



In the Seam Zone

Walaja's Fate Between Jerusalem and Nowhere

Ruba Saleh

Al-Badawi Olive Tree.
Source: Ruba Saleh.

Walaja is an attractive Palestinian village eight kilometers southwest of Jerusalem and five kilometers northwest of Bethlehem. Rich in traditional agricultural terraces and a fascinating natural landscape, it also boasts a singular natural legacy, the al Badawi olive tree. This tree is Walaja's oldest native: Japanese and European experts estimate its age at around 4000-5000 years. Al Badawi has long been the village's proud guardian; more recently, the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities recommends it as a tourist destination not only for the charming panorama the site offers, but also for the intangible heritage the ancient tree embodies through the innumerable stories the inhabitants recount about this olive tree and its magical powers. Regrettably, even this ancient olive tree is not immune to the relentless advance of Israel's Separation Wall and the segregation and land grab

policies that underpin it. The roots of the al Badawi tree stand in the Wall's path; the Wall threatens to surround Walaja and turn the village into yet another Palestinian open-air jail.

Walajeers like to call their village a *microscopic Palestine* as they list the emblematic instances of disenfranchisement and segregation their village has suffered since 1948: forced eviction, house demolitions, unilateral annexation of the Jerusalem side of the village, land and property confiscation, immigration and disruption of the social order, prohibition of access to work, restricted access to education and health facilities, and more recently the threat of complete isolation and alienation by the encroaching Wall. The story of Walaja is indeed typical of the fate of many Palestinian villages. But the peculiar twists to Walaja's tale exemplify the most blatant excesses of apartheid planning. On the one hand, Israel has pursued a gradual ethnic cleansing program by sealing and isolating Walaja and prohibiting its inhabitants from exercising their basic human rights; on the other, Israel is attempting to realize its nationalist dream of physically connecting the Jerusalem colonies to the Gush Etzion settlement bloc in the Bethlehem region. The de facto annexation of these conquered lands to Israel will cost the villagers their freedom, their homes and their land, as well as severing them from their kith and kin in neighboring communities. Thus 2,000 Walajeers will become hostages to Israeli settlers' insatiable aspiration to occupy a desirable biblical landscape.

Walaja after 1948: Dispossession and Destruction

During the Nakba,¹ Zionist forces captured Walaja for only a brief period.² However, following the signature of the armistice agreement between Israel and Jordan in 1949, the village was ceded to Israel and of the original 17,793 dunums (one dunum equals one thousand square meters) Israel occupied 11,793 dunums.³ As a consequence, villagers were forced to leave: some fled to their grazing and agricultural land on an opposite hill from their original village, others to refugee camps in Jerusalem (Shu'fat) and Bethlehem (Dheisheh) while some went abroad. Those who moved to the opposite hill witnessed the establishment of two Israeli new towns, Ora and Aminadav, on their occupied land in 1950, and later the building of the Jerusalem Biblical Zoo. The villagers clearly intended to return: they at first inhabited improvised structures or even caves and refused to build houses, claiming that soon they would go back home. Finally, however, Israeli forces destroyed what remained of original Walaja in 1954. According to Sheerin al-Araj, who serves on the village council and is an active member of the popular resistance committee:

The village of Walaja lost most of its lands in 1948, and the people were forcibly transferred south of the armistice line. The valley where the railway line passed became the armistice line, and from the hill on the other side where they settled Walajeers looked to their village every day. UNRWA,



Wall around Wajala. *Source: United Nations, OCHA.*

British and Jordanian soldiers tried to create a large tent city for people on the top of the hill where they had settled, but Walajeers refused and insisted on returning home. The Israeli delegate who was present at the meeting went to the village the next day and asked his collaborators to destroy it completely so the Walajeers wouldn't see it anymore and wouldn't ask to return.⁴

In the sixties Walajeers realized that their refugee status (UNRWA considers ninety-seven percent of the villagers as refugees) had become permanent and therefore started constructing homes in new Walaja on the other side of the valley.

