

The Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem

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The Geopolitical Status Of Bethlehem Governorate

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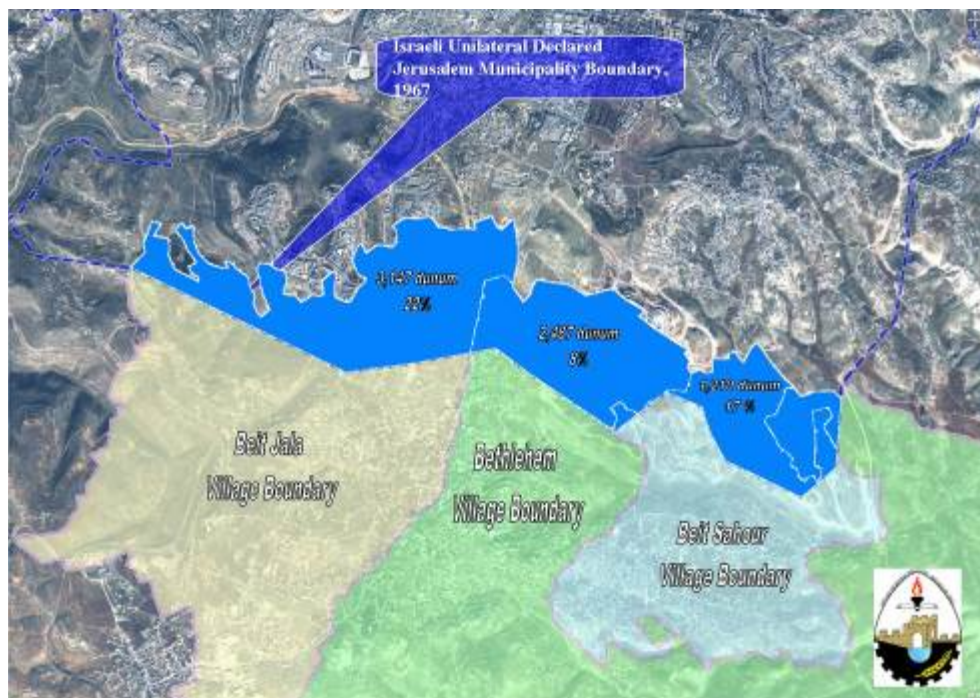
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The Geopolitical Status of Bethlehem Governorate

Bethlehem Governorate lies in the southern part of the West Bank south of Jerusalem. It has an area of 658.6 Km² and is home to 217,400 Palestinian inhabitants (PCBS, 2017). It has been targeted by the Israeli occupation since 1967 when 18.1 Km² from its lands were unilaterally annexed by Israel to the illegally declared new municipal boundary of Jerusalem. However, since 1967, the owners of the “annexed areas” continued to access their land until the Segregation Wall plan came to existence.



Map 1: lands of Bethlehem Governorate unilaterally annexed by Israel to the illegally declared new municipal boundary of Jerusalem

Under the signed Oslo Accord, Bethlehem Governorate was classified to areas “A”, “B” and “C”, which reflects various levels of control over the territory each defined.

While Area “A” designates Palestinian absolute autonomy over administrative and security issues; Area “B” granted Palestinians only civil/ administrative responsibilities on education, health and some administrative control over development and what remains of Bethlehem was classified Area “C”, where the status quo of the occupation remains as is and Israel retain full control. The following table shows how Bethlehem came under Oslo classification:

Table 1: The Geopolitical Divisions of Bethlehem Governorate				
Area	Area in Km ²	%	Population	%
Area A	49.6	7.5	125,099	58
Area B	36.9	5.6	78,537	36

Area C	446.5	67.8	10,841	5
Nature Reserves	125.6	19.1	2,923	1
TOTAL	658.6	100	217,400	100

Palestinians has control on 13.1% (86.5 Km²) of the entire governorate's area where nearly 95% of the population (203,636 Palestinians) inhabiting Bethlehem Governorate live, and the population density reaches 2354 person per 1 km², while the remaining area remains under full control of the Israeli Army where restriction on land use is greatly practiced by the Israeli Army; meaning no construction allowed and no cultivation on great parts of the area that falls under the Israeli Army jurisdiction.

The Israeli unilateral activities in the Bethlehem Governorate constitute a belligerent act against the Palestinians population. The encroachment of the Israeli Segregation Wall on Bethlehem lands is a growing danger that threatens the development, the sustainability, and the very existence of the Palestinian people as in throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. It does not only deprive the Palestinians from their valuable agricultural and grazing lands; but it also puts physical barriers to their natural growth and disconnects them from each other.

The Israeli settlements' Activities in Bethlehem Governorate

The Israeli settlement activities in Bethlehem commenced following the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967. Israel's settlements' activities seek to unilaterally and illegally create facts on the ground that will ultimately undermine the Palestinian presence and sustainability and create Israeli majority on the lands extending from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. The occupation, confiscation of Palestinian lands, uprooting of fruitful trees and the demolition of Palestinian houses has proceeded virtually without interruption. As from January 2000 and till end of 2019, the Applied research institute - Jerusalem recorded the Israeli violations against Palestinian lands and properties in Bethlehem Governorate and found out that a total of **95,139** dunums (68 km²) of Palestinian lands were confiscated in Bethlehem Governorate for the various Israeli purposes. Moreover, a total of **88,934** fruitful trees were either uprooted or razed and 1,518 Palestinian houses were demolished throughout this period in addition to 2,417 others that were threatened of demolition.

