



## WEST BANK MOVEMENT AND ACCESS UPDATE MAY 2009



Checkpoint staffed by the Israeli Border Police controlling access between Sheikh Sa'ad, a Palestinian community isolated by the Barrier, and neighbouring communities in East Jerusalem, March 2009

### Executive Summary

1. The present report provides analysis and figures addressing the main developments and trends in the system of internal movement and access restrictions, implemented by the Israeli authorities in the period between September 2008 and end of March 2009. This system comprises a combination of physical obstacles (e.g. checkpoints, roadblocks, the Barrier) and administrative and legal measures (e.g. prohibitions, permit requirements, annexation) restricting Palestinian vehicular and pedestrian access throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.
2. During the reporting period the Israeli authorities implemented a number of measures, which have eased the flow of Palestinian traffic on some of the access routes into four main cities: Nablus, Hebron, Tulkarm and Ramallah. These measures included the removal of permit requirements for vehicles entering Nablus City; the opening of two junctions allowing more direct access to Hebron City; the removal of one checkpoint on the southern route into Tulkarm City; and the opening of a "fabric of life" alternative road easing access to Ramallah City from the west.
3. At the same time, there has been further entrenchment of various mechanisms used to control Palestinian movement and access and to facilitate the movement of Israeli settlers. The key elements of this entrenchment, as were observed during this and previous periods, are: the expansion of the alternative ("fabric of life") road network; the expansion of key staffed checkpoints; and the replacement of rudimentary obstacles (e.g. earthmounds) with more permanent ones (e.g. road gates and guardrails).
4. While some of these measures eased the flow of Palestinian traffic, they exact a price from Palestinians. For example, the "fabric of life" roads reconnect Palestinian communities that were disconnected due to the restricted access of Palestinians to a main road, or due to the obstruction of a road by the Barrier, at the expense of reinforcing the exclusion of Palestinians from the primary road network and of undermining the territorial contiguity between different areas. The pavement of these roads entails the expropriation of private and publicly-owned land, thus further shrinking the space available for Palestinian development.

5. In its most recent comprehensive survey, OCHA field teams documented and mapped 634 physical obstacles, including 93 staffed checkpoints and 541 unstaffed obstacles (earthmounds, roadblocks, road barriers, etc). Twenty out of the 93 checkpoints are not always staffed, including some that are rarely staffed. The overall figure represents an insignificant increase of four obstacles, compared to the parallel figure at the end of the previous reporting period (11 September 2008). However, despite the proximity in the totals at the end of both periods, the number of changes recorded during the current period (24 obstacles removed and 28 installed) was significantly lower when compared to the previous period (82 removals and 101 additions).
6. Though the total number of obstacles remains indicative of the widespread nature of the system of internal movement and access restrictions, this figure alone is insufficient to capture some of the most relevant developments and trends during the reporting period.
7. The West Bank Barrier, in conjunction with its gate and permit regime, are key components of the system of movement and access restrictions. Construction continued on various sections of the Barrier during the period, albeit at a slower pace compared to past periods. The Israeli authorities requisitioned land and began leveling works towards the construction of four new sections, two of which are aimed at relocating existing sections, in compliance with decisions issued by the Israeli High Court of Justice more than three years ago. All four sections are located within the West Bank, rather than on the Green Line or in Israel, in contravention of the Advisory Opinion issued by the International Court of Justice in July 2004.
8. In addition, large areas between the Barrier and the Green Line, in Salfit, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Hebron governorates were declared as "seam zone" and closed to Palestinians. Since 2003, monitoring of Barrier-affected communities situated in the northern West Bank shows a significant reduction in access to agricultural areas situated between the Barrier and the Green Line.
9. Access to East Jerusalem through the two main Barrier checkpoints controlling access of Palestinians with entry permits from the northern and southern West Bank (Qalandiya and Gilo) has been further constrained as a result of longer delays.
10. Israeli settlements remained the most important factor shaping the system of movement and access restrictions. This is reflected in the significant degree of overlap between the location of access restrictions (including the Barrier) and the location of settlements and settlers' routes. The main trends observed during the reporting period include an acceleration in the expansion of settlements on the western ("Israeli") side of the Barrier, along with the maintenance of all settlement outposts and the expansion of some; a deterioration in access of Palestinian farmers to agricultural lands located in the vicinity of some settlements, due, among other reasons, to an increase in settler violence; and the imposition of harsh restrictions (including prolonged curfews) on individual villages in the northern West Bank, following incidents of stone throwing at settlers' vehicles.
11. Access of farmers and herders to areas in the Jordan Valley and in the eastern slopes of Bethlehem and Hebron governorates that were declared in the past as closed military zones or as nature reserves, was further constrained as a result of an increase in the enforcement of restrictions by the Israeli authorities. Approximately 28% of the West Bank is designated as either closed military zones or as nature reserves.
12. Overall, the easing observed during the period in the flow of Palestinian traffic in some areas falls short of a genuine improvement in access. This is reflected not only in the lack of change in the total number of closure obstacles, but also in the parallel implementation of other restrictive policies and measures, including the expansion of the Barrier and Israeli settlements. Moreover, in contrast to assurances given by the Government of Israel regarding the temporary nature of the system of movement and access restrictions, measures adopted during this and previous periods indicate a further entrenchment of this system. As a result, the space available for Palestinian development in increasingly constrained.

## Introduction

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The freedom of movement of Palestinians living in the West Bank has been significantly reduced since the beginning of the second Intifada (September 2000) as a result of the internal system of movement and access restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities. This system is implemented through a combination of physical obstacles (e.g. checkpoints, roadblocks, the Barrier) and administrative and legal restrictions (e.g. closed military zones, prohibited roads, permit requirements) affecting Palestinian vehicular and pedestrian access throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The Israeli authorities have justified this system as a temporary measure to contain violent confrontations with Palestinians and to protect Israeli citizens, both

in Israel and in the West Bank settlements, from Palestinian attacks.

The present report provides analysis and figures addressing the main developments and trends in the system of movement and access restrictions for the period between September 2008 and the end of March 2009. The report is based on the regular monitoring carried out by OCHA field teams, culminating in a comprehensive survey documenting and mapping all closure obstacles.<sup>1</sup> Even though the total number of obstacles is indicative of the widespread nature of the system of movement and access restrictions, this figure alone is insufficient to capture the overall access trends during the reporting period.

## Access to four cities eased

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During the reporting period the Israeli authorities implemented a number of measures, which have eased the flow of Palestinian traffic on some of the access routes into four main cities: Nablus, Hebron, Tulkarm and Ramallah. These measures conform to a trend already identified in the previous reporting period (May-August 2008).<sup>2</sup> As elaborated in the following sections of this report, these easings fall short of constituting a genuine overall improvement in access:

### Nablus

Five main checkpoints continue to control access to and from Nablus City: from the south (Huwwara and 'Awarta), the north ('Asira Ash Shamaliya), the north-west (Beit Iba) and the east (Beit Furik).. However, relaxation measures implemented since December 2008 have eased Palestinian movement through them:

Firstly, Palestinian-plated vehicles coming from the north-west, the south and the east, are no longer required to secure a special permit to enter Nablus, and are only occasionally checked at these checkpoints (access through the northern

checkpoint did not require a permit). However, Nablus residents younger than 50 years of age are still banned from driving out of the city through the southern and eastern checkpoints.

