).

Moreover, housing rights are specifically protected by Article 11 of the ICECSR which provides that State Parties must recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living which includes adequate housing.<sup>26</sup> The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which monitors the compliance of State Parties to the ICESCR, has stated that “the right to housing should not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense which equates it with, for example, the shelter provided by merely having a roof over one’s head or views shelter exclusively as a commodity. Rather it should be seen as the right to live somewhere in security, peace, and dignity.”<sup>27</sup> The Committee further stated that to be considered adequate, a home should contain certain facilities essential for health, security, comfort and nutrition. The Committee clarified this by stating that “adequate housing should have sustainable access to natural and common resources, safe drinking water, energy for cooking, heating and lighting, sanitation and washing facilities, means of food

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20. ICCPR, Article 12

21. ICCPR, Article 23

22. ICESCR, Article 12

23. ICESCR, Article 13

24. ICESCR, Article 6

25. ICESCR, Article 11

26. Article 11: “The State Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing and to the continuous improvement of his living conditions. The State Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognising to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.”

27. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment 4 - The Right to Adequate Housing (article 11(1),13/12/91 at paragraph.18



storage, refuse disposal, site drainage and emergency services.”<sup>28</sup>

In addition, the Israeli settlements, many of which are located in the Seam Zone, violate international humanitarian law (IHL). Article 49 (6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, for example, prohibits the transfer of the population of the occupying power into occupied territory. This has been reiterated by the ICJ in the Wall Advisory Opinion which noted that the route of the Wall included 80% of the settlers living in the OPT within the ‘closed areas’ of the Wall, and went on to conclude that the settlements were established in violation of international law.<sup>29</sup>

A fundamental idea in the law of occupation is that occupation is only a temporary state and that the occupying power therefore cannot make permanent changes to the occupied territory. The rationale behind the occupation law and its directives is to prevent measures that could lead to annexation, which is forbidden under international law. The prohibition of annexation by use or threat of force stems from Article 2(4) of the UN Charter and it has been reiterated in the Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States. It has been referred to with specific regard to Israel and the oPt by the ICJ in the Wall Advisory opinion. Nevertheless Israel has created a network of measures that lead to Annexation demonstrating that Israel’s project is a colonial one.<sup>30</sup> The Seam Zone is both part of and caused by these measures. These measures include: the construction of settlements within contiguous blocs of land that Palestinians cannot enter; a connecting road system between the settlements located in the West Bank and cities within the Green Line, the use of which is denied to Palestinians; and the Wall that separates Jewish from Palestinian populations and divides Palestinian communities

28. *Ibid*, paragraph 8(b)

29. Advisory Opinion Concerning the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, International Court of Justice (ICJ), 9 July 2004, paras. 119-120

30. Human Science Research Council, *Occupation, Colonialism, Apartheid?: A re-assessment of Israel’s practices in the occupied Palestinian territories under international law*, May 2009, p.150

from each other, while passage between Palestinian areas is being controlled by Israel. By partitioning Palestinian areas into cantons, Israel has violated the territorial integrity of the oPt, which is in violation of the Palestinians' right to self determination as provided for by common Article one of the ICCPR and the ICESCR and in violation of the Declaration on Colonialism.<sup>31</sup>

