



OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

P.O. Box 38712, East Jerusalem, Phone: (+972) 2-582 9962 / 582 5853, Fax: (+972) 2-582 5841 ochaopt@un.org, www.ochaopt.org

West Bank closure count and analysis¹

January 2006

1 Introduction

This report reviews the obstacles that are part of the system of internal closure within the West Bank as of 13 January 2006 and compares them with the situation in August 2005.¹

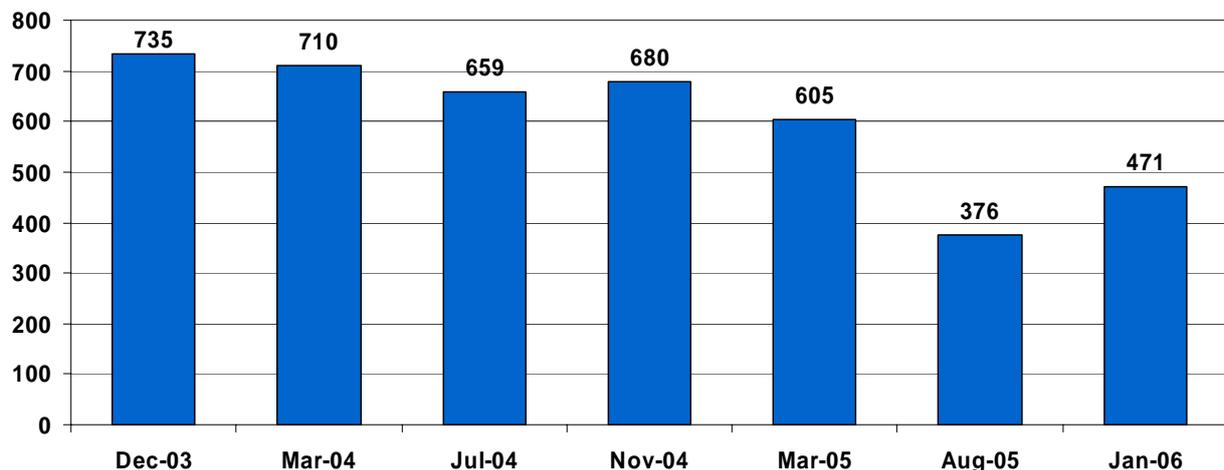
The closure system is a primary cause of poverty and the humanitarian crisis in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and restricts Palestinian access to health and education services, employment, markets and social and religious networks. The types of obstacles include permanent and partially manned checkpoints, roadblocks (consisting of rows of 1-metre concrete blocks), metal gates, earth mounds, earth walls (a long series of earth mounds), trenches, road barriers and permit restrictions. The purpose of these obstacles, as the Israeli Government states, is to protect Israeli citizens from Palestinian militant attacks that have killed around 1000 Israelis since September 2000. OCHA field staff collects the exact location of each closure with a Global Positioning System (GPS). The information is then integrated into a Geographic Information System (GIS) and used to map each obstacle.

2 Main Findings

2.1 The West Bank closure system comprises 471 physical obstacles placed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on roads to control and restrict Palestinian vehicle traffic, compared to 376 physical obstacles, reported in OCHA's August 2005 update – an increase of 95 closure obstacles or a 25% increase.

2.2 The number of manned checkpoints remained the same during the five-month period – with 50 permanently-manned and eight partially-manned checkpoints around the West Bank. The increase has occurred in unmanned physical obstacles.

Physical obstacles in the West Bank December 2003 - January 2006



2.3 The addition of physical obstacles was most noticeable in Hebron governorate² where there was an increase by 55, and in the northern West Bank around Nablus governorate (an increase by 16), Salfit governorate (an increase by 11) and Tulkarm governorate (an increase by ten).

2.4 Physical obstacle numbers in the central region have remained stable. However, the Barrier is increasingly causing access problems around Ramallah governorate and East Jerusalem. Approximately 299 km (45% of the Barrier's total length) has been constructed. Of this, 53 km have been constructed since October 2005. A further 124 km is under construction (19% of the Barrier's total length).

