

THE FABRICATION OF ISRAEL

About the usurpation and destruction of Palestine through Zionist spatial planning

A UNIQUE PLANNING ISSUE

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4. Transportation and Mobility in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Conclusion from last part:

It is obvious, that Israel's last attack on Gaza is not the end. The 'disengagement' was an interim step and one has to realise, that the 'settlers' of Gaza were only transferred to the West Bank in order to fill in the Jerusalem illegal colonies.

Moreover, Gaza is not at all a 'liberated' area from occupation. Still parts of the region in north, west and south Gaza the 'buffer zones' are occupied and grabbed land. The Israeli military is entering the region from where and when ever wanting: by planes, helicopters, bulldozers, tanks and even with missiles from the sea side. The seldom rackets from the Palestinian side are always a reason for military attacks. Illegal killing of supposedly terrorists with civil 'casualties' is part of a still ongoing threat, pressure.

We have to conclude that the question of Gaza Region is not finished. Will it be part of a future 'Palestinian State'? Will the total usurpation of 'Israel's Hawaii' only be postponed?

The following part will go into transportation and mobility in Gaza and the West Bank.

IV

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4. Transportation and Mobility in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

The current Arab-Israeli conflict is more than a century old; namely since the start of the establishment of Jewish colonies in Palestine in the late 19th century. Some claim that the conflict goes back millenniums ago; however, historical evidence indicates no significant conflict between Arab or Muslims and Jews in Palestine ever occurred before the beginning of the 20th century.

UN resolutions, diplomatic missions, wars, and ethno-national violence were not able to figure-out this high profile conflict; albeit, it is a longstanding necessity where no one could disagree or argue on the importance to solve this conflict for the sake of Middle East and international peace and security. Walls of segregation have fallen throughout history; bridges, mobility, and coexistence are the key to harmony and peace. However, experiences from post-conflicts areas have proven that it is more problematic and challenging when dealing with the associated infrastructure of segregation artefacts, namely roads. This section will elaborate on this doctrine of *de facto* immobility and further investigate the existing mal-distribution of services, as well as spatial segregation along nationality.

The West Bank and Gaza Strip were occupied in 1967 by Israel. The West Bank has a mass area of 5,661 square kilometres (about twice the area of Luxembourg), about 130 km in the north-south direction and 30 to 60 km in east-west direction. Its shortest width is from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea. The Gaza Strip has an area of 362 square kilometres (about the area of the island of Malta), 40 km along the Mediterranean Sea and 6 to 12 km in the east-west direction.

Jerusalem is a divided city as a consequence of the 1948 war. The old city (East Jerusalem) remained under Arab control until 1967. Israel occupied the old city of Jerusalem in 1967 and annexed it in 1968. Just prior to the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 1994, Israel restricted travel for the Palestinians in the West Bank to Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a major transportation link between the north and south portions of the West Bank, and certainly holy to Christians, Muslims and Jews.

Between 1948 and 1967, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem was under the Jordanian authority, while the Gaza Strip was under the Egyptian authority. There were no transportation links connecting the 40 km Israeli territories separating the West Bank from the Gaza Strip. After the 1967 war the transportation links between the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT; the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including East Jerusalem) and the neighbouring Arab countries were virtually cut off, except for Israel authorised passage to Jordan and after 1979 to Egypt. On the other hand, travel between the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Israel were permitted after the 1967 war. However, there were on and off restrictions of travel from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The restrictions of travel by the Israelis after the establishment of the PNA have been most severe, especially after Al-Aqsa uprising in the fall of 2000.

4.1 The Palestinian Transportation Network

Currently there is no **railroad network**, a functional airport or a seaport in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Before the 1948 war there was a railroad passing through the Gaza Strip connecting to Egypt in the south, and to Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey in the north, in addition to minor lines connecting some West Bank towns such as Jaffa, Jerusalem, Nablus and Tulkarem (see map 1, image 1). Before the 1967 war, there were two functioning **airports** one north of Jerusalem, Qalandiya air port, and the other one, basically an affiliated UN's runway strip, in the Gaza Strip, as well as a small seaport in Gaza. Therefore, transportation's facilities were not only neglected in the past 40+ years in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but even were underdeveloped. This in contrast to the region and the world; where transportation had substantial advancements.