Year	Confiscated Palestinian Land (Dunums)	Uprooted/destroyed Trees	Demolished Palestinian Homes	Palestinian Homes Threatened of Demolition
2000	3219	2990	2	1
2001	3655	3360	3	4
2002	1453	3550	13	142
2003	5476	27183	30	49

2004	9694	1576	50	53
2005	3515	2864	13	44
2006	1277	1515	20	27
2007	3634	6120	6	52
2008	219	350	3	22
2009	2808	273	1	50
2010	215	1395	9	35
2011	9972	745	13	26
2012	2896	2140	12	56
2013	5956	1975	2	21
2014	4885	2059	5	80
2015	790	850	4	64
2016	8962	3792	509	692
2017	4400	6989	206	530
2018	3588	7546	162	171
2019	18525	11662	455	298
Total	95139	88934	1518	2417
Source: Settlement Monitoring Department, Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem (ARIJ) - 2019				

Israeli Settlers continued their obliteration against Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) and their properties; uprooting trees, snatch Palestinian houses; all under the protection of the Israeli Army. The Israeli settlers attacks across the past decade in particular has definitely been upgraded from being violent attacks associated with severe hostility toward the Palestinian civilian population to an organized attacks orchestrated that terrorize and imperil the lives and way of life the Palestinian population. Spanning over 50 years of occupation, the Israeli settlers have been nibbling away of the occupied territory to accommodate more than 824,000 Israeli settlers residing in 199 settlements and 220 outposts. Their existence and ever-growing numbers there has grounded any suspicious that the much debated two-state solution has been brought to a halt.

The Israeli settlers' attacks on Palestinian and their properties in the occupied Palestinian territory remains to be a main concern especially that such attacks are disregarded by the Israeli occupation Army; in fact much of such attacks are carried out under their protection and direct sight. The settlers premeditated attacks has grown over the past decade in number of and also in types of attacks, which have grown more violently than even the Palestinians expected over years. The Israeli settlers stopped at nothing to turn the Palestinians lives upside down, destroying the agricultural lands, uprooting and burning trees, contamination of cultivated fields and wells. Statistics shows that settler violence against Palestinians and their property in the occupied Palestinian territory is on the rise.

The Israeli bypass roads in and around Bethlehem Governorate

The term “Bypass Roads” did not come into use until the signing of Oslo agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians in 1993 to indicate designated roads for the Israeli Army and settlers use, to bypass Palestinian towns and communities in the context of the Israeli Army redeployment.

Today the length of the bypass roads in the West Bank exceeds 939 km in length; of which 118 km run in Bethlehem to accommodate the Israeli Army and settlers’ needs. In addition, Israel plans to construct a 30 kilometers road (Bypass Road No. 80) in Bethlehem Governorate. Once constructed, it will undermine the Palestinian urban expansion in the eastern part of the Bethlehem Governorate and will segregate more than one third of the Governorate's area.

Prior to the outbreak of the September 2000 Intifada Palestinians had almost complete access to these bypass roads, except at time when the Israeli Army is on security alerts that Palestinians are no longer allowed to travel on the bypass roads or would have to undergo a through security check conducted by the Israeli Army border patrols, which would take hours at times.

However, following the 2000 Intifada, Palestinians accesses to virtually all bypass roads became forbidden; unless they are in possession of a special permit issued by the Israeli civil administration. Later on, the Israeli Army would refer to bypass roads were Palestinian are no longer allowed to travel on as “sterile” roads; meaning that these are Palestinians free roads.

Israeli Settlements & Settlement outposts in Bethlehem Governorate

Kfar Etzion settlement was the first Israeli settlement established after the June 1967 war, followed by a propagation wave of Israeli settlements in the Governorate. Today, there are 23 Israeli settlements accommodating more than 183,000 Israeli settlers infringed on the Palestinians’ lands in Bethlehem Governorate. These settlements are built on a total area of 22,684 Dunums (22.7 Km²), which constitutes around 3.4 % of the Governorate’s area.

No.	Settlement Name	Population (end of 2019)	Date of Establishment	Area of Settlement (Inside Bethlehem Governorate)
1	Geva'ot	76	1984	139
2	Gilo	44,520	1971	3,077
3	Hadar Beitar	87	1978	49
4	Har Homa	39,382	1997	2,315
5	Har Gilo	1,646	1972	441

6	Beitar Illit	62,554	1985	4,784
7	Efrat	12,269	1979	2,555
8	Eliazer	2700	1975	581
9	Rosh Tzurim	1032	1969	853
10	Allon Shevut	3,855	1971	1,005
11	Neve Daniel	2,718	1982	595
12	Tekoa	4,338	1977	1,089
13	Ein Al Fashkha	Tourist Site	1969	155
14	Mashoki Dargot	104	1991	111
15	Kfar Etzion	1,067	1967	1,023
16	Avenat	153	1983	261
17	Ma'ale Amos	825	1981	331
18	Mitzpe Shalem	226	1980	420
19	Bayt 'Ayn (Tzurif)	1,637	1989	836
20	Nikodim	2,221	1982	413
21	El David (Kfar Eldad)	335	1999	368
22	Migdal Oz	963	1977	1,108
23	Abei Nahal	456	1981	175
Total		183,164	****	22,684
Source: Geo-Informatics Department, Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem Source: Israeli Ministry of Interior – Population Registry 2019-2019				

Furthermore, in the years between 1996 and 2018, the Israeli settlers in Bethlehem Governorate established 20 locations, which came to known as settlements' outposts¹. The Israeli outposts' phenomena started back in the year 1996 by Israeli settlers who contrive to take control of hilltops in the occupied Palestinian territory. The outposts are located mostly within 1-4 miles distant from an existing settlement.

The Israeli government did not provide those settlers with direct financial support rendering them to be illegal and unauthorized but simultaneously providing infrastructural support through the Israeli Army who would also provide them with security blanket to carryout their attacks against Palestinian lands.

