



المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات  
ARAB CENTER FOR RESEARCH & POLICY STUDIES

BOOK REVIEW

# The Separation Wall: Israel's Complete Apartheid

Malek Wannous | May 2012

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Series: Book Review

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*The Separation Wall in the West Bank*

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Editor: Mohsen Saleh

Publisher: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations

Pages: 120

Date of issue: 2012

Edition: First

The idea of erecting the separation wall, or what Israel calls the “security fence,” in the West Bank came in 1992, and building commenced on April 16, 2002. Several studies tackling this project have been released as part of the *Am I Not A Human?* book series, along with the book *The Separation Wall in the West Bank*, which was published by the Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations in Beirut, in first edition in 2012.

The idea of erecting the separation wall in the West Bank, or what Israel calls the “security fence,” came in 1992, and the building commenced on April 16, 2002. The Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, as part of the *Am I Not A Human?* book series, published several studies prior to the release of *The Separation Wall in the West Bank*, prepared by Hasan Abheis and Khaled Ayed and edited by Mohsen Saleh, who is the president of the Centre and a university professor specialized in Palestinian studies. The book, 120 pages, including maps and photos, was written as a comprehensive text on the subject, discussing the wall and its history from multiple angles, including: the physical presence, the history (before building commenced), the legality of the wall, and the human reaction, including international opinion, protests, and Palestinian resistance.

Through the review of the chapters of this book, it is posited that the true goal of the construction of the wall refutes Israel's claims that its construction was necessitated for security purposes. The book's authors refer, in the introduction, to the book's commitment to the approach taken in "transferring the suffering in a manner that addresses the mind and the heart in a documented, systematic, and scientific context" (p. 5). The introduction confirms that the book seeks to answer all questions about the wall and its description, including its inception, goals, history, and legality, its effect on individuals and the Palestinian society, and the ways to resist it. A glimpse of the Palestinian people's suffering is presented through the examples and testimonies that the book provides – economically, socially, health wise, or educationally – in addition to the threat this presents for the Palestinian cause and its future, while undermining the Palestinian state.

The book features a smooth, sequential style that does not deter from the accuracy and scientific methodology used in its preparation, and contains a great deal of numbers, statistics, examples, and testimonies. The book's significance comes from its refuting the alleged motives behind building this wall; in the introduction, the authors "refute Israel's claim that the motive behind building this wall is for security purposes, clarifying the connection between the wall's path with political agendas, occupation, and monopoly of agricultural land and water resources" (p. 5). Additionally, the book's importance lies in its highlighting the danger the wall poses for the future of the Palestinian people's cause and their existence as a whole.

## **What Is the Wall?**

### **More than ethnic segregation**

In the early chapter of the book, the authors offer a description of the wall and the idea behind it, which emerged through several plans, the first of which was put forth by the Israeli Labor Party in 1988. In 1992, Yitzhak Rabin won electors' votes and was elected as Israel's Prime Minister because he suggested the idea of separating the Israelis from the Palestinians, demanding its start in 1995 by setting forth a plan. The plan materialized in 2000 with Prime Minister Ehud Barak's approval to build a barricade to stop the passage of vehicles. However, work on the wall in its current state did not commence until June 2002, during Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's administration. All

plans were based on the excuse of the separation operation, which was based on a quote in the book from an Israeli journalist: "It is difficult for six million Israelis and four millions Arabs to live together because their co-mingling breeds a dangerous and terrible threat" (p. 13).

The idea behind the wall is multi-faceted; there is the security aspect to prevent the guerillas from reaching the lands of '48, as well as the political aspect that lies in Israel's perception of a settlement which makes it impossible for the Palestinian state to be formed on the scattered remains of land, thus making it easier to annex. The economic aspect seeks to stop Palestinians from reaching their agricultural lands, to push their emigration. Additionally, there is the societal aspect, which isolates the Palestinian towns and villages from each other to prevent communication.

