



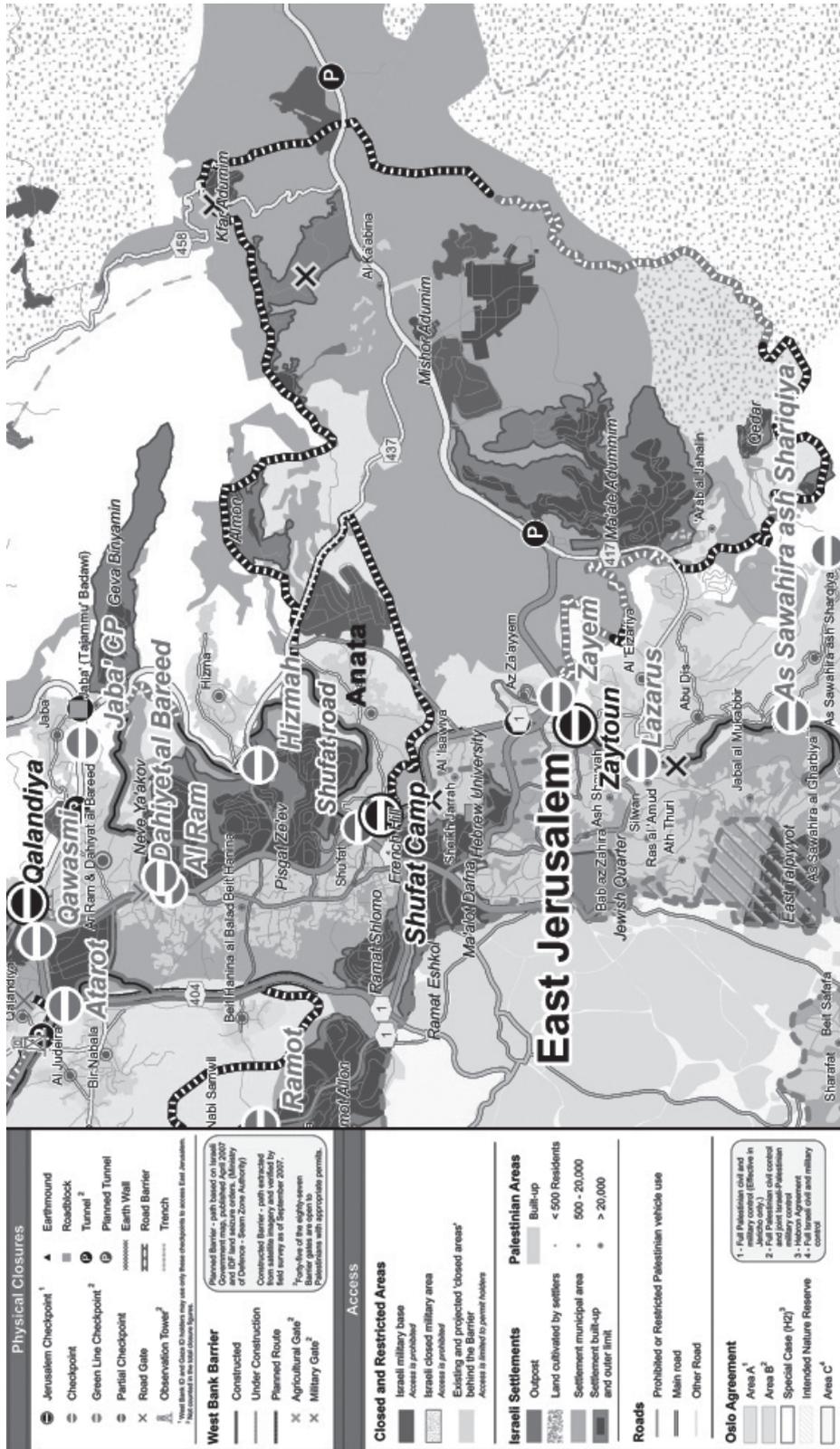
Jerusalem's Anata Out of Options

The sole entrance to Anata town is marked only by this road sign in Hebrew. The Arabic script seen here spells out the name of the nearby Israeli settlement, Almon.

