



# Repression allowed, resistance denied

FACTSHEET

09



**PALESTINIAN GRASSROOTS  
ANTI-APARTHEID WALL CAMPAIGN**

الحملة الفلسطينية للوقوف ضد جدار الفصل العنصري



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The popular resistance against the Wall that has emerged in the affected villages in an effort to protect their rights and their land, has faced a staggering level of repression, arrests and violence from the Israeli authorities. The most visible and unifying expressions of this resistance are the weekly demonstrations against the Wall, which are organised and led by local “popular committees”, comprised of activists from the affected communities. The communities’ actions are supported, coordinated, and sometimes initiated through their umbrella organisation, the Palestinian Grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (Stop the Wall).

### ***The popular resistance movement against the Apartheid Wall***

The committees usually have three focuses: 1. Protests through demonstrations 2. Legal approaches 3. Contacting international movements. Typically, protests against the Wall involve different activities, such as marches, blocking Wall-construction machinery, destroying gates and fencing, and/or throwing stones at IOF soldiers.

### ***June 2002 to October 2003: the rising of the popular resistance against the Wall***

The first protests against the Wall started in the districts of Qalqiliya and Jenin where the bulldozers began work in June 2002. The demonstrations were aimed at stopping the destruction of village land. In June 2003 the popular committees, via Stop the Wall, organised their first national coordination meeting, bringing representatives from Jenin, Tulkarm, Qalqiliya and Salfit. They called for the first National and International Week against the Apartheid Wall to be held on November 9-16 2003 as part of the first joint plan. In Palestine the week began with a general strike throughout the West Bank and was followed by protests across the affected districts. Some 70 protests in 25 countries worldwide were held in solidarity. Jayyus was the first village to engage in day-to-day protests. These protests saw the first participation from international and Israeli activists.

***November 2003 to November 2005: The resistance against the Wall intensifies***

The year 2004 was marked by a large-scale growth of popular resistance. It was the year that the first martyrs were killed in protests against the Wall. This period also saw the hearings and ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the illegality of the Wall. The verdict of the International Court of Justice and its endorsement by the UN General Assembly did not alter anything for the people on the ground – the construction of the Wall continued, as did the repression of the protests. In fact, the repression intensified. The first wave of escalation in military violence, including an assassination, along with mass arrests and killings, took place. The period was marked by both many protests in the villages affected by the Wall, and demonstrations aimed at the PNA, to pressure it to support the affected communities, raise the issue of the Wall at international level and to ensure the implementation of the ICJ decision.

***November 2005 to May 2008: The resistance Against the Wall has to reorganise itself***

In many places the Wall was completed and the daily mobilization aimed at stopping bulldozers came to an end. The fact that none of the necessary international forces were (and are) willing to ensure the implementation of the ICJ decision underlined the awareness of the people that the Wall is yet another fact on the ground, only to be overcome with a long term struggle. The popular resistance against the Wall had to develop forms of protest that were sustainable and appropriate for such a long-term effort. The daily protests, which were disrupting all everyday life in the village, were slowly replaced with Friday demonstrations that allowed resistance to take place alongside some semblance of a 'normal life'. The popular resistance against the Wall not only solidified and re-organized itself but it also expanded.

***May 2008 to July 2009: Popular resistance against the Wall: a dangerous phenomenon***

In 2008/2009 weekly protests have gained strength in a number of villages. In addition to the protests against the Wall, popular committees have started focusing on the settlements, and renaming themselves 'Committees Against The Wall and The Settlements' in recognition of the fact that the two colonial construction efforts are two sides of the same coin, which leaves Palestinians dispossessed and living in walled-in ghettos and enclaves. The commitment to the boycott of Israeli products and anti-normalization campaigns of the popular committees has added yet another aspect to the struggle. The movement against the Wall has transformed from the spontaneous protests to a politically mature network of activism and resistance. It has gained over the years the support of a new generation of activists that leads demonstrations and increasingly makes its voice heard. Its strengthened political influence and the sustained Friday protests in a growing number of villages have sadly also provoked another escalation of repression and killings at the hands of the IOF.