Occupation: Annexing Land but Not the People

After the June 1967 war Israel unilaterally and illegally annexed East Jerusalem and seized 71,000 dunums from the surrounding twenty-eight Palestinian villages. As a result the territory of Jerusalem expanded from 38 km² to 108 km² (East Jerusalem expanded from 6.5km² to 71 km²). This forced annexation was carried out in order to maximize the amount of annexed Palestinian land and minimize Palestinian presence. A “demographic balance” policy was introduced to increase the Jewish population and decrease the number of Palestinians.⁵ Walaja was divided into a Jerusalem side (Ain Jweizah neighborhood) and a West Bank side. By annexing Ain Jweizah to Jerusalem

Israel seized 2.1 km² (2,095 dunums) almost forty-eight percent of remaining Walaja. Ain Jweizah is home to approximately 600 people and ninety-two housing units within which only twenty-two houses are considered legal by the Jerusalem municipality due to their existence prior to the 1967 unilateral expansion of boundary lines. As in the case of the other villages, the annexed population was granted neither residency nor services from the Jerusalem municipality, a typical case of annexing the land but not the people.

The colonies of Gilo and Har Gilo were established respectively in 1971 and 1972 on Walaja land. In the case of Gilo, the land was unilaterally annexed to Israel as part of Jerusalem and Israeli law was immediately applied to the colony. In the case of Har Gilo the land was expropriated by a military order for allegedly military purposes, but when the colony seized more land for its expansion it was by declaring it state land. This change of policy occurred because the extensive use of expropriation orders for military needs ended in 1979, following the decision of the High Court of Justice in the case of the Elon Moreh colony. Unlike in previous cases, the Court upheld the claim by the residents of the village of Rujeib that the expropriation of their lands for establishing Elon Moreh was illegal since it was intended for a colony and not for security reasons. The Court's decision was due to disagreement between important figures in the Israeli defense establishment with regard to the military importance of a colony in that location, as well as the settlers identifying their motives as ideological rather than security-related.

After Oslo: Fragmentation and the Separation Wall

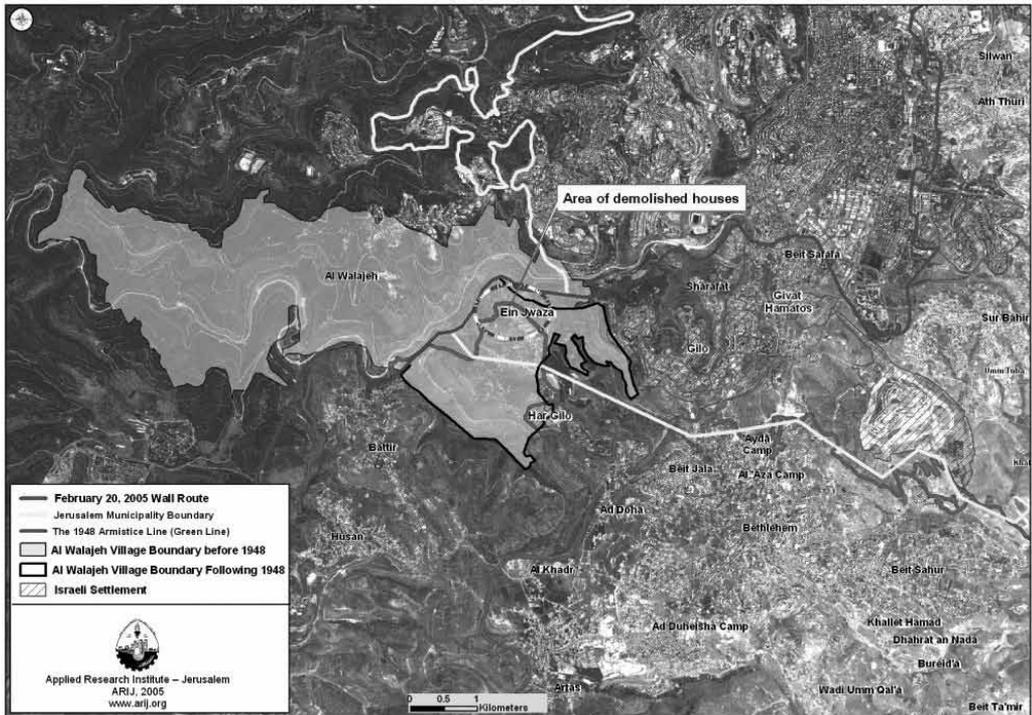
Following the Oslo agreements, Walaja was divided into three administrative areas. Half of the village became part of the Jerusalem municipality, and the other half was classified as West Bank territory and further divided into two parts, the larger (2,192 dunums) falling in area C under the administration of Israeli Civil Administration (ICA),⁶ where planning powers are held by the planning committee of the ICA, and the remainder (113 dunums) in area B under the administration of the Palestinian Authority (but with joint security control with Israel). On the Jerusalem side of the village, construction is prohibited as is frequently the case in Arab East Jerusalem where twenty-two percent of East Jerusalem has been classified as belonging to the Green Zone;⁷ even though the vast majority is privately owned Palestinian land, building permits are not granted and the building of new houses is considered “illegal” (on the other hand it is normal practice for the Jerusalem municipality to reclassify such areas as building sites at the request of private Jewish companies for building a colony). Area C, however, is considered an agricultural area according to plan RJ5⁸ of the British mandate. This additional division placed new obstacles in the way of the village's development and the coherence of its social structure.