This practice – which the book did not elaborate on – takes us back to the motives behind establishing the Jewish National Fund in 1901 by the World Zionist Organization, which were to seize more lands to lessen the area owned by Arabs to isolate them in certain areas that cannot be lived in. However, the tool to facilitate this policy is the Jewish occupier; this is one of the similarities between Zionism and the apartheid regime in South Africa that did the same thing beforehand; Israel is seeking to create safe compounds for settlers that can only be achieved by isolating the Arab communities, cordoning them off, and separating them from each other. It is evident here that Israeli racism is not only being practiced daily, but is also a part of Israel's political, economic, and societal foundation, which draws its components from the idea of transfer that evolved in Zionist ideology prior to the Basel Convention in 1897, and matured through the lie that Palestine is a "land without people for a people without a land". Because the South African apartheid was based on segregation laws, such as the Group Areas Act, the law of the land, and passing and departure laws, which in turn are based on the belief of the Dutch Reformed Church that the "inequality of races is of divine will,"<sup>1</sup> Zionism's exercise in racial discrimination not only depends on the allegations of the Jewish faith of the Jews' superiority, but also on Zionism's plans with Czarist Russia to commit massacres against Jews, and then with Nazi Germany to establish the Holocaust in order to bolster the idea of the Jews' isolation, until they accept this idea of separation. This idea will help, later on, with the cultivation of the

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<sup>1</sup> Hamad Said Al- Mawed, *The Zionist Apartheid*, First Edition, (Damascus, Arab Writers Union, 2001), p. 10.

settlements, like cancerous tumors in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that expand and reproduce, requiring protection and the protection of the long roads leading to them later on. When this is not possible, it is necessary to separate parts of the Arab lands and to build a separation wall to achieve safety. This is the lie that the book focuses on negating.

### **The Stages of Construction of The Wall and Its Path**

The separation wall goes beyond the issue of building a concrete wall, setting up barbed wire, and the periodic checkpoints and electronic fences. It is the cordoning off of 39% of the land mass of the West Bank, which amounts to 5,876 kilometers squared and dividing it into three areas: the eastern security zone, controlled by the occupation forces in full, the buffer zone extending between the Western Wall and the Green Line, which is the smallest in size, and the remaining area, which is equivalent to 61% of the West Bank, an area expected to be ceded to the Palestinians by Israel.

According to the Applied Research Institute in Jerusalem (ARIJ), Palestinian sources indicate that the length of the wall will reach 770km in the final stages of the project, while the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that length of the wall, according to the set plans, will reach 709km. However, according to the numbers provided by the Palestine Liberation Organization, the length could reach 711km. The reason for these conflicting figures is due to the constant adjustments to the plans carried out by the Israeli government on the path of the wall. Accordingly, the estimate varies on the areas isolated by the wall.

### **The Wall's Components and Specifications**

The wall, despite what its name might suggest, is not a single wall. The book describes the barrier on the Palestinian side as six rolls (belts) of barbed wire, followed by a deep trench, a dirt road to allow the passage of patrol cars, and an electronic fence that is three meters high. However, on the Israeli side, it consists of paved road with two dirt passageways on either side of it to track intruders, barbed wire, and electronic alarms. The width of the barrier in some parts is 60 meters, though in densely populated areas, the wall reaches a height of eight meters. Between the areas separated by the wall are gates guarded by soldiers, which is where the Palestinians' suffering is concentrated because of inspections, audits, insults, and the denial of access to agricultural land,

schools, and the transfer of goods and medical supplies, as well as whatever else that accompanies this form of daily suffering. The opening of the gate is subject to the mood of the authorities, despite a previous classification of the gates, some of which open daily for a limited amount of time, some of which open once a week, while others are seasonal in their opening times, with the remaining gate in Bilin the only one open for 24 hours a day, a decision that the Palestinians succeeded in passing through the Israeli Supreme Court.

## **The Wall Under the Law**

### **Before the International Court of Justice**

This chapter of the book reviews the international law's position concerning the wall, and Israel's continued refusal of the decisions issued in this regard, as is its usual habit of rejecting all decisions of international bodies, and the United States' support of Israel through vetoing any project that condemns Israel or requires its compliance. In the first attempt to stop the wall project, the United States used its veto power to drop a draft resolution submitted by the Arab Group to the Security Council in 2003 to cancel the wall project because it was a breach of the 1949 Armistice Demarcation Line. The ruling was then turned over to the General Assembly of the United Nations, which on October 21, 2003 demanded that Israel stop building the wall, with the Secretary General of the international organization submitting a monthly report on the extent to which the Israeli authorities were committing to the implementation of the resolution.