West Bank: Access and Closure

January 2006

PHYSICAL CLOSURES

Manned Closures

-  Checkpoint
-  Partial Checkpoint

Unmanned Closures

-  Earthmound, Roadblock and Road Gate
-  Trench, Earth Barrier and Road Barrier

West Bank Barrier

-  Constructed
-  Under Construction
-  Planned Route

Planned Barrier - path based on Israeli Government map, published 20 February 2005 and IDF land seizure orders (Ministry of Defence - Seam Zone Authority)

Constructed Barrier - path extracted from satellite imagery and verified with field surveys as of January 2006.

ACCESS

Closed and Restricted Areas

-  Israeli military base
Access is prohibited
-  Israeli closed military area
Access is prohibited
-  Existing and projected 'closed areas' behind the Barrier
Access is limited to permit holders

Israeli Settlements

-  Settlement
-  Evacuated Settlement
-  Outpost
-  Settlement Municipal Area

Palestinian Areas

-  Builtup

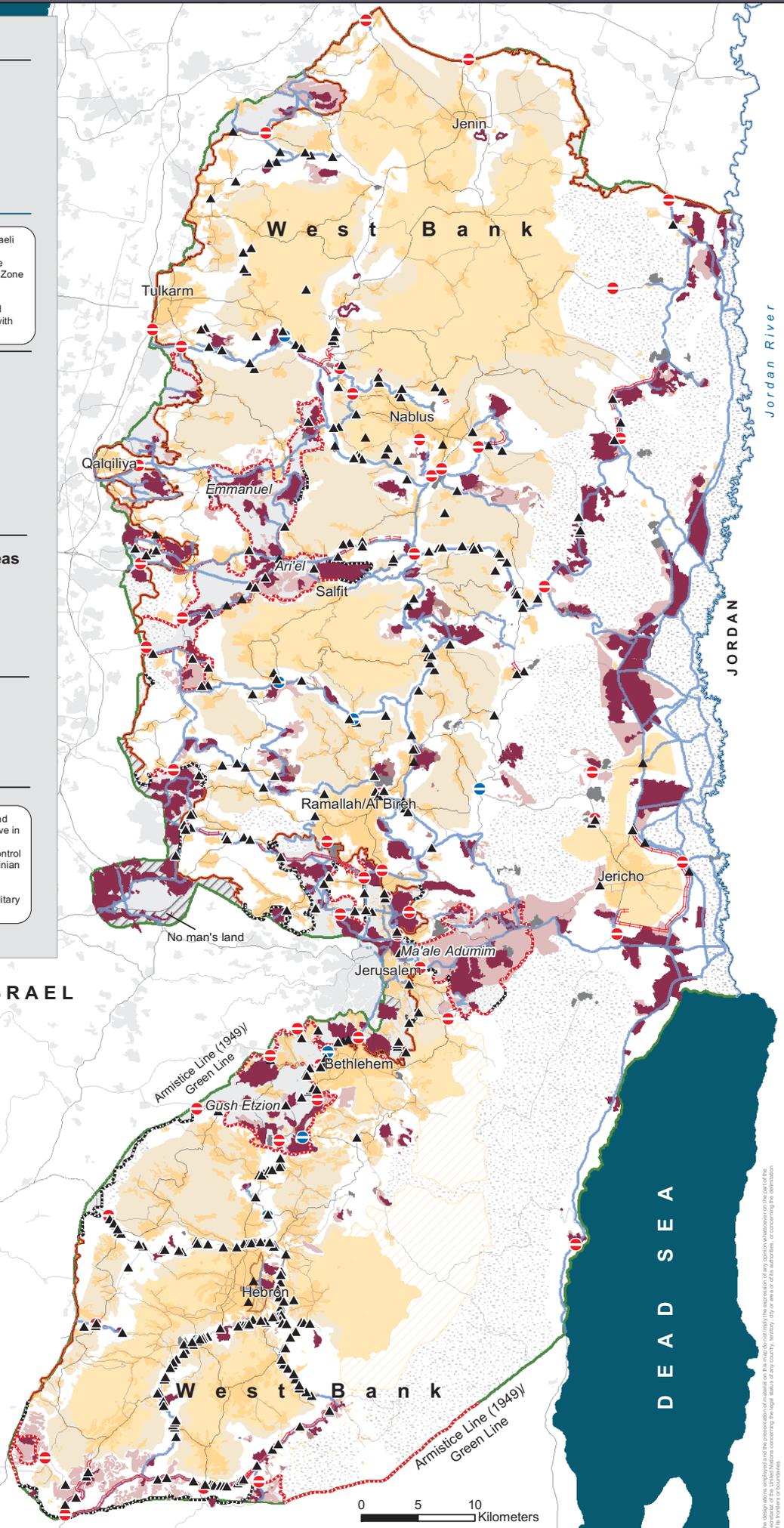
Roads

-  Prohibited or Restricted Palestinian vehicle use
-  Regional or Main
-  Other Road