Projected Israeli Plans in Bethlehem Governorate

Future Israeli plans to build and expand settlements in Bethlehem governorate include:

¹ settlements' outposts, is a technique improvised by Israeli officials in cooperation with the Israeli settlers; under which the latter seize hilltops and certain locations in close proximity to existing settlements in order to annex the location to the settlement –if it exist within the master plan area of the settlements - all of which under the direct protection of the Israeli Army

- **A new settlement neighborhood and a public park added to Har Homa settlement:** the Master Plan set by the Israeli municipality of Jerusalem (Master plan Jerusalem 2000) indicates the presence of a new neighborhood northwest of Har Homa settlement, identified as “ Har Homa West ” which is planned to include the construction of 1600 new settlement units and will occupy a total land area of 445 dunums of Bethlehem lands, to the south of Saint Elias Monastery. Additionally, an additional 1211 dunums of land classified as “Public Park” (Jerusalem Master Plan 2000) to the southeast of Har Homa settlement. This new neighborhood settlement and the public park will have an approximate area of 1255 dunums of land of Bethlehem.
- **Giv'at Yael Settlement:** in June 2004, private initiatives made by the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem (status unrecognized) to illegally build a new Israeli settlement on agricultural lands that belong to Al-Walajeh, Battier and Beit Jala residents west of Bethlehem Governorate. The total land area threatened to be confiscated to construct this settlement project is 2976 dunums; The new Israeli settlement to be; will hold the name of "Giv'at Yael" and is set to include some 20,000 housing units to accommodate more than 55,000 Jewish settlers.
- **Rachel's Tomb Settlement:** a Jewish community around the Rachel's Tomb compound at Bethlehem's northern entrance.
- **A New Israeli site in Ush Ghurab:** On April 8, 2008, a group of Israeli right-wing activists called 'Developing Har Shamu'el Settlement' along with settlers of the ‘Gush Etzion regional council’ proclaimed their intention to construct a new Israeli town on the remains of the evacuated Israeli military base 'Ush Ghrab' ('Shdema' in Hebrew) located east of Beit Sahour city. The military base was evacuated by the Israeli Army on April 27, 2006 but the location remained within the Israeli Army's jurisdiction as it is located in area classified as 'C Area'.
- **Giv'at Hayetim: a new Neighborhood for Efrat Settlement:** In mid February 2009 the Israeli military court affiliated to the Israeli Civil Administration in Bethlehem Governorate rejected eight of nine petitions filed by Palestinian citizens from Al Khader and Artas villages southwest of Bethlehem city against an Israeli Military Order issued back in 2004, which stated the seizure of 1700 dunums of Palestinian land, and allegedly declared as 'State Land'. The Israeli rule confirming the seizure of the targeted land went to revive a plan at the same location to build an additional neighborhood for Efrat settlement, at the targeted land, which the settlement council of Efrat calls the “eighth hill” and the planned neighborhood name is 'Giv'at Hayetim.' The initial plan for the neighborhood is to construct 2500 housing units.
- **An Additional Neighborhood north of Efrat Settlement – Giv'at Hadagan Neighborhood:** On December 11, 2011, the Israeli minister of Defense, Ehud Barak, has approved the establishment of a new and permanent neighborhood and a farm near the settlement of Efrat in the Gush Etzion settlement bloc, inside the planned route of the Israeli Segregation wall, which is set to engulf the western area of the Bethlehem Governorate and annex it to Israel. The new neighborhood will constitute an effective expansion of the Gust Etzion settlement Bloc toward the north and north-east, on lands of Al Khader village. The plan for the new settlement neighborhood calls for the building of 40 new units (homes) on Giv'at Hadagan outpost, to replace the mobile trailers already exist on the site.

- The New settlement Neighborhood “Giv’at Hatamar” – Efrat Settlement:** On the 9th of March 2015, the Israeli machinery started razing lands in Al Khader village allegedly for being declared as “State Land”. The targeted site is located in Batn Al Ma’asi area in Al Khader village, on a hill near the Israeli outpost, Giv’at Hatamar. The razing process comes as first step towards the expansion of Giv’at Hatamar outpost to become a new settlement neighborhood and connect it with the nearby mother settlement, Efrat. Earlier in January 2013, the Israeli Custodian of State property in the occupied West Bank and in cooperation with the Israeli Ministry of Housing and Construction, issued a tender No. 265/2012 (plan No. 1/5/410) which includes the construction of 114 new housing units in Giv’at Hatamar Settlement. Other tenders were also issued during the year 2014 to build more settlement units in Giv’at Hatamar outpost, they are: Tender No, 167/2014 (Plan No. 5/410) and includes the building of 56 new units in Giv’at Hatamar outpost; Tender No. 216/2014 (Plan No. 1/5/2014) and includes the building of 37 new settlement units in Giv’at Hatamar outpost; and Tender No. 1/2014 which includes the construction of 208 new settlement units in Giv’at Hatamar outpost
- “Including Industrial, commercial and tourism areas” A new neighborhood in Beitar Illit settlement on lands of Wad Fukin village:** on the 1st of February 2014, the Custodian of Israeli Government Property in the occupied West Bank and the Ministry of Housing and construction issued a tender No. 171/2014 which includes the construction of 218 settlement units (five complexes) in Beitar Illit settlement southwest of Bethlehem city as part of Town Planning Scheme ([TPS No. 426/3](#)). The tender, which was published on the Israeli Land Administration (ILA) website, states that the Israeli Government is planning to build a new neighborhood to the northwestern side of Beitar Illit settlement under the name “Beitar Illit C”, on lands of Wad Fukin village in Bethlehem Governorate. The expansion, which Israel intends to impose through plan No. 426/3 would change the geography of the area on the expense of the surrounding Palestinian communities, most specifically, the lands of Wad Fukin village.
- Dead Sea- Gush Etzion Road Project:** In September 2013, the Israeli Maariv daily newspaper reported on its Hebrew website that Israel has recently approved a plan to construct a new bypass road that will extend from the Gush Etzion settlement bloc to the Dead Sea area, east of Bethlehem. The new Israeli bypass road is intended to be the longest road connecting illegal Israeli settlements located in the southern West Bank (Bethlehem and Hebron) to the Dead Sea area and with Israeli settlements inside Israel. The project is estimated to cost \$34 million and will, according to Maariv, reduce the time between Gush Etzion settlement bloc and the Dead Sea area to around 30 minutes. Work on the road is expected to start in January 2014.
- Building in Geva’ot settlement:** On the 19th of December 2012, the Israeli “defense” minister, Ehud Barack, approved a plan to construct 523 units in Geva’ot military site, in a step that will change the status of Geva’ot from Military site to an urban settlement. The plan holds number 1/2/418. The building approval gave the Higher planning council at the Israeli Civil administration the green light to go forward with the plan and deposit it for public review that time.

