

OCHA
occupied Palestinian territory

humanitarian

UPDATE

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Overview

The humanitarian situation further deteriorated in the past two weeks. Strict movement restrictions against Palestinians in both the West Bank and Gaza remained in effect following the suicide bombings in Haifa on 5 October and Tulkarm on 9 October. The introduction of the "green permit" for residents of the area between the Green Line and the Wall means that access to land, essential services and work are now under threat. In Gaza, IDF incursions resulted in the large destruction of Palestinian property.

Senior Israeli military sources stated this week that the IDF is concerned that the continuous pressure on the Palestinian population - including curfews, reoccupation of towns and severe movement restrictions - has the potential to cause a humanitarian crisis.¹ Israel's army chief, Lieutenant-General Moshe Ya'lon, recommended a less controversial route for the Wall through the West Bank, stating that the current route will make Palestinians' lives 'unbearable' and require too many soldiers to guard it.²

¹ Haaretz, p.B2, 30 October 2003

² Guardian 31 October 2003

757 barriers in the West Bank

OCHA has counted 757 barriers blocking Palestinian roads and towns in the West Bank (1 Nov 2003) and severely restricting movement for 2.3 million Palestinians.

| Type of physical barrier | Quantity |
|--|-----------------|
| Manned checkpoint | 73 |
| Ditches blocking vehicular access | 58 |
| Concrete blocks | 95 |
| Road gates | 34 |
| Wall gates for Palestinians | 33 |
| Earth mounds blocking vehicular access | 464 |
| TOTAL | 757 |

The UN demands Israel stop and reverse construction of the Wall

The UN General Assembly overwhelmingly (144 in favour and 4 against) approved a Resolution demanding that Israel stop and reverse construction of the wall. The Resolution, passed on October 21, refers to the problematic route marked out for the wall, including in and around East Jerusalem, and states that it will cause further humanitarian hardship.

It also notes that the Wall's route could prejudice future negotiations and make the two-state solution physically impossible to implement. The UN's Secretary General is asked to periodically report on compliance with the Resolution.

New IDF map reveals complete Wall route cutting further into Palestinian land

An official Israeli government map published on 23 October (website: www.seamzone.mod.gov.il) reveals new information about the Wall's planned route in the southern West Bank.

OCHA's preliminary analysis shows that approximately 16 percent of West Bank land will be located between the Wall and the Green Line. About half a million Palestinians living in 136 communities will be located in this area.

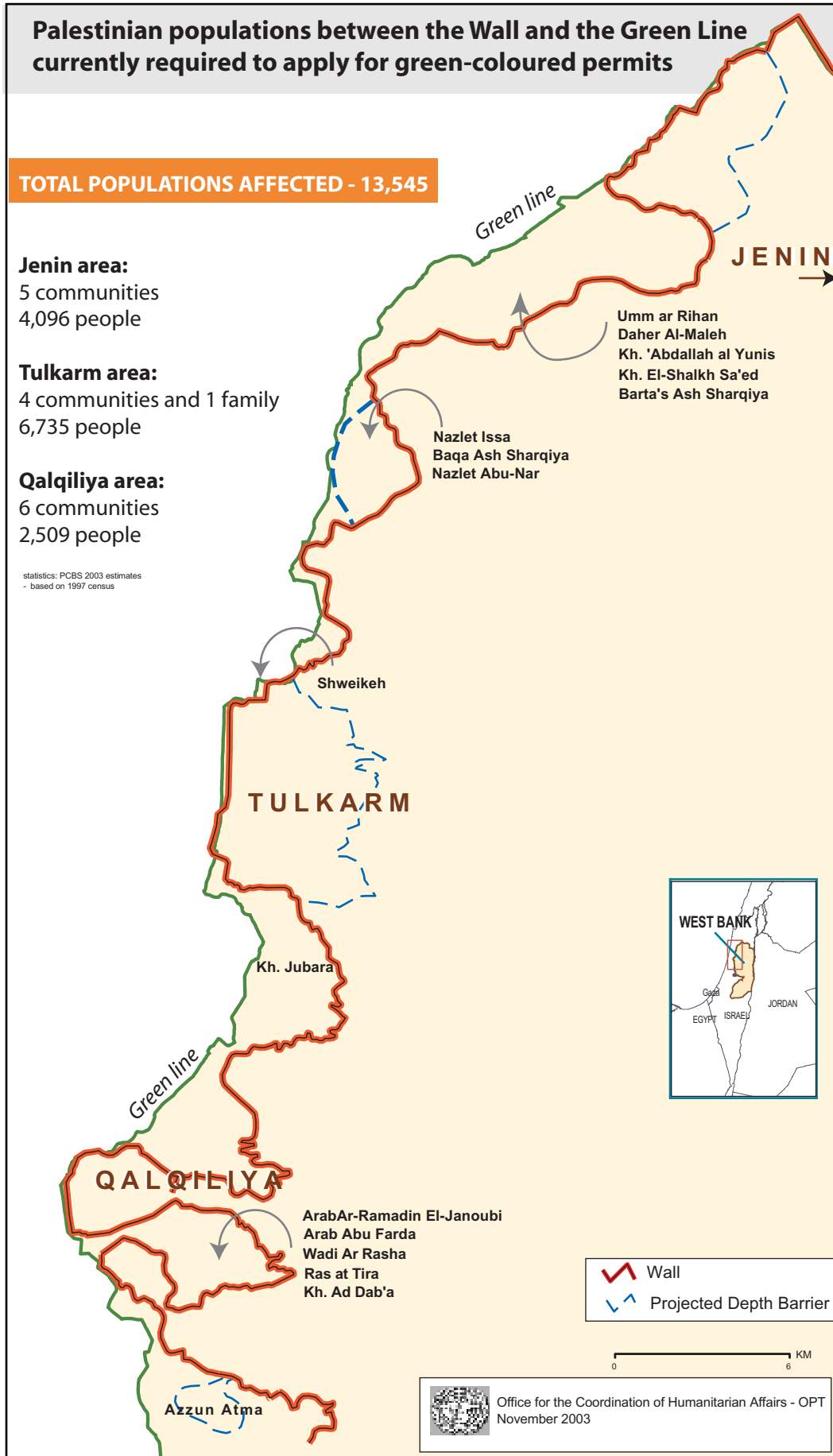
In Tulkarm and Qalqiliya governorates, four enclaves completely surrounded by the Wall have already been created (see below). See also www.ochaoPt.org on 5 November for the posting of a special report and map on the Wall's new route and its humanitarian implications.

