

30 Apr. 06

The government approved re-routing of the Separation Barrier

This morning the government approved a series of alterations to the route of the separation barrier. In accordance with the newly approved route, the barrier will form two enclaves instead of one in the area of the Ariel-Kdumim settlements, thus allowing a number of Palestinian villages to remain under the control of the Palestinian Authority. Responsibility for security in the barrier gateways in the Jerusalem area will be transferred from the army to the police.

Even in its new, amended, route, the barrier in the Ariel-Kdumim area will severely infringe upon the human rights of thousands of Palestinians who live nearby, only to allow for the annexation of 15 Jewish settlements as well as huge swaths of land for their future expansion. In the announcement it published this morning, following the government decision, B'tselem emphasized that "a route which penetrates deep into the West Bank, a distance of 22 km from the green line, is not a security route, but a blatantly political route, which fails to realize the promise of security, and infringes upon human rights."



The last brick in the wall. Closing the remaining gaps in the wall near A-Ram. Photo: Roberto Costonovo

Through the back door

In recent weeks, Israel has been building a 41-kilometer-long concrete barricade between the settlements Tene and Carmel, in the southern Hebron hills. The barricade, 82 centimeters high, blocks the crossing of vehicles and livestock. The army contends that the barrier is necessary to safeguard the access roads to the settlements that lie north of the Separation Barrier, and to facilitate the work of security forces. The barricade's construction will further isolate the more than 3,000 Palestinians living in 18 cave-villages in the area, who are completely dependent on the town of Yata, which is situated on the other side of the planned barricade. The barricade will also limit access to farmland for many farmers who live in Yata and nearby villages.



Barricade in the southern Hebron hills. Photo: ACRI

In February 2005, following a High Court of Justice decision, the government approved a new route for the Separation Barrier, which would run in the southern Hebron hills, mostly along the Green Line. Construction of the barricade reinstitutes the original plan "through the back door."

[Separation Barrier](#)

High Court petition over reduction of Gaza shelling "safety zone"

On 16 April 2006, B'Tselem, along with other Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations, petitioned the High Court of Justice to cancel the IDF order reducing the safety zone for shells fired into the Gaza Strip to only 100 meters from civilian objects. The petitioners argue that the weaponry is not precise and reduction of the safety zone endangers civilian lives. On 10 April, after the range had been reduced, seven-year-old Hadil Ghiban was killed by a shell that struck her house. The blast also injured twelve members of her family.

The petitioning human rights organizations emphasize that the shelling is not a defensive measure, directed at the source of Qassam rocket fire at the time the rockets are launched at Israel, but shelling into "the Qassam launching spaces," broad areas from which the army estimated Qassam rockets had previously been fired. Thus, the attack is initiated by the IDF for purposes of punishment or deterrence, and not as self-defense. The petitioners argue that reducing the safety zone constitutes a grave breach of the fundamental principles of the laws of war, and that the order is manifestly illegal.



Evacuation of infant injured in IDF shelling of the Gaza Strip. Photo: Reuters

[Additional details](#)

Firing Qassam rockets at a civilian population is a war crime

>From June, 2004, through the end of March, 2006, thirteen civilians, five of them minors, were killed by Qassam rockets that Palestinians fired into Israel and at Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip. In a recent statement, B'Tselem noted that the firing of rockets aimed at civilians, which often were fired from Palestinian residential areas, are both immoral and illegal, and constitute a war crime.

Qassam rockets are themselves illegal, even when aimed at military objects, because the



A home hit by a Qassam rocket in the Carmia Kibutz. Photo: Merav Merodi

rockets are imprecise, and thus endanger civilians situated in the area in which the rockets are fired and where they land. B'Tselem called on the Palestinian organizations to cease their attacks, and on the Palestinian Authority to do everything in its power to put an end to the firing of the Qassam rockets.

[Additional details](#)

Illegal revocation of residency status

On 18 April 2006, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert approved the recommendation of Foreign Minister and Justice Minister Tzipi Livni to begin the process of revoking the Israeli residency status of three members of the Palestinian Legislative Council. The three Palestinians represent Hamas in the Council and live in East Jerusalem. The decision was made, according to media reports, "following the terrorist attack in Tel Aviv."

The action will expel them from their homes and from the city whose residents elected them as their representatives. It should be noted that, despite Israel's annexation, East Jerusalem is an integral part of the Occupied Territories, so its Palestinian residents are protected by the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the occupying power from forcibly transferring civilians from their homes. Therefore, Israel's proposed action would flagrantly violate Israel's obligations under the Convention.



Illustration

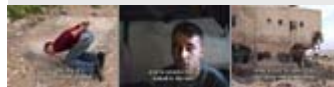
[Additional details](#)

[Background on Jerusalem](#)

Two new B'Tselem videos

On 14 March 2006, IDF soldiers raided Palestinian headquarters in Jericho, causing damage and arresting Palestinians who were being held there. In the video, Fahdi Abu Tabikh, a member of Palestinian National Security tells of the great humiliation suffered by the detainees who were forced to undress and sit under the sun naked for many hours.

On 12 March 2006, Israeli police officers in civilian dress detained Hamzeh 'Awida, 15, near his home in East Jerusalem. 'Awida relates in this video how the policemen forced him into their car, during which time they handcuffed him, beat him and swore at him. They then took him to a police station, where he suffered another beating.



>From B'Tselem video

[Testimony of Fahdi Abu Tabikh](#)

[Testimony of Hamzeh 'Awida](#)

Soldiers fatally shoot youth during chase following stone throwing

On 3 April 2006, soldiers shot to death Muhammad Zi'ad, 16, in the Qalandiya refugee camp, and wounded another youth in the leg. Zi'ad was shot after he joined two youths who had thrown stones and were being chased by soldiers. In his testimony to B'Tselem, one of the youths stated that soldiers in a jeep had opened fire at them.

B'Tselem has demanded that the Judge Advocate General order an investigation into the incident. It is doubtful that the stone-throwing could have endangered the soldiers, who were inside an armored jeep. Clearly, at the time of the chase, the youths presented no danger to the soldiers. Therefore, as B'Tselem noted in its letter, the soldiers were not justified in opening fire.

The youths presented no danger to the soldiers and therefore the soldiers were not justified in opening fire

▶ [Testimony of Nader 'Othman](#)

▶ [Background](#)