In December 2009, the Israeli daily newspaper, Haaretz, unveiled a secret and comprehensive Israeli settlements database which revealed that in August 1982, the Israeli cabinet approved the establishment of a Nahal pre-settlement on Palestinian land southwest of Bethlehem city by declaring it as State land. The approval was based on decision number 887—32/HT. Some years later, in July 1998, the Israeli military commander at that time announced that the jurisdiction of the settlement of Alon Shevut is to be amended to include the Geva'ot Nahal pre-settlement within its borders. This in turn has made any expansion in the Geva'ot settlement look like as an expansion of an existing settlement (Alon Shevut) and not an establishment of a new settlement in the area. Note that Geva'ot military site is around 3 km to the northwest of Alon Shevut settlement.

- **Expropriation of 984 dunums south of Bethlehem:** On April 6, 2014, the so-called “ Custodian of Absentee Property in Judea and Samaria” attached to the Israeli Ministry of Defense , Yousi Sigal, issued a military order to confiscate 984 dunums from Al-Khader, Nahalin, and Beit Ummer towns west and southwest of Bethlehem city. According to the military order, the "Custodian of the Absente Property” based his decision on an Israeli law issued following the Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian territory - (Absentee Property – Judea and Samaria- 59/1967) - in which it considered the targeted lands (984.35 dunums) as state lands.
- **Expropriation of 3799 dunums of Bethlehem and Hebron Governorates:** On the 31st of August, 2014, the so called “Custodian of Absentee property in Judea and Samaria ” attached to the Israeli Ministry of Defense , Yousi Sigal, issued a military order which seizes 3799 dunums from five Palestinian villages in Hebron and Bethlehem Governorates; they are: Wadi Fukin, Husan, Nahalin, Surif and Jab’a. According to the military order, the "Custodian of the Absente Property” based his decision on illegal Israeli military law issued following the Israeli military Occupation of the Palestinian territory in 1967- (Order Concerning State Property (Judea & Samaria) (No. 59-1967))- in which it considers the targeted land (3799 dunums) as state land. The issued Israeli military order paves the way for the construction of a new Israeli settlement in the Gush Etzion settlement bloc. in a move that will cut the contiguity of the Palestinian communities in the area, at the same time, it will increase the correlation of Israeli settlements in the area and enhance the control over the Palestinian land.
- **The Oz Veaga'on new outpost:** In early August of 2014, the women in Green movement led by its co-founder "Nadia Matar" announced the establishment of a new outpost near the Gush Etzion roundabout with the explicit support of the Gush Etzion settlement council, and was given the name "Oz Veaga'on". The site of the new outpost is quite strategic as it overlooks the surrounding Israeli settlements such as the settlements of Efrata and Migdal Oz in the southeast and the settlements of Alon Shvut and Kfar Etzion northwest. Additionally, the targeted area is a mix of forest and open area which allows settlement expansion in the future.
- **Israeli Military Extending Order to confine +400,000 dunums as “Closed Military Area”:** On the 18th of January 2015, the Israeli Occupation Authorities issued a military order entitled “ S/1/99 (Amendment border No.6) (5885 -2015) (Firing Zone No. 912)”, which extends the expropriation of 410,672 dunums of lands as “Closed Military Zone”, while another 212 dunums deducted from the order since

it became part of the settlement of Ma'aleh Adumim. Note that on the 5th of May 1999, the Israeli occupation authorities issued military order No. S/1/99 (5785-1999) which targeted the same aforementioned areas (410,884 dunums, including the 212 dunums) and declared it "Closed military area". However, the area (212 dunums) which were removed from the Firing zone area, is located east of Ma'ale Adumim settlement and part of it is located within the border of the settlement.

- **Israel to establish an Industrial Zone on Lands of Kisan village east of Bethlehem:** On March 8th 2015, Israeli bulldozers razed 80 dunums of Palestinian land in Kisan village southeast of Bethlehem city. The land was targeted in 2004 with a military order expropriating it under the pretext of "state land". The Kisan community appealed, and the case was still pending in court. The targeted land is part of a plan to establish an Israeli industrial zone at the site. The plan holds No. 413/T and it came to light back in August 1986, and stated the construction of an Industrial zone on 570 dunums of lands of Kisan Village.
- **Israel to add Beit Al Baraka compound to the list of Israeli settlements comprising the Gush Etzion Settlement bloc.:** on the 1st of October 2015, that the Israeli occupation minister, "Moshe Ya'alon" has decided to add Beit Al Baraka compound located alongside the Israeli bypass road No. 60, and the land surrounding it to the jurisdiction area of the so called "Gush Etzion bloc of settlements" west of Bethlehem city, in an attempt to Judaize the area and consolidate the Israeli control over the compound. Earlier in May 2015, the Israeli daily newspaper, Haaretz, revealed that a new real estate deal has been settled and targeted the abandoned Beit al-Baraka building and hospital located on Jerusalem-Hebron road. Several names emerged in this deal including Arieh King, director and founder of the Israel Land Fund (ILF) and member of the municipal council in Jerusalem municipality, a man who supports settlement projects in the occupied Palestinian territory and most specifically in and around Jerusalem city, as well as the right-wing Gush Emmunim settler movement, and Davidi Perel, the mayor of the Gush Etzion settlement bloc. In the meantime, works on restoring and rehabilitating the building is ongoing in an effort to turn it into an outpost and settle settlers.
- **A new Israeli settlement in the Gush Etzion settlement Bloc:** Israel plans to build a new settlement to the east of Migdal Oz settlement, in the area between the aforementioned settlement and Bayt Al Baraka compound and bordering the Israeli bypass road number 60 from its eastern side. The new settlement plan holds No. 407/3 and is projected to occupy 152.6 dunums of Palestinian owned land in the area, to set up a "tourist attraction" site (settlement).
- **"For Public Purposes", the Israeli Finance Minister requests the acquisition of 102 dunums of land in Bethlehem Governorate:** On the 28th of October 2015, the Israeli daily newspaper, "Israel Hayom", published on its website three announcements stating the expropriation of 102 dunums of Palestinian lands in Bethlehem Governorate, located within the illegally and unilaterally defined Jerusalem Municipal boundary of 1967, for public purposes. The announcements, which were signed by the Israeli Finance Minister, Moshe Kahlon, on the 4th of August 2015, were cited as "announcement of the intention to acquire the rights of land and land ownership, required under emergency regulations, for public purposes

(with reference to section 5 and section 7 of the Land (Acquisition for Public purposes) Ordinance No. 24 of 1943)". The published announcements target land in Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour cities and state that the acquisition of land is "necessary due to the continuous attacks against the Israeli security in the area around Jerusalem, and to maintain the separation wall which addresses the security threats, and to protect the national security".