In his first report, the Secretary General reported that Israel did not halt the project, so the matter was turned over to the International Court of Justice in The Hague for it to express an opinion, but Israel refused to cooperate with the Court, claiming its "lack of jurisdiction," arguing that it was a bilateral issue between it and the Palestinians. But the Court looked at the issue of the wall's legality in light of international human rights, arguing that the wall affects the fight to freedom of movement, guaranteed by items 12 and 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It also affects the right to work, health, and education, as guaranteed by items 6, 11, 12, and 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In addition, the Court relied on Israel's violation of The Hague Convention of 1907, which prohibits confiscating or destroying the property of the occupied, and the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which prohibits the transfer of the population under occupation.

The Court issued, on July 9, 2004, a purely advisory opinion, which counted the wall as contradictory to international law, and included a call to abolish the wall, return confiscated property, and compensate those affected. This was ratified by the General Assembly of the United Nations on July 20, 2004, calling for Israel to abide by what was decided. As is usual, Israel did not pay much attention and continued building the wall, citing the Israeli Supreme Court's rejection of the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on the pretext that it does not take into account the imperatives of Israel's security.

### **Before the Israeli Supreme Court**

The role of Israel's Supreme Court does not exceed the consideration of everyday items, and counts more as a waste of the Palestinians' time to distract them from the core of their suffering and its cause, but also the wall, which continues to grow day by day, chomps on large parts of the West Bank, and brings misery to the lives of Palestinians – even though they have succeeded in changing the course of the wall in some areas.

However, a breach occurred when the Israeli Supreme Court agreed to modify the route of the wall in the Jayyous-Flamiya section in 2007, and Maale Adumim in 2008, located east of Jerusalem. In doing this, thousands of dunums of confiscated land were returned to their Palestinian owners. The same applied to the section in Bilin, when the Court approved a decision it issued in 2007 to change the wall's course, restoring 1,100 dunums of confiscated land. However, this decision has yet to be implemented.

## **The Wall and the Settlements**

### **Expansion of the Settlements**

The wall was built as planned, so that it surrounds the settlements, but in some instances its reach is a thousand meters beyond the last house in some settlements, which proves that one of the objectives of the wall is to expand the settlements, as this space gives way to the establishment of new settlements in the future. The wall surrounds 237 settlements inhabited by more than 540,000 Israeli settlers. An example of this expansion is the increase in the residents of the settlement near Qalqilya from 1,000 to 6,000 settlers.



## **Theft of Agricultural Land**

There is no doubt that water is the first element in Israel's thinking when planning to take over the land. Not least from the water wars Israel is preparing to wage against the Arab world, including Southern Sudan and the Nile Basin countries, the Sinai, and southern Lebanon, to the support it provided for the establishment of the Ataturk Dam in Turkey on the Euphrates River, to the acquisition of water resources in the entire geographical environment and, of course, the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The barrier has isolated agricultural land, forests, and open areas, and placed obstacles that have prevented owners from reaching their lands, paving the way for their division among Israeli settlers. The area of land to the west of the wall, where many settlers are located, is 733 kilometers squared. The same applies to the water, with the wall aiding Israel in stealing the water to the west of it. It will destroy or isolate 90 wells and control 165 wells and 53 springs; the combined energy discharge is up to about 734 million meters cubed per year, in addition to water bodies and rivers, which amount to 99% of the water paths in the West Bank. This will lead to the depravation of water among the Palestinians and their lands, which is a violation of the resolution issued by the United Nations on July 29, 2010, which finds access to clean water a human right. One result of the acquisition of the water resources in the West Bank is the turning of Tulkarem, an important agricultural producer in the West Bank, to an importer of wheat for the first time in its history. This is the action part of a policy of genocide of the Arabs, derived from the ideology of Israel; the fact is that the Torah "educates its followers that there is no salvation for the Jews until there is complete extermination of all non-Jews, so they cling to livelihoods, water resources, and political and military influence."<sup>2</sup>

## **The Palestinians' Suffering Because of the Wall**

### **Numbers and Statistics**

The wall is like a nightmare that has infringed on the daily lives of the Palestinian people, turning it on its head and inflicting change. Regardless of the homes that were

