



Setting the Scene

A drive through the West Bank quickly dispels any notions one might have of Israel's beneficent intentions. There are none. The first ugly blight on the horizon are gleaming white structures clumped together on hilltops. They jut out treeless, naked and unashamed as below them the green valleys continue to gently undulate in their menacing shadows. A shimmering sliver cuts through the land or over it, every now and then brought to life by cars that speed along these highways towards Jerusalem, Tel Aviv or Haifa: and below them, life barely moves at all. A looming watchtower confirms the feeling of something very wrong. Grey and threatening with cavernous windows, behind which shadows watch and aim at things that move, this is one of hundreds of such towers overseeing the mass of humanity waiting endlessly at yet another checkpoint that makes every journey torture for every Palestinian.

Soldiers, machine guns, tanks make up the rest of the set pieces as does the razor wire which coils around the kilometres of fencing before it comes up against the Wall – mammoth in size and structure and even more monstrous in the reason for its existence.

Closing In

The Wall is Israel's provocative solution to the Palestinian problem in the West Bank. It is a wall ostensibly built for

Israel's security, yet its path does not follow the borders between Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Instead, at many points it goes deep into the heart of Palestinian territory. The Wall is being built, despite an advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice that condemned it. It is being built despite a similar wall coming down almost two decades ago between East and West Berlin. Then, the whole world breathed a sigh of relief that such barbarity had finally come to an end – in the West at least. Israel's Prison Wall - much higher and longer and begun only 4 years ago – hardly raises a whimper of protest where it counts, despite it being built contrary to the Court's ruling.

It is a wall, the like of which most people cannot imagine – 8 metres high in places and up to 100 metres wide in others and running 720 kilometres the length and breadth of the West Bank – a wall in some places and electrified razor fencing with ditches and a no-man's land in others. Already 180 kilometres of wall run right through thousands upon thousands of acres of private land – Palestinian land. Half of that wall encircles East Jerusalem, isolating the city from the rest of the occupied West Bank and separating it from its Palestinian neighbourhoods which are dependent on Jerusalem for their survival. In the process, the Wall has skirted around three of the largest illegal Jewish settlement blocs – aggressively staking out more territory – and connected them to Israel, wiping out all the areas needed

for Palestinian natural growth and economic development.

The Wall is the most dangerous phase of Israel's occupation of Palestinian land because it allows for the continual expansion of illegal Israeli settlements deep inside the West Bank. The end result for the Palestinians will be three miserable truncated enclaves without access to valuable water resources or the fertile agricultural land on which they have depended for centuries. Certainly, there will be no contiguity between them or the walled-in Gaza Strip on the coast. It also means that Palestinian movement will have to be severely curtailed within the West Bank in order to protect these implanted illegal settlements. And these illegal activities are still going on while everyone continues to talk in absolute terms about a two-state solution and totally ignoring the realities on the ground. The wall has relegated Palestinian self-determination in their own sovereign state to the bulldozed, treeless dust heap of a prison that Israel has deliberately and systematically succeeded in diminishing. This is the land that Israel wants and is taking, while herding Palestinians into ever smaller disconnected Bantustans, in order to establish an exclusively Jewish state.

How It Happened

The actual owners of all of historic Palestine - the Palestinians - have watched their land being dispensed, taken, fragmented, violated and