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31. Ibid



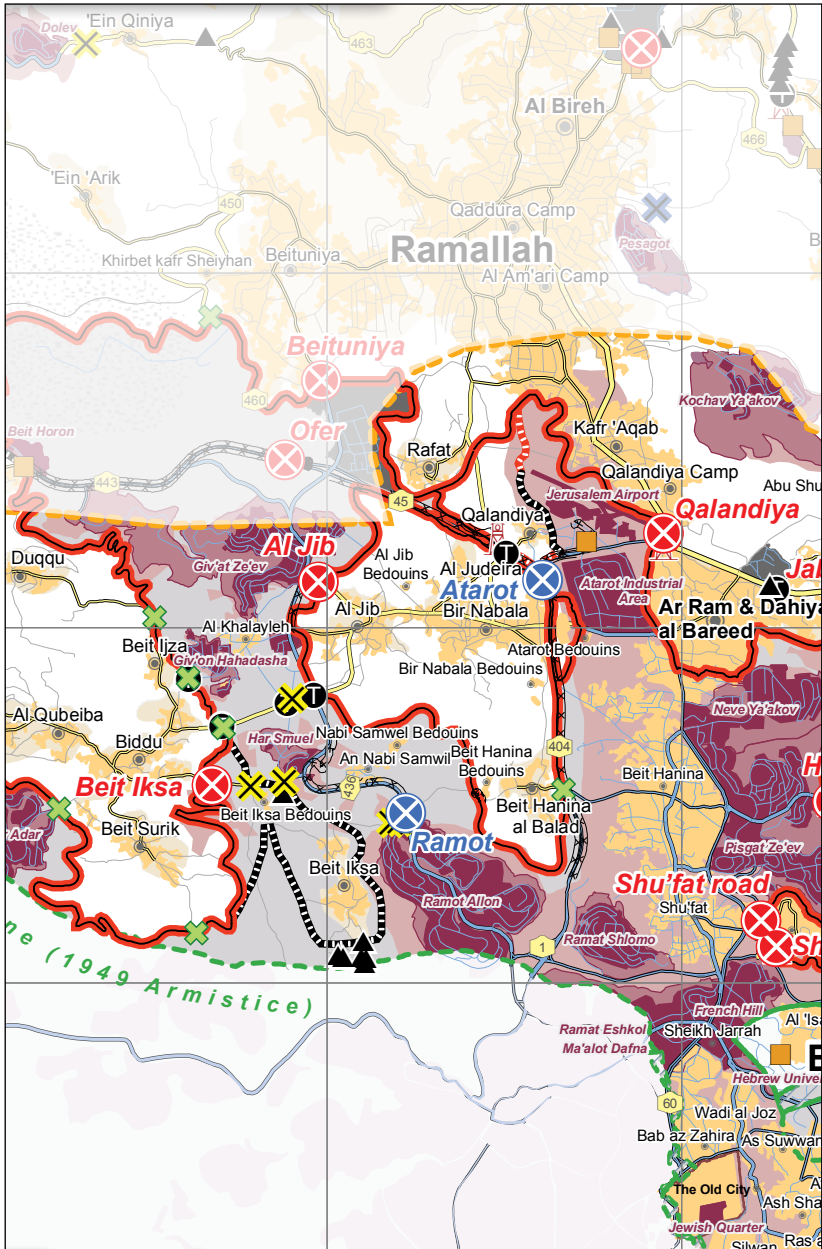
# 4

# Methodology

This report is based on in-depth interviews conducted with Palestinian women living in the Seam Zone areas by WCLAC staff and fieldworkers in 2010. A number of interviews were conducted with women from the Al-Khalayleh neighborhood which lies within the area of Al-Jib. The area of Al-Jib is located on the Western side of the Wall but still belongs to the West Bank making this area severely affected by the Wall and various other restrictive Israeli policies. The village can be seen on the map on page 21 of this report . WCLAC's fieldworkers could not pass through the checkpoint to interview the women in their homes, meaning interviews had to take place in the community centre in Al-Jib. Photographs were taken by international staff who were able to pass through the checkpoint, but they too faced various difficulties crossing the Givat Ze'ev checkpoint. Other interviews were conducted with Palestinian women from Beit Iksa which can be seen on the map on page 21 and from the village of Azzun Atmeh to the north of the West Bank. One woman from Mas'ha near Bedy'a was also interviewed whose home is isolated behind the Wall.

There are many women similarly affected, in many different communities that are usually very difficult to access. However, we believe that the cases presented in this report are representative of the problems faced by women living in the Seam Zone areas.

All interviews conducted were written in the form of statements. Some of the women were interviewed a second or third time, either when follow up was required or a new event had occurred. Moreover, the women were asked to contact us, whenever they wanted to add or reformulate their statements or if they wanted to talk about their experience in more detail. In some cases the interviewed preferred to stay anonymous. In these cases we have used either a pseudonym or their initials to indicate their words in this report. In all cases, we have consulted the women before publishing any of their statements and have fully respected their wishes.



UNOCHA Closure Map, East Jerusalem showing some of the areas referenced (UNOCHA, 2010)





# 5

## Life in the Seam Zone



In this section, we assess the impact on women living in the Seam Zone. After analyzing the statements taken from the interviewed women, most women appeared to suffer common problems and restrictions in their lives and were denied similar rights due to various restrictive policies imposed by Israel. We therefore focus on the following common issues raised by the interviewed women: inadequate living conditions; lack of access to natural and common resources; restricted access to health services; the impact on livelihoods; inability to enjoy family life; and restricted access to education.

### **5.1 Inadequate Living Conditions**

Although new and spacious villas are currently built within the outskirts of various Israeli settlements in the Seam Zone, Palestinians are unable to obtain building permits to construct new homes or to extend or renovate existing homes. Accordingly, women interviewed by WCLAC reported partial or complete demolitions of their homes and indicated inadequate, overcrowded and dangerous housing conditions including zinc roofs and asbestos ceilings. Moreover, since women in Palestinian society often do not work outside the home, but take responsibility for child care, domestic tasks and in some cases run small businesses from their homes, women's lives are particularly affected by these poor and overcrowded housing conditions.

FH, is originally from Al-Jib but after marrying her husband who is from the neighbourhood of Al Khalayleh, she decided to move to the other side of the Wall in order to live with him. She has only recently obtained a permit to live behind the Wall and to pass the checkpoint. Further, she still spends some time in her parents' home on the other side.

"We're not allowed to do any maintenance to the house or make any additions or extensions. In around 2008 we tried to build a small kitchen as an extension to the house, but before we had finished it the Israelis came and told us that we could not build it and that they would demolish it, so we had to leave it unfinished and unusable.



We haven't tried to do any more building work since then. It's also very difficult to take furniture through the checkpoint to the other side."

JM also lives in the neighbourhood of Al Khalayleh. Her home is now located behind the Wall and she can only enter it by going through a checkpoint.

"Our house is only about 50 metres from the settlement of Gavon; we have about 2 dunams of land for our property and then on the edge of that land there is a barbed wire fence with the settlement behind it. Around 160 dunams of my husband's family's land was confiscated by the Israelis to build the Wall.

The house has three rooms, one for the girls, one for me and my husband and one for my mother in law: the boys sleep in the living room. There is also a kitchen and a bathroom. Part of my husband's house was built more than 50 years ago and is built properly of cement but for many years it has not been possible to do any proper construction on the house and so the extensions have all got zinc roofs rather than tiles. Even before the wall was built the area was designated as a green zone and we could not build and extend and had to use zinc. Now even that is not allowed: we can't do any work on the house, despite the fact that the houses of the settlements have been built all around us."

JD is another resident of Al Khalayleh. Her home is located behind the Wall on the Jerusalem side. The Wall and checkpoint of Givat Ze'ev separate her from the village of Al-Jib and the rest of the West Bank.

"We built a small house next to our house which was meant to be for my son S, his wife and their four children. They moved into it although it was not really finished but in 2005 the Israelis demolished it. They had to move back into the main house, but it's so crowded. They are six people living in one room in the house. There are 25 people living in the house altogether and we can't extend the house and build any extra rooms even though we have a lot of land around

the house and there are lots of new houses in the settlements of Givat Ze'ev and Gavon which are next to our house. We have just five rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom. We were obliged to use the rooms that we used for our sheep to house people because it's so crowded."

SH lives in the village of Azzun Atmeh which is located near Nablus and the settlement of Elqana. Since the building of the Wall, she has been living in the Seam Zone: the Wall and a checkpoint separate her home and several other's from the rest of the village. Together with her husband and three sons she currently lives in a house behind the wall and the checkpoint.

"There is a checkpoint into the village that affected everyone in the village, only those people who lived in the village could pass through. There was also another gate/checkpoint on the west side of the village which was located just behind our house, but this was not the main checkpoint. In February 2010, the Israelis stopped using the main checkpoint into the village and the road is now open most of the time, although there are still soldiers in the watchtower. But now the checkpoint that separates our home from the rest of the village and the rest of the West Bank is the main checkpoint and only Palestinians registered as living in the area can pass through it.

