

# Dismantling Barriers

*God has broken the dividing walls  
(Ephesians 2:14)*



World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel  
18-24 September 2016

#DismantlingBarriers

Resource Booklet



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# 1. About World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel 2016

The Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF) of the World Council of Churches invites member churches, faith-based communities and civil society organizations around the world to join together in 2016 for a week of advocacy and action in support for an end to the illegal occupation of Palestine and a just peace for all in Palestine and Israel. Congregations and individuals around the globe who share the hope of justice shall unite during the week to take peaceful actions, together, to create a common international public witness.

The theme of the week in 2016, to be observed during 18-24 September, is: “**Dismantling barriers**”. The week will build on the momentum of the WWPPI in 2015, with further focus on the barriers that separate peoples and families in Palestine and Israel. While communities around the world are welcome to commemorate the week in whatever ways suits their context, it is recommended that extra focus be placed on four barriers undermining efforts to establish a just peace in Palestine and Israel: the separation barrier, checkpoints, the ongoing situation in the Gaza strip, and settlements. You will find a short presentation of each of these points in this resource document.

The selected bible verse for 2016 shares the same verse as WWPPI 2015: “**God has broken the dividing walls (Ephesians 2:14)**”

## How to get involved

As participants in WWPPI, churches around the world shall send a clear signal to policy-makers, community groups, and their own parishes about the urgent need for a peace settlement that ends the illegal occupation, and secures the legitimate rights and future of both peoples.

During WWPPI 2016, participants will organise events/activities around three main principles:

1. **Praying** with churches living under occupation, using a special prayer from Jerusalem and other worship resources prepared for the week.
2. **Educating** about actions that make for peace and about facts on the ground that do not create peace, especially related to separation and barriers
3. **Advocating** with political leaders using ecumenical policies that promote peace with justice.

**Please also see a list of concrete suggested actions for WWPPI 2016 on page 8.**

The action week's message is that now is the time for Palestinians and Israelis to share a just peace; for freedom from occupation; for equal rights; for the healing of wounded souls. The "Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum" (PIEF), established in 2007, is an instrument to “catalyse and coordinate new and existing church advocacy for peace, aimed at ending the illegal occupation in accordance with UN resolutions, and demonstrate its commitment to inter-religious action for peace and justice that serves all the peoples of the region.”

The PIEF works towards increasing solidarity between and among churches committed to peace and justice for communities living under occupation. Its inter-faith dimension invites people of other religions in the Middle East and elsewhere to join the search and struggle for a just and comprehensive peace.

## 2A. The Separation Barrier

In November 2000, then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and his Labor-led government approved construction of the separation barrier. The planned route of this separation barrier, the stated purpose of which is the physical separation of Israelis and West Bank Palestinians, will be 712km long<sup>1</sup>. About two thirds of the barrier has been completed with a mixture of fences; ditches; razor wire; and concrete walls of up to eight metres high.

Significantly, the wall is being built not in Israeli territory or on the Green Line (the internationally recognised boundaries of the Israeli state) but the vast majority runs through Palestinian territory<sup>2</sup>. The barrier's construction violates international law yet building continues<sup>3</sup>.

In a 2004 statement of the WCC Executive Committee, "Israel has serious and legitimate security concerns" and recognises Israel's "right and duty to protect its people against attacks and suicide bombers inside the state of Israel". Yet, "the construction and location of this wall in grave breach of international humanitarian law". Security must therefore be safeguarded through alternative methods, without the practice of collective punishment of innocent civilians.

### Key Facts

- 8.5% of West Bank land is situated to the West of the barrier's planned route cutting 27,520 Palestinians off from the West Bank<sup>4</sup>.
- The separation barrier is over twice as long as the Green Line (the internationally recognised Israeli border)<sup>5</sup>.
- A further 3.4% of West Bank land is completely or partially surrounded by the barrier affecting 247,800 Palestinians<sup>6</sup>.
- The International Court of Justice ruled that the barrier's construction was illegal in 2004 but construction has continued ever since.
- In some parts the barrier consists of a concrete wall of up to eight metres in height. This is over twice the height of the Berlin Wall.

### Further Reading

[WCC's statement on the «Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel's Annexation of Palestinian territory», 2004](#)

[The wall's consequences on Israelis and Palestinians](#), from the EAPPI program.

