



## THE UNTOLD STORY: THE COSTS OF ISRAEL'S OCCUPATION TO THE PALESTINIANS IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA

### FACT SHEET 3 ONE COMMUNITY'S LOSSES UNDER SIEGE\*

The 37-year Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem has been marked by damage, destruction and loss of Palestinian life and property. As yet, there is no full account of such losses. These four fact sheets illustrate the kinds of losses that should be documented to underpin a compensation regime.<sup>1</sup>

#### FACT SHEET SERIES

1. OVERVIEW
2. LOSSES FROM THE SECOND INTIFADA
3. **ONE COMMUNITY'S LOSSES UNDER SIEGE**
4. HOW TO ASSESS PALESTINIAN LOSSES

**QALQILYA: A MICROCOSM OF THE PROCESS OF DESTRUCTION AND DISPOSSESSION** Qalqilya and the surrounding region in the northern West Bank are blessed with fertile agricultural lands and water resources. As with the remainder of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, it suffered under the impact of closure and other restrictions since the start of the Oslo peace process in 1993. And the situation has deteriorated even further.

- Closure meant that farmers and workers could no longer enter Israel or travel from town to town in the West Bank. By end-2000, over 16,000 workers had lost their jobs in Israel.
- Losses in agriculture due to closure were estimated at some \$30mn by end-2000, which had a major impact on the livelihood of 7,000 households in the area.
- The March–April 2002 Israeli “incursions” destroyed or damaged businesses, public sector offices, homes, roads, electricity and water supplies, at a cost of at least \$4.81mn, and approximately \$1.1mn to the agricultural sector alone.<sup>2</sup>

By late 2002, some 100 sq. km. of land had been confiscated in the northern region for the first phase of the Wall's construction. Qalqilya town and small nearby villages have been completely surrounded from three sides, leaving only one entrance for their 48,000 inhabitants.

- Qalqilya, once a hub for some 32 villages in the area, has reportedly lost at least 15% of its municipal lands and over 50% of its agricultural lands.
- Over 33% of Qalqilya's shops and business were forced to close, contributing to an unemployment rate that has topped 80%.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, the town of Qalqilya lies on the main Western Aquifer inside the West Bank, which supplies 51% of the West Bank's water resources. Most of these resources are now effectively annexed to Israel. The other effects of the Wall on Qalqilya have been equally catastrophic.

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\* The fact sheet series is based on the full-length study by Souad Dajani, “The Untold Story: The Cost of Israel's Occupation to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip” (Washington, DC: The Palestine Center, 2005). The Palestine Center is the educational arm of The Jerusalem Fund for Education and Community Development, [www.thejerusalemfund.org](http://www.thejerusalemfund.org). All rights reserved.

<sup>1</sup> This study has as its point of departure the continued applicability of international law, which clearly defines the West Bank and Gaza Strip (including East Jerusalem) as occupied territories from which Israel is obliged to withdraw.

<sup>2</sup> See “Damage Assessment, Qalqilya,” Support Group of the Local Aid Coordination Committee (LACC), (2 June 2002), <http://www.support-group.org>.

<sup>3</sup> “News from the North,” Stop the Wall (17 June 2004), <http://www.stophthewall.org>.

- 30 Palestinian localities were separated from their health services, 22 from their schools, eight from their water supplies, and three from their electricity networks.
- 65.8% of families in areas affected by the wall reported being cut off from their relatives.
- As of August 2003, 402 households had been displaced. By October 2003, 29.1% of housing units in areas affected by the Wall had been destroyed.
- Infrastructure losses in Qalqilya alone amounted to \$3.7mn by August 2003, including extensive damage and destruction to vital agricultural roads.<sup>4</sup>
- Some 6,000-8,000 people in this community left this area – a quiet “transfer” that is beginning to be replicated in other areas of the Wall’s construction.
- Over 25,000 Palestinians are now, for the first time, facing such severe food shortages they have to rely on the World Food Programme.

**THE STRUGGLE OF THE VILLAGE OF JAYYOUS** Jayyous, a small village with a population of some 3,078, has been in the news, not least because of the determined resistance of several of the villagers. It is located some 6 km. east of the Green Line and, like other villages in the region, is a farming community whose produce benefited over 60,000 Palestinians across the West Bank.<sup>5</sup>

- In 1986, 1.3 sq. km. of its lands were seized for the construction of a Jewish settlement.
- In 1990, settlers confiscated additional lands to use as a garbage dump.
- The Wall took more than 8.6 sq. km. – 72% – of the village’s lands, leaving about one-third of its prime irrigated agricultural lands to the west of the Wall. Lost with these lands are 7 wells, 120 greenhouses, 15,000 olive trees and 50,000 citrus trees, which together had produced 7 million kilograms of fruits and vegetables per year.
- Jayyous now receives water every three days, which has led to deterioration in health standards – and the Wall has also cut off residents from health services and centers.

The entire village now has to rely on a single gate to the north of the village as its only link to the outside. Over 87% of households lost their means of livelihood and more than one-third of families in the village were forced to rely on outside humanitarian aid.

The International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion issued on July 9, 2004, reaffirms the illegality of the Wall and states that Palestinians must be compensated for the losses they have incurred.

### **The Story of Sharif Omar, farmer, Jayyous**

*Before the Wall, merchants used to come to our farms and purchase our produce... Israel finished building the Wall in my village in July, 2003. I did not want to apply for a "permit" to go to my own land, so until last October I camped on my land in a makeshift shed and did not return to my house in Jayyous. Then there was a military crackdown. The Israeli army threatened that not having a permit could result in a heavy fine and a month in detention. So I returned to my village and applied for my permit and only received it five months later.*

*When I returned I was shocked by the damage neglect had caused my orchards. It was as if I had been gone for five years, not five months. I felt all the trees blaming me as I inspected the mango, the avocado, the walnut, the pear, the apricot, the peach and the fig. I thought about every stage of their lives: from building the retaining walls, stone by stone, plowing the land, to creating the reservoir and beginning the planting. I spoke with every tree and promised I would repair everything.*

*On my way back to the shed to help my wife prepare our lunch, I saw a tree growing wild inside a large rock. I stared. "How will you live?" I wondered. "Where will your roots spread? Where will you find your food, where store your water?" I understood the lesson: We must continue to live off our land, no matter how terrible the hardships.<sup>6</sup>*

<sup>4</sup> See International Court of Justice, “Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory” (9 July 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Most of the information in this section is compiled from articles on Jayyous by Stop the Wall, <http://www.stophthewall.org>.

<sup>6</sup> Sharif Omar, “Diaries: Before and After the Wall in Jayyous,” *The Electronic Intifada* (16 July 2004), <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article2922.shtml>.