There are maybe 70-100 people who live on the other side of the checkpoint. I now have a permit called a Seam Zone permit which permits me to cross through the checkpoint to my home. I was first given a permit which lasted for seven months, then I had to apply for another one which only lasted for 3 months. The one I have now is for 12 months and when it expires I will have to apply for another one to allow me to pass through to my home."

Mounira Amir lives in the small village of Mas'ha near Bedyia in the central West Bank.

"I live in a house in the village of Mas'ha, which is totally enclosed – on the side by my village there is the nine foot high Israeli Wall, on two sides are fences and on the other side is the Israeli settlement

of Elqana. There is a gate in the fence next to the Wall which I have to use to get to my house.

The Israelis confiscated a lot of land from our house to build the Wall and for a road for military vehicles that is in between the Wall and our house. In most of the sections near us the Wall is a metal wire fence but just in front of our house, they have built a nine foot high concrete Wall. It's just a small section, maybe 50 metres long just next to our house. It felt like a punishment for refusing to leave, to cut us off completely from the village so we couldn't even see our neighbours or the village anymore and force us to leave. But we knew that we wanted to stay in the house and didn't want to lose it."

IFI lives next to the Israeli settlement of Ramot which is located on land belonging to the West Bank village of Beit Iksa. She lives on the Jerusalem side of the Ramot checkpoint which separates Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. While IFI does live in the Seam Zone – between the Wall and the Green Line, she is in possession of an East Jerusalem ID which allows her to travel into Jerusalem. She does however suffer from many of the restrictions faced by Palestinians with West Bank IDs, since she too is separated from the West Bank by the Wall and by the closure of the Ramot checkpoint. She is not permitted to build or extend her home and the Israeli authorities are moreover trying to confiscate 3-4 dunams of land located around the house.

"The house is a very old house, and not in good condition, although I try my best. The ceiling above the sitting room is asbestos which I know is not healthy, and the roof is made of zinc. There are only three bedrooms in the house for eight people, and when my daughter comes to visit with her three children it is so overcrowded. My sons share a room, and this is hard, my eldest is a doctor and works shifts so he needs peace and quietness. N is studying during the day and working at night to pay for it and so also he has a different routine. This is difficult with my younger children of course and sometimes I have to take them to my room to give them some space and some quietness. Really it is not healthy. It is traditional in Palestinian

families for our sons to live with us after they marry and this is what I want for my eldest son. I want to build an extra room for my son and his wife but this is impossible. I have been suffering with these kinds of problems for ten years now. I have to be patient, until someone will find us a solution. I've changed a lot because of the problems but I adhere to the principle that I must overcome them and come out stronger. I feel stronger from within and I'm not scared of them – the soldiers, settlers, despite their guns. It's the children who suffer the most."

## **5.2 Natural and Common Resources**

As noted above, and as provided by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adequate housing should have sustainable access to natural and common resources, safe drinking water, energy for cooking, heating and lighting, means of food storage, refuse disposal, site drainage and emergency services. Women, who work inside the home, i.e. taking care of the children and taking responsibility for cooking, cleaning and other domestic tasks, are particularly affected by the lack of common and essential resources. The women from Al Khalayleh and Azzun Atmeh described how they are prohibited from bringing gas for cooking and heating through the checkpoint. Moreover, food products such as meat and eggs are also not permitted. One woman described how trucks that empty her sewage tank are sometimes not allowed to access her home. Additionally, public transportation is not available for Palestinians living within the Seam Zone because Palestinian buses and transportation are not allowed to access the area. This is restricting their ability to enjoy services they require. Alternative transportation is expensive and dependent on an individual's car ownership, penalizing the poorest families.

### **JM, Al Khalayleh**

"There is no public transport that we can use in the area that we live, and it takes about half an hour to walk to the checkpoint and then another fifteen minutes on the other side of the checkpoint to get to the shops and services on the other side. It usually takes about

an hour altogether to go through when I need to go shopping or go to the clinic. It's also forbidden to bring eggs or chicken or meat through the checkpoint; they usually check our bags when we pass through the checkpoint. This happened to me a few weeks ago – I was taking through 6 chickens and 2 kilos of meat and I begged them to let me through with it; after 30 minutes of me begging them and telling them that I wouldn't do it again they let me through with it.

We also can't take the gas cylinders we use for cooking and heating through the Givat Ze'ev checkpoint, we can only take it through the checkpoint at Ramot after co-coordinating with the Israelis which is very difficult to do. When I go through this checkpoint I have to rent a car from one of my neighbours for 100 shekels (approximately \$27) an hour as it's a long way from our house. Palestinian cars can only come through the Ramot checkpoint if they are registered in our area, otherwise it is prohibited so we have to rent a car from our neighbours. Some of our Palestinian neighbours have Jerusalem ID and have yellow plated cars – I and my husband can't use these cars because we have West Bank ID's and we also can't go into Jerusalem even though we are on the Jerusalem side of the Wall and cut off from the West Bank. We can only use a West Bank car registered in Khalayleh."

### **JD, Al Khalayleh**

"Our house has a large area of land around it, about 40 dunams, although around 200 dunams were confiscated by the Israelis to build the Wall. Our house is located around 300 metres down a rough track which is difficult to access. Until very recently there was no public transportation around; now there are two cars we can use but they are for Palestinian workers who have permits to work in Israel. We can only travel in these West Bank Palestinian cars and only cars that are registered to a house in Al Khalayleh can be in our area. We can't afford to have a car ourselves so we usually have to walk everywhere or in difficult situations we will ask our neighbours for help. We can't bring meat and chicken and eggs through the

checkpoint and we're also not allowed to bring gas cylinders through for cooking. We have to restrict ourselves with cooking on fires."