- **“For the Construction of the Segregation Wall”, an Israeli military order extending the expropriation of 243 Dunums southeast of Bethlehem Governorate:** On the 1st of December 2015, the Israeli occupation army handed over Palestinian citizens from Al Jab’a and Surif communities southeast of Bethlehem and north of Hebron cities a military expropriation order No. (15/12/T) which extends the expropriation of 243.5 dunums for the construction of the Segregation Wall in the aforementioned villages. The military order was signed in September 7, 2015 but was only handed to Palestinian land owners on December 1st 2015 in an attempt to deprive land owners from submitting their appeals to the designated Israeli court against the expropriation order, which is usually 7 days. The current military order extends the confiscation of land till the 31st of December, 2017.
- **The Refayem Park – Israeli TPS No. 12222:** In July 2013, the Israeli District Planning and Building Committee related to the Israeli Ministry of Interior approved the town plan scheme No. 12222 to build “Refayem Metropolitan Park” in the southern parts of the city of Jerusalem. According to the plan that was developed by the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem and the “Israeli Development Authority”, the Refayem Park will fill in the “public” spaces between the expanding settlements on Jerusalem's southern side, further erasing the Green Line and contributing to the “buffer” between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Additionally, the plan that, Refayem Valley Park will occupy an area of 5,649 dunums, of which, 1195 dunums beyond the Green Line (Armistice Line of 1949), on lands belonging to Bethlehem Governorate, Beit Jala, Battir, Beit Jala and Al Walajeh.
- **A huge Israeli settlement neighborhood southeast of Gilo:** On the 8th of August 2016, the Israeli developer Nehemiah Davidi and architect David Guggenheim advanced a new plan to build about 3000 housing units in the settlement of Gilo, located between Jerusalem and Bethlehem Governorates. The plan holds number 125195 and states the construction of 2992 new settlement units on 268 dunums of land, located southeast of Gilo settlement and along the Israeli Bypass road No. 60.
- **A New Israeli settlement neighborhood in Elazer settlement:** on the 2nd of February 2018, the Israeli Government has approved Town Planning Scheme (TPS) No. 404/1/6/5 which states the construction of 68 new housing units in the northwestern part of Elazar settlement, one of the Israeli settlements comprising the so-called Gush Etzion settlement bloc. The plan will be implemented on 17 dunums of Al Khader village lands.
- **A new Israeli settlement in the Gush Etzion settlement Bloc:** on the 16th of February 2018, the Israeli Government has approved a New Town Planning Scheme (TPS) No. 405/11 (Parcel 91) for the establishment of a new, “temporary” settlement

,northeast of Allon Shevut settlement, for the settler families whose homes are slated to be demolished in the Nativ Ha'Avot outpost according to the High Court of Justice's 2016 ruling. The TPS will be implemented on 40.8 dunums of lands of Al Khader and Nahalin villages in Bethlehem Governorate.

- **The relocation of Al Walajeh Checkpoint:** On the 14th of February, 2018, Israel has begun the relocation of the military checkpoint located at the northern entrance of al-Walajeh village west of Bethlehem city to a new location, beyond the 1949 Armistice Line (Green Line). The new Israeli military checkpoint will be placed 2.5 km inside the lands of Al Walajeh village, to its west, and will cause the isolation of the ancient Ein Haniya spring (which provides recreation, bathing and picnicking for Palestinians in Al Walajeh village and the surrounding communities of Beit Jala and Bethlehem cities) and thousands of dunums of Palestinian agricultural lands surrounding it. The relocation of the checkpoint will shift a large area of Al Walajeh village lands to become under the jurisdiction of the Israeli side.

The Segregation Wall Bethlehem and the Israeli Segregation Plan

In Bethlehem Governorate, the Segregation Wall extends across 82 kilometers starting at the eastern rural area north of Al-Khas village and runs south to reach Um Al-Qassies village; it then extends towards the west, bypasses the southern part of Abu Ghneim mountain north of Beit Sahour, before it continues northwest of Bethlehem and Beit Jala cities and westward to run along bypass road #60 south of Al-Khader village, it then runs southeast towards Wad Al-Nis to encompass Efrat settlement. After which, the route of the Segregation Wall moves further south and southwest to isolate and Segregate the western rural area of Bethlehem Governorate along with what is known as the Gush Etzion settlements Bloc, which also include 8 Palestinian communities (population exceeding 24,200 Palestinians) within the western Segregation Zone that will effectively become inaccessible to other Palestinians who are not residents of these communities.

Another Palestinian village stands to face total isolation but not included with the western rural area, is Al-Walajeh village (Pop 2017: 2671), which will be enclosed and cut off by the Segregation Wall from all of its sides with a single but guarded and monitored exit to access Bethlehem. Overall, the Segregation Wall in Bethlehem Governorate will end up amputating some 176,524 dunums (176.5 km²) of lands behind the Wall, and threatens crucial supply areas containing artesian wells and main water basins that provide Bethlehem Governorate with water as the path of the Wall is designed to enfold the groundwater locations within Bethlehem Governorate.

Wall Status	Length (Km)
Existing Sections	30
Planned Sections	48
Under Construction Sections	4

Total Wall Length	82
Source: Geo-Informatics Department, Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem	



Parcel 53 (in yellow) of the updated military order No. 03/14/T

Map 2: Part of the Segregation Wall at the northern entrance of Bethlehem

The Israeli Segregation Wall plan on lands of Bir Onah Neighborhood

The Israeli security guards escorting machinery and bulldozers started on the 17th of August 2015, leveling lands and uprooting Old Roman Olive trees in Bir Onah neighborhood in Beit Jala city to resume the construction of the wall following [a court order on the 6th of July 2015](#) allowing the Israeli occupation ministry of defense to commence the construction of the wall on lands of Beit Jala city. Later on the 9th of April 2016, the Israeli occupation machinery escorted by the Israeli security guard police started laying down the cement wall blocks to continue the construction of the Segregation wall in the area.

