

Photo-Reportage

By Anne Paq

NEW TERMINALS: NEW IMPOSED BORDERS?



Terminal of Bethlehem, view from "Jerusalem side" of the Wall. The Wall is located on land belonging to Bethlehem municipality.

In December 2005, Israel opened new "terminals" in Bethlehem and Kalandia to replace its military checkpoints. The terminals are located deep inside the occupied Palestinian territory. Others are also in place around Qalqilia, Tulkarem and Jenin and more have been announced for construction in 2006. Out of the more or less 9.5 billion shekels invested for the construction of the Wall and its regime, two billion goes to "improve the quality of life" of Palestinians. These funds are set aside for construction of these terminals. Each terminal costs between 120-170 million. The United States, acting through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), signed a \$50 million agreement with Israel to purchase, deliver and install scanners and other inspection equipment at these terminals.

Although the Israeli authorities justify them out of so-called humanitarian and security concerns, these terminals, all located inside the occupied Palestinian territory, are part of an ongoing strategy to create facts on the ground: further separation between the OPT and Jerusalem, isolation of Palestinians in enclaves, *de facto* annexation of Palestinian land, unilateral imposition of new borders and prevention of a viable, contiguous Palestinian state. As Amira Hass, Ha'aretz correspondent posted in the West Bank, wrote:

What is important is that the army and the Israeli citizens who design all of the details of dispossession -and the roadblocks are an inseparable part of this dispossession- have transformed the term "humanitarian" into a despicable lie.However, even an important matter -that is, the humanitarian deception - is only one detail in a full set of details in which no single detail is representative in itself....And among all the details, the reality of colonialism intensifies, without letup or remission, inventing yet more methods of torture of the individual and community; creating more ways to violate international law, rob land behind legal camouflage, and encourage collaboration out of agreement, neglect or torpor.⁽¹⁾

These terminals consist of a complex and impressive system of cameras, electronically controlled iron turnstiles, electromagnetic gates with x-ray equipment, long corridors, and ID checks made by Israeli border police behind bullet proof glass. A pedestrian who sets off an alarm is taken to a separate room to be

searched. All movements are monitored by soldiers/border police in control rooms, who shout their orders in Hebrew through loudspeakers. The whole security process looks like the ones used at high-security facilities and can take between 10 minutes and two hours. The passage through the terminals represents a chilling and dehumanizing experience as soldiers/border police are often rude and aggressive. ‘Processing’ individuals at these terminals often provoke delays and humiliating treatments.

BETHLEHEM TERMINAL

“It is unconscionable that Bethlehem should be allowed to die slowly from strangulation.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, 2005



The Bethlehem terminal is located two kilometers inside the occupied Palestinian territory. It does not follow the municipal boundary between Bethlehem and Jerusalem, but is in fact located within Bethlehem city. Only holders of foreign passports, Jerusalem ID holders and Palestinians holding West Bank ID's with a permit to enter Jerusalem are allowed to cross the terminal. Vehicles have to pass through an approximately 8-meter wide by 6-meter tall, sliding, iron gate within the concrete wall.

At the entrance of the terminal for vehicles, one can read “Welcome to Jerusalem” (sign on the Wall before entering the terminal). Pedestrians have to go through one of the doors in the Wall, next to the watchtower, wait until the light turns green and then pass through two iron turnstiles to access the main building of the terminal. The terminal is supposed to be open 24 hours a day, however, the iron gate and doors in the Wall close around 23:00 and one has to wait until a soldier/border police opens the gate to access the main building.⁽²⁾





At this point you have already passed the entrance and the two sets of turnstiles. You are now entering the main building of the terminal through this iron corridor. Once you enter the building, you follow another corridor under the constant surveillance of cameras. You then have to wait for the soldier/ border police in the control room to switch the light from red to green to be able to pass through another set of turnstiles. Once you enter, a border police in a booth may briefly check your ID.



In the terminal, tourists and foreigners do not use the same lanes as Palestinians. Your belongings are then checked by an X-ray machine and you have to go through a metal-detector. Afterwards it is again necessary to pass another turnstile to finally access the exit and present, once more, your ID to a soldier/ border police officer behind bullet proof glass. At all times an armed soldier/ border police officer walks on elevated walkways/ passages and scrutinizes all movements, which creates a feeling of vulnerability and makes the experience even more stressful and intimidating.



View of the terminal (located in Bethlehem, but on the “Jerusalem side” of the Wall). In what was once a field of olive trees, the Wall supports a “welcome sign” from the Israeli Ministry of tourism: “Peace be with You”.

KALANDIA TERMINAL



The terminal in Kalandia is often overcrowded as many Palestinians travel between Ramallah and Jerusalem everyday.



In the Kalandia terminal, you also have to go through a series of four iron turnstiles. In every terminal, pedestrians have to pass between four to six turnstiles.

According to the latest survey of Palestinian Public Perceptions by the Graduate Institute of Development Studies (IUED), the number of people directly affected by the Wall is 21 percent in the north West Bank, 66 percent in the middle of the West Bank and 22 percent in the south. The report also underscores that the situation in Jerusalem has deteriorated since November 2004. The percentage of people who have been forced to move has increased from 17 percent in 2004 to 24 percent in 2005 while others have had problems meeting relatives and accessing basic services as a direct result of the Wall and its regime.

Jalal Al Hussein, "Mobility & Security", Palestinian Public Perceptions, Report IX, Graduate Institute of Development Studies (IUED), Geneva, November 2005, p. 5. Available at: <http://www.iued.ch/palestine>





A sign posted by the Israeli occupying forces at the entrance of Kalandia: “The hope of us all” with a ‘flower’ saying “security” and “stability” lead to “development”, “investment”, “prosperity”, “income”, and “education”. The terminals in Bethlehem and Kalandia are full of signs and posters that say “Welcome”, “Please keep the terminal clean”, “Israel, the holy land, the land of peace” and “Enjoy your stay.”

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Endnotes

- (1) Amira Hass, “It’s not all in the details”, *Ha’aretz*, 5 December 2005.
- (2) For a detailed report on the Bethlehem terminal, see the Special Report: New Bethlehem Checkpoint Terminal: Israeli Unilateralism in the Occupied West Bank, Palestinian Monitoring Group, Negotiations Affairs Department, 1 December 2005.