Map 1: Railroad System in Palestine before 1948 (railway black)



Image 1: Massudiye railway station Tulkarem



Source: palestineremembered.com

Foto: Sybil Ehrlich 1999

The only transportation mode currently in operation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is **highways/streets**, which also is subject to neglect and poor maintenance. According to the World Bank (2004) about half of the OPT paved roads in 2003 were classified by the World Bank to be in poor condition and below acceptable service levels, up by 40 percent from its 1993. The rest of the network was a combination of fair (25 %) and good (25 %). This declination of local roads quality is due to the Israeli physical attacks and breakings on the Palestinian infrastructure including the road network. Paradoxically, there is a high standard highway network connecting the Israeli colonies together and with the activity centres within Israel. These highways were planned and designed to serve the colonies and bypass the Palestinian communities, thus many of such highways were more of barriers between Arab towns and villages, rather than a facilitator between them.

The public transit conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip also suffered devastating setbacks since the 1967 Israeli occupation. A relatively regulated and efficient bus transport was in operation in 1967 with about 700 buses. Currently very limited numbers of buses are in operation and shared-taxis and jitneys (private vehicles used for hire) are providing a poor service. The closure of roads and use of unpaved and poor alignment roads are the main reasons for use of such vehicles for public transit.

4.1.1 Palestinian Road Network

The current Palestinian road network in the West Bank runs at 11,889 km in length, connecting 667 residential communities spread on 5661 km² patch of land. More than 90 % of this network is classified as main, main urban and secondary roads, 53.2 % of which are suited in Areas A and B that fall under the PNA jurisdiction regarding transport sector management. In the Gaza Strip, the road network is 3,219 Km in length, where 77 % of the road network are unimproved dirt tracks; some are merely graded and surfaced with gravel or sand. 12 % of the road network of Gaza Strip e.g. is off-limits for Palestinians as they are within the Israeli Security Zone (ARIJ GIS-Database 2007) (see map 2).

Map 2: Road network in Gaza Strip

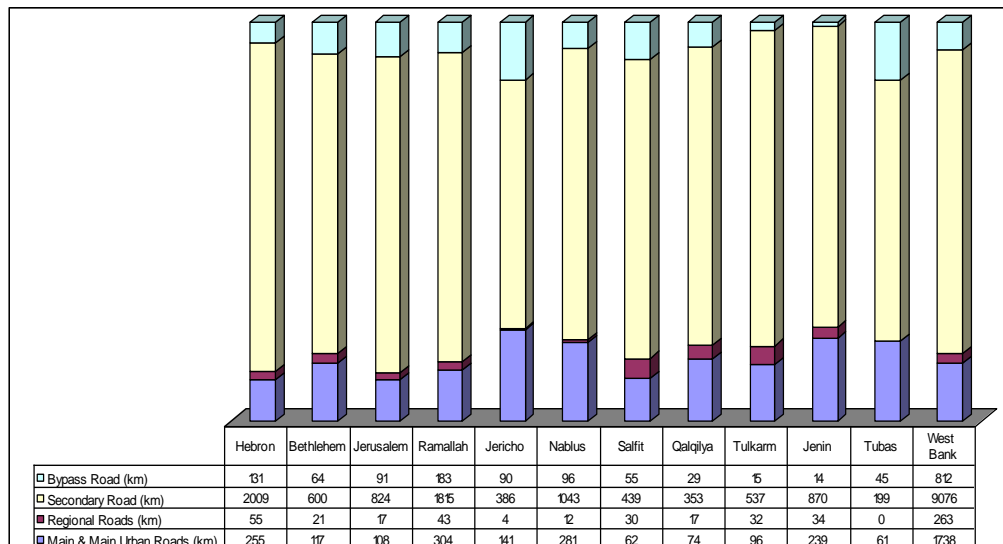


Source: ARIJ GIS-Database 2007

The West Bank and Gaza Strip main road network connecting major cities and providing access to nearby village's runs at 1,738 km and 185 km in total length, respectively. This shows an increase of about 38.5 % compared to the year 1993 in the West Bank and an increase of 76 % through the period (1996-2001) in Gaza Strip. What makes significance in the analysis of the West Bank aerial photo of the year 2004, is the high increase in the secondary roads length that calculated 9,076 km; representing an

increase of 3.6 times of that in the year 1993. Also the data shows that about 6.8% of the total road network length in the West Bank is for bypass roads (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Length of the West Bank road network, classified by Districts



Source: ARIJ GIS-Database 2007

Most of the West Bank current main roads are 10-12 m in width; they were constructed during the British mandate and the Jordanian administration periods (1917-1967), to link Palestinian urban areas of the West Bank. Secondary roads are typically 4-8 m in width; they are densely constructed in the Palestinians urban peripheries. Most of the secondary roads are in a state of despair, as they host more than their designed operational capacities. Unfortunately, the volatile political situation in the West Bank reflected its negative impacts on every facets of the Palestinian life. Since the out break of the second *Intifada*, Palestinian cities were besieged and access inter-cities were denied by the Israeli army. For that, a considerable number of secondary roads became primary travel arterials.