# ***Violent repression of Palestinian anti-Wall protest***

- Violence is both common and an integral part of Israeli military policy toward popular resistance. It is based on a system of threats, and repression ensures that every member of the community is aware that such threats are not empty, nor merely possible, but guaranteed. Violent repression follows the same discriminatory patterns as arrests; IOF spokespersons are clear that violence should be toned down when non-Palestinians are present.

## ***Threats and intimidation***

- The military relies on a system of threats that are issued to villages and protestors (particularly youth), both on the individual and collective levels. Threats are delivered by various sources, from individual soldiers, over loud-speakers during patrols, by the distribution of flyers and pamphlets, and with warnings delivered directly to village officials. Threats of physical violence include explicit threats of death or serious injury; property is sometimes targeted.

## ***A policy of violence***

- Threats are substantiated by violence. A key approach of the IOF toward popular resistance is overwhelming aggression which involves causing abnormally high levels of injuries at a given time or place. This can be seen on the level of individual demonstrations as well as at demonstrations that continue over a period of time. For example, 450 were injured in Ni'lin over a period of 13 months.

- Serious injury and subsequent disability has also been common since protests began. The heavy use of live ammunition against unarmed demonstrators has been constant. This has resulted in countless injuries, many of them serious. Snipers are often used, stationed on rooftops or concealed among bushes or trees, to shoot protestors. Recently, they have begun using .22 rounds and silencers as well as fragmenting ammunition to target Palestinians in protesting villages. Non-lethal ammunition is also an important tool in causing serious injury. Rubber or rubber-coated bullets and high velocity tear canisters have both caused serious injury and death in Bil'in.

- There have been 16 people killed, half of them under 18, in villages protesting against the Wall since 2004. There have been two clearly identifiable waves of killings; one in 2004/5 and a second wave from 2008 until now. Both waves of killings can be considered at once both intentional and indiscriminate. In a majority of cases, the target is not chosen on account of his role as a political activist and organizer or

his capacity to inflict harm on soldiers, but is instead killed solely for his presence at a given demonstration. At the same time, however, the killings are direct and intended result of a policy which relies on spectacular violence, the victims of which are presented as examples, or warnings, to terrify communities and deter protest.

- The injury brought against Palestinian demonstrators is often explained away as a product of crowd or riot control or under the pretext that soldiers fire in self-defence. However, there is very little to substantiate either of these claims. The way in which the shootings are carried out illustrates how little crowd control has to do with military violence. Many of those interviewed testified that they were shot by concealed snipers, shot multiple times at close range, on the edges of demonstrations or after they had finished, or from behind while moving away from soldiers.

## ***Collective punishment***

- Repression and violence are also aimed at the community as a whole. The IOF make a point of letting villages know that these tactics are in response to demonstrations and popular resistance. Systematic collective punishment is key to the repression and occurs during and outside of demonstrations. The destruction of property, curfews and night raids are each key tactics.

- Curfews are one of the main forms of collective punishment imposed on villages that are demonstrating against the Wall. During curfews people are prohibited from going outside, and soldiers search homes in the village and remove people for interrogation, which often includes beatings and humiliation. Curfews are often imposed during demonstrations, but also take place after demonstrations and at other, arbitrary times. At times, the curfew becomes so extreme that it involves the closure and siege of a village.

- The collective punishment of villages raises the stakes of popular resistance considerably for communities. As a whole, these tactics target the most vulnerable sections of a village. The tear-gassing of homes, for example, may be bearable for adults but is a nightmare for children. What these tactics aim at, politically, is to divide families trying to protect their children or other vulnerable members from those engaged in popular resistance.

## ***Violating civil and political rights – arrests and detention of communities and supporters involved in protests***

Addameer has recorded 176 confirmed cases of Palestinians being arrested and detained, for periods ranging from a week to as long as 6 months in prison, as a result of participating in protests since 2004. This number is likely to be far lower than the actual number of protesters arrested. It also does not reflect the number of Palestinians being detained several hours for questioning and subsequently released.