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<sup>2</sup> Ghazi Hussein, *Racism and Group Extermination in Zionist Thought and Practice*, First Edition, (Damascus, Arab Writers Union, 2002), p. 14.

demolished and the land that was confiscated, the wall has led to the isolation of the Palestinians towns and villages from each other, and created obstacles for the Palestinians' movement and their communication with each other. The book reveals the statistical data for destroyed houses and the confiscated lands. In three years, until April 3, 2008, the Israeli authorities demolished 166 houses in the vicinity of the wall and its path, anticipating the demolition of another 754 houses. The confiscation of land, on the other hand, reached an area of about 49,291 dunums as of June 2008. About 19.2% of land was confiscated from families completely affected by the wall, while 28.5% were partially confiscated from other families. Most of these lands were used for agricultural purposes.

The damage caused by the wall is attributed to two factors: isolation and the impediment of movement between the areas adjacent to the wall. The lives of citizens have been affected at all economic, societal, health, and educational levels, with 425,000 Palestinians are limited to isolated pockets of area, with most of them needing permits from the Israeli military to move around since they have declared the area between the wall and the Green Line a military zone. Even those heading to work in their own private agricultural lands are subjected to this permit system. Thus, 274,607 dunums of agricultural land was isolated, with the owners unable to reach their lands. Of the communities affected by the wall, as of 2008, 27,841 people have abandoned their land, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. Additionally, because of this situation, the unemployment rate rose to reach 32% in 2006 among residents both of isolated areas and close to the wall. Also, 3,351 economic facilities were closed by 2008 due to the lack of customers as a result of the constricted movements and road closures. Agricultural productions also fell in the West Bank by 20%, leaving only 15% of the pastoral areas in the buffer zone of the East bank alone.

In addition to the societal damage and the separation of relatives and families, the wall has affected access to medical facilities; it presented an obstacle to 65% of the people in the affected areas and prevented them from seeking treatment. Moreover, the psychological effects of the wall are evident on those neighboring it, where young and old appear to be suffering from depression and sleep disorders, not to mention the physical consequences of these psychological effects. The Palestinian Center for Guidance has been monitoring in the population of Qalqilya.

In education, 124 schools attended by 14,000 students have been damaged, affecting the students' educational achievement because of the students' and their teachers' detentions at the crossings, causing consistent disruption to school schedules. There is a 4% decrease in the number of students, with students of institutes and universities affected as well.

### **Examples and Testimonies**

In this section, the book provides a set of examples that depict the suffering the wall has caused for Palestinians on all levels, and describes the after-effects left by the theft of land and water resources, in addition to the practices of the occupying soldiers.

For example, the book cites the story of the Israeli Army's raid on the home of a Palestinian named Muwafaq in the village of Tura al-Gharbiya near Jenin to arrest his son Ahmad, who is mentally and physically disabled. However, Ahmad's disabilities did not impede the Israeli army from arresting him, after beating him with their rifle butts and dragging him in his pajamas to the bus, convicting him in court of throwing rocks at the separation wall. Ahmad, being disabled, did not understand the charges being levied against him, yet he spent 26 days in detention, only being released after paying a fine and signing a pledge. Another example tells the story of a father that was prevented from crossing through the gate in Qalqilya to seek treatment for his daughter in the town of Haila, and was left with no option but to call the doctor and ask him to come to the gate, pass his stethoscope through the wires of the gate to examine her. At the same time, the doctor was unable to give her an injection to lower her fever, and have to give her pills instead.

There are stories of villages being isolated from their farmland, and what this loss causes the lands, and the loss of the only source of livelihood for these villages. The lucky villages are those whose lands were not completely confiscated; only 90% of land was confiscated, with the farmers being able to reach the remaining 10% only three periods a day, for less than an hour each time. Also, the wall has led to a reduction in the number of cattle raised by the farmers, because of their inability to lead them to their grazing areas located behind the wall.