4.2 Current Mobility Conditions in the Gaza Strip

The Gaza Strip has borders from the north and east with Israel and it has a Mediterranean coast of about 40 km from the west, which is controlled and blocked by Israel. Egypt borders the Gaza Strip from the south-west with a 12 km long border. Before the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2005; Israeli colonies and military outposts controlled about 37% of the Gaza Strip. The roads connecting Israeli colonies in the Gaza Strip with Israel has split the Gaza Strip into four areas. Currently (after the Israeli redeployment from the Gaza Strip in 2005), the mobility within Gaza Strip is unimpeded. However, the trip by car from the seacoast in the west to Israel border in the east (from most parts of the Gaza Strip seacoast) is only about six kilometres or under free flow traffic conditions, the trip is only six minutes. The trip from the north border to the south border of the Gaza Strip, which has the longest distance, is about 45 minutes in case of free flow traffic conditions. There are no railroads in the Gaza Strip, and public transit is mostly taxis and shared taxis with no scheduled public

transit service. The border between the Gaza Strip and Israel is virtually closed. Free travel from the Gaza Strip to Israel or via Israel to the West Bank or Jordan and vice-versa is not allowed by Israel. However, very limited permits have been given during 2001-2006 for medical or special conditions, which ranged only in the tens or may be in the hundreds per year.

Goods movements to and from the Gaza Strip is completely controlled by Israel. Closure of all goods movements in and out of Gaza Strip is common for extended duration. Thus shortages of many goods in the Gaza Strip is an often occurrence. In addition, export of agricultural products from Gaza Strip is often delayed while hauling in trucks; thus the products are wasted. All travel from and to Gaza Strip through the Mediterranean Sea is barred and the Israeli navy blockades the Gaza Strip coast. Only fishing boats from Gaza are allowed to fish at a maximum distance of three miles from the coast, but often fishing boats are not allowed to leave shore at all. No goods movement from Egypt to and from the Gaza Strip is allowed. Goods between Gaza Strip and Egypt are only allowed via Israel. Since the military attack in December 2008/January 2009 the blockade imposed on Gaza since 2007 continued and all the 7 crossing points are generally closed (see map 3).

Map 3: Gaza Strip and the West Bank border crossings



Source: ARIJ GIS-Database, 2010

The 12 kilometre border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip is highly fortified and sealed, which was constructed during Israel occupation of the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, Palestinian houses and portions of refugee camps adjacent to the border with Egypt

have been demolished in order to have a so called “security strip” with a width of about 500 meters along the length of the border between Gaza Strip and Egypt. Concurrently, Israel has created a *de facto* “security zone” along the eastern borders of the Gaza Strip with Israeli that extends at 25% of the total mass area of the Strip. Before the blockade there was only one border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, the Rafah crossing, which was monitored by EU representatives stationed on the crossing based on the principles of the Agreement on Movement and Access signed in 2005. It was also monitored by close circuit televisions and through border control databases at real time processing by Israel. No goods were allowed through this crossing; goods from/to Egypt must pass via Israel, more specifically through Karm Abu-Salem crossing point. Also, only Palestinians from the Gaza Strip are allowed to use this border crossing. All visitors to Gaza Strip regardless of nationality can only enter (or exit) the Gaza Strip through Israel border crossings with the Gaza Strip. Even though, the Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt is the only access for the Palestinians from/to the Gaza Strip to/from the world; it often has been closed by order of the Israeli Army and is still since the attack in 2008/09. During the year of 2006, the Rafah border crossing has been closed often and some times for weeks; leaving the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip without access to worldwide. Thus, the Gaza Strip became a large prison, with most people can not drive more than half an hour in any direction by car. Images 2 and 3 present pictures of Palestinians stranded at the Egyptian side of the Rafah crossing in August 2006.