In 1996 an additional 500 dunums were confiscated for the construction of the bypass road for the exclusive use of Har Gilo settlers, leaving the village with only

4,400 dunums, almost a quarter of original Walaja. In July 2003 Walajeers started receiving military orders of land confiscation for the construction of the Wall and the colony of Givat Yael. The Wall's initial course was intended to bisect Walaja into a Jerusalem side and a West Bank side, but after the villagers' appeal the route was reconsidered and the "demographic balance" was revised. The outcome was the annexation of the land but not the people. In fact the amended version envisions encircling Walaja completely. The Wall will extend for 7.9 km of which 3.5 km will be barbed wire, while the rest will consist of eight-meter-high concrete blocks. This will isolate an additional 2,210 dunums of the village's land: about 50.2 percent of the village's agricultural and grazing land, forests, open areas, and archaeological sites. Agricultural and grazing lands will be accessible only to the direct owner through unmanned gates, a system which has proved to be a failure in several Palestinian villages. According to Ottoman law still in force, land uncultivated for three consecutive years automatically becomes state land, so this is a further ploy for land seizure. Granting accessibility to the direct owner on a seasonal basis – if that is indeed done – means that owners will have a difficult time managing the lands on their own, especially as permits are not likely to cover additional labor or equipment. Walaja will be transformed into an open-air jail. The Wall has been built at a distance of 50 meters from village dwellings. Everywhere in the West Bank where the Wall has been completed military orders were issued prohibiting construction at a distance of 50, 100 or 150 meters from the Wall. The same order sooner or later will apply to Walaja, consequently natural growth will be prohibited and people may gradually be forced into *soft transfer*. In addition to the loss of land, the Wall will sequester two cemeteries, the Barghout family cemetery and the village's old cemetery, as well as the al-Hadaf spring. In the words of the village's lawyer, Mr. Ghaith Nasser,

Israel is building a Wall without consulting anyone, and it does not give the opportunity for complaints; it makes plans and later allows you to appeal, but that is only a formality. For the construction of the Wall there is no consultation; after the plans are signed by the Israeli military governor people have only three days to raise objections.⁹