Secondly, the relocation of the Beit Iba checkpoint further west has allowed residents of the Jenin governorate to access Nablus City without crossing it.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, these residents must now cross Beit Iba checkpoint when travelling to Tulkarm and Ramallah.

Thirdly, the permit and "back-to back" regime applied for trucks entering or leaving Nablus through the 'Awarta checkpoint was lifted. This has significantly improved the flow of commercial traffic in this area.

Finally, the opening hours of all five checkpoints were extended from 5am until midnight.

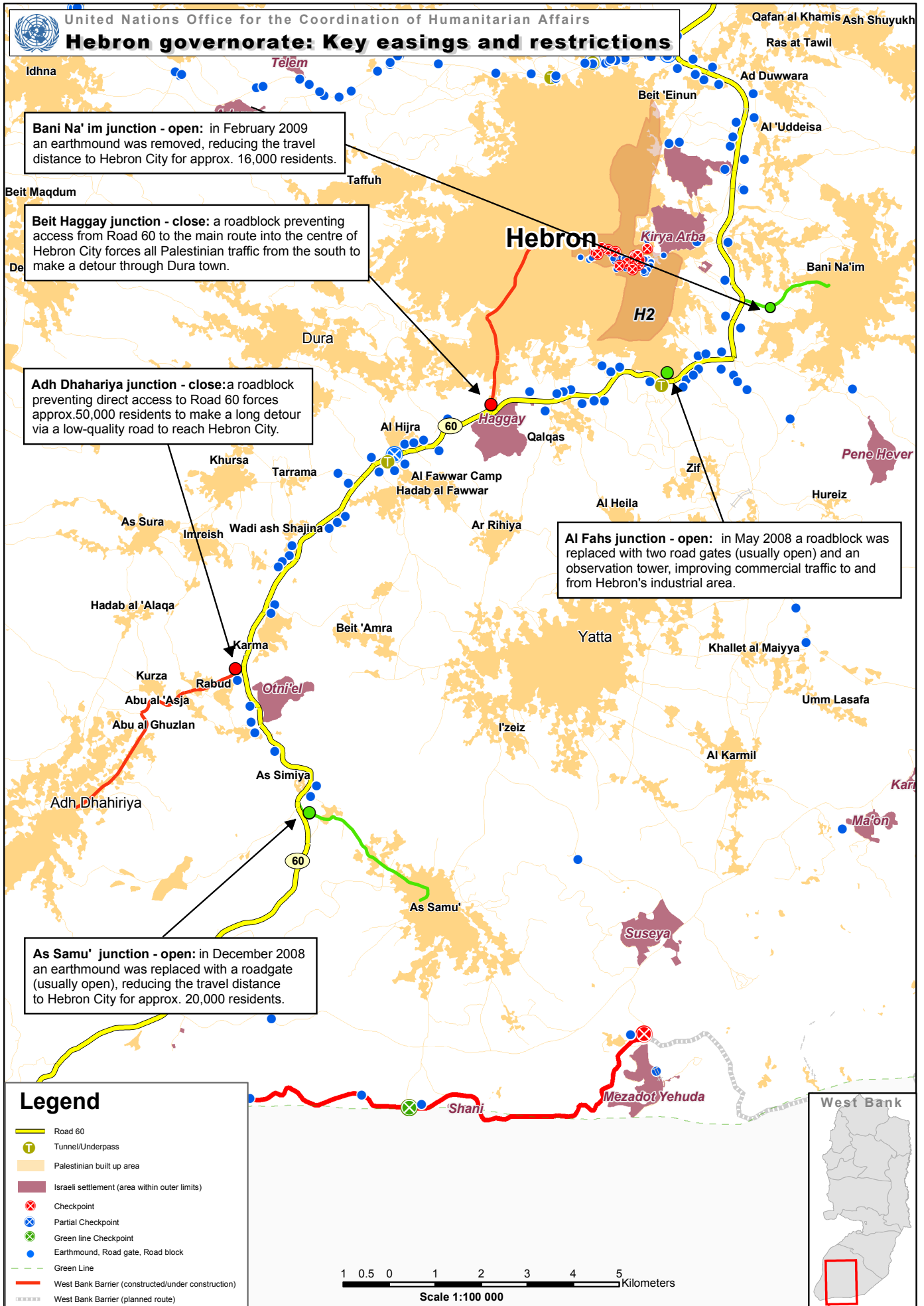
### Hebron

During the reporting period, the IDF removed a number of obstacles that blocked direct vehicle access between various communities to the south and east of Hebron City, including As Samu' and





# Hebron governorate: Key easings and restrictions



Bani Na'im towns, and Road 60, the main traffic artery in the south. These removals, which follow the opening of two key junctions during the previous reporting period (Ras A-Joura and Al Fahs), have facilitated access into Hebron City and its industrial area, which serve as the main economic and service hub for the region.

Despite these easings, however, the main route into the city center from the south remains blocked next to the Bet Haggai settlement. This forces local residents to make a significant detour through the town of Dura. Access from the east is also limited by the multiple obstacles installed throughout the Israeli-controlled area of the city (H2), blocking the main route into the city center. Finally, residents of Ad Dahariya and adjacent villages (approx. 50,000 residents) continue to be denied access to Road 60 by a roadblock placed next to the 'Otniel settlement, which forces them to make a long detour via a low-quality road to reach Hebron City, (see Hebron map).

## Tulkarm

In early March 2009, the IDF removed the Ar Ras checkpoint, the main staffed checkpoint controlling the southern access route to and from Tulkarm City. While this measure has improved the flow of traffic between the Tulkarm and Qalqiliya governorates, its impact was diminished by frequent random

checks performed by IDF soldiers on Palestinian vehicles at flying checkpoints along this route. The main entrance to Tulkarm from the east remained restricted by a staffed checkpoint (Enav).

## Ramallah

In December 2008 the Israeli authorities opened a new, paved road linking the village of Beit Ur al Fauqa with Ramallah City. Two similar roads were opened in the same area during the previous reporting period. These roads, also referred to as "fabric of life" roads, are part of the secondary road system built by the Israeli authorities. In this area, the alternative roads were built in light of the Israeli ban on Palestinian movement on the main east-west route in the Ramallah governorate – Road 443. This road has become a main traffic artery for Israelis travelling between the western coastal area and Jerusalem. In addition, an obstacle blocking traffic between Ein Qiniya village (approx. 800 residents) and Ramallah City was removed during this period. These measures have allowed quicker and more direct movement between some towns and villages in the western Ramallah governorate (approx. 40,000 people) and Ramallah City. Meanwhile, the main routes into Ramallah City from the south, east and north have remained tightly controlled by staffed checkpoints.<sup>4</sup>

## Further entrenchment of the system of restrictions

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Measures adopted by the Israeli authorities during the reporting period, including some of those discussed above, have contributed to a further entrenchment of various mechanisms used to control and restrict Palestinian movement, and to facilitate the movement of Israeli settlers across the West Bank.