Image 2
Return to Gaza Strip (shuttle buses)
after weeks stranded at Rafah,



Image 3
Passport Control at Rafah



Source: Awadallah 2006

An airport was built in the extreme south-east area of the Gaza Strip and it became operational at the end of 1998. Regular air carrier flights were scheduled from this airport (1st named Gaza Airport, and later Arafat Airport) for about three years (1998 - 2000). The airport flights and passengers departing/arriving needed Israeli permission. Travellers on the scheduled flights had to go to the Rafah border crossing in a bus before entering the aeroplane or when leaving an aeroplane after arriving. The Rafah border control is about one kilometre from the airport and it was then under full Israeli control. At the Rafah border control the passengers and their luggage were processed by Israeli border control personnel. The airport was closed since the end of year 2000

until now, 2010. The Palestinian Airlines owned and operated three aircrafts, two Fokker 50, and one Boeing 727, which were operated on few routes and mostly flights were either to Cairo or Amman.

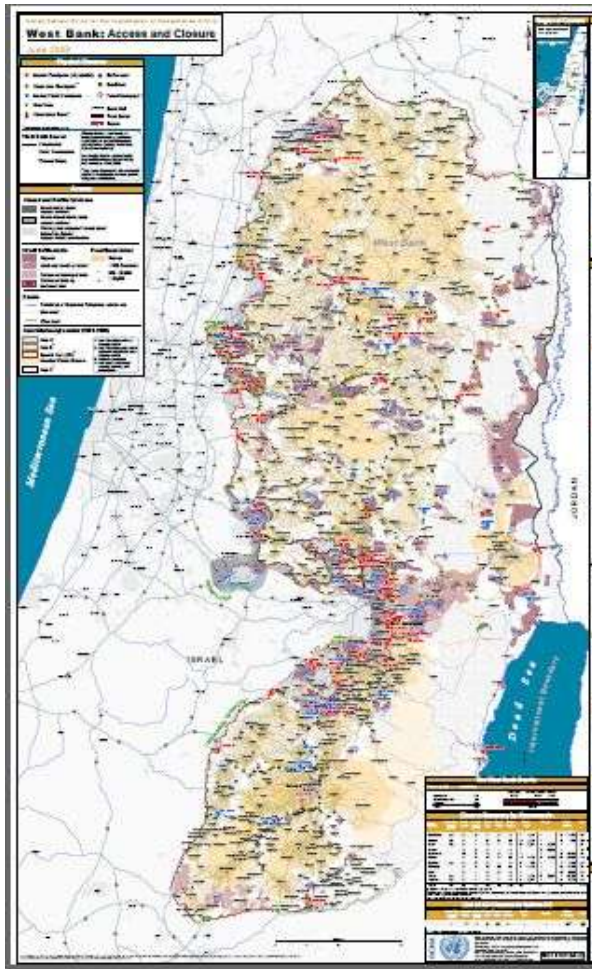
Since the blockade people organised transportation through hundreds of tunnels – the only way to enter needed goods, medical equipment, nutrition, spare parts and others.

4.3 Current Mobility Conditions in the West Bank

Unlike the Gaza Strip, the West Bank is still occupied by hundreds of Israeli colonies throughout the West Bank. Even though the area of the West Bank is more than 15 times the size of the Gaza Strip (the West Bank is about one fourth the area of Israel); the mobility is currently worst than that of the Gaza Strip. The West Bank unlike Gaza Strip has mostly mountainous terrain. It is surrounded by all sides by Israel, except from the east; it borders the Jordan River. The Jordan River is in a land depression called 'al-ghor' and pours into the Dead Sea, which is the lowest land point on earth. Thus steep terrain and roadways exist throughout the West Bank. There are no railroads in the West Bank and public transit is very poor. Very few scheduled bus service exist on limited routes in the West Bank, but most of the public transit is handled via shared taxis and jitneys (private vehicles used for hire).