The "security policy" which underpins the Wall's construction has a massive negative impact on Walaja, but it will permit Israel a de facto annexation of the illegal colony of Har Gilo and a physical connection between East Jerusalem colonies and the colonial bloc of Gush Etzion in the south of the West Bank. In this context on 23 August 2011 the Israeli High Court rejected the villagers' appeal against the route of the Wall, and granted approval to the Israeli authorities to complete its construction. In this regard, the president of the Israeli High Court of Justice Dorit Beinisch wrote in the ruling: "We believe that the damage the security barrier will do to the petitioners is in fair proportion to the tremendous security benefits the barrier affords."¹⁰ The petitioners argued that if the real purpose of the Wall is "security benefit" it should be erected on the Green Line border which is a few hundred meters down the valley.



New and Old Walaja. Source: *Applied Research Institute, Jerusalem.*

In 2004, private investors announced plans to build a new colony, Givat Yael, on Walaja land. The planned colony is to consist of 12,000 housing units spreading mostly east and south of the Green Line. According to maps about sixty percent of Walaja land could be absorbed by Givat Yael,¹¹ including built up areas, and almost all Walaja's agricultural lands. The colony would further strangle the village between two colony areas and disconnect it totally from any West Bank access, making it unsustainable for the inhabitants to remain in the village. But there was an obstacle, as Ghaith Nasser pointed out:

Givat Yael company appealed to the Supreme Court saying that it is opposed to the route of the Wall because it passes through "its land" and ruins its plan. So now there were two cases against the Wall in Walaja at the Supreme Court, ours which petitioned for shifting the Wall's path to the edge of the Green Line, and the case of the Givat Yael company appealing to annex the entire village to Jerusalem. The army took advantage of the situation and proposed to put the Wall in the middle of the two proposed paths, that is between the Green Line and the lands of Walaja.¹²

The company tried to convince Walajeers not to appeal against them, falsely claiming to be the owners of the land, and offering in exchange to stop the Wall, supply them with Jerusalem IDs, build infrastructures, and bring about the cancelation of the

demolition orders. The Walajees rejected the offer. When I asked Dr. Meir Margalit, a member of the Jerusalem City Council representing Meretz and a founder and field coordinator for the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD)¹³ why Givat Yael is such an important project for the state of Israel, he explained that “first of all because this is the last piece of land that the municipality has for Jews, it has no more land in West Jerusalem, and second because it connects Jerusalem with Gush Etzion.”

Present Absentees Inside Jerusalem: Building permits and House Demolitions

At the beginning of the 1980s the municipality of Jerusalem realized that half of Walaja was inside its municipal boundaries, which had been unilaterally extended in 1967. This occurred when a lawyer fighting against the demolition of a Palestinian house by the ICA claimed that the house was under Israeli jurisdiction and that its demolition was not in the ICA’s competence.¹⁴ The disenfranchised population was not aware that they were living within Jerusalem’s new municipal boundaries, as they had not been informed or offered either Israeli citizenship or Jerusalem ID cards. Indeed there are only sixty residents of Walaja who are Jerusalem ID cards holders: they had moved to the Jerusalem-area refugee camp of Shu‘fat after their expulsion from old Walaja in 1948 and received their IDs in the wake of Israel’s 1967 occupation. They later moved to new Walaja.¹⁵

Although landowners with West Bank IDs were physically present inside the area annexed to Jerusalem, they were declared by Israel to be “Absentees” making it impossible for them as West Bank ID holders to register their lands. This was possible because of the Absentee Property Law (1950) which gives the Israeli Custodian of Absentee Property the right to seize, administer and control land owned by persons defined as “absentees,” with no possibility of appeal or compensation. Confiscated lands get transferred to the Israel Development Authority or the Jewish National Fund to be made available for Jewish-only colonies.¹⁶ In 1967 this Law was applied to East Jerusalem. Hence in 1985 the municipality executed the first two demolition orders inside the Jerusalem half of Walaja. In the same year the Jerusalem Municipality refused the request of residents for a zoning plan which would have established a system allowing residents to build lawfully. Villagers who have been compelled to build houses in spite of the prohibition have been fined, and some were jailed. In 1991, the Israeli authorities assessed penalties against residents based on square meter. For houses in Ain Jweizah, it ranged between NIS (Israeli Shekel) 8,000-100,000 (\$2,158-26,976). If a monthly payment is missed, the entire penalty becomes due.