Oslo Agreement

-  Area A¹
-  Area B²
-  Special Case (H2)³
-  Intended Nature Reserve
-  Area C⁴

- 1 - Full Palestinian civil and military control (Effective in Jericho only.)
- 2 - Full Palestinian civil control and joint Israeli-Palestinian military control
- 3 - Hebron Agreement
- 4 - Full Israeli civil and military control



Cartography: OCHA Information Management Unit
 Map Produced: February 2006
 Base data: PA MOP, July 2000, OCHA update August 2005
 For comments contact <ochaopt@un.org> or
 Tel. +972 (02) 582-9962, <http://www.ochaopt.org>

The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the United Nations Secretariat concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the boundaries or its borders or frontiers.

3 Why the increase?

3.1 There has been an increase in **road barriers** – consisting of long stretches of fencing or concrete barriers along road verges – on main West Bank roads.

3.2 Some obstacles that were imposed immediately prior to **Israeli disengagement**³ have remained in place and are hampering Palestinian access.

3.2.1 Prior to disengagement, north-south traffic was able to bypass Nablus city because the Shave Shomeron checkpoint was removed. However, during disengagement (from 15 August 2005) this section of road was completely blocked and it remains closed. The result is that the northern West Bank is closed off from the central and southern regions and travellers need to pass through Nablus.

3.2.2 Two gates originally installed to secure the evacuation of two settlements remain in place and now hamper movement for Palestinians between Jenin and Tulkarm governorates, specifically on Road 585.

3.3 The IDF states the reason for the rise in the number of physical obstacles is an increase in Palestinian violence. At the same time, they acknowledge that some of the physical obstacles and restrictions are unrelated to security needs.

4 Other closure trends

4.1 The increase in observed **flying or random checkpoints** noted in the August closure update stabilised at a high level (at between 60 and 70 per week). However, since December 2005, this number rose to over 100 per week. At least five flying checkpoints have become more permanent in the sense that they have been present daily since November 2005.

4.2 Road barriers are a more common feature within the West Bank. The IDF states that they have two functions: to protect Israeli settlers travelling in roads bordered by Palestinian communities and road safety. Nevertheless, these obstacles block access for Palestinian communities onto and across main West Bank roads and cause problems for residents to access emergency and other services, markets and jobs. Palestinians are required to travel longer distances to reach openings in the road barrier, where movement is often controlled by an IDF gate or flying checkpoint.



Jaljoulia checkpoint, Qalqiliya, August 2005
Photo by: Steve Sabella / OCHA



Deir Sharaf flying checkpoint, Nablus, August 2005

Photo by: Steve Sabella / OCHA

4.3 As of January 2006, there were **27 tunnels and bridges** constructed and 19 planned or under construction. These tunnels link Palestinian Areas A and B to each other, most commonly under roads that are limited for Israeli use that run through Area C and the Barrier. The trend is that Palestinian traffic is funnelled onto fewer roads that lead to and from the tunnels. These roads may not have the capacity to absorb a greater traffic load.⁴

4.4 As of January 2006, **52 observation towers** were observed, an increase of seven since August 2005. Although not included in the count of physical obstacles, these elevated military towers are used to monitor and control Palestinian pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Closed and Restricted Access for Palestinians