The key elements of this entrenchment observed during this and previous reporting periods are the expansion of the alternative ("fabric of life") road network; the expansion of key staffed checkpoints; and the replacement of rudimentary obstacles (e.g.

earthmounds) with more permanent ones (e.g. road gates and guardrails). Some of these measures, the first two in particular, necessitate the investment of large amounts of money. The perpetuation of some of the closure obstacles in their original form and location is also indicative of this entrenchment and has significant ramifications.

As elaborated below, some of these measures resulted in an easing in the flow of traffic, while others had no impact, or even had a negative impact on access. Yet, regardless of the immediate access impact, all of them exact a price from

Palestinians in terms of land loss, disruption of traditional routes, and deepening fragmentation of West Bank territory. The entrenchment of the system of restrictions diminishes the prospects for a genuine improvement in the degree of control that Palestinians have over the physical space of the West Bank. Without such improvement, the possibilities available for the Palestinian population to address its own needs will necessarily remain limited.<sup>5</sup>

### The alternative road network

This network comprises a number of roads, part of which are tunnels and underpasses, linking Palestinian areas that were disconnected due to a ban or restriction on Palestinian access to a main road, or due to the physical obstruction of a road by the Barrier. Such a physical reconnection, however, reinforces the exclusion of Palestinians from the primary road network utilized by Israeli citizens and has the effect of undermining territorial contiguity between different areas (see Western Ramallah map). Though it has yet to be systematically evaluated, the environmental and economic impact of this additional road network on a small area like the West Bank is also of concern. To date, about 49 kilometres of alternative roads, including 43 tunnels and underpasses, have been paved by the Israeli authorities.

In addition to the opening of the previously mentioned road linking Beit Ur al Fauqa with Ramallah, during the reporting period the Israeli military began leveling land next to Ni'lin village (also in Ramallah governorate) for the construction of another "fabric of life" road. Once completed, this road will enable Palestinian residents to travel between Ni'lin and the adjacent checkpoint without accessing Road 446, which currently serves the residents of the nearby Israeli settlement. An additional "fabric of life" road and tunnel are planned to be constructed under Road 446 to connect western Ramallah villages with the rest of the governorate; according to the Israeli DCL, upon the tunnel's completion, Palestinians will be barred from using Road 446.

In the Hebron governorate, two additional alternative roads were under construction during the reporting period. One, running from the Tarqumiya checkpoint through the town of Halhul, is being built because Palestinian access to Road 35, the main east-west traffic artery in the south, is restricted by the Israeli authorities. The other road will link the town of Adh Dhahariya with Metar checkpoint, via Ar Ramadin village, in the south-western area of the governorate. This road will provide an alternative to the traditional route, which has been blocked next to the Israeli settlement of Tene. The construction of both alternative roads is supported by the PA and funded by USAID.

### Expansion of checkpoints

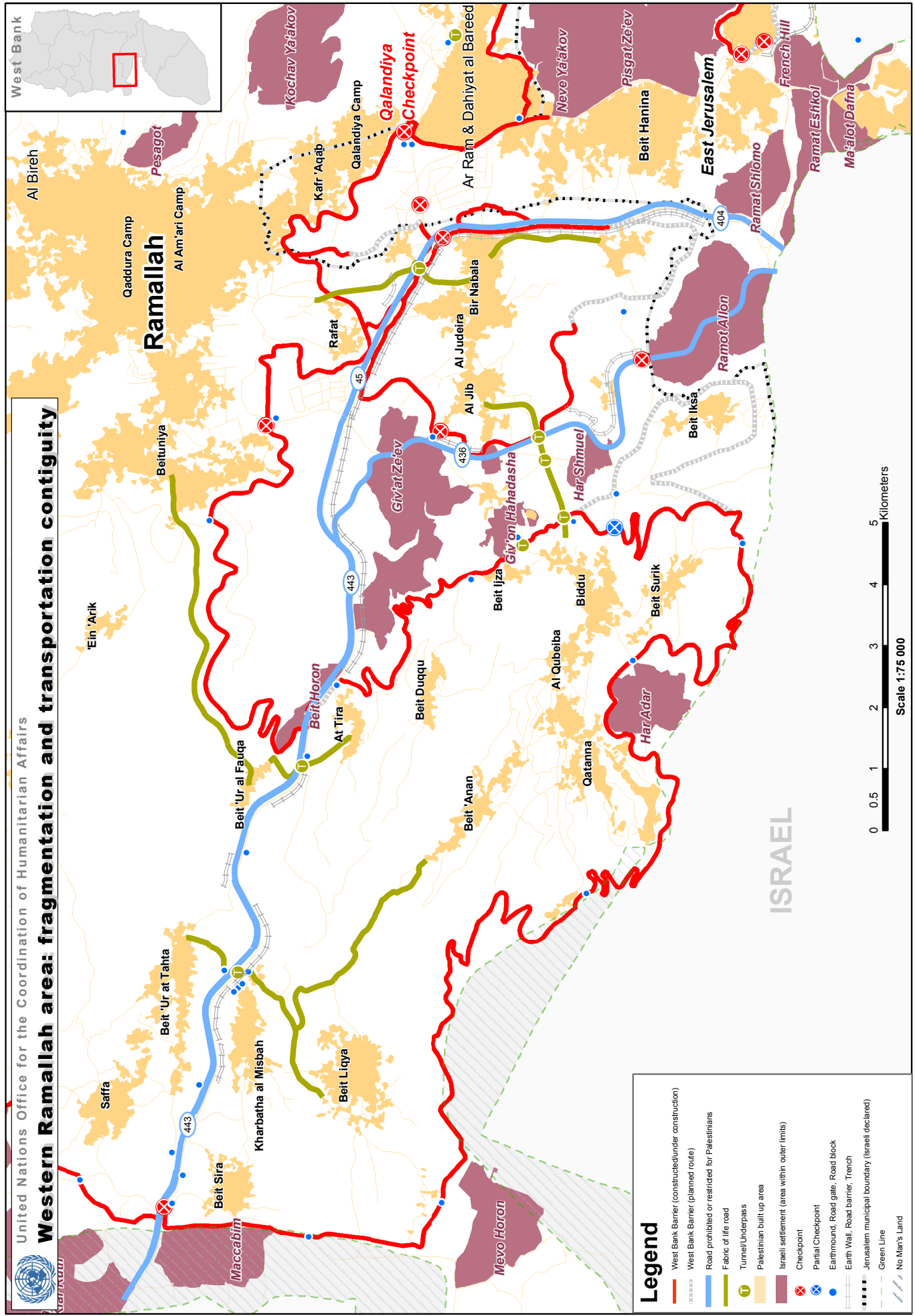
Checkpoint expansion usually entails the confiscation or seizure of Palestinian land located in the vicinity of an existing checkpoint and the addition of physical infrastructure, including new lanes paved for vehicles crossing the checkpoint. During this period, the Israeli authorities completed the expansion of two key checkpoints: Wadi Nar (also known as "Container"), which controls movement through the main north-south transport artery,<sup>6</sup> and Huwwara, which controls access to Nablus City from the south. Contrary to earlier statements issued by the IDF, none of these expansions have so far resulted in an improvement in the flow of traffic, and long delays continue to be observed at peak times. This has occurred, among other reasons, due to the non-usage of the additional lanes or to the limited amount of military personnel performing the checks.