Bir Onah neighborhood is part of Beit Jala city, located in the area that was illegally and unilaterally annexed from the city for redrawing Jerusalem municipality boundaries back in the 1967, following Israel's occupation of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem)

and the Gaza Strip. The majority of Palestinians living in Bir Onah neighborhood are East Jerusalem ID card holders.

The latest Israeli revised route of the Segregation Wall route published on the Israeli occupation Ministry of Defense website in April 2007 showed that the wall will extend a length of 1.2 km on lands of Bir Onah neighborhood and will pass less than 100 meters from the Palestinians houses in the neighborhood. Additionally, the wall will isolate vast areas of agricultural lands, to become on the Israeli side of the wall.

Israel has already completed the section of the wall down the hill where Gilo Settlement is built, to the north of Bir Onah neighborhood; additionally, Israel has also lined the path of the wall section which will surround Har Gilo settlement, towards the main road leading to both Cremisan Monasteries. The only wall section left to be constructed is the one that connects the two aforementioned sections together, starting from Bir Onah neighborhood and extending upwards the tunnel road, to finally connect with the section near Har Gilo settlement.

Israel is waging for creating another "Kafr Aqab" on lands of Beit Jala city

With the construction of the wall on lands of Bir Onah neighborhood, where the majority of Palestinians hold Jerusalem ID cards, this part of Beit Jala city will be set outside the boundaries of Jerusalem municipality to become on the eastern side of the wall, under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian National Authority despite its location inside the Jerusalem municipal area; thus stripping Palestinian Jerusalemites off their right to acquire city services in return for what they pay of Arnona and other taxes, because they no longer will be living within the city boundaries. This clearly shows that the Israeli Government is changing demographic balance in favor of Judaizing the city of Jerusalem by emptying the city from the high dense Palestinian communities to ensure the "Israelization of the city".

Upon wall completion, Bir Onah neighborhood will be added to the list of Palestinian communities (12 communities inhabited by more than 130 thousand Palestinians) in occupied East Jerusalem that excluded from Jerusalem city's municipal boundaries due to the construction of the wall, including Ar Ram, Al Bareed outskirt, Az Zayyem, Hizma, Anata, Shu'fat Camp, As Sawahrah Ash Sharqiya, Ash Sheikh Saed, Al Ezariyah, Qalandyia camp, Kafr Aqab, Mikhmas and Abu Dis.

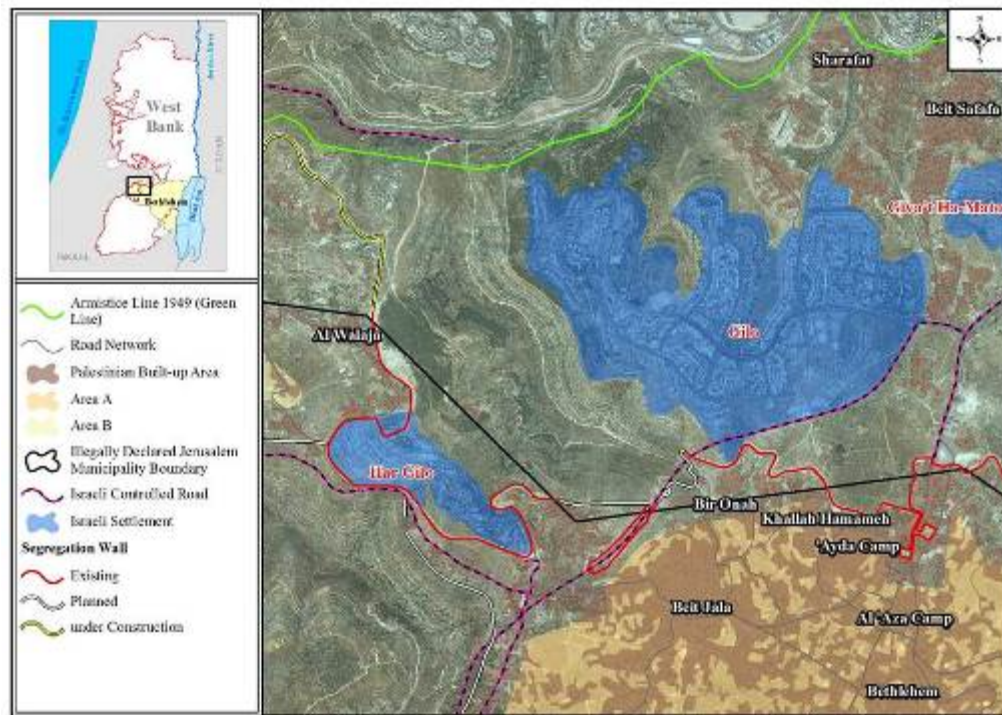
Cutting off Cremisan Valley from Beit Jala city

On the 29th of January 2016, the Israeli High Court of Justice rejected the latest petitions submitted by Beit Jala Municipality and Palestinian landowners and the Salesian Sisters Convent against the Construction of the Wall on lands of Cremisan Valley near Beit Jala city and issued a decision which grants "Israel's Defense Ministry" the green light to build a new section of the separation wall in the area under "security needs". The Israeli court's favorable opinion on wall construction will ultimately cause the isolation of

Cremisan Green area from its owners, to become on the Israeli side of the wall; while denying Palestinians their right to access the land. The Israeli court's decision came separate from wall constructions that are taking place in Bir Onha neighborhood in Beit Jala city these days.