**SH, Azzun Atmeh**

"They also won't allow us to take certain things through the checkpoint at all. We're not allowed to take meat and chicken from the West Bank side through the checkpoint or gas cylinders. In the same way, the vet isn't allowed through, also workmen aren't allowed to come through to help us fix machinery, like the washing machine or fridge; we have to take them to the other side to be fixed. If I needed a doctor to make a house-call, it wouldn't be possible: I would have to go through the checkpoint to see a doctor. Another restriction is that it's forbidden to build new houses in the area we live in and we also can't extend our own home or make any structural changes. We're not connected to the sewage network and so we regularly need a truck that comes to pump and empty the tank. Sometimes the Israelis won't even allow the truck through to empty the system."

IH lives in the village of Beit Iksa in the West Bank. Her husband lives nearby Ramot. They are separated by a checkpoint which is now closed and she is forbidden to cross.

"I am from the village of Beit Iksa which is located to the north of Jerusalem. Although the village is close to Jerusalem, I and the rest of my family have West Bank IDs, which means that I cannot enter Jerusalem. I am married to someone who has a Jerusalem ID, but cannot live with him because I am not permitted to enter Jerusalem.

Beit Iksa is also located behind a checkpoint which we have to cross when entering the village from the West Bank and the Wall has also been built around the village. To get to Jerusalem, there is a checkpoint called Ramot, which is also the name of the settlement there that is built on Beit Iksa lands. They closed this checkpoint about two months ago, in June 2010 meaning that the road is closed between Ramot and Beit Iksa, and access by car now has to be done through another checkpoint like Qalandiya further away. When I

first married, I managed to cross over through the checkpoint with my husband and spent two or three weeks in my husband's parents' home. But it was so difficult for me to be there. I had to stay in the house, because if I was found in Jerusalem without a permit, I could get in a lot of trouble. It was like being in prison, I couldn't go out of the house to go to the doctors, to go shopping or to go on trips with the families. Really, I couldn't even sit on the balcony in case I was seen. There are a lot of soldiers around this area where my parents in law live, because it is where many Palestinian labourers cross over to find work in Israel. So the soldiers are around and chase them. Sometimes they would come into my parents-in-law's house to search for Palestinian workers. Another time they came to the house searching for me, as they'd seen me on one of their cameras, crossing through an access point by Nabi Samuel. I quickly changed my clothes, and my in-laws told the soldiers they'd seen a woman go in another direction and wouldn't let them in without a warrant."

#### **IFI, Beit Iksa / Ramot**

"There has been a checkpoint on the road between us and Beit Iksa for some time now, but the road was open so we could at least travel easily to visit family and friends in the village and in the West Bank. A couple of months ago, around June 2010, they closed the checkpoint, and instead of this meaning that access was easier it meant that no cars could use the road, and in the beginning no-one could walk through it either. We made a complaint about this, and eventually the Israeli authorities gave permission to three families, including ours, who live on the Jerusalem side of the checkpoint to walk through that checkpoint to Beit Iksa. No one else is supposed to use that route. So we are the lucky ones, but it's not easy. It's a very isolated road, with no lighting and it's quite scary to walk along it especially at night. There are wild dogs along there and you also sometimes see men along the route, who hang around and take drugs. Also, when there are army jeeps on the crossing, which are often present, they harass and question us and ask us who is with us. The only other way is round the Qalandiya checkpoint which can take more than two hours, but anyway, I can't drive and so can't

go that way unless someone will drive me. Now it also means that no-one from Beit Iksa can visit us. There were lots of people living in Beit Iksa with Jerusalem Identification but now they can't cross through, and have to go all the way around through Qalandiya to get into Jerusalem. I don't have a driving license so I can't drive around myself."

### **5.3 Access to Health Services**

Since most health services that Palestinians are able to use are located to the east, or on the West Bank side of the Wall, Palestinians with West Bank IDs living in the Seam Zone, have to pass through the checkpoints in the Wall to access health services. Our interviews revealed the severe reality of this for the women in the Seam Zone. Within Palestinian society, women take responsibility for the health care of their children, the elderly and the disabled in their families. Moreover, women need to access medical services regularly for routine check-ups for children, pre and post natal treatment and other women-specific medical services. In Al-Khalayleh, where there is little transportation, it is particularly hard when medical treatment is needed. The women there talked about delaying or ignoring serious medical treatment because of the difficulties. Furthermore, they talked of family members fainting on the long walk to the checkpoint. Finally, the women were also seriously affected by the closure of the routes into East Jerusalem and faced difficulties accessing the hospitals of East Jerusalem.

#### **JD, Al Khalayleh**

"It is very difficult when any of us need medical treatment and have to go to the doctor, hospital or clinic. Two days ago my daughter in law and her baby had to go to the clinic in Al-Jib to have their vaccinations and I went with them with some of the other children. It is about a 3km walk from our house to the clinic. We had walked about half of the way to the checkpoint, and I was walking a bit ahead, when one of the children started screaming that my daughter-in-law was dead. I ran back and found that she had fainted because of the heat and the long walk. I was very ill recently and had to go



to the hospital for an operation on 4 August 2009. To be honest, for two or three months I put off going to the doctor and to the hospital because it is so difficult to

get access to the doctor and it is expensive to get there. I just put up with the pain and took herbs and pain killers. Before the Wall was built it would have been very easy and would have only cost 10 shekels to go to Ramallah. Eventually my son persuaded me that I had to go. A friend of my son took me to Ramallah in his car because by this stage I couldn't walk and they took me through the Ramot checkpoint. The doctor in Ramallah said that I needed a hysterectomy surgery and recommended the Maqased hospital in Jerusalem. The Doctor filled in a report for me and then my son went to the Israeli co-ordination office to get the permit. On the day I had to go to the hospital my friend's son took me to the checkpoint at Givat Ze'ev and dropped me at the crossing. I then walked through the checkpoint and took public transportation to Ramallah and then to the checkpoint at Qalandiya where again I had to walk through. I had to go to the hospital on my own because they did not give a permit for anyone to go but me and none of my family members have permits for Jerusalem. I am now recovered but after the surgery every six weeks or so I would have to go back to the doctor in Ramallah for follow up. Travelling was very difficult.