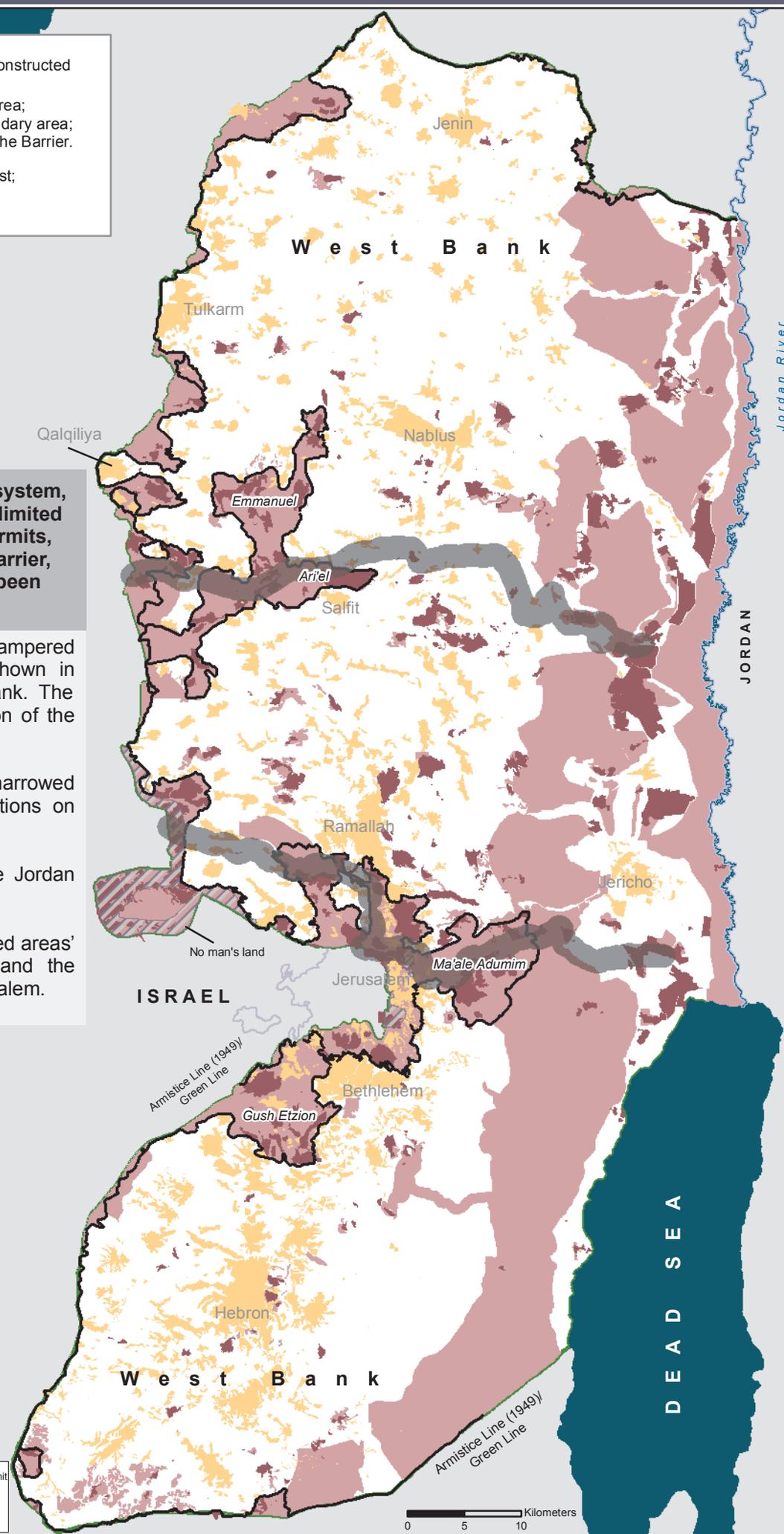
-  Barrier: planned and constructed
-  Israeli closed military area; closed settlement boundary area; or closed area behind the Barrier.
-  Israeli settlement; outpost; or military base.

As a result of the closure system, which includes, but is not limited to blocks, checkpoints, permits, restricted roads and the Barrier, the following trends have been observed:

Interregional movement is hampered by the east west lines, shown in gray, which split the West Bank. The effect of these is a trisection of the area.

The West Bank has been narrowed due to tight access restrictions on movement:

- 1- On the east side, to the Jordan Valley;
- 2- On the west side, to 'closed areas' between the Green Line and the Barrier, including East Jerusalem.