As we review the images of the tragedies in this book, which have been recounted in other media as well, we are reminded of Australian journalist and documentary maker

John Pilger's classification of true heroes of our time, in his book titled *Heroes*, first published in 1986. All those who refused to leave the small, scattered patches of land that remained to them and the thousands of people of their ilk who have endured the suffering caused by the wall are classified as heroes. Pilger wrote that the true heroes of our time are those millions of people scattered around the world stripped of the aspects that provide them with strength, yet they go through their lives without compromising their dignity, despite the fact that the powerful have committed to closing the door in their faces.

## **The wall in Jerusalem (the Jerusalem Envelope)**

### **Isolating Jerusalem from the Rest of the West Bank**

The cloud clears over Jerusalem and out pour all the calamities because is the first target to all that Israel weaves, and in front of its walls is where Israel's plot comes to settle. Jerusalem has its place in the wall. It is one of its most important objectives, and establishing the city as Jewish was and still is the main concern of the enemy's government. As for its wall, which the Israeli's have dubbed "the Jerusalem envelope," its main purpose is reducing the proportion of Arabs in the city from 35% to 22% in the first stage, according to the National Office for Land Defence in Palestine.

The wall has kept the heavily populated areas outside of the Jerusalem envelope, with the same applying to the villages. The wall that is dedicated to Jerusalem, which runs 167 kilometers, aims to isolate Jerusalem from the West Bank and the surrounding villages in preparation to evacuate its indigenous population. To the west, the wall will isolate 43% of Jerusalem, which is occupied by 56% of the population. The Israeli Army controls the crossings leading to it, where the residents of the West Bank are not allowed to enter unless t a permit from the Army, to be granted or withdrawn whenever they please.

### **The Suffering of the Residents of Jerusalem Because of the Wall**

The suffering of Jerusalem's population is the suffering of the rest of the Palestinian population living along the wall, adding to it the moral dimension, because of what Jerusalem represents in terms of historical significance to the Palestinians and its centrality in the evolution of the Palestinian cause, in addition to the religious dimension

of the city, and its symbolism for hundreds of millions of Muslims and Christians across the world.

Of the wall's effects on the city, the displacement of the population is key. According to a statistical study, approximately 53% of Jerusalemites have moved their place of residence because of the wall since 2002, while 86.7% of them need work, social security, and other services to be able to stay in their homes. Because Israeli law threatens to confiscate Jerusalem IDs from those that have exceeded their stay outside the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem over seven years, the residents are forced to live within the boundaries of the municipality, despite what this causes in terms of overpopulation, overcrowding, high costs of living and education, and high taxes. The wall has forced many of the Bedouin residents of the areas surrounding Jerusalem to leave, which is what happened to the al-Jahalin tribe in East Jerusalem and the al-Salamat and al-Hamadin tribes.

The economic impact of the wall on Jerusalem and its surroundings is devastating because of the obstacles put in place to deter the movement of traders and goods to and from the city, which caused an increase in unemployment to 19.3% in 2006, according to a report issued by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). It has also led to the closure of many of the establishments and shops due to a decrease in customer traffic. The wall caused the loss of lands of villages in Jerusalem, like the village of Beit Sorim, which used to be on an area of 13,000 dunums in 1948, and now has 6,800 dunums remaining, with the wall taking another 5,500 dunums, leaving them with only 1,300 dunums. This is not enough to meet the village's needs for agricultural investment, in turn pushing them to migrate, which would also cause them to lose the burial places of their dead.

Socially, the wall is an obstacle in communication between relatives living on both sides, decreasing the number of opportunities for marriage because of the reluctance of parents to allow marriage with those residing on the other end. From a health point of view, as in the West Bank, Jerusalem and its surroundings, the wall is considered an obstacle to the population in accessing healthcare and medicine, as well as access to hospitals in East Jerusalem that provide a high quality of care and were frequented by the residents of the West Bank prior to the building of the wall. The difficulty in passing through has also prevented medical personnel in the West Bank from reaching their places of work in the hospitals in Jerusalem, with a decrease of 38% in 2009, increasing

the difficulty of securing medical services, like surgeries, and has led to administrative difficulties as well.