At the hospital, I had no one; I was completely alone with just foreigners around me. Nobody could visit me for the ten days that I stayed in hospital. During the bad moments I wished I was dead, I felt so alone. After I was discharged I was able to get a taxi from Jerusalem home – the taxi driver checked my permit before he would drive me back to my home. It is very hard for my son S. He can only walk with crutches and has had to have a lot of medical treatment. He has had operations on both ankles and medical procedures on his bones and now has metal rods in his legs. He used to be able to work but after the surgeries he can't anymore. When he had to go for treatment we couldn't afford to pay for transport which is very difficult to get anyway, so when he had to go I would walk with

him to the Givat Ze'ev checkpoint and I would carry a small stool so when he couldn't walk anymore he could stop and sit down on it and rest. On the other side of the checkpoint we would get in a small bus to go to the hospital in Ramallah. It is very difficult now for him to leave the house as we are about an hour's walk away from Al-Jib through the checkpoint and this is very hard for him."

Imm Rashad, lives in the West Bank village of Beit Iksa which is separated from Jerusalem by the Wall and checkpoints. She is 72 years old.

"I have a lot of health problems – in fact I've had two heart bypass operations – and so although I have West Bank Identification, I can get permits to go to Jerusalem for health treatment. My doctor is based at the Augusta Victoria Hospital on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem: I've been seeing him regularly for 15 years. Before the checkpoint at Ramot closed, I could take a taxi or ambulance directly to the hospital to have treatment or in emergencies, now all that has changed and it is really hard to get to Jerusalem. In June 2010 – after the checkpoint closed – I fell very ill. I woke up and was feeling very dizzy. Because we couldn't go to Jerusalem, my family took me to the Palestinian Red Crescent Hospital in Ramallah. They didn't know my medical history, even the fact that I'd had two heart bypass surgeries and made mistakes with my treatment. I was very ill and stayed in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) for 5-6 days, before I was discharged. But I wasn't better and felt very sick while I was back home and felt like I was going to die. My skin was turning black and I was very sick. In fact, I told my family that I was going to die I felt so bad. I went back to Ramallah, but this time to see my regular doctor, who comes to Ramallah once a week on a Tuesday to see his patients who can't go to Jerusalem. He told me that I had internal haemorrhaging and immediately said that I had to go to the Augusta Victoria hospital in Jerusalem. He arranged co-ordination with the Red Cross and arranged for an ambulance. I was taken out on a stretcher to one ambulance which took me to the Qalandiya checkpoint, where I was taken out and transferred from

one ambulance to another. Once I was in the hospital in Jerusalem, I spent another two days in the ICU there. They transferred seven units of blood into my body and gave me the right injections that they hadn't done in Ramallah. My family couldn't come to visit me at the hospital in Jerusalem because they don't have permits to visit Jerusalem. My brother got a permit for one day, but could only stay for the afternoon with me."

### **IH, Beit Iksa**

"In November 2009, I was in the second month of pregnancy, and had to go to the doctor in Jerusalem. I left the house at 5pm, and I was in the car with my husband, my father in law and brother in law; all of them have Jerusalem ID. We were stopped at the checkpoint going between Beit Iksa and Ramot/Jerusalem, and the soldiers checked the ID, and then asked me to get out of the car. They took me into the small room to one side of the checkpoint and made me wait. While I was waiting, my husband and my in-laws started arguing with the soldiers telling them that I had my marriage certificate. The soldiers were telling my brother in law that they would give him a penalty notice fining him for carrying a person with West Bank identification in his car. The soldiers were teasing me while I was waiting at the side, talking to me in Hebrew, knowing I couldn't understand and laughing. My brother in law and husband were very angry and when the Israeli police arrived, they told them and accused the soldiers of abusing me and humiliating me.

In all, I ended up waiting for around 3 hours at the checkpoint, and then had to return to Beit Iksa. When I got home, I felt unwell and told my mother and we went together to a female doctor. She referred us to the Palestinian Red Crescent Hospital in Ramallah. They told me I was having a miscarriage."

### **5.4 Livelihoods**

The livelihoods of families are drastically affected by the Wall. Traditional ways of life and making a living from the land is rendered impossible as machinery for harvesting crops and transporting the harvested products through the checkpoints is prohibited or

difficult. Women's lives can be particularly affected by this as the removal of economic self sufficiency leaves women dependent on male family members who are able to find work outside the home. This leads to a consequent lack of economic independence and a declining social status.

**FH, Al Khalayleh**

"Our economic situation has gotten much worse since the Wall was built. Although my husband and I now have access to the area, my husband does not have a permit to work in Israel. He has to work in Al-Jib and there is very little work there."

**JD, Al Khalayleh**

"Only one person in the family has work, that's A my son. He works in a car wash in a settlement and earns \$700 a month. My oldest son is not able to work and the others haven't been able to get permits to work in Israel; it is very difficult to get work in the West Bank.

We used to be farmers and make money from the land, and my sons used to work on the land. We used to make around 15-18,000 shekels approximately 4,100 – 5,000 USD a year from selling produce. This has all stopped since the Wall was built. We would grow wheat but this is not possible anymore because we cannot bring the machinery to do the harvesting, we need to use a combine harvester and it cannot come through to where we live. We also have olive trees and vines, but now it is all ruined – we are in shackles. We don't have the equipment to look after the land and can't take what we need through the checkpoint and also can't take anything out to sell. I also used to grow and sell vegetables, tomatoes and cucumbers, but it's too difficult to transport them to sell now."

**SH, Azzun Atmeh**

"It has also affected our livelihood. We have sheep and goats, and also grow crops and other products on our land. Now they inspect our products when we take them through the checkpoint and won't allow us to take more than two kilos of anything through to the village on the other side without co-ordination which can be a really lengthy process, although eventually things get through. They also

won't allow us to bring in large amounts of feed for our goats, and we have to get co-ordination from the Israelis to bring equipment through for harvesting. One time it took me one hour of arguing with the soldiers to allow me to bring a big sack of wheat through. There are other things as well - one of our pregnant goats was sick and we needed a vet, but the soldiers would not allow the vet to pass through the checkpoint and in the end the goat miscarried. Financially, it has not been so disastrous yet, but it will get harder if it stays like this."