Chronology Events in Cremisan Valley of Beit Jala

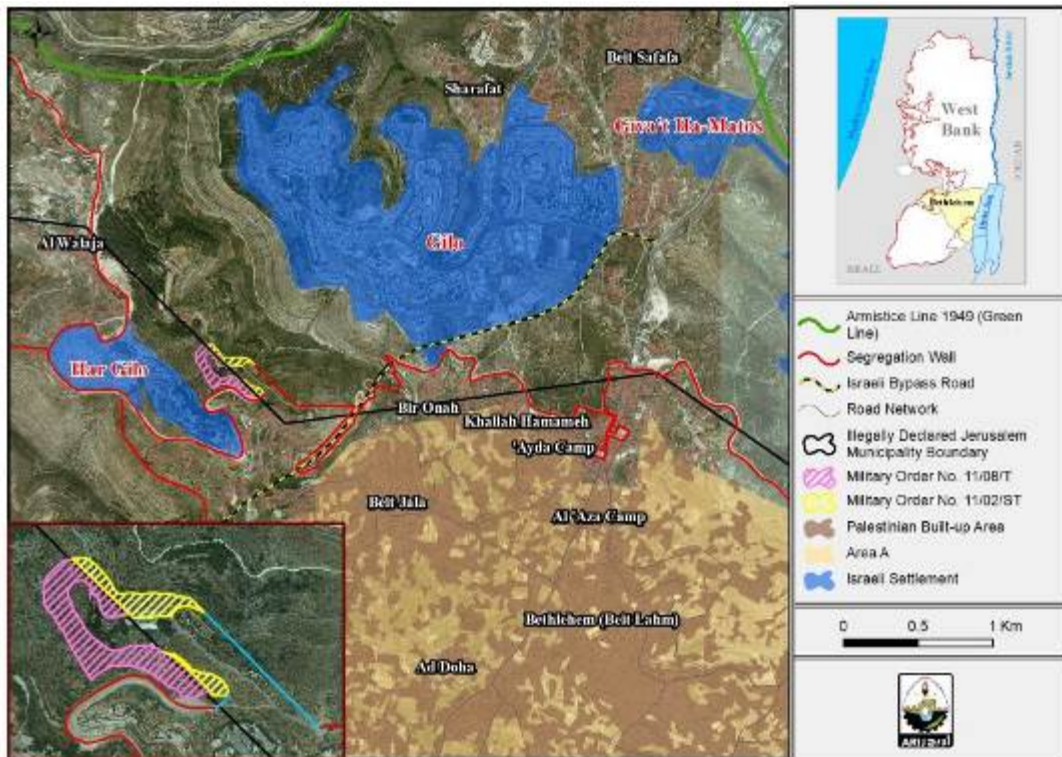
The latest revised route of the Israeli Segregation Wall published on the “Israeli Ministry of Defense” website on the 30th of April, 2007, showed that the wall will annex the Cremisan Valley in Beit Jala city to the illegally declared Jerusalem Municipality boundary of 1967, to become on the Israeli side of the wall, along with the Salesian Sisters monastery and the Monks Convent. The wall also annexes the settlements of Gilo, Har Gilo, Giv’at Hamatos and Har Homa to become on the Israeli side of the wall, under the full Israeli sovereignty.



Map 3: [The Israeli Segregation Wall plan of 2007, as presented by the Israeli Occupation Army](#)

Later on the 13th of October 2011, the Beit Jala Municipality received two Israeli military orders stipulating a change in the route of the Segregation Wall of 2007 in the Cremisan Valley area. The first military order holds number 11/08/T and was issued on the 22nd of September 2011. The order, which was signed by Avi Mevrachi, Head of Israeli Central Command in the Israeli occupation forces in the West Bank (that time), stipulated the confiscation of 37.3 dunums of lands to reroute the path of the wall in Beit Jala city, and most specifically, the section east of Har Gilo settlement. While the second Israeli military order holds number ST/02/11 and was issued and signed by the director of the so called “Israeli Ministry of Defense” since the targeted land is located inside the unilaterally declared Jerusalem Municipality boundary; The order stipulated the

confiscation of 15.2 dunums of lands of Beit Jala city to reroute the path of the Segregation wall in the area.

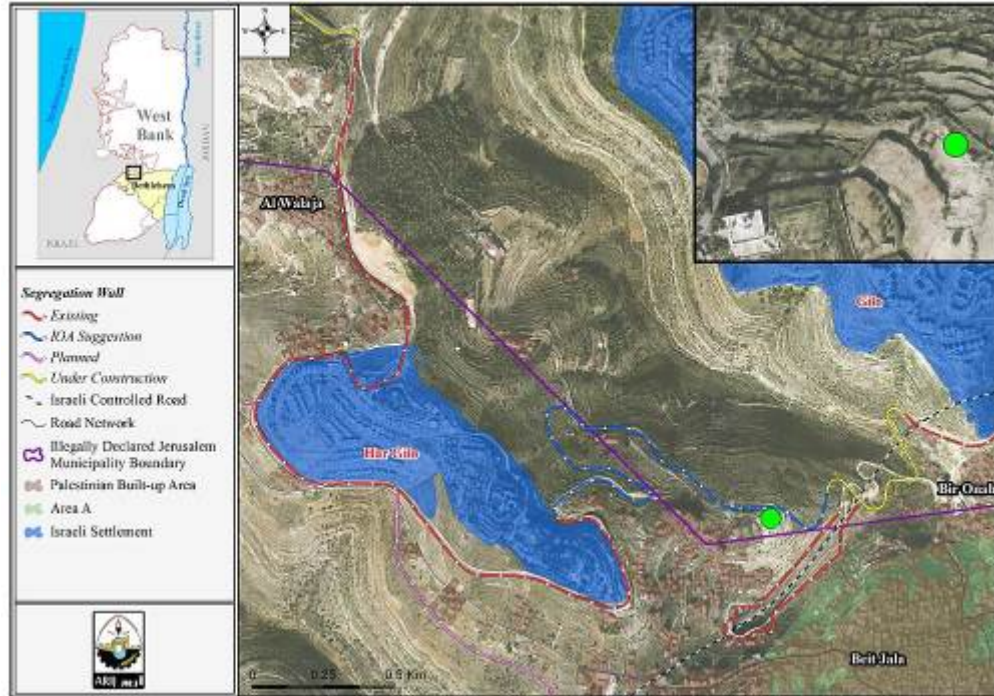


Map 4: [Military orders No. 11/08/T & ST/02/11 as shown in the map and state a change in the wall route.](#)