### ***Breaking protests***

- The IOF have a policy of arresting those involved in the protest. Those targeted and the ways of arresting them may vary, due to the nature of the army's structure, but arrests are carried out frequently, indiscriminately and in a way that is vastly disproportionate to the events.

- At first, the IOF targeted the leaders of the popular committee. While this still occurs in certain areas, this policy seems to have shifted towards arresting the youth, in an attempt to undermine the demonstrations and break the spirit and stronghold of the resistance.

- One of the key bail conditions for Palestinians released is that they do not attend the protests. Often, prisoners who are released have to sign a statement that they will no longer attend the protests.

- Suspended sentences are used as a means of coercing Palestinians to stop protesting. They can be applied at any time to threaten further arrest for attending a protest.

- Palestinians who have been detained and their families are subjected to economic sanctions through permit denials. They are also the victims of harassment by the IOF, who further reduce their freedom of movement and regularly summon them for interrogation for unjustifiable reasons.

- Curfews and mass arrests have been carried out in most active villages with the aim of undermining the protests, IOF raids are usually accompanied by house searches, interrogations of family members, destruction and confiscation of private property

### ***Discriminatory treatment in prison and trial arrest and imprisonment***

- When arrested, Israeli, international and Palestinian activists all face violence, though it appears the IOF will still use more force in its arrest of Palestinians. Israelis and internationals are less likely to be arrested than Palestinians. Once detained, Israeli and international activists are treated much less harshly than Palestinians and do not suffer the same human rights violations.

- Palestinians face violence, torture, and long periods of interrogation, as well as humiliation, denial of adequate medical care, poor sanitary and hygiene conditions, insufficient and inadequate food and drink, and exposure to the elements.

- In addition to physical abuse, Palestinians face threats of arrest and violence to their families, as well as damage to their property and livelihoods, amongst other forms of psychological abuse.

- The Israeli prison system has special facilities for juveniles, but the military courts use sixteen as the cut-off age. Palestinian juveniles are therefore treated and sentenced as adults. From the accounts received from children in detention, child protection measures are not respected in detention, and juveniles are subjected to ill-treatment and torture.

### ***Trial and sentence***

- Israeli and International activists are tried in civil courts and are much less likely to face charges. Palestinians are tried in military courts and are likely to be convicted of an offence, regardless of the strength of evidence against them.

- Palestinians do not receive fair trials, due to problems with accessing legal advice, coercive methods used during interrogations – which are used in court against them, contrarily to international law - and an inability to prepare their case properly.

- The fines that Palestinians are charged with are much higher than those of other nationalities, and consist of one of the punitive measures used against them.

## Conclusion

The popular protest movement has shown a remarkable ability not only to survive, but to grow and spread, cultivating a new generation of activists and leaders, and taking root in new areas. How this phase of the popular protest movement will end depends in no small way upon the resolve of the villagers and willingness of global forces to take action as laid out in the recommendations at the end of the full report. The international community has a duty to bear witness to the crimes being perpetrated with the construction of the Wall, and to act to protect and aid those who resist it.



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## Recommendations:

- Campaign for targeted sanctions, such as an arms embargo. In light of Israel's use of arms in oppressing civilian populations and repressing human rights defenders, including through the use of violence and torture, no arms manufacturers (many of which are state owned) should be given financial and political backing through international trade and investments.
- Campaign for the release of the dozens of prisoners from Jayyus, al-Ma'sara, Bil'in and Ni'lin, as well as other villages without weekly protests, held for anti-Wall actions. While the arbitrary detention of activists should be stopped completely, Israel should in any case respect the right to a trial in which international standards and legal guarantees for fair trial are upheld for all political detainees. The international community should put pressure on Israel to respect and uphold these standards throughout any of its legal proceedings.
- Work to illegalize all trade with and investment in companies that aid or assist the construction or maintenance of the Wall, and follow the same course of action with regards to companies that construct, invest or operate in the settlements.
- Pressure representations to take real action to ensure that Israel complies with the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, fulfils its obligations under international law and (1) stops the construction of the Wall in the occupied Palestinian territory (2) dismantles the sections built to date; (3) returns all confiscated lands and provides compensation for all damage caused by the construction of the Wall.