**Mounira Amir, Mas'ha, Bedya**

Mounira's family had run a small plant nursery from their home, the business closed as a result of closures during the Second Intifada and then the building of the Wall, which cut the house off and made it impossible to do business. She now travels to and from her house via a small gate in the Wall which leads to the village, which is monitored by the Israelis. "Our financial situation is much worse now. We lost the business because of the closure and then the wall. My husband is now just working two days a week for a project digging wells in local villages. Things are very difficult for us. Before the Wall was built, our house was worth about 150,000 Jordanian Dinar (about \$210,000) now it is worth far less even if it were possible to sell it. We received no compensation for the land we lost to the Wall and the road – we used to have about 3.5 dunams of land, now we only have 1.5 dunams. I tried to make some money doing some work in the house; I would make tomato paste at home to sell in the village. But the soldiers would ask me about what I was carrying through the gate and in the end it was just too much trouble, and I don't do this anymore. It's very difficult to move things in and out of the gate; it's quite small and I have to use a small cart to transport things. We have some large pieces of rubbish in the garden – old metal frames and things, but we can't move them, they won't fit through the gate."

### **IFI, Ramot/Beit Iksa**

“Financially it has been very difficult for us having to pay all the fines, court fees and expensive lawyers’ fees to challenge our land being confiscated. My husband has a good job, but does not have so much work at the moment because of the economic situation and I don’t work. We haven’t been able to pay my son Noor’s tuition fees because of all the expenses and so he’s having to work to support himself.”

### **5.5 Family Life**

Particularly devastating for most of the women who were interviewed was the impact of living in the Seam Zone on their family life. Only those who live in the Seam Zone areas can enter, meaning that the women that have usually moved into the Seam Zone to live with their husbands, are isolated from their own families, friends and community. The women’s lives which would normally revolve around the home, with social gatherings and integral interaction with the extended family and community, are now reduced to gatherings with their own immediate families. Important social occasions normally held in the home are impossible – even for funerals, where family and friends would normally come to the home of the deceased to pay respects cannot take place as family members cannot cross into the Seam Zone. The routes that must be taken to visit extended family are, moreover, very difficult to pass through: there is infrequent or no public transportation and journeys are long due to limited access points in the Wall. The traditionally strong ties between families are loosened without the regularity of visits during religious holidays, weddings, births and other traditional social occasions. The impact on the lives of women in the Seam Zone, thus, mostly consists of social isolation, loneliness and an end to their traditional cultural and social life.

### **FH, Al Khalayleh:**

“... my family can’t visit me when I’m living on the other side. Only those people who are registered as living in the area behind the Wall can pass through and that means my family cannot visit me

at all. My parents and my four sisters and five brothers all live in Al-Jib on the other side of the Wall. Before the Wall it used to take five minutes to come to the house, but now it is impossible for them. It isn't easy for me to cross either because I have to pass through the checkpoint and it can be really unpredictable. There is also no transport on the other side meaning it is very difficult for us to get around."

### **JM, Al Khalayleh**

"I only go through to the village when I have to, so I don't have to go through the checkpoint. But we are so cut off from our family. None of my family can visit me and even my sisters-in-law who grew up in this house are not allowed to visit now that they are living away from the house with their husbands. When my daughter got married, I wanted to have the wedding at my home but this wasn't possible because nobody could come. I wanted it to be a happy occasion for her but it's just not possible with the situation. My father-in-law died three years ago at home and none of the family or friends from the village could visit to pay their last respects. We hired a car to bring him to Al-Jib but the Israelis wouldn't let the car through at Givat Ze'ev and we had to go all the way round through Ramot and Beit Iksa so his family could see the body. My children get frustrated that none of their friends can visit. None of my family have been allowed even one visit. My husband's sisters have not even been allowed to visit their sick mother in our home. I wish I could have my life without the Wall and could go back to sharing my life with my family and loved ones. We have no life at all here."

### **JD, Al Khalayleh**

"I live in the house of my husband's parents. I and the rest of my family have West Bank IDs which means that although we are on the Jerusalem side of the Wall we are not allowed to go into Jerusalem. To travel through the checkpoint to our home we have to be registered as living in the Al Khalayleh area and none of my extended family does and so they cannot visit me in my home. Before the Wall and the checkpoints my parents' house was only five minutes away; now

it takes me more than an hour if I go to visit them.

I wish we didn't have the Wall anymore. I want to be able to go back to how it was before: to be able to cultivate our land and have access to our families and for them to be able to come and see us. If we were able to cultivate our lands, our lives would be very different. This is not a life but I don't want to leave our home as we would be betraying the land and the people."

**SH, Azzun Atmeh**

"Now no-one from my family can come and visit me in my home. My mother, father and my cousins all live on the other side of the checkpoint and none of them can pass through to my house. Even my son and daughters who live on the other side can't come through the checkpoint to my home. I'm really unhappy about this; I want my family and my friends to be able to visit me in my home. I only feel comfortable in my own home, it's not the same as visiting people, I don't even really feel comfortable in my son's home – it's just not the same. It's really hard during times like the recent Eid holidays – it's traditional for men to visit the women in their family home, but my brothers couldn't come and visit me because they don't have permits to pass through the checkpoint. My grandmother died a few weeks ago. She lived on the same side of the checkpoint as me, with my grandfather. Normally the tradition would be that during the mourning period, people would come and pay their respects and give their condolences at the home of my grandfather. But instead, the condolences had to take place on the other side of the village because nobody can come through to my grandparent's home. This was really hard for my grandfather – he is very old and is partially blind. It really was very hard for him."