The expansion of another three checkpoints was ongoing during this period. Two of these control and restrict Palestinian access into East Jerusalem: Qalandiya checkpoint, which blocks the main route into the city from the north, and Al Jib checkpoint, which controls the access of Palestinians living within a settlement enclave (Giv'at Ze'ev block), northwest of East Jerusalem. The third checkpoint, Enav, controls the main route into Tulkarm City from the east.



United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

# Western Ramallah area: fragmentation and transportation contiguity







A guardrail and an earthmound blocking a access to Road 60 from a dirt track south of Sinjil village, Ramallah governorate

### From rudimentary obstacles to more permanent ones

The practice of replacing rudimentary obstacles with more permanent physical obstacles has been implemented in a variety of ways. One, more “benign” way, is the replacement of an earthmound or roadblock with a road gate, that remains open, unless a security alert is declared; this is the case of the recently opened access road to As Samu’ town, which followed the opening of two key junctions during the previous period, all in the Hebron area (see previous section). By contrast, in at least four other cases recorded during this period, in the Nablus and Qalqiliya governorates, the road gates replacing the earthmounds were kept closed. Overall, by the end of the reporting period there were a total of 110 road gates located throughout the West Bank.

Another, more detrimental method involves the installation of a metal guardrail along a main road, blocking access of vehicles to the main road, as well as preventing herds from crossing to the opposite side. While, in some of the above cases, the original earthmounds blocking these access points were

removed, in others they were kept intact and made redundant. Such guardrails were recently installed along a section of Road 317 in the southern Hebron governorate and a section of Road 60 in the Ramallah governorate. Both roads are used primarily by Israeli settlers and the Israeli authorities have justified the installation of the guardrails as a safety (as opposed to security) measure.

Despite differences in the access impact of these changes, ranging from positive to neutral, from a wider perspective, they are variations of the same entrenchment pattern.

### Perpetuation of unstaffed obstacles

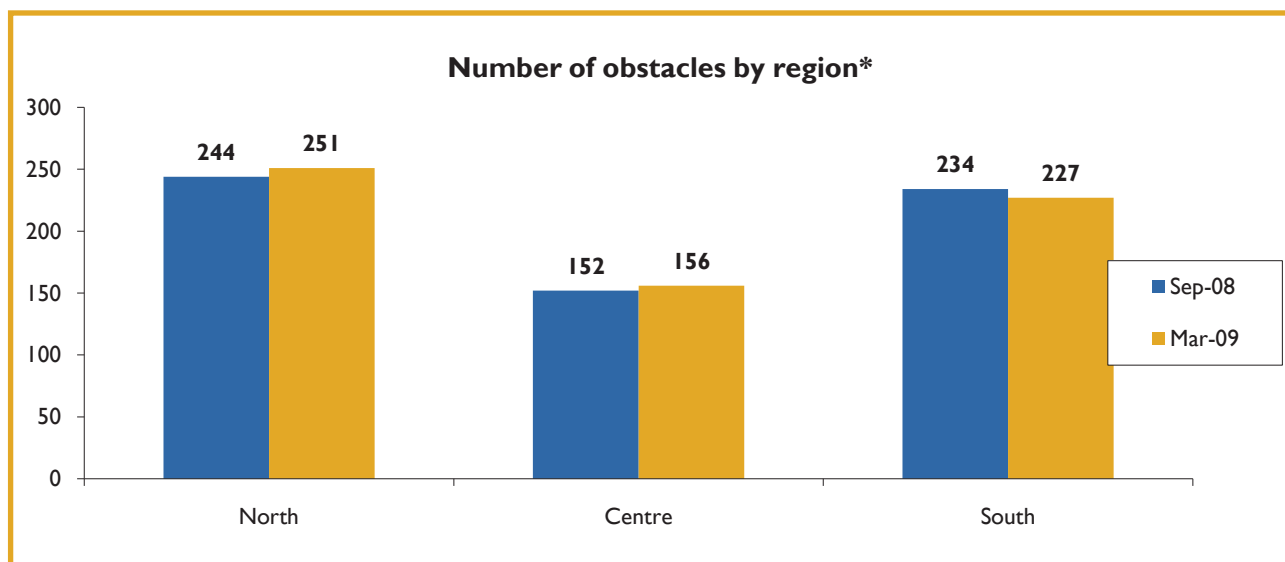
A significant number of unstaffed obstacles (e.g. roadblocks and earthmounds) identified and mapped as far back as five years ago remain in the same form and place. The perpetuation of these obstacles has contributed to the gradual erosion and disappearance of some traditional routes, due to the prolonged lack of use and maintenance; some routes have subsequently become invisible following their plowing and cultivation by Palestinian farmers.



## Total number of obstacles unchanged

In the comprehensive closure survey completed by the end of March 2009, OCHA field teams documented and mapped 634 obstacles blocking internal Palestinian movement and access throughout the West Bank. These include 93 staffed

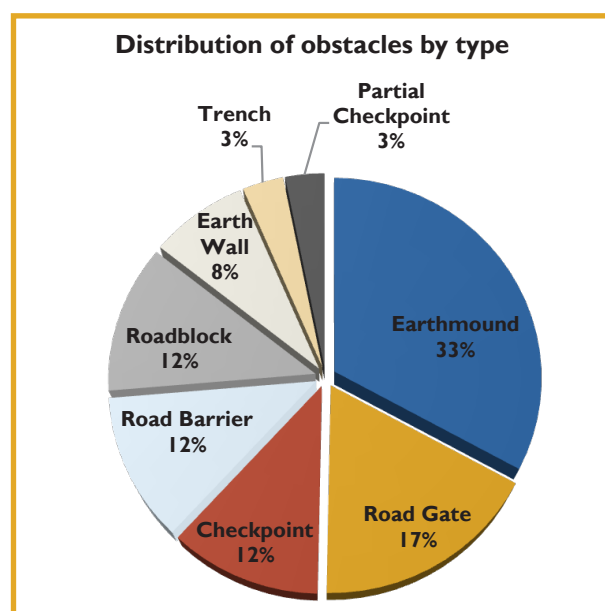
checkpoints and 541 unstaffed obstacles (roadblocks, earthmounds, earth walls, road barriers, and trenches). Of the 93 checkpoints, 20 (called “partial checkpoints”) are only staffed part of the time, including some which are rarely staffed.



\* The southern region includes Bethlehem and Hebron governorates; the central region, Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Jericho governorates; and the northern region Jenin, Tubas, Tulkarm, Nablus, Salfit and Qalqiliya governorates.