5 Analysis of closure dynamics

5.1 The various functions of closure

Israel has stated that the closure system is a security measure to protect Israeli citizens from Palestinian attacks. This justification does not always appear consistent with developments on the ground. For example, the new road barriers on Roads 317 and 60 in southern Hebron governorate are explained by the Israelis as a traffic safety measure instituted by the civilian (rather than military) authorities.⁵ In the Jordan Valley, which has witnessed the recent tightening of access restrictions, the reason remains unclear given the absence of Palestinian attacks emanating from the area in the past several years.



Road barrier on Road 317, Hebron, January 2006

Photo by: OCHA

5.2 The separation of Israeli and Palestinian traffic

Palestinian traffic is being separated from West Bank roads that are limited for Israeli use through a combination of physical obstacles, movement permits and road barriers.⁶

Palestinian traffic is channelled onto a reduced number of alternative roads⁷ where movement is regulated by an obstacle that can be opened or closed by the IDF, such as a flying or permanently manned checkpoint or gate. A series of tunnels and bridges allows Palestinians using these alternative roads to traverse Area C and Israeli restricted roads, while keeping separate from them. Many tunnels have a gate inside them or a flying checkpoint is positioned at their entrance – in this way they can act as a barrier as much as a passage for access.⁸

5.3 Spatial analysis

5.3.1 Horizontal trisection of the West Bank: A picture is emerging of the West Bank divided into three distinct areas – north, central and south. Movement is easier inside these areas but travel between them is hampered by a combination of checkpoints and other physical obstacles and permits which act as bottlenecks to interregional movement within the West Bank.⁹



Road barrier on Road 505, Nablus / Qalqiliya, January 2006

Photo by: OCHA

5.3.1.2 Access for the northern West Bank: Since the August 2005 update, movement between the central and northern West Bank has deteriorated. Shave Shomeron checkpoint is closed. Since December until the present, residents of Jenin and Tulkarm governorates have not been permitted to pass through the new checkpoint at Tappuah / Zaatara junction southwards. In effect, these two measures have severed links between the north and middle areas.

5.3.2 Vertical narrowing: Access to tightly restricted areas of the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley, East Jerusalem and area between the Barrier and the Green Line ('closed areas') has deteriorated since August 2005.

5.3.2.1 Jordan Valley: In October 2005, it became necessary to obtain a permit to pass through the four checkpoints channelling traffic into the area and frequent, longer delays are experienced at checkpoints.¹⁰ The IDF imposed new ID requirements on access to the Jordan Valley. A trench between Tammoun, Tubas and the Jordan Valley has been lengthened.

5.3.2.2 East Jerusalem: The combination of the Barrier, Israeli settlements, permit restrictions and physical obstacles serve to further separate East Jerusalem from the West Bank. West Bank permit holders can now access East Jerusalem only through four crossings in the Barrier.¹¹

5.3.2.3 Closed areas: Increasingly, Israel is narrowing the eligibility requirements for Palestinians wanting to pass through the Barrier. In addition, the erratic operation of Barrier gates means that those who successfully obtain a permit are not guaranteed regular access to these closed areas.¹²