**Mounira Amir, Mas'ha**

Mounira explained that initially when the Wall was built, the soldiers would only allow them to pass through the gate to the village twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening and after they pass the gate it was locked behind them. After a lot of pressure was put on the Israelis, she explains that the situation changed:



“So the soldiers granted us better access by giving us the key to the gate, I take great care of the key because my whole life depends on it. The soldiers said we couldn’t have guests, but we ignored it and would have people come to visit. But we found out they must have cameras on the gate, because every time we had guests, soldiers would come, I think that there must be electronic sensors on the gate. We have never obeyed the orders – it is up to me to decide who is allowed in the house and I will let anyone in who wants to visit. There have been lots of incidents since then – for example one time, my son was locked out on the other side of the gate for two days and the soldiers wouldn’t allow him through. Another time, a group of activists came to visit; the soldiers kicked them out and then locked the gate and took the key and left. We are now a bit more used to it, but I wish we didn’t have to live like this. I worry because I don’t feel comfortable leaving my daughters on their own. If I go out then I will take everyone with me. If I need to go to the village, I will make arrangements with everyone; I make sure I know where everyone is. My life has changed a lot since the Wall was built. It’s the small things that I miss a lot. For example, I used to be able to talk to my neighbour in the next house; I would shout to her and she would come over and have a chat and a cup of tea. I would have liked to have had my son’s wedding in the house, and parties for the children’s graduations but this isn’t possible.”

### **IH, Beit Ikksa**

“I got married on 5th July 2008, to AH. He is 28 years old and works in a hotel in Jerusalem. His family is also from Beit Ikksa, but their home is on the other side of the Ramot checkpoint and they have Jerusalem identification. Their house is one of only three Palestinian homes there, all of which are surrounded by Israeli settlements. ... Since my brother-in-law’s wedding, I have not been to my in laws’ home, and have stayed in Beit Ikksa. So, I only see my husband when he comes to stay in our house here. It’s not easy for him, he can’t drive here anymore and his work and all his family are in Jerusalem. Sometimes, I have regrets; I always ask my husband – “Aren’t you regretting marrying me”. I feel guilty, and feel that he is not happy

because of the situation. I know that his family has now decided that they will not allow their children to marry people from the West Bank because it is too hard.”

## **5.6 Education**

The Children’s education is also affected by the above mentioned restrictive policies imposed by Israel in the Seam Zone. Journeys to school are often long, taking a circuitous route to the access points in the Wall, and public transportation is infrequent or unavailable. In addition, to attend school, children have to pass through checkpoints and with this, there is a daily encounter with armed Israeli soldiers, that often consists of humiliation and harassment. Girls are particularly affected, as some traditional families who are concerned about such encounters remove their daughters from school. One woman described how she encouraged her daughters to leave school early. Yet another woman encouraged them to marry at sixteen and to leave school so that they would not have to pass through the checkpoint and deal with harassment or culturally inappropriate interactions with male soldiers. The women also described their worry and concern for their children whose school friends could not or will not visit them in their homes behind the Wall. Normal social interaction between children is rendered impossible due to the restrictive Israeli policies.

### **JM, Al Khalayleh**

“I no longer send my children to school in Al-Jib where they used to go because I don’t like them to pass through the checkpoint. The soldiers used to joke with the girls and this is not good. So I transferred my daughter B and my son H from the school in Al-Jib to Beit Iksa. She now has to pass through the Ramot checkpoint where there is a coordinated arrangement for the school bus to pass through. It is much further for them to go. My older daughter E was in Class 9 when I transferred B but instead of transferring schools with just one year to go, she left school early. Me and her father did not want her to have to go through the checkpoint every day and were afraid for her of the soldiers. I would not let my daughters go

alone through the checkpoint.”

**JD, Al Khalayleh:**

“My daughter and my son’s children go to school in Al-Jib. Every school day they have to go through the checkpoint. If I could I would send them to the school further away in Beit Iksa so they wouldn’t have to go through this checkpoint but I can’t afford the money for transportation. On a daily basis they and I are afraid of having to walk around for an hour to get to school and pass through the checkpoint. I have encouraged all my daughters to marry young to try and end the situation so they don’t have to do that anymore. My daughter N married when she was sixteen. Fortunately she can still visit the house here as we have made sure she has stayed registered here but her husband can’t visit.”

**FH, Al Khalayleh,**

FH is reluctant to spend all her time in her home behind the Wall particularly because of her children’s education:

“It is difficult to live on the other side of the checkpoint for lots of reasons. My children are all still at school and they would have to walk to the checkpoint and then pass through it every day to get to their school.”

**Mounira Amir, Mas’ha**

“My 12 year old daughter’s friends won’t come to the house because of the situation and neither will my 10 year old son’s friends. My children are affected by the situation. They don’t want to live like this. After school, they want to hang out with their friends because they need to come back through the gate but I say no, they have to come home. My youngest son has grown up only knowing the gate and the Wall. He knows no different. He used to refuse to go home because of the Wall and still doesn’t want to come straight home from school. He wants his friends round but they won’t come.”





# 6

# Conclusion

The route of the Wall, which cuts through the West Bank, is not only contrary to international law but is causing irreparable harm to the lives and livelihoods of Palestinians either living in the Seam Zone or who own lands within the Zone. This report has highlighted these hardships and described how almost every aspect of the women's lives is affected.

While the facts about the Wall and the permit regime are better known, little is written about the lives of the Palestinians living within the Seam Zone. Particularly absent are the voices of women. In this report, through interviews with women, the reality of life in the Seam Zone is exposed: the poor, inadequate and overcrowded housing conditions; the impact on their livelihoods; the difficulty in accessing health services and the difficulty in accessing education for their children. Most importantly women stress that living in the Seam Zone has taken away their lives as they knew them – their family life and their social and cultural life have been destroyed by the Wall and the associated checkpoint and permit regime.

The ICJ's opinion called on Israel to cease construction of the Wall and to dismantle the existing sections or re-route them onto the Green Line. This decision if fully implemented by Israel would allow the Palestinian communities in the Seam Zone areas to exercise their rights to freedom of movement, health, work, education and an adequate standard of living. However, besides the impact of the wall it has been the settlements (with as many as 80% of the settlers in the oPt being included in the area behind the wall) that have caused many of the restrictions imposed on Palestinians living in the Seam Zone. Moreover, the Wall is being built in such a way so as to include most of the large settlements and the areas designated for settlement expansion into Israel proper, leading to de facto annexation of more Palestinian land.