As for the suffering cause by the wall in education, the numbers summarize this suffering and the future impact on the new generation. Out of 33,000 students and more than 2,000 teachers, more than 6,000 students and 650 teachers face difficulties in reaching their places of education. The students of universities suffer the same. In addition to the obstruction of access, those that are able to get to school take routes that take hours where they used to take minutes. These difficulties are reflected in the number of students dropping out – those who can no longer endure the hardship of the road – in addition to those who could not find a way to gain access to education. All of this combined with the destruction of some schools, the confiscation of play grounds, and the splitting of some schools, as is what happened to the Anata secondary school, with the wall isolating its play grounds, leaving a small area that is not large enough to fit the students. The same applies to the three campuses of Al-Quds University in Abu Dis, Beit Hanina, and the Old City. The impact on the educational process will be evident in the future in terms of educational attainment, all of which will be the result of irregularity in the educational process in schools and universities, and the failure to meet the curriculum that is supposed to be followed and the delay in its completion.

### **Facing the Wall: Bilin's example**

Bilin makes weekly news headlines that talk of the resistance to the wall due to the protests that have been organized every Friday, starting on February 20, 2005, the moment that the wall was erected in this village. These weekly demonstrations have unique characteristics that start with their type, the form of protests that accompany them, and their continuity. The village of Bilin was on an area of 4,000 dunums when the Israeli settlement of Modiin Illit bit off 800 dunums, with the wall threatening another 2,000 dunums, leaving 1,200 dunums for its population of 1,800 individuals. Based on the villagers' determination to prevent the construction of the wall on their land, or at least preventing it from annexing large sections of land, they have continued in their protests and demonstrations, creating many forms of resistance that have gained supporters from all over the world that empathize with them and their suffering. Abdullah Abu Rahmeh, coordinator of the Bilin Popular Committee Against the Wall and the Settlements, has said: "They say the eye is not resistant to the awl; this saying

applies to any place except Bilin. They have pillaged our lands, and we will not stand silent. The wall will collapse here.”

Israeli and European peace activists joined the villagers in the International Solidarity Movement. A number of Israeli activists were injured during these demonstrations, of them activist Jonathan Pollak was wounded several times. Pollak is part of the “Anarchists Against the Wall” movement and participates weekly in the demonstrations in Bilin. As well, Israeli lawyer Limor Goldstein was hit in the head with rubber bullets, and international activist Mairead Corrigan, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in April 2007, and was hit in the leg. Also hit were the vice president of the European parliament, Luisa Morgantini and Italian judge Julio Toscano, during their participation in peaceful demonstrations in 2008. The people of the village lost many martyrs during these confrontations, and many of them were subjected to harm, because of lead bullets or from inhaling tear gas.

It is clear that the Israeli armed forces are using new types of weapons, believed to have been tested on the residents of Bilin, for later use in suppressing demonstrations within or to market them on an international level. *Haaretz* reported on an investigation on the matter, stating that in addition to the Israeli Army, the prison services are also taking part in these experiments. One of these weapons is a sponge bomb that inflicts large bruises on individuals, as well as sound weapons that, when directed at an individual through loud speakers, can cause him to lose his ability to balance.

One of the forms of resistance included the following: two Palestinian families occupied a house in the settlement of Modiin Illit and placed their belongings and their children’s toys in it, raising a Palestinian flag above it. The occupation forces took them out of the house, so they submit papers and documents proving the illegality of the settlement, which led to a number of its houses being demolished, allowing the people regained the land on which it was built.

In spite of the oppression faced by these demonstrations and the other forms of resistance, the people succeeded in passing a resolution on September 4, 2007 from the Israeli Supreme Court, declaring a change in the route of the wall in the vicinity of the village. This resolution was reinforced by another decision from the same court, on December 15, 2008, recovering half of Bilin’s lands to the west of the wall to its people.

As the book demonstrated that the wall is more than just ethnic segregation, the book *The Separation Wall in the West Bank* is more than just a book. It is a historical document that addresses the wall making clear to those concerned with the Palestinians' rights the danger that the Palestinian issue is facing in the wake of its construction. The wall is just another issue to be added to the list of other issues that shape the tragedy of the Palestinian people – the issue of the refugees, the issue of prisoners, and the issue of Jerusalem. Its dangers are no less grave than the *nakbah* of 1948, for if we do not declare it a new *nakbah*, because of its theft of Palestinian lands and its isolation of villages and towns from each other, then we decrease the chances for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state as a clearly-defined entity.