6 Humanitarian impact of the new physical obstacles

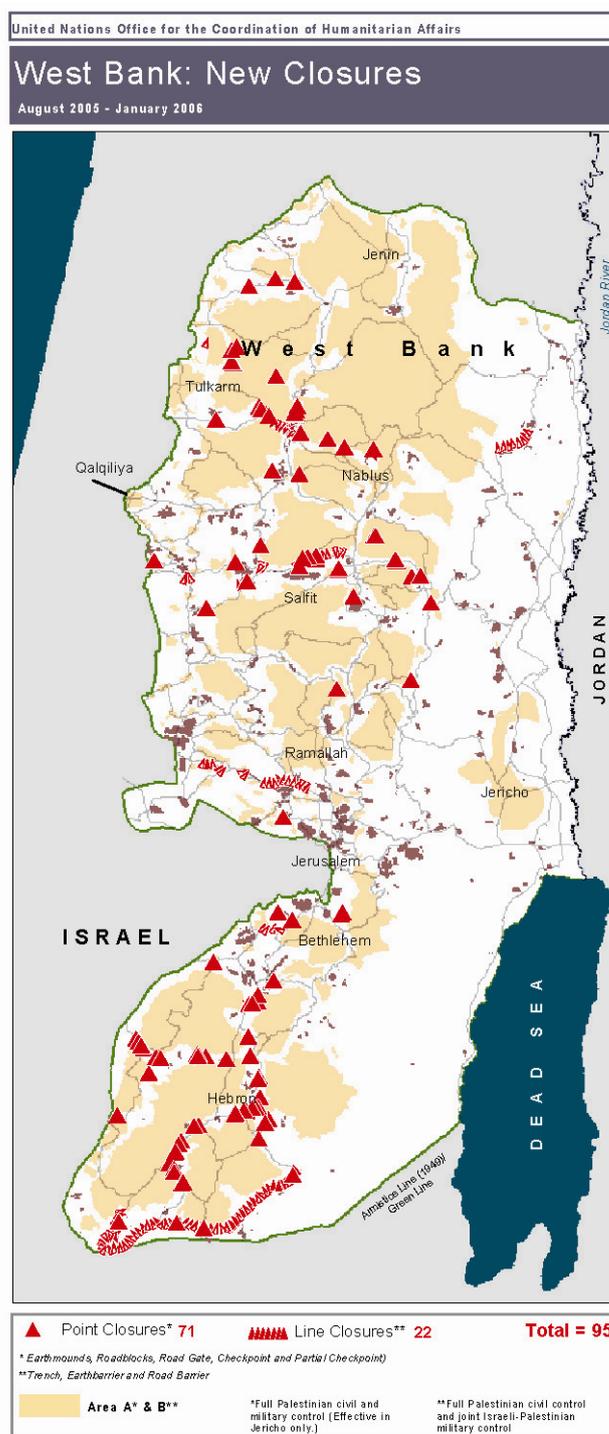
The new physical obstacles have further restricted access to land, markets, services and social relations.

6.1 Access to land: The construction of military observation towers, the new road barriers, the West Bank Barrier and other physical obstacles have resulted in the requisition of 7,884 dunums (788 hectares) of land throughout the West Bank since August 2005. New physical obstacles and permit restrictions make access to available land problematic.

- Palestinians who own land or property in the **Jordan Valley** but live in the West Bank can no longer access the area without a special permit. Permits do not allow overnight stay. Waiting times at Jordan Valley checkpoints range between 30 and 90 minutes.
- In **Salfit governorate**, residents of Marda village face difficulty in crossing the road barrier on Road 505 to reach approximately 250 dunums (25 hectares) of land on the northern side of road.¹³
- The new road barrier in south **Hebron governorate** creates problems for farmers in accessing approximately 80,000 dunums (8,000 hectares) of agricultural land on the other side of Road 317.

6.2 Closure of rural clusters of villages: The new physical obstacles isolate rural communities.

- In south **Hebron governorate**, 22 communities (population 1,900) are located between the Barrier and the road barrier under construction along Road 317.
- In **Nablus governorate**, villagers from 'Asira ash Shamaliya have had to use the more circuitous Al Badhan road to access Nablus (a 30-minute journey) because of



the closure of the traditional route (a 10-minute journey). The almost continual presence of a flying checkpoint on the Al Badhan Road, involving delays of an hour or more, triples the time taken to reach the city.

6.3 Access to markets: Having lost access to Israeli markets, farmers rely increasingly on local West Bank markets. These are more difficult to reach.

- With the imposition of Israeli closure measures in September 2000, followed by the completion of the Barrier in the **northern West Bank** in 2004, residents lost vital goods and labour markets in Israel. Residents turned to Ramallah for markets and work but the closure of Shave Shomeron and new restrictions at Zaatara checkpoint meant this was no longer possible. Two gates on Road 585 make it more difficult to access the market in neighbouring Tulkarm governorate.
- The Barrier and associated regime around East Jerusalem undermines the city's role as a centre for commerce, education, health and other services. It also means that travel between the northern and southern parts of the West Bank involves a time-consuming and costly detour around East Jerusalem.
- In the south of **Hebron governorate**, rural livelihoods are based on shepherding and the sale of meat and dairy products in Yatta and the Old Suq of Hebron. However, they can no longer access these markets because they are prevented from crossing Roads 317 and 60. Overall, the connection between rural producers and markets is deteriorating.