Humanitarian consequences of green permits

The last OCHA update (1 Sept -15 Oct 2003) reported that IDF military orders established an 18,000-acre closed zone between the Green Line and the Wall (see map: http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/maps/nwall_oct03.pdf). The declaration of this land as a closed zone intensifies the territorial fragmentation of the oPt, cutting Palestinian villages off from each other, from the larger towns, and from their own fields.

The new green permit that determines movement to this land through gates in the Wall will lead to increased hardship for residents of this closed zone by adding to already complex movement restrictions.

All residents (about 13,545 people) of this zone must apply for green-coloured permits to continue residing there and to exit for school, employment, and health services. The 15 villages affected are Umm ar Rihan, Daher Al-Maleh, Khirbet 'Abdallah al Yunis, Khirbet El-Shalkh and Barta'a Ash Sharqiya in Jenin governorate, 'Azzun 'Atma, Ras at Tira, Arab Abu Farda, Ad Dab'a, 'Arab ar Ramadin al Janubi and Wadi ar Rasha in Qalqiliya governorate and Khirbet Jubara, Nazlat 'Isa, Baqa Ash Sharqiya, Nazlat Abu Nar and one family in the suburb of Shweikah in Tulkarm governorate (see map at the end of the update).



In Tulkarm and Qalqiliya governorates, other Palestinians (approximately 4,100 families) who have land in the area, go to school, conduct business and visit relatives must obtain green permits as well.

According to IDF, some 4,000 green permits have been issued in the past three weeks in Tulkarm and Qalqiliya governorates. The IDF announced that residents should apply at the Israeli Governorate Co-ordination Office (DCO) but is yet to receive any applications. Because of this, the IDF has issued cards according to villagers' past permit applications.

In Khirbet Jubara village, Tulkarm governorate, located between the Wall and the Green Line, residents have collectively refused to accept the validity of green permits. With the exception of children attending schools in neighboring Ar Ras, Kafr Sur and Kafr Zibad and ambulances, no-one can leave the village because they do not have the permits.

From a humanitarian perspective, the new military orders are another measure to impose further restrictions on Palestinians. They will increase food insecurity and impoverishment, A recent FAO/WFP survey indicates that about 40% of Tulkarm and Qalqiliya residents that has until now managed to cope, risks becoming food insecure within the coming year largely due to the Wall. This 40% is in addition to 45% in Qalqiliya and 33% in Tulkarm who are already food insecure.

Green permit: Front and back

Permit for passage through Qalqiliya gate.