Source: C. Seitz.

There are a lot of things one notes about Anata, but few are as striking as this: the town of some 15,000 is completely unmarked on the Jerusalem-Jericho highway that provides its only entry-way. Like most Palestinian destinations in the West Bank, Anata has disappeared from official Israeli road signs otherwise pointing to nearby settlements. While Arabic remains a state language in Israel, on many official road signs, the Arabic letters sound out Hebrew consonants, in this case, Arabic-speakers are pointed away from Anata to the relatively luxurious but off-limits settlement of Almon.

A wish or a fact, this official sleight of hand is effectively 'disappearing' nearly every Palestinian community in the West Bank, save the largest towns. The future of these locales is, in truth, a slow economic death forced by the growth of settlements around them.



[104] HISTORICAL FEATURES Jerusalem's Anata Out of Options

West Bank 2007. Source: UN OCHA.

Prior to 1967, the village of Anata boasted 35,000 dunams, stretching from the outskirts of Jerusalem down into the valleys near Jericho. Anata was a major thoroughfare, and its wheat fields and olive trees an agricultural heartland.

But Anata's estimated 15,000 residents are today being surrounded on three sides by the wall Israel has built around them, cutting them off from the economic center of Jerusalem, and the lands they once planted and quarried. Beyond the wall lie Israeli settlements Kfar Adumim, Almon/Anatot military camp, Alon, and Nofei Prat.

The area inside the wall is approximately 1,400 dunams, but not even all of this land is open for development; swathes of land are considered part of the expanded Jerusalem municipality, boundaries drawn unilaterally by Israel but now in effect abandoned by the city. Still, homes constructed without building permits are threatened with demolition, and dozens have been demolished. Some of the houses with demolition warnings are the homes of the Jahalin Bedouin who were forced out of the area of Maale Adumim, where they previously resided, to the outskirts of the built-up area of Anata. Accustomed to herding livestock for a living, the Jahalin have been forced to sell off most of their sheep and goats, which have no place to graze in the urban areas around Anata. The Jahalin in this area now number over 1,000 people, some 10-15 families.

The other areas inside the wall are mostly built-up, having been the focus of investment after the Oslo accords in 1993 that designated them area B, or under Palestinian Authority civil control.

The future of this semi-enclave is dire, predict residents. Anata Land Defense Committee engineer Hussein Rifaai looks out over the nearby Shufat refugee camp, also technically within the city boundaries, and sees a tragedy waiting to happen. "The houses are only a meter apart. If there is, God forbid, any disaster, no ambulances will be able to get inside."

The Shufat refugee camp is home to 20,000-30,000 people, among them some 11,000 United Nations Relief Works Agency-registered refugees who generally hold Jerusalem ID cards (meaning they can move and work in Jerusalem, and have access to Israeli health and other services). The camp has grown increasingly crowded with an additional 10,000-20,000 people who moved here in the 1990s in an attempt to protect their Jerusalem residency rights (because Palestinian Jerusalemites are forced to prove that their center of life is within the municipal boundaries or risk being stripped of health and travel benefits). Although the camp is located within the Israeli-defined municipal boundaries, it receives only minimal Israeli services.

Rifaai estimates that the completion of the wall will enclose some 70,000 people into an area less than three kilometers square. No one authority offers services here,

while the UN, the Palestinian Authority and the city of Jerusalem offer limited infrastructure.

Nearly half of Anata's population is under the age of 15. In order to meet their needs, Anata must build three to five classrooms a year. But there is nowhere left to build, and classrooms have as many as 50 students each. The wall has cut off access to Jerusalem's six hospitals, and unemployment is climbing. In every way possible, Anata has become a non-destination.

C.S.