



**THE HUMANITARIAN
IMPACT ON PALESTINIANS
OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS
AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE
IN THE WEST BANK**

July 2007



United Nations - Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

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The settlement of Betar Illit in Bethlehem governorate (see map of Palestinian governorates, p. 146), the most rapidly growing settlement in the West Bank (see inset p.29). Photo by J.C.Tordai, 2007.

Introduction

This report examines the humanitarian impact on Palestinians from the ongoing construction of settlements in the West Bank and other Israeli infrastructure, such as the Barrier and the roads that accompany them.

The analysis shows that almost 40% of the West Bank is now taken up by Israeli infrastructure. It also demonstrates how roads linking settlements to Israel, in conjunction with an extensive system of checkpoints and roadblocks, have fragmented Palestinian communities from each other.

The deterioration of socio-economic conditions in the West Bank has been detailed in regular OCHA and World Bank reports over the last several years. These have underlined the fact that freedom of movement for Palestinians is crucial to improving humanitarian conditions and reviving socio-economic life.

The findings are based on extensive fieldwork combined with spatial analysis derived from satellite imagery.¹ As the maps illustrate, the consequences of settlements and related infrastructure on Palestinian life are severe, and if current trends continue, socio-economic conditions in the West Bank are likely to worsen.

Despite the transfer of Israeli civilians into occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) being illegal under international law, the Israeli settler population in the West Bank settlements has continued to grow steadily by around 5.5% each year. In 2007, approximately 450,000 settlers² live in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, alongside 2.4 million Palestinians.

More than 38% of the West Bank now consists of settlements, outposts, military bases and closed military areas, Israeli declared nature reserves or other related infrastructure that are off-limits or tightly controlled to Palestinians. The settlements and other infrastructure are detailed in Chapter One.

The settlements are linked to each other and to Israel by an extensive road network. Palestinians for the most part are either prevented from using these roads or have only restricted access onto them. The roads and their restrictions on Palestinian movement are outlined in Chapter Two.

The West Bank has been dissected into dozens of enclaves by the settlements and related infrastructure. This fragmentation has negatively affected social and economic life for the vast proportion of Palestinians. Chapters Three and Four examine the impact of these restrictions in both urban and rural settings.

Palestinians compete with Israeli settlers for West Bank resources, notably limited land and water, while their freedom of access and movement is denied. These issues, which are directly related to Israeli settlements and infrastructure, are detailed in the concluding chapter.



The Israeli settlement of Pesagot is located in Ramallah governorate with a 2004 population of approximately 1,380. Photo by J.C.Tordai, 2007.

Endnotes

¹ OCHA has created a geo-database of Israeli presence in the West Bank drawing together a variety of primary resources including satellite imagery, Israeli topographical maps (Survey of Israel), available Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics data (ICBS) and Palestinian Ministry of Planning data. For more details related to methodology please refer to Annex 2.

² According to the Israeli movement Peace Now (<http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=57>). However, throughout this report OCHA cites 2004 population data for the number of Israeli settlers living in the West Bank as this is the most current available data at the time the research and writing of this present document were conducted. See Annex 2 for more details about demographic data contained in this report.