Between 1985 and April 2010, forty-five houses were demolished in Walaja (thirty within the Jerusalem municipal area, and fifteen located in Area C),¹⁷ and more than one hundred people made homeless – some who were evicted after the destruction of their houses re-settled in Shu‘fat and Deheisheh refugee camps. Over the years, many

residents on the Jerusalem side of Walaja have been arrested for “illegally residing in Jerusalem” while they were simply living in their own houses. In 2002 the keys of all cars including the two collective buses of the village were confiscated by the Israeli army and people were told that they could not enter “Israeli territory” and that they needed a permit from the ICA in order to enter the village. People moved for months on horses and donkeys, until villagers won the appeal at the Supreme Court of Justice against such prohibitions.

In June 2006 residents represented by ICAHD’s lawyer appealed against the demolition of “illegal” houses on the grounds that they had no possibility to build legally. They argued that the Jerusalem Municipality had never “zoned” Walaja and had refused several requests to do so. In August 2006 the Israeli Court suspended the demolition orders for three years and let the residents, supported by ICAHD, prepare a master plan. An Israeli historian, Meir Margalit, commented:

Claude, who is a professional architect and in agreement with the former head of the village, prepared a master plan for the entire village. This would have been the fifth bi-national master plan prepared for Palestinians and Israelis, and might be a good model to follow, but the interior ministry and civil administration have both rejected the master plan.¹⁸

ICAHD submitted the plan for the first time to the Jerusalem Municipality in February 2009, but it was rejected on the basis that too much land was allocated to the village. A smaller plan was submitted in December 2009 and rejected on the grounds that the area was classified as a green zone in Jerusalem’s master plan 2020. “The real reason was Givat Yael. We understood that if the master plan is approved the draft Givat Yael plan will be blocked,” Margalit explained.¹⁹ In December 2010 the village council decided to prepare a new master plan for the village in cooperation with the IPCC (International Peace and Cooperation Center). The plan was submitted in July 2011 and up to the present time the village council has received no response.

On 11 May 2011, seven houses in Ain Jwezah, built between 2006-2010, received demolition orders. The demolition of these houses was crucial to Israel. Once a house is destroyed because its owners do not have Jerusalem IDs they become illegal, and the IDF can expel them from this part of the village. Once expelled they automatically become “absentees” and the Israeli government takes control of their land. As with the majority of Palestinians, very few Walajees had registered their lands. In the West Bank, registration of land only started in 1966 under the Jordanian administration, and only about thirty percent of the land in the West Bank was recorded by 1967, the year in which recording was suspended by Israel.

Challenging the Wall: Legal and Civil Actions

The villagers appealed twice to the Israeli authorities to be included as part of the West Bank (in 1989 and in 2003) however in both cases the response was: “the area belongs to the Jerusalem Municipal Boundaries annexed on 28 June 1967.” Since the commencement of the construction of the Wall in Walaja, the popular non-violent resistance committee has set up a tactical plan to confront the Wall through peaceful struggle. The first level of the struggle is to gather the largest number of villagers from Walaja and nearby villages, together with national and international activists and institutions engaged in non-violent resistance, in order to help in building the village’s “non-violent culture”: the committee is convinced that peaceful struggle is more convenient and gives better practical results. The second level aims at involving all village institutions in the legal struggle. Several lawsuits were raised against the Israeli Defense Ministry, the Interior Ministry and the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality. Although there were few tangible results, the most fruitful was the case against the construction of the illegal colony of Givat Yael. The village’s lawyer, Mr. Ghaith Nasser, proved to the court that a private Israeli company which claimed to have much property in Walaja had no supporting documents and was only able to prove the ownership of one dunum. The route of the Wall has also been challenged several times but in that regard the issue of “security” won every time.