[The Humanitarian Impact of the Barrier](#), UNOCHA factsheet, July 2013

[10 Years Since the ICJ Advisory Opinion](#), UNOCHA report, July 2014

[The Last Nail in Bethlehem's Coffin](#), report, St Yves, August 2015

[Uprooted Lives](#), EA Bethlehem Team, blogpost, August 2015

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_barrier\\_factsheet\\_july\\_2013\\_english.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_barrier_factsheet_july_2013_english.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.btselem.org/separation\\_barrier](http://www.btselem.org/separation_barrier)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_10\\_years\\_barrier\\_report\\_english.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_10_years_barrier_report_english.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.btselem.org/separation\\_barrier/statistics](http://www.btselem.org/separation_barrier/statistics)

<sup>5</sup> <http://caabu.org/sites/default/files/resources/israeli-Wall-2015%20update.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.btselem.org/separation\\_barrier/statistics](http://www.btselem.org/separation_barrier/statistics)

## 2B.Checkpoints

The checkpoint system has been a systemic feature of Israeli occupation since the Second Intifada began in 2000. Hundreds of obstacles and about one hundred separate checkpoints restrict the movement of Palestinians throughout the West Bank. These can range from vast checkpoint complexes that separate Bethlehem (Checkpoint 300/Gilo checkpoint) and Ramallah (Qalandiya checkpoint) from Jerusalem staffed by dozens of Israeli security forces to earthmounds and concrete blocks manned by a few soldiers outside remote Palestinian villages.

UNOCHA characterises the restriction of movement, caused by these checkpoints, as “one of the key drivers of humanitarian vulnerability in the occupied Palestinian territory<sup>7</sup>. NGOs monitoring the checkpoints from EAPPI to Machsom Watch (an Israeli peace organisation) report the arbitrary regulation of movement and abusive behaviour against Palestinians at checkpoints<sup>8</sup>. Checkpoints restrict the free movement of Palestinians; they impede access to crucial services; they choke economic transit and deprive thousands of Palestinians of access to their own agricultural land.

### Key Facts<sup>9</sup>

- UNOCHA reported 500 obstacles to movement in the West Bank in 2014 including 95 checkpoints.
- 150 Palestinian communities are denied or restricted access to their agricultural land.

### Further reading

UNOCHA [Movement and Access Report](#), 2012

[Machsom Watch](#)

[Guide to a West Bank checkpoint](#), BBC

[Blog on Bethlehem Checkpoint](#), EAPPI

[Security or Control?](#) Blog explaining the checkpoint system, EAPPI

[Israeli Checkpoints](#), Al Jazeera

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[https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_movement\\_and\\_access\\_report\\_september\\_2012\\_english.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_movement_and_access_report_september_2012_english.pdf), p.3

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.en.machsomwatch.org/Checkpoints.html>;

[http://eappi.org/en/resources/factsheets/bethlehem-checkpoint-may-2014/at\\_download/file](http://eappi.org/en/resources/factsheets/bethlehem-checkpoint-may-2014/at_download/file)

<sup>9</sup>[https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_movement\\_and\\_access\\_report\\_september\\_2012\\_english.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_movement_and_access_report_september_2012_english.pdf),

## 2C. Gaza

In 2005, the Israeli government, led by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, withdrew its settlements from the Gaza strip and instituted a blockade of the territory that sees it cut off almost entirely from the rest of Palestine and the outside world. Travel between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank is virtually prohibited<sup>10</sup>. The blockade creates a barrier between the 1,800,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the outside world.

The escalation of the military operations in Gaza only perpetuates the deadly cycle of violence, stoking the fires of mutual demonisation and division and further diminishing the vision of two peoples living side-by-side in peaceful co-existence. The human costs of military solutions and the blockade have also been staggering. Since 2014, UN OCHA has declared a humanitarian emergency for the area as the people of Gaza suffer severe distress as a result of the blockade which has crippled the Gazan economy. The situation continues to deteriorate and the UN issued a report last year suggesting that the Gaza Strip could be uninhabitable by 2020<sup>11</sup>.

### Key Facts

- 80% of the population of the Gaza Strip are in need of aid relief.
- 500,000 Palestinians were displaced within Gaza in the 2014 war and 18,000 homes were destroyed, 100,000 remain displaced<sup>12</sup>.
- 106,000 Gazan Palestinians are homeless.
- The Gaza Strip has a 40% unemployment rate (67% for youth) with exports<sup>13</sup> reduced to 3% of 2005 levels.

### Further Reading

[WCC Statement on Gaza](#), 2014

[Call of heads of churches in Jerusalem to end siege on Gaza](#), 2008

[This is how we fought](#), Breaking the Silence database of testimonies from Israeli soldiers who took part in the 2014 war in Gaza

[The Children of Gaza](#), The Guardian photo essay

[Gaza still in ruins](#), Al Jazeera

[Why are Israel and the Palestinians fighting over Gaza](#), BBC

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.btselem.org/freedom\\_of\\_movement](http://www.btselem.org/freedom_of_movement)

<sup>11</sup> [http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/tdb62d3\\_en.pdf](http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/tdb62d3_en.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.ochaopt.org/content.aspx?id=1010361>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.oxfam.org/en/emergencies/crisis-gaza>

## 2D. Settlements

In 1967 Israel occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. The building of settlements, developments on occupied land which are illegal under international law, quickly ensued. Israel has since withdrawn from the Sinai and most of the Golan and removed its Gaza settlements, however, its settlement of East Jerusalem and the West Bank continues year on year.