Travel within the West Bank by motor vehicles may have the longest trip of about three hours for travel of about 180 km of mountainous winding roads. Also, since the occupation of West Bank by Israel in 1967, the borders with Israel were mostly open and uncontrolled. The long border is located in inhabited areas and mountainous areas, which is difficult to establish or enforce. In addition, East Jerusalem is an integral part of the West Bank that was occupied in 1967, illegally annexed and unified with West Jerusalem in 1968; thus there were no restrictions on travel for Palestinians from Jerusalem or the West Bank to West Jerusalem and any part of Israel. The building of the Segregation Wall since 2002 (almost 57% of the 774 km long Wall is completed, whereas a further 7% is under construction and 36 is planned) has barred Palestinian from the West Bank to travel to Israel or even to East Jerusalem. The Wall does not only separate the West Bank from Israel, but also separates the West Bank into many enclaves, in many cases separating Palestinians from Palestinians (see previous section). The Israeli imposed Separation Plan expropriates about 40% of the total West Bank area (i.e. 5,661 km²). Almost one-third of expropriated area is located between the Wall and Green Line "Western Segregation Zone." The other two-thirds of the confiscated area are the *de facto* created "Eastern Segregation Zone" on the eastern side of the West Bank, which was created without walls or fences, but through its control of access points along the Jordan Valley and the shores of the Dead Sea (ARIJ GIS-Database, 2009). In addition, to settler roads (by-pass roads, POICA 2008), hundreds of checkpoint and roads closure exist in the West Bank. Roads are closed with embankments, concrete blocks, iron gates or trenched road sections (see map 4). Pictures for an example of the closed section of Ramallah - Birzeit road are shown images 4-7 in October 2002.

Map 4: West Bank closure: colonies, barriers and road blocks 2009



Source: OCHA June 2009

Image 4: Wall Splitting the Palestinian Community of Abu Dees, East of the Old City of Jerusalem



Source: OCHA 2005

Image 5 Birzeit – Ramallah Road Trenched and Closed with Embankment



Source: Awadallah 2002

Images 6 and 7 Birzeit – Ramallah Road Showing Jam traffic caused by Road Closure (yellow vehicles are shared taxis) and dangerous walking after closure

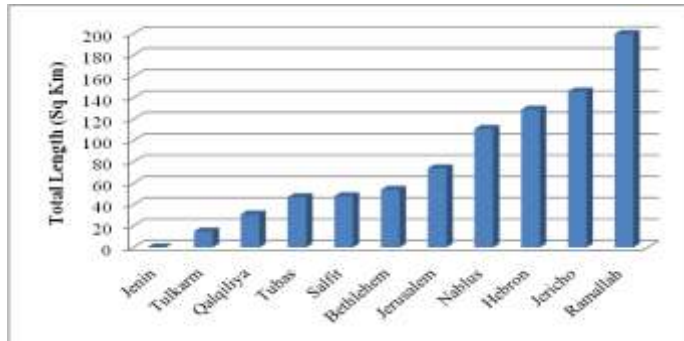


Source: Awadalla 2002

The mobility restrictions in the West Bank are beyond comprehension and unparalleled anywhere in the world today, even though they were more severe since 2002. Any Palestinian in the West Bank can not travel an hour by a motor vehicle without a check point or road closure. It is not possible to reach many areas in the West Bank with any vehicle. A person travelling from Bethlehem south of Jerusalem to Nablus north of Jerusalem, a distance of about 70 km, can not use his/her private vehicle. Also, such a trip is only possible via shared taxis, taxis, or jitneys and at least three to four different separate trips using different vehicles is needed, and is also costly. There are many enclosed area in the West Bank, which have only one or two entrances/exits including major cities such as Nablus. Some enclaves are so limited in area that a person can not travel more than one kilometre in any direction. Furthermore, some enclaves have only one entrance/exit and it is opened and closed via a gate. This gate is opened few hours in the morning and afternoon to allow the school children to go to their schools and every one living in such areas must accustom his/her work and errands to coincide with

the schedule of the opening and closing of the gate. Thus, the mobility within the West Bank for the Palestinians is a nightmare and it is beyond facilitating mobility for Israeli colonists or security reasons. The by-pass road system for Israeli mobility is the other system of restriction already shown in the previous section (see figure 2).

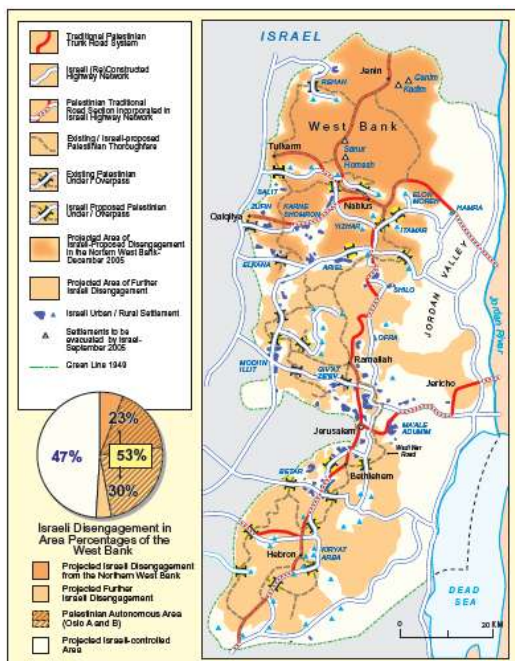
Figure 2: Total Length of Bypass Roads in the West Bank