The ICJ also stated that: "[T]he Court is of the view that all States are under obligation not to recognize the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the Wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in and around East Jerusalem. They are also under an obligation not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by such construction."<sup>32</sup> The Court called on

32. Advisory Opinion Concerning the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, International Court of Justice (ICJ), 9 July 2004, para. 159

the United Nations, particularly the Security Council and General Assembly to act to bring an end to the illegal situation.<sup>33</sup> This report testifies to the need for urgent action from the international community and from the UN, as by the ICJ.

The experiences of the women interviewed testify to the humanitarian consequences of these policies and bear evidence to the policies of entrenchment of Israeli settlement expansion and colonization. In the Seam Zone, Palestinians cannot obtain permission to construct new homes or to extend or renovate existing homes. The women interviewed by WCLAC described how their lives have been impacted by partial demolitions of their homes and the overcrowded inadequate and dangerous housing conditions including zinc roofs and asbestos ceilings. They also described being unable to bring meat, eggs and even gas for cooking and heating through the checkpoints. Furthermore, they indicated the lack of public transportation that is needed to connect them to vital services and their communities on the other side of the Wall. Yet the only a-few-meters away settlement homes, new, multi storey villas, are being built and connected to Jerusalem and Israel by new roads. In addition, Palestinians living in the Seam Zone are particularly affected by the lack of access to essential services; a severe reality revealed by our interviews. As most health services are located to the East, or on the West Bank side of the Wall, Palestinians with West Bank IDs living in the Seam Zone have to pass through the checkpoints located along the Wall to access primary health services. Moreover, they frequently need to access medical services for routine check-ups for their children, pre and post natal treatment and other women-specific medical services.

Many of the women also spoke about the impact of life within the Seam Zone on their children's education, since the children have to pass through checkpoints in order to reach school. Some women described removing their daughters from school at sixteen to prevent them from being subjected to a daily encounter with armed Israeli soldiers that often coincides with humiliation and harassment.

Finally, the livelihoods of the families are affected by living within the Seam Zone. Traditional ways of life and making a living from

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33. Ibid, para. 159

the land is rendered impossible as machinery for harvesting crops and transporting products is prohibited or difficult due to the manned checkpoints. This report identifies that women's lives can be particularly affected by this as the removal of economic self sufficiency leaves women dependent on the male family members who are able to find work outside the home. This leads to a consequent lack of economic independence and declining social status.

Particularly devastating for most of the women who were interviewed was the impact of living in the Seam Zone on their family's social and cultural life. Only those who live in the Seam Zone areas are allowed to enter the Seam Zone area, meaning that the women that have moved into the Seam Zone to live with their husbands are isolated from their own families, friends and community.

The Wall and its associated regime, including the Seam Zone, is a direct impediment to the exercise by the Palestinian people of the right to self determination.<sup>34</sup> Fundamental guarantees under international human rights law regarding adequate housing, freedom of movement, rights to health, work, education and family life are thus systematically and routinely violated by Israel. Homes and properties have already been destroyed to make way for the construction of the Wall in violation of IHL.<sup>35</sup> For the residents of the Seam Zone, it is clear that the consistent and grave violations of their rights are part of a policy to forcibly displace them from their homes and land. Any such displacement would amount to the grave breach of unlawful forcible transfer under international humanitarian law.<sup>36</sup> This report which has highlighted the particular impact of such issues on women, calls for urgent and concerted action by the international community to end these policies and practices and to hold Israel accountable.

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34. Ibid, para. 159

35. Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and see Advisory Opinion Concerning the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, International Court of Justice (ICJ), 9 July 2004, para.133

36. Article 49 and 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention



# 7

# Recommendations



The findings and analysis in this study reveal serious violations of international law and enormous humanitarian consequences for the affected families. In light of these findings, we recommend the following:

**The Israeli Authorities should:**

- Cease the construction of the wall and dismantle the already existing sections, in line with the ICJ advisory opinion,
- Respect and implement the provisions of international humanitarian law and international human rights law regarding the Palestinian population of the oPt;
- Return land and property confiscated for the building of settlements, roads and the Wall and provide compensation to those Palestinians who have lost income and livelihoods as a result of the Wall or settlements;

**Until then, the Israeli authorities should:**

- Ensure that West Bank Palestinians particularly women are able to access specialized health care in East Jerusalem;
- Facilitate access to schools for Palestinian children, particularly girls living in the Seam Zone areas;
- Allow Palestinians living in the Seam Zone to bring meat, eggs, cooking gas and other essential items through the checkpoints; and
- Ensure that public transportation is able to access the Seam Zone areas for the use of the Palestinians living there.

**The International Community should:**

- Advocate for the implementation of the ICJ advisory opinion, to ensure that Israel ceases the construction of the Wall and dismantles the already existing sections.
- Raise the issues in this report with the Special Rapporteurs and other UN institutions, including with the Secretary General, at the Human Rights Council and the Security Council; and

- Raise the issues with the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Convention to compel Israel to comply with its obligations ensuing from the Fourth Geneva Convention.

**International and local NGOs and Women’s Organisations should:**

- Provide training and education to local communities, particularly women, on their economic, social and cultural rights;
- Develop and provide programs for the rehabilitation of communities, particularly focusing on providing emotional and psychological counseling for the affected families;
- Provide financial and humanitarian assistance to families whose livelihoods have been affected by the Wall, particularly to women, to counter poverty caused and exacerbated by living in the Seam Zone or having land rendered inaccessible; and
- Utilise international human rights mechanisms such as CEDAW and the Special Rapporteurs to raise the issues in this report and their impact on women.

**The Palestinian Authority should:**

- Advocate for the implementation of the ICJ advisory opinion, to ensure that Israel ceases the construction of the Wall and dismantles the already existing sections;
- Provide support for legal intervention and legal aid to assist families threatened with displacement and land confiscation; and
- Monitor and document the impact of the Wall, particularly within the Seam Zone areas.

