



MA'AN DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Case Study

West Bank Apartheid Wall
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Bir Nabala Wall: A Devastating Blow to the Palestinian Economy

As a result of Israel's apartheid wall, the Jerusalem district has suffered immeasurable loss. In a stormy afternoon, Haj Tawfik Nabeli, Bir Nabala's head of counsel, explained impacts of the wall as we were surveying the damage in the area. Bir Nabala is one of Jerusalem's many Palestinian neighborhoods isolated from the rest of the city by 181 km of the eight-meter high concrete Wall that is, in Nabeli's words, "affecting every single aspect of life."

Bir Nabala was once a bustling commercial center, sometimes linking the people of northern West Bank cities such as Jenin and Tulkarm with the greater Jerusalem metropolis. Because of the neighborhood's strategic location, many Palestinians depended on more than 600 businesses and shops as well as six tire factories to maintain their livelihoods. When the occupying power decided to build the Wall in the area, its affect could be felt in every area of life. The shops now number less than 180 and only two tire factories remain.

Walking the streets of Bir Nabala is a sobering experience. One imagines what once was but is confronted with boarded-up houses and block after block of closed shops. The occupation's industrial zones form a ring around the Palestinian neighborhoods, adding to the choking economic growth and development of the occupation.

The Qalandia checkpoint stands watch over the area, controlling the every movement of Palestinians as they go about their daily lives. The violence and discrimination that are inflicted on the Palestinians as a part of these checkpoints was a point



that was hard to miss. A drive of what used to be a few Palestinian residents of the Jerusalem district are granted blue IDs that differentiate them from West Bank residents who carry green IDs. When Bir Nabala was forced to be annexed into the Ramallah district with the construction of the Wall, the status of most residents changed, refuting them access to the rest of Jerusalem. This split families and undermined all cultural and economic ties to the city.

Credit: the Grass Root Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign

Prior to the Wall's conception, residents had unabated access to an adequate hospital. Now located on the other side of the apartheid wall, the hospital is no longer accessible and people are now only able to receive treatment at a sparse clinic employing only one nurse and not a single doctor.

Nabeli explained that many of the 7,000+ residents have been forced to leave the district. Before the Wall, the average salary was about 100 shekels (roughly 25 USD) per day. Now, the vast majority of these people are unemployed. Expulsion from the Jerusalem district carries a heavy price – the loss of one's blue ID and any future access to the city. Over the coming year, many Jerusalemite Palestinians will be forced to leave their homes. Some of these homes will be demolished, and their residents will be obligated to pay for the demolition and offered nothing in reparatory damages. The face of the Jerusalem city of Bir Nabala is drastically changing, and if the international community does not act quickly, the already austere damages could soon reach irreversibility.