Hundreds of thousands of Israelis now live on land internationally recognised as belonging to Palestinians. Their number grows rapidly year on year, encouraged by Israeli government subsidy. As settlements expand, Palestinian access to the land and resources integral to their livelihoods is reduced and the military apparatus that sustains the settlement system grows ever larger, imposing ever more on Palestinian lives.

A 2009 statement of the WCC Central Committee on Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories expresses that “the continuous settlement of lands beyond Israel’s internationally recognised borders (the 1949 Green Line borders) is almost universally rejected and met with widespread incredulity because it is illegal, unjust, incompatible with peace and antithetical to the legitimate interests of the state of Israel.” The WCC Central Committee further states that the settlements “make the peace efforts by the international community more vulnerable and virtually impossible.”

### Key Facts

- There was an estimated 547,000 settlers living in the West Bank & East Jerusalem by the end of 2013. Their population was growing rapidly at 4.4%<sup>14</sup>
- Israeli settlements control over 42,9% of the West Bank<sup>15</sup>
- The WHO recommends that every human being consumes a minimum of 100 litres of water daily. Palestinians consume, on average, 73 litres while Israeli settlers consume 369 litres<sup>16</sup>

### Further Reading

[WCC Statement on Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories](#), 2009.

[By Hook & By Crook](#), report on Israeli government settlement policy, B'Tsalem (Israeli NGO)

[EU Differentiation and Israeli Settlements](#), a report from the European Council of Foreign Relations on European Union policy towards Israeli settlements

[Settlement Watch](#), a series of resources produced by the Israeli Peace Organisation, Peace Now

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.btselem.org/settlements/statistics>

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.btselem.org/sites/default/files2/201007\\_by\\_hook\\_and\\_by\\_crook\\_eng.pdf](http://www.btselem.org/sites/default/files2/201007_by_hook_and_by_crook_eng.pdf), p. 11

<sup>16</sup> <http://imeu.org/article/water-consumption-israeli-settlers-vs.-palestinians-in-the-occupied-palesti>

### 3. What can I do?

There are many creative ways to observe the WWPPI, with each group responding in ways most suited to their situation. There are no ideas that are too big or too small!

The important thing to bear in mind is that the three components of prayer, education, and advocacy are somehow included. Here are some concrete ideas for you or your group in 2016:

- Pray for the removal of barriers, for Palestinians and Israelis to share a just peace, for equal rights, for freedom from occupation, and for the healing of wounded souls.
- Call your local congregation or church, and provide them the short prayers written for the WWPPI2016. Ask your pastor or religious leader to include some of these prayers during the worship service during the week, or at other points in the year.
- Arrange a “WWPPI Breakfast” to discuss the barriers that deny peace in Palestine and Israel, perhaps before or after your congregation’s worship service. If you are looking for a short film to show to start conversation, a few options could be the film created by a former Ecumenical Accompanier for WWPPI 2015 on the separation barrier (<https://youtu.be/8nrFylF1b7Q>) or by the Jerusalem Interchurch Center on the Cremison Valley (<https://youtu.be/4GcbdDHZA1U>). If you are looking for a longer film, one option could be [Budrus](#). Inform your friends, family and co-workers.
- Invite an eyewitness to speak! Many countries have a local coordinator of the WCC’s Ecumenical Accompaniment program. Write to them and see if there is an earlier EA available to tell stories from their experience in Palestine and Israel.
- Learn more from local partners on the ground! Keep up to date by following updates from (among others) Kairos Palestine, EAPPI, Breaking the Silence, Rabbis for Human Rights, and Machsom Watch. These are many of the voices in Palestine and Israel calling for an end to the occupation, and for a just peace between Christians, Muslims, and Jews in the region.
- Check with a local newspaper to see if they are willing to cover your WWPPI event, and to see if they are willing to write on the issues that the WWPPI is raising related to the dismantling of barriers in Palestine and Israel.
- Download, print and display the upcoming Photo Exhibit on “Dismantling Barriers” developed for WWPPI 2016, available on the WCC’s website in May 2016.

**If you are looking for inspiration from around the world, make sure you visit the WCC’s website for a list of past events during the WWPPI:**

<http://pief.oikoumene.org/en/world-week-for-peace/events-from-previous-years>