The overall figure represents an insignificant increase of four obstacles, compared to the parallel figure at the end of the previous reporting period (11 September 2008). However, despite the proximity in the totals at the end of both periods, the number of changes recorded during the current period (24 obstacles removed and 28 installed) was significantly lower when compared to the previous period (82 removals and 101 additions), suggesting greater stability in the system.

In addition, during the reporting period, OCHA recorded the deployment of an average of 65 random, or “flying”, checkpoints per week throughout the West Bank. This represents a 21% decrease compared to the parallel figure in the previous period. Random checkpoints often cause more difficulties for Palestinians than the permanently staffed ones, as they are unpredictable and usually entail more intensive search procedures and longer delays.



While the total count of 634 obstacles includes the main checkpoints along the Barrier leading to Palestinian communities and to East Jerusalem (some of which preceded the Barrier itself), this figure excludes 63 crossing points along the Barrier,

also known as “Barrier gates”, leading into isolated agricultural areas.<sup>7</sup> Also excluded from the count are hundreds of roads and dirt tracks that had been obstructed as a result of the construction of the Barrier (for Barrier developments, see next section).

In addition, the total figure of 634 obstacles does not include most obstacles deployed within the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron City (H2), except for nine key staffed checkpoints. Since these obstacles were not counted in the past, in order to preserve the

continuity of the data set, they are disaggregated from the total. In this survey, OCHA recorded and mapped a total of 93 closure obstacles throughout H2 (including the nine staffed checkpoints), representing an increase of 15 obstacles (or 19%) compared to the parallel figure at the end of the previous period. This increase reinforces an otherwise observed worsening situation in relation to the freedom of movement of Palestinians within this area.<sup>8</sup>

## The Barrier and its associated regime expanded; access to East Jerusalem further constrained

The West Bank Barrier, in conjunction with its gate and permit regime, have become key component of the system of movement and access restrictions. Following a campaign of suicide bombings, its construction began in summer 2002 with the stated purpose of preventing Palestinian suicide bombers from entering Israel.<sup>9</sup> The majority of the Barrier’s route, approximately 87%, runs inside the West Bank, surrounding 80 Israeli settlements, which will be located between the Barrier and the Green Line. According to the Government of Israel, the protection of Israeli settlers and settlements against Palestinian violence is an additional objective of the Barrier.<sup>10</sup>

Construction of several sections of the Barrier continued during the period, albeit at a slower pace compared to previous periods. During this period, the Israeli authorities requisitioned land and started leveling works towards the construction of four new sections, two of which are aimed at relocating existing sections, in compliance with decisions issued by the Israeli High Court of Justice more than three years ago; all four sections are located within the West Bank, rather than on the Green Line or in Israel, in contravention of the Advisory Opinion issued by the International Court of Justice to the UN General Assembly in July 2004.

In addition, various areas between the Barrier and the Green Line, and between the Barrier and the

Israeli-defined municipal boundary of Jerusalem, were declared as “seam zone” and closed off for Palestinians.

The future impact of the Barrier in the Bethlehem governorate, in the area of the Gush Etzion settlement bloc, is of increasing concern. Firstly, the section of Road 60 running between Bethlehem and Hebron will be severed by the Barrier, with still unclear access ramifications. Secondly, nine Palestinian communities located to the west of the Barrier with a population of 22,000 will be located in an enclave, separated from the West Bank. These communities will face restricted access to the Bethlehem urban area; farmers living on the West Bank side of the Barrier will also face access restrictions and will be separated from their agricultural lands west of the Barrier.<sup>11</sup>

### New areas declared “Seam Zone”

In January 2009, the Israeli authorities issued military orders declaring the area between the Barrier and the Green Line in the Hebron and parts of the Salfit, Ramallah, and Bethlehem governorates, as well as a small area between the Barrier and the Israeli-defined Jerusalem municipal boundary, a closed military area (‘seam zone’). These are the first such orders to be issued since October 2003, when all of the land between the Barrier and the Green Line in the Jenin, Tulkarm and Qalqiliya governorates was designated as a closed military area. OCHA’s

monitoring of Barrier-affected communities situated in the northern West Bank since 2003 shows that a significant reduction in access has followed the declaration of areas as “seam zone,” thus giving rise to serious humanitarian concerns.<sup>12</sup>

Until the recent declarations, access by Palestinian farmers to the areas beyond the Barrier required prior coordination with the Israeli army. Once land has been officially declared closed, Palestinians require IDF-issued 'visitor' permits to access their land in these areas with a particularly detrimental effect on farmers. In the northern West Bank, permit requirements have become more stringent over the years. Those applying for, or renewing, fixed-period permits are required to pass security checks and to prove a connection to their land by providing valid ownership or land taxation documents, which are not easily obtainable.<sup>13</sup>

A number of households in southern Hebron and in one locality of Qalqiliya governorate (‘Azzun ‘Atma) are located in the area recently declared closed. Residents of these areas will require special permits to continue living in their homes.<sup>14</sup> Other Palestinians, including family members and service providers, will require “visitors permits” to access these communities. Also affected by this declaration is one neighborhood located in Area C (Dahiyat Al Barid) between the Jerusalem municipal border and the Barrier. While the Palestinian residents of this neighborhood with Jerusalem IDs have no restrictions, residents with West Bank IDs are required to obtain the special residency permits to stay in their homes.

## Construction of new Barrier sections began

In Qalqiliya, the Israeli authorities started leveling land and uprooting trees belonging to Palestinians for the re-routing of two sections of the Barrier, in compliance with decisions issued by the Israeli High Court of Justice more than three years ago. The relocation of one section (around the Alfe Menashe enclave) will reconnect three communities with the rest of the West Bank, while cutting them

off from large tracts of their agricultural land. Two other communities in the same settlement enclave will remain isolated from the rest of the West Bank. The rerouting of the other section will mean that two Palestinian villages are reconnected to 700 dunums of agricultural land, presently isolated by the Barrier.

Leveling of land was also carried out around two Israeli settlements in Salfit and Hebron governorates for the construction of entirely new sections. The Salfit section, around the settlement of Revava, is part of the so-called Ariel ‘Finger’, a 22-kilometre-long corridor into the West Bank, linking a large settlement block, including Ariel, to Israel. In Hebron, land leveling started around the Eshkolot settlement. Once constructed, this section will isolate approximately 4,000 dunums of land, encompassing the settlement built up area and grazing areas currently used by Palestinian herders.

## Access to East Jerusalem further constrained

Access to East Jerusalem is of critical importance for the entire West Bank population, for specialized medical care, university education, work, social and family relationships and worship.<sup>15</sup> However, for most Palestinians this access has been forbidden since 1993, unless they possess a difficult-to-obtain entry permit issued by the Israeli authorities. Since the Barrier was completed in the area, permit holders are allowed to enter East Jerusalem only through four of the 16 existing checkpoints to the city along the Barrier, and only by foot. Permits become invalid whenever a general closure is declared, usually during Jewish holidays and times of security alert.