6.4 Access to services: Before September 2000, residents from Saffarin village in Tulkarm governorate travelled along Road 557 to reach medical services in Tulkarm. The closure of this road meant that residents took an alternative longer route. Since December 2005, a flying checkpoint which became a partial checkpoint incurs delays of more than 45 minutes for ambulances and other vehicles alike.

- Most teachers serving in the two primary schools south of Road 317 (located in at Tuwani and Imneizel in south Hebron) are non-residents and are often prevented from reaching work by the physical obstacles along Road 317.

6.5 Access to social relations: Movement restrictions have led to a severing of social relations.

- As a result of the new identification card restrictions on residency in the Jordan Valley, Palestinians residing there without the correct address on their identification card face problems getting to their homes from other parts of the West Bank. This is the case for women who have married into a Jordan Valley family or people who were born in other areas of the West Bank but moved to the Jordan Valley. These people fear leaving their homes to visit relatives in other parts of the West Bank because they may not be allowed to return home.

¹ The Agreement on Movement and Access reached between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority on 15 November 2005 states that: "Consistent with Israel's security needs, to facilitate the movement of people and goods within the West Bank and to minimise disruption to Palestinian lives, the ongoing work between Israel and the U.S. to establish an agreed list of obstacles to movement and develop a plan to reduce them to the maximum extent possible will be accelerated so that the work can be completed by December 31".

Meetings between OCHA and the IDF on each party's count of physical obstacles continue.

² This was confirmed in a meeting with Israeli DCL in Hebron on 17 January 2006.

³ In Jenin governorate, Israeli disengagement has had some positive impact. The evacuation from two settlements (Ganim and Kaddim) has improved access for residents who can now travel on roads to Jenin city on which previously, only settlers could travel. While internal movement within Jenin governorate has improved, the connection of the governorate to Tulkarm and the central West Bank became difficult after the closure of Shave Shomeron and Road 585.

⁴ Due to the Barrier's meandering route, once completed, residents of Biddu enclave in Ramallah governorate, using a series of bridges and tunnels, will be required to pass through the Barrier four times to reach Ramallah.

⁵ In a meeting with the IDF, OCHA was informed that the road barriers were instituted by Mahleket Avodot Tziburiot (Ma'atz), the Department for Public Work in the Ministry of Transportation. In fact, a newly established public company, 'Ha Hevra ha Leumit Le Drachim Be Israel ba'am', the National Road Company in Israel, has replaced Ma'atz.

⁶ In the Jordan Valley, the IDF forbids the movement of Palestinians along Road 90 and diverts Palestinian traffic on to alternative side roads.

⁷ For example, in the past, the western Bethlehem villages of Nahhalin, Wadi Fuqin, Husan and Battir used four different routes to Bethlehem and its surrounding areas. Once the Barrier is completed, these villages will have to travel on one joint road to reach the tunnel that passes under the Barrier, resulting in increasing strain on an agricultural road not designed for heavy traffic.

It is possible that in the future, as more road barriers are built, fewer obstacles are needed to prevent access onto roads restricted for Israeli use, with the result that the total number of physical barriers actually decreases.

⁸ The network of tunnels together with the roads leading to and from them which remain separate from Israeli restricted roads makes it difficult to envision a situation where there can be a return to the situation pre-2000 as laid out in the Road map. The Road map requires that: "*Israel withdraws from Palestinian areas occupied from September 28, 2000 and the two sides restore the status quo that existed at that time, as security performance and cooperation progress.*"

⁹ See OCHA, *Restrictions on the movement of people and goods within the West Bank*, Technical Note, November 2005.

¹⁰ Before 2000, Palestinians were able to move freely between the Jordan Valley and other areas in the West Bank and no permit restrictions were in place.

¹¹ See OCHA, *Humanitarian Update*, February 2006

¹² UNRWA / OCHA, *Crossing the Barrier: Palestinian Access to Agricultural Land*, January 2006.

¹³ Approximately 50 families that own plots on the land, where they cultivate cereals for animal fodder and human consumption, now have to pass through a gate to reach their land. Some farmers fear that they will not be allowed to harvest or graze the crops. At least two families have sold their flocks because shepherd boys have been intimidated by the soldiers at the entrance to the village and are afraid to cross the road.