The third level entails media coverage and information dissemination. The committee built a network of contacts with journalists and various agencies for media coverage. Short documentaries on human rights violations, house demolitions, land confiscation, and the uprooting of trees are regularly uploaded on YouTube and Facebook. For this purpose, two young men from Walaja received a one-year training at the press and media workshops established by the Palestinian popular resistance committees under the framework of a national initiative for training young people in non-violence, human rights, media documentation and reporting. The 63rd anniversary of the Nakba, when massive demonstrations took place in Palestine, and in countries hosting Palestinian refugee camps such as Lebanon, Syria and Jordan on 15 May 2011, proved to be a turning point in the village’s non-violent resistance activities. Since then people have demonstrated on an almost weekly basis. The Israeli military have reacted with excessive force to the non-violent demonstrations. Tear gas bombs, sound grenades and even live ammunition have been launched at the demonstrators, with a number of people injured and some arrested.

On the Jerusalem Side

Ain Jwezah neighborhood embodies the best examples of the force of planning and disenfranchisement but it also demonstrates the power of popular non-violent resistance. Three representative cases from this neighborhood tell the story.



Omar's tunnel. *Source: Ruba Saleh.*

The one house enclave: Omar

Omar and his wife and three children live on top of a hill in Ain Jweizah. His house is half a kilometer away from the Green Line which coincides with the Ottoman railway line built in 1890 to connect Jerusalem with the surrounding villages and with the most important Arab cities such as Cairo, Damascus, Beirut and Mecca. Omar (45 years old) is a construction worker in Israel. His encounter with Israel's segregation policies commenced in 2000 with the birth of his first son Hakam. Since he and his wife had been living in a one-bedroom house he decided to enlarge the house and immediately received a demolition order. "My troubles and our suffering started in 2000, it was then that Israeli border guards tried in every way to put us under pressure to go away and leave the house. I was stopped everywhere and they tried to humiliate me in every way," says Omar.²⁰ He was one of the petitioners to the Supreme Court of Justice against the original planned route of the Wall. In order to make a decision concerning the potential route of the Wall the judge decided to go to Walaja, which resulted in Omar receiving various offers from Israeli officials. These included a Jerusalem ID card, buying the house and land, or joining a co-operative project with settlers aiming at building a five-star hotel on his land. "My acceptance of the Jerusalem ID card would have meant the loss of additional dunums of the village's land, and I am not willing to forsake the history of my village, my family and my country," Omar said. "When they realized that their proposals did not interest me, they started investigating how to isolate my home from the village."

In 2010 Omar was visited by a committee composed of representatives of the Ministries of the Interior and Defense, and the architect of the Wall. The latter explained that Omar's house would be left on the opposite side of the village and that the Wall would be seventy meters away from his house. His house would be completely sealed by an electric fence just ten meters away, and in order to connect him to the other side of the village a three-meter passage with four alternately opening doors would be built. Two doors would be allocated to Omar and two to the passage of Israeli military patrol jeeps. A watch tower would be installed in front of his house. At this point the representative of the Ministry of the Interior spoke: "You see, you must understand that no one can enter your house by car, you will be living in a closed military zone. No visitor can remain in this house after 6 pm: only the residents of the house can sleep here". Omar was told that they were studying a system for the opening of the doors so that they could be opened in the morning and afternoon at specific hours to allow him go to work and his children to go to school and return. Omar was asked to choose between having the alternate doors system or a tunnel which would connect him to the other side of the village and which may be used only by him, but he refused both options, "They want to enclose us in a cage like animals. How could I accept this?" he asked.