Access through the northern checkpoint, Qalandiya, during the reporting period, became more difficult and time consuming, both for permit holders and for Jerusalemites. One of the reasons is the increase in the volume of traffic moving through this checkpoint, which resulted in longer queues. The increase in traffic flow followed the closure of one



of the gates in the Barrier (Dahiyat Al Barid Gate) and the dismantlement of an adjacent checkpoint (Ar Ram), which forced more vehicles through Qalandiya checkpoint. In addition, elderly and sick passengers, along with foreign passport holders, all of whom had previously been allowed to remain on public busses while crossing Qalandiya southwards, began being required to exit the bus and pass on foot through the pedestrian crossing. This has increased the stress and time spent in accessing Jerusalem as well as contributed to the increased volume of persons crossing. Medical staff (except doctors) and patients accessing East Jerusalem hospitals from the north continued to be prevented from using the more convenient Hizma checkpoint, which is used mainly by Israeli settlers and at which crossing

on foot is not required. Staff and patients are now forced to enter via the more crowded Qalandiya checkpoint.

Long queues also continued to be observed at Gilo checkpoint, the main Barrier checkpoint along the southern route to East Jerusalem. While the checkpoint opens at 5am daily, due to the lengthy checking procedures, people begin arriving as early as 2am in order to get a good place in the queue and reach their workplaces in East Jerusalem and Israel on time. In February 2009, the Israeli authorities opened a “humanitarian lane” at this checkpoint for patients, the elderly and children. However, this lane only bypasses one of three checking procedures at the checkpoint and lengthy, stressful waiting periods remain.

## Israeli settlements and settlers continued to affect Palestinian access

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Israeli settlements built in the West Bank since 1967 constitute an important, if not the most important, factor shaping the system of movement and access restrictions.<sup>16</sup> Firstly, the areas included within the outer limits (i.e. the physical boundary) of the 149 Israeli settlements, covering approximately 3% of the West Bank, are inaccessible to Palestinians and contribute to the fragmentation of the territory.<sup>17</sup> Secondly, most of the movement restrictions imposed since the beginning of the second Intifada in 2000 are aimed at securing the movement of Israeli settlers, especially their commute to and from Israel, and to provide protection to settlement areas. This is reflected in the significant degree of overlap between the distribution of movement and access obstacles and restrictions and the location of settlements and settlers’ routes. Finally, settler violence against Palestinians and their property constitutes a significant element of constraint to Palestinian movement and access in certain areas.

The main trends observed during the reporting period include the continued expansion of settlements on the western (“Israeli”) side of the Barrier, along with the maintenance of all settlement outposts and the expansion of some of them;

a deterioration in access of Palestinian farmers to agricultural lands located in the vicinity of settlements; and the imposition of harsh restrictions (including prolonged curfews) on specific villages in the northern West Bank, following incidents of stone throwing at settlers’ vehicles.

### Settlement expansion

The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS) reported that, during the last quarter of 2008, it recorded construction starts for 454 new housing units in West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) settlements, while another 3,229 housing units were reported to be under active construction.<sup>18</sup> Both figures represent a 28% increase compared to the parallel figures for the fourth quarter of 2007. Most of this construction activity occurred on settlements located to the west of the Barrier. While no similar ICBS figures are available for East Jerusalem, various reports suggest that a similar trend is taking place there.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the Israeli group Peace Now reported that the Israeli Ministry of Housing has announced its intention to build 73,000 new housing units in West Bank settlements, of which 15,000 have received approval of outline building plans.<sup>20</sup>

Settlement outposts, “unauthorized” under Israeli law, continued to expand as well. According to Peace Now, in the course of 2008, a total of 261 new structures were added to existing settlement outposts, compared to 98 structures added in 2007.<sup>21</sup> In several outposts, prefabricated structures were replaced with permanent buildings.

By the end of 2008 there were approximately 485,000 Israelis living in West Bank settlements, including some 195,000 in East Jerusalem.<sup>22</sup>

### Access to land in the vicinity of settlements

Access of Palestinian farmers to agricultural land located in the vicinity of Israeli settlements on the eastern (“Palestinian”) side of the Barrier, remained restricted and in some cases deteriorated.<sup>23</sup>

One of the practices behind this phenomenon is the creation of “buffer zones” around the existing outer limits of settlements, where access of Palestinian farmers is restricted and sometimes completely denied. Demarcation of these areas is carried out by various means, including fences, electronic warning systems and patrol roads. According to B’Tselem, as of September 2008, the IDF had officially established buffer zones (also called “Special Security Areas”) around 12 settlements. Access of Palestinian farmers to these areas, which encompass close to 5,000 dunums, requires “prior coordination” with the Israeli Civil Administration. In addition, according to B’Tselem, Israeli settlers have unilaterally established such buffer zones around many other settlements and denied access of Palestinians, including by intimidation and assault.<sup>24</sup>

Settler attacks and intimidation against Palestinian farmers and herders take place also in other areas

in the proximity of settlements, outside these buffer zones. Most affected areas include the south-east corner of Hebron Governorate (Massafer Yatta), areas south-east of Bethlehem City (Teqoa, Noqedim and Ma’ale Amos settlements) and areas south of Nablus City (Yitzhar, Bracha and Itamar settlements). Another geographical area where Palestinian access is reduced as a result of systematic settler violence is the Israeli-controlled zone of Hebron City (H2). Overall, between September 2008 and March 2009, OCHA recorded 207 incidents involving settler violence against Palestinians; while this figure is roughly the same as during the previous reporting period, its distribution was uneven, with peaks recorded around the evacuation of the Rajabi House settlement in Hebron on 4 December, and since March 2009, with a period of relative calm in-between.<sup>25</sup>

### Access restrictions in response to stone-throwing

During the reporting period, an increase has been observed in the frequency of IDF military operations in some villages in the northern West Bank where incidents of stone-throwing at settlers’ vehicles by Palestinian youth have taken place. Most of these operations involve, in addition to searches and arrests, the imposition of curfews for periods of up to 12 hours. Overall, between September 2008 and March 2009, OCHA recorded 47 curfew incidents with a combined duration of 471 hours, representing a 15% increase compared with the previous period. Moreover, in the case of two of the most affected villages (Azzun and Haris in Qalqiliya and Salfit governorates), in addition to the curfews, vehicular access to the main roads used by settlers (Road 55 and Road 5) was blocked by the IDF.

## Access to closed military zones and nature reserves further constrained

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Since 1967, approximately 1,150 square km, or more than 20% of the West Bank, were declared by the Israeli authorities as closed military zones, where Palestinian access is prohibited (excluding areas declared as “Seam Zone”). In addition, over 600 square km, or 10% of the West Bank, were declared as nature reserves.<sup>26</sup> Development or use of these areas, including for grazing, is prohibited. The large majority of these areas are located in the Jordan Valley and in the eastern slopes of the Bethlehem and Hebron governorates.