Source: ARIJ GIS-Database, 2009

An Israeli plan of 2004 shows the absurdity of a small country divided in many pieces through Israeli bypass roads, under and over passes for Palestinians and a dense Israeli highway network (see map 5). This system will ease even more the mobility in east-west direction, between Israel and the Jordan Valley, linking the colonies with Israel, and an integral part of Israeli transportation network from Israel to the West Bank. While the main direction historically and still for the Palestinian goes south-north - the Israeli network breaks this flow and marginalise it if not destroy it. The closure of Jerusalem in addition forces Palestinians to dangerous detours through 'Wadi Nar' and check points all around.

Map 5: Israel's Road Plan 2004



Source: Stop the Wall 2005

The West Bank has an airport north of Jerusalem but it has been closed since 1967. The Palestinians in the West Bank can only travel outside the West Bank to anywhere in the world through the Jordan River Crossing to Jordan. This crossing point is controlled by the Israeli army and it is subjected to the Israeli's customs, and it is also closed on Israeli holidays. The only crossing point for the Palestinians in the West Bank has limited capacity, especially with the limited times of operation; thus overcrowding on the crossing point is a common phenomenon, especially in the summer months. In past years, some Palestinian travellers leaving or returning to the West Bank had to sleep on the Jordan River crossing point for two or more days.

4.4 Transportation Sector Impacts on Environment

The existing transport sector causes severe negative impacts on the Palestinian environment. Transport sector is the responsible for increased noise levels, habitat loss, water pollution, and waste generation. Natural resource depletion and negative direct, indirect and cumulative effects are other consequences of transport related activities that may influence people's health and safety.

Road transport is responsible for the majority of negative impacts of the transport sector on the Palestinian environment. Road transport accounts for more than 60% of the overall energy consumed in the Palestinian Territory (El Ghoussein 2004), which makes the transport sector a target field for future energy and environmental research. However, Palestinian society has indicated a willingness to accept some risks and some changes of the natural environment to gain the benefits of a more efficient and sustainable use of transport systems.

It is estimated that transport infrastructure (mainly roads) consumes 7.42 percent of the built up area, and about 3.73 percent of the total land of the West Bank. Increased land use for transport infrastructure increases pressures on environment that may lead to irreversible impacts on land and its resources. An unfortunate fact, that the suitable land for building transport infrastructure is the suitable one for agriculture as they are stable and flat.

In addition, the current road network reveals some serious alarming facts concerning the impacts on the local environment. According to spot analysis of the available aerial photos at ARIJ database for the year 2004, there is 2.10 kilometers of roads per square kilometers in the West Bank, as compared to 0.80 kilometers per square kilometers in Israel at the same year. The West Bank has 5.17 kilometers of roads per thousand of inhabitants as compared to 2.55 kilometers of roads inside Israel. These trends show the size of pressure being exerted on the local Palestinian environment, noting that though the figures indicate better influences for the Palestinians in favour of the Israelis road network they not really are, as the population density in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is seven times greater than that of the Israelis. Where, the West Bank has on average a population density of approximately 432 capita/km² of the total area, while in the Gaza Strip the population density is equal to 3,981 capita/km² of the total area, in Israel the average population density is equals 300 capita /km². Moreover, the urban areas in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip suffer from higher population densities: there is a density of 6,842 capita /km² in the total built-up area in the West Bank (ARIJ

Database, 2002), while the population density is 7,485 capita /km² in the total built-up area in the Gaza Strip (ARIJ Database, 2004).

Other types of transport sector pressure on the Palestinian environment include the negative effects on biodiversity, landscape and cultural heritage. But unfortunately, there is not enough data collected at the local level that traces these effects and document them.

Conclusion

Segregation based on race, ethnic origin and also religion surely does not ensure security and peace. However, when segregation is coupled with severe travel restrictions on a particular people and their goods this definitely breeds mistrust, alienation, and more instability and hostility. It is definitely a violation of human rights and international conventions. Walls of concrete, hate, and/or discrimination can not protect nor be a solution. Mobility needs roads and bridges, which inevitably pave the roads of peace.

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