The two issued military order indicated a change in the wall route in which the Wall will surround the sisters convent and the school affiliated to it from three directions (north, west and south), as well as a Palestinian house in the area owned by Citizen George al Al Alam, leaving all, the convent, the school and the house, on the Palestinian side of the wall with an open road to access the center of life in Beit Jala city; while the Cremisan monks Monastery to stay on the Israeli side of the wall. See Map 2

In August 2015, the Israeli machinery and bulldozers started leveling lands in Beit Jala city to resume the construction of the wall following a court order on the 6th of July 2015 allowing the Israeli occupation ministry of defense to commence the construction of the wall on lands of Beit Jala city. The Israeli bulldozers leveled lands and uprooted old Roman Olive trees in Bir Onah neighborhood and down the tunnel road (a section of the Israeli bypass road No. 60) owned by a number of Palestinian families in the area including Khalilieh, Al Shatleh, Abu Eid and Abumohor; where during the first week of August 2015, the Israeli Occupation Authorities team placed signs in many locations in Bir Onah neighborhood depicting the path of the wall in the area.

In December 2015, Israeli bulldozers started leveling the archaeological site of Khirbet al-Najjar in Beit Jala city as part of the preparations to construct the Segregation Wall in the area.



Map 5: [Location of the discovered archeological site in Kherbit An Najjar in Beit Jala](#)

To Conclude

Bethlehem Governorate is chained with all sorts of Israeli checkpoints or obstructions to indicate all forms used by the Israeli Army to restrict the Palestinian's movement, which include: cubical cement roadblocks, earth mounds, manned checkpoints and agricultural gates, tunnels, secondary roads iron gates, etc. Prior to the year 2000, Bethlehem Governorate had only 2 permanent checkpoints located at the outskirts of the Governorate, on the entry points to Jerusalem. The obstructions multiplied over the past 16 years to 23 different forms of obstructions. The following table shows the number and various types of obstructions established by the Israeli Army to restrict and confine the movement of 215,000+ Palestinian residents of Bethlehem Governorate.

Table 5: Israeli Checkpoints in Bethlehem Governorate	
Type of Checkpoint	No. of Checkpoints
Checkpoint	6
Earth mound	4
Green Line Checkpoint	2
Road Block	2
Iron/Road Gate	8
Partial Checkpoint	1
Total	23
Source: Geo-Informatics Department, Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem	

The consequences of these actions on the economy of Bethlehem have been devastating; businesses have been forced to close and unemployment has increased to unprecedented

levels, particularly the tourism sector, which is a major source of livelihood for many of Bethlehem's residents, which stands literally paralyzed, thus affected the economic aspect, causing wide spread frustration.

Israeli Terminals in Bethlehem Governorate

In Bethlehem Governorate, Israel planted 6 terminals on the outskirts; their main function is to control movement of residents and commercial activities to and from Israel. Below is detailed information of the terminals, their location, status and functions.

Table 6: The Israeli controlled Terminals in Bethlehem Governorate				
No.	Terminal's Name	Function	Location	Status
1	Umm Salamuna	Commercial	South of Bethlehem	Planned
2	Rachel-Gilo 300	Crossing	North of Bethlehem	Operational
3	Mazmuria	Commercial	East of Bethlehem	Operational
4	Al Walajeh	Crossing	North of Bethlehem	Planned
5	Al Khader-Beit Jala	Crossing	West of Bethlehem	Operational
6	Al Jab'a	Commercial	Southwest of Bethlehem	Operational

Source: Settlement Monitoring Department, Applied Research Institute Jerusalem

The Israeli Eastern Segregation Zone in Bethlehem Governorate

When the unilateral segregation plan was launched by the Israeli government in June 2002, a wall was projected to be constructed along the slopes of the eastern West Bank. However, the map approved by the Israeli government and issued by the Israeli Occupying Forces on April 30th 2007 indicated that the section previously marked in earlier maps from the Matallah village northeastern the West Bank going south to the village of Al Aqaba is cancelled. However, the Israeli Prime Minister Sharon on April 2004 indicated that the eastern barrier will be maintained by blocking access to the Jordan Valley region, he added that *"a wall is not likely to be erected in the near future, unless there are military necessities"*. He also pointed that *"the Jordan valley area will remain under Israeli control even after reaching a settlement with the Palestinians as it is considered to be a strategic security zone"*.

The eastern part of Bethlehem Governorate lies within the West Bank's eastern Segregation Zone. This area extends from Bethlehem's eastern slopes to the western shores of the Dead Sea. This sparsely populated eastern section covers a total area of 195,146 dunums (195.2 km²), 29.6% of the total Governorate area. The reason for this small population is that the vast majority of the land was declared closed military area/ or nature reserve area by the Israeli Government since 1967. Accordingly, the Israeli Army prohibited any kind of development to that area, utterly became inaccessible to Palestinians.

Israeli Military Orders in Bethlehem Governorate

Israel has always tried to escape its status as an occupier of the Palestinian Territory by attempting to justify its existence as an administrator of the occupied territory. For this reason, Israel resorted to military orders to validate its belligerent acts, using its infamous “military purposes” pretext to violate the international humanitarian laws and the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Following the signing of the Oslo Accord in 1993, Israel has issued thousands of military orders to execute its plans to consolidate its control over the occupied territory starting from building and expanding settlements and bypass roads, confiscation lands, etc. and ending up with the Segregation Wall. In the Bethlehem Governorate, the Israeli Army issued hundreds of military orders to carry out its plans, many of which were not made available to the public. But to those of concern to this day, the ones that were available were recorded as listed.

Table 7: Israeli Military Orders in Bethlehem Governorate			
No.	Type of Military Order	No. of Orders	
1	House Demolition	278	
2	Land Seizure	State Land	74
		Segregation Wall	81
		Military Uses	88
		Evacuation	16
Total		537	
Source: ARIJ Military Orders Database - 2019			