Anecdotal information collected by OCHA suggests that during the reporting period there was an increase in the enforcement of the restrictions applicable to these areas, in particular in the

nature reserves located on the eastern slopes of the Bethlehem governorate. This development has exacerbated the hardship of small herder communities, already affected by ongoing water scarcity, by reducing their access to grazing land and traditional water sources. In addition, during this period, the IDF re-installed six obstacles that had been previously removed blocking access to the main routes within a closed military zone in the south-eastern part of the Hebron Governorate (Masafer Yatta), where about 1,200 people live in a number of small communities.<sup>27</sup> This has resulted in reduced access to services and grazing areas and increased isolation and hardship faced by these communities.

## Conclusion

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Despite the measures implemented by the Israeli authorities during the reporting period, which have eased the flow of traffic on some key access routes, the movement of Palestinians within the West Bank remains highly constrained. This is reflected not only in the high number of closure obstacles (634), which has remained unchanged since the end of the previous period, but also in the continuous implementation of other detrimental measures and policies, including the construction of the Barrier and implementation of its associated regime, the expansion of Israeli settlements and settlement outposts, and the enforcement of access restrictions in areas designated as closed military zones and nature reserves.

In contrast to assurances given by the Government of Israel regarding the temporary nature of the system of movement and access restrictions, measures adopted during this and previous periods indicate a further entrenchment of various mechanisms used to control and restrict Palestinian movement, and to facilitate the movement of Israeli settlers, those

commuting between Israel and the West Bank in particular. While some of the measures outlined herein have resulted in an easing of movement, all of them exact a price from Palestinians in terms of land loss, disruption of traditional routes, and deepening fragmentation of West Bank territory. One of the key components of this entrenchment trend is the creation of transportation contiguity between Palestinian areas severed due to the Barrier or to restricted roads, as a “compensation” for the loss of territorial contiguity.

These trends have resulted in a contraction of the overall space available for Palestinian development and a decrease in the degree of control that Palestinians have over that space. Without an improvement in the control over physical space, the possibilities available for the Palestinian population to address its own needs will necessarily remain limited.



# Annex I: Methodology and definitions

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## Methodology

OCHA monitors and maps closure obstacles in the West Bank on a regular basis. Teams of experienced staff, with extensive and detailed knowledge of the West Bank travel along every paved road, all significant unpaved roads and the majority of minor tracks in their area of operations. The monitoring survey takes approximately ten full working days for three teams. Each team is equipped with a GPS (geographical positioning system) unit and a camera.

Each time a significant obstruction is located, the team records its position with the GPS unit for future mapping and takes a photograph of it. The obstacle is then categorized according to pre-determined definitions as described below and given a unique identifying name based on a combination of the nearest main road, nearest village or town, and the governorate and the field office identifying it. Next, the type of access blocked is described, e.g. access of a village to main road, connection between two towns or access from an agricultural road to an olive grove. Records, including the code of the photograph, are entered on a file in the GPS, relying on pull-down menus to reduce the risk of error.

Only obstacles that effectively block vehicular access along a clear paved or unpaved road are counted. Obstacles within 50 metres of another obstacle on the same route are recorded as one.

The GPS files are down-loaded on a daily basis into a computer using geographic information system (GIS) software to render the information into maps. Maps are printed and crosschecked against other field data jointly by the GIS specialist and a member of the field team. If there is any query, further field checks are carried out to ensure a complete and accurate data set.

It should be noted that the OCHA survey is extensive, but not necessarily exhaustive, as some of the smaller routes may be missed. Thus, the figures produced by OCHA should be considered a minimum number and not reflective of the total number of obstacles.

## Definitions

- Checkpoints are composed of two elements: an infrastructure which inhibits vehicular and pedestrian traffic and permanent presence of Israeli security personnel (e.g. the IDF, the Border Police, the civil Police, a private security company). Security personnel usually check the documentation of persons crossing the checkpoint and conduct searches on their vehicles and their belongings.
- Partial Checkpoints are made up of similar infrastructure as checkpoints but are not permanently staffed. Frequently, the partial checkpoint infrastructure is installed on road-sides and, therefore, does not directly obstruct the traffic. When staffed, partial checkpoints function as the full checkpoints described above. When unstaffed, the traffic may flow relatively freely along the route.
- Earthmounds are mounds of rubble, dirt and/or rocks put in place by IDF bulldozers to prevent vehicular movement along a road or track. Several mounds less than 50 meters apart, blocking the same route, are only counted as one closure. If a mound is pushed to the side (by IDF or Palestinians) or if a route around it is created and vehicle access is possible, the mound is not recorded as an obstacle. Earth mounds are often removed or circumvented and then re-built and/or enlarged. Therefore, some of them appear on one map, disappear from the next and then subsequently reappear.
- Roadblocks are constructed from one or more concrete blocks about one cubic meter and, like earthmounds, are used to prevent vehicle access to land or roads. In all other respects, they are the same as earthmounds.
- Trenches (or ditches) are dug across flat land or along the side of a road to prevent vehicles from going around a closure obstacle on the road.

- Road Gates are metal gates used to block access to a route. All road gates are marked on the maps as closures, including those which were open when recorded by OCHA, until the infrastructure is removed.
- Road Barriers may be composed of a continuous earth wall, a fence or a concrete barrier running along the side of a road. To be classified as a road barrier, this type of infrastructure should be at least 100 metres long and obstruct free passage of people, vehicles or livestock, onto, off or across the road.

## Annex II: Barrier Gates

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The Barrier has severed hundreds of agricultural roads which Palestinians formerly used to access land and water resources. The IDF has installed 63 Barrier gates which allow Palestinians, primarily farmers, restricted access to land isolated between the Barrier and the Green Line. These gates are divided into different categories depending on the frequency of opening – daily, weekly or seasonal – and the procedures required for Palestinians to cross (prior coordination or permits).

In the northern West Bank, where the land between the Barrier and the Green Line was declared closed by military order in October 2003, those above the age of 12 require a ‘visitor’ permit to access land in the closed area. In January 2009, the closed area designation was extended to the Ramallah, Hebron, Salfit and parts of the Bethlehem and Jerusalem districts. In certain localities in the Jerusalem and Hebron districts, permits are now required, while in other areas, access to land isolated by the Barrier is dependent on ID cards and list of names maintained at the gates, which are open by prior coordination with the Israeli District Coordination Liaison (DCL) Office.

The special requirements for Palestinians to cross, limited gate placement and opening hours, and restrictions on vehicles, equipment and materials have severely curtailed access and movement for Palestinians, especially the time available for farming with negative impact for rural livelihoods. As a result, while excluded from the overall number of obstacles, OCHA considers the Barrier crossing points as an integral of the system of movement and access restrictions in its closure monitoring from now on.

A complete list of the crossing points which allow Palestinian access to communities and land isolated by the Barrier is included in the table below. The list does not include military gates, which Palestinians are prohibited from using, or the crossing points installed or incorporated into the Barrier, which control Palestinian access into Israel or to East Jerusalem.