Colour

Type

Purpose: Permanent resident in the seamzone

Vehicle Number

Dates in effect

Signed: Oled Dahamni, Deputy DCO officer, Qalqiliya

Signed: Rami Barakat, DCO officer, Tulkarm

Conditions of this permit (back of permit).

1. Entry is only permitted for the specific purpose stated on this permit.
2. The permit holder should keep the permit with him at all times along with the 10 card.
3. Accompanied persons should be in the presence of the permit holder at all times.



4. In the event of loss of the permit, report to the nearest police station or place of issue.
5. The permit should be returned to the place of issue no later than a week after its expiry.
6. This permit does not constitute evidence of legal rights including property rights or legal residency in the area.

Gates cause difficulties and ruin the harvest

Only Palestinians with permits can pass through the Wall gates, but even then movement is not guaranteed.

The IDF in Tulkarm announced that agricultural gates will open at 06:00, 12:00 and 18:00 for 20 minutes. OCHA's monitoring indicates that in practice, permit holders experience irregular opening times and arbitrary passage.

All gates have been closed for prolonged periods following the Haifa and Tulkarm suicide attacks on 5 and 9 October and during the Yom Kippur holiday. On 19 October, the IDF announced that a number of agricultural gates would re-open and checkpoints and roadblocks would be removed making travel between villages easier. However, Palestinians are still subject to major delays.

According to UN's World Food Programme, virtually all crops have perished because of delays in timely harvesting and transportation. The price of fresh vegetables and fruits has risen.

Al Zahra Demolitions - Collective punishment

In response to an attack by Palestinian gunmen that killed three Israeli soldiers in Nezarim



settlement, south of Gaza city on 24 October, Israeli forces entered the adjacent Al Zahra town two days later, destroying three high-rise apartment blocks comprising 150 apartments and worth USD 9 million.

In response to these demolitions, the Secretary General, Kofi Annan, deplored Israel's continuing demolition of Palestinian-owned buildings as illegal and

reiterated that the house demolitions amount to collective punishment, which is a clear violation of international humanitarian law (27 Oct 2003).

Each building comprised 12 floors, with each floor containing 4 apartments. Individual apartments averaged 150 square metres containing 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, lounge and kitchen. The construction, which began in 1998, was halted with the onset of the Intifada. Forty families (about 240 people) had signed contracts on units prior to September 2000 but were waiting to move.

These demolitions have further reduced accommodation which is badly needed. According to UNRWA, 12,000 Gaza people have been made homeless since September 2000 due to house demolitions.

The impact of closure continues to be felt in Bethlehem: Gas shortages

Despite IDF withdrawal from inside Bethlehem earlier this year as part of the Road Map, the city is surrounded by IDF checkpoints and remains closed. Bethlehem governorate is facing a shortage of gas essential for cooking and heating, a situation which could deteriorate during Ramadan and winter. New restrictions on gas delivery to Bethlehem have meant that the amount gas supplied falls short of the governorate's requirements.

Since early August, it has become increasingly difficult for the Israeli gas company (OOR) to deliver Liquid Propane Gas (LPG) to the two Bethlehem gas stations due to IDF restrictions at Gilo checkpoint. There were no gas deliveries between the 25-29 September. Two 20-tonne consignments were allowed on 30 September. But between 1-13 October, renewed restrictions prevented the Israeli supplier crossing Gilo checkpoint.

The IDF proposed that the Israelis sell the gas directly to Assalam company located in Israeli-controlled Area C. But this proposal was rejected by the Palestinian Authority, which would not be able to claim revenue from VAT as Assalam is located in an Israeli area. An agreement was reached to procure LPG from DOR using the back-to-back system at the Tarqoumia checkpoint in Hebron. The gas is now pumped from an Israeli truck to the sole green-plated truck delivering gas to Bethlehem. This truck transports gas from Tarqoumia to Bethlehem negotiating four checkpoints along the way. .

Bethlehem consumes 20-30 tonnes of LPG per day in the summer and 50-60 tonnes in the winter. The longer distance from Tarqoumia checkpoint to Bethlehem and delays at checkpoints mean that the one 10-tonne Palestinian tanker makes a maximum of two deliveries per day (20 tonnes), 6 days per week. This supply is well below the daily amount required by the governorate in winter. The gas stations have recently used up their reserves. Secondary distributors queue for days to get hold of scarce supplies and face movement restrictions when delivering gas to villages. Alternative fuel sources are inadequate - electricity supply is erratic because the network is in a state of disrepair and firewood is very expensive.

Further to supply shortages, plummeting incomes mean that households are facing problems simply affording gas. One canister, lasting a family about one week during winter, costs between NIS 27 -30.