TITLE	DESCRIPTION	NO.
Agricultural gates	Open daily, generally for one hour early morning, noon, late afternoon to allow farmers holding valid permits access to their land in the closed areas. Only a minority of permit-holders, generally herders, are allowed to stay on their land overnight.	11
Seasonal/Weekly gates	Open seasonally, generally during the olive harvest, to allow farmers access to olive groves, and one to three days weekly throughout the year, to allow for ploughing, weeding, pruning, etc. of fields and crops.	9
Seasonal gates	Only open for a limited period during the olive harvest, October-December.	12
Prior coordination gates	Access is not dependent on permits, but on ID cards and a list of names maintained at the gate. Gates are opened through prior coordination on a seasonal / several days weekly basis.	30
Other gates	Bil'in is open 24 hours following an order by the Israeli High Court of Justice.	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>63</b>

## Endnotes

- For the methodology used in the survey and a definition of the different types of obstacles, see Annex I.
- OCHA, *Closure Update*, September 2008, available at: [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_closure\\_update\\_2008\\_09\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_closure_update_2008_09_english.pdf)
- Jenin residents still need to cross the Shave Shomron checkpoint to access Nablus. While cars are usually not stopped at this checkpoint, no Palestinian traffic is allowed through between midnight and 5am.
- Qalandiya & Jab'a checkpoints in the south; Bet El checkpoint in the east; and 'Atara checkpoint in the north.
- For an elaboration of the economic impact of the reduced control over West Bank space see, The World Bank, *The economic effects of restricted access to land in the West Bank*, October 2008.
- This is the only route connecting the south and central regions of the West Bank, which is available for Palestinian-plated vehicles; Israeli-plated vehicles are not allowed. In May 2008, the Government of Israel committed to Mr. Tony Blair, the Quartet Representative, to remove this checkpoint, subject to security considerations. The Israeli investment in expanding this checkpoint raises questions regarding this commitment.
- For an account of the different types of gates and crossing points, see Annex II.
- On the impact of settler violence on Palestinian access see the Settlements Section below.
- Since 2004, the number of suicide bombings has decreased. In 2005, Palestinian militant groups declared a ceasefire on suicide bombings in Israel.
- See for example, Cabinet Decision 3283, of 20 February 2005, Section B.2.
- For further information on the expected impact, see OCHA, *Shrinking Space: Urban Contraction and Rural Fragmentation in Bethlehem District*, May 2009.
- According to a UN survey conducted in 2007 in the northern West Bank, less than 20% of those who used to farm their lands in these areas before completion of the Barrier, are now granted permits to reach their farms and wells. See, OCHA, *The Humanitarian Impact of the Barrier*, July 2008, Update No. 8, available at: [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_settler\\_vilonce\\_special\\_focus\\_2008\\_12\\_18.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_settler_vilonce_special_focus_2008_12_18.pdf).
- See, OCHA, *The Humanitarian Impact of the Barrier*, July 2008, Update No. 8.
- While the village of Azzun 'Atma is entirely located on the "Israeli" side of the Barrier, their residents were not required to obtain permits to continue living in the village. In March 2009 the IDF installed an inner fence, or secondary Barrier, with two gates along it, cutting off nine houses from the rest of the village forcing their 75 inhabitants to apply for 'permanent resident' permits.
- See, OCHA, *East Jerusalem : The Humanitarian Impact of the West Bank Barrier*, July 2007, Update No. 7, available at: <http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/Jerusalem-30July2007.pdf>.
- Settling an occupied territory is illegal under international law. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian



Person in Time of War explicitly prohibits the transfer of the Occupying Power's civilian population into the territory. The illegal status of Israeli settlements has been confirmed by the United Nations Security Council (Resolution 466 of 22 March 1979) and the International Court of Justice (Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, of 9 July 2004).

- 17 OCHA, *The Humanitarian Impact on Palestinians of Israeli Settlements and Other Infrastructure in the West Bank*, July 2007, pp. 42-3. In fact, Palestinians are prohibited, through a military order, to enter the "municipal boundaries" of settlements, which cover an area more than twice as large as the size of the outer limits, however, this prohibition is not enforced outside the outer limits. See, B'Tselem, *Land Grab – Israel's Settlement Policy in the West Bank*, May 2002, p. 116.
- 18 Available at: [http://www1.cbs.gov.il/reader/yarhon/yarmenu\\_e\\_new.html#15](http://www1.cbs.gov.il/reader/yarhon/yarmenu_e_new.html#15)
- 19 Ir Amim, "Post-Annapolis Construction", available at: <http://www.ir-amim.org.il/Eng/?CategoryID=294>.
- 20 Peace Now, Ministry of Housing's Plans for the West Bank, March 2009, available at: <http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=61&docid=3566&pos=0>
- 21 Peace Now, "Summary of Construction in the West Bank 2008", available at: <http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=61&docid=3508&pos=1>. According to Peace Now, while the Israeli authorities announced that during 2008 they have dismantled four outposts, two of them were only partially dismantled, one was dismantled and immediately rebuilt and another cannot be considered a settlement outpost (information submitted to OCHA upon request). In addition, on December 2008, the Israeli authorities evacuated the Al Rajabi House settlement in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron (H2), however, this building was not considered by the authorities as an outpost.
- 22 Non-Jerusalem figures are from ICBS: [http://www1.cbs.gov.il/population/new\\_2009/table1.pdf](http://www1.cbs.gov.il/population/new_2009/table1.pdf). The figure for East Jerusalem settlements was calculated by OCHA on the basis of the figure produced by the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies as of the end of 2005, on the assumption of an even population growth in both East and West Jerusalem, based on ICBS growth figures for the whole of Jerusalem.
- 23 Access to areas adjacent to settlements on the "Israeli" side is restricted mainly by the Barrier's permit and gate regime. See Barrier Section above.
- 24 B'Tselem, *Access Denied - Israeli measures to deny Palestinians access to land around settlements*, September 2008. Available at: [http://www.btselem.org/Download/200809\\_Access\\_Denied\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.btselem.org/Download/200809_Access_Denied_Eng.pdf)
- 25 See also, OCHA, *Unprotected: Israeli settler violence against Palestinian civilians and their property*, December 2008, available at: [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_settler\\_vilonce\\_special\\_focus\\_2008\\_12\\_18.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_settler_vilonce_special_focus_2008_12_18.pdf).
- 26 This figure includes 167 square km that were declared as nature reserves in the framework of the 1998 Wye River Memorandum signed between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel. Due to some overlap of areas declared as closed military zones and nature reserves, the net size of areas with one or both of these designations is 1,550 square kilometers, or 28% of the West Bank.
- 27 Most of these residents were evacuated by the IDF from their homes in 1999 on the grounds that the area is a closed military zone. Subsequently, the residents petitioned the Israeli High Court of Justice, which issued a temporary injunction, permitting them to return to their homes until the court reached a final decision in the matter. The petition is still pending. See, B'Tselem, *Means of Expulsion*, July 2005.



**UNITED NATIONS**  
**Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs**  
**occupied Palestinian territory**

**P. O. Box 38712**  
**East Jerusalem 91386**  
**[www.ochaopt.org](http://www.ochaopt.org)**

**Tel. +972 (0)2 582 9962**  
**Fax +972 (0)2 582 5841**  
**[ochaopt@un.org](mailto:ochaopt@un.org)**