In May 2010 Israeli machines commenced uprooting the trees on top of the hill in front of Omar's house. Omar took part in a peaceful protest and was wounded in the eye when soldiers threw two sound bombs at the entrance of his house. He was also threatened with the loss of his permit to work in Israel. In June 2011 the Israeli authority decided unilaterally to build a tunnel for Omar and they started the excavations. In practical terms Omar's family has lost 20 dunums and their freedom of movement. At present Omar's sons go to the Salesian nuns' school in Beit Jala, a walk of less than two kilometers on a level road. Once the Wall is erected the only access for the children to Beit Jala will be through Walaja, so they will have to cross the tunnel, climb the hills to reach the only exit point of the village, descend to Beit Jala, pass through the military base in area C, and walk down to school (more than 6 undulating kilometers).

Land deprivation: Abu Nidal

"In 1967 I realized that we were losing ground, I was living in Beit Jala at that time. First I decided to go back and plant 2,000 pine trees to protect the land, then I decided to build and move back to Walaja. When we moved there were no services at all, we had no water, no electricity, nor a road to reach our land," said Abu Nidal.²¹ In 1996, fifty dunums of Abu Nidal's land were confiscated for a bypass road being constructed for the exclusive use of the settlers of Har Gilo. On 8 June 2010 eighty-eight of his olive trees were uprooted and all his remaining land was confiscated (fifteen dunums were confiscated and twenty dunums became an inaccessible closed military zone) all for the construction of the Wall. Within the confiscated land lies the private cemetery of the Barghout family, where his parents and grandmother are buried. After petitioning the Israeli Supreme Court of Justice he was told that he might obtain a

special permit to enter the cemetery and that a special unmanned gate would be made for him. Before the uprooting Abu Nidal was asked to move his bee-hives and olive trees, but he refused to collaborate with the occupation. His hives were destroyed and the trees uprooted. “They replanted my olives elsewhere, putting three trunks in the same hole, or placing them too close together, this is an insult it is clear they cannot survive this way” commented Abu Nidal. In order to avoid house demolition Abu Nidal followed bureaucratic procedure. He hired an architect from Jerusalem and applied for a permit. Although he did not receive one Abu Nidal started construction work and eventually received a demolition order. An Israeli lawyer followed his case and after eight sessions in as many years the court ruled that he had to pay a fine of ILS 40,000 (\$10,740) in monthly instalments, and within a year and a half the house would have to be demolished. Abu Nidal refused to accept the sentence and in 2000 his lawyer managed to close the case claiming that his client had not been present during the hearings because the army had not granted him a permit to attend. Abu Nidal is a sixty-five-year-old farmer who used to make a living from his trees, hives and sheep and who is left with no means of subsistence yet has no intention of leaving the house.

Systematic denial of housing and residency rights: Abu al-Mutasem

Abu al-Mutasem’s wife inherited a piece of land in Ain Jweizah on which they built their home. On 30 June 2003 he received a summons and after eight sessions in court – as in the majority of cases involving Ain Jweizah residents – he received a fine to be paid in monthly instalments over eighteen months by the end of which the house would have to be demolished. Mr. Ghaith Nasser explained that there are two types of demolition orders:

Based on a list of accusations the court issues a fine and it allows a period of eighteen months for the accused to formulate a detailed plan and apply for a permit. This method is usually used when the house is already built. The second method applies to cases where construction works are on-going, or the house is finished but people have been residing in it for less than sixty days, or not all the work has been completed, or the final work was completed less than sixty days earlier. In such cases the owner receives an administrative demolition order, and once the order is posted, the house gets demolished after twenty-four hours.

And in fact that is what happened to Abu al-Mutasem. When the house was demolished the first time the International Red Cross and UNRWA provided the family with a tent, flour, rice, and sugar. This was only the beginning of the family’s split. People usually are requested to choose between demolishing their house themselves or getting the work done by the municipality and paying the demolition fees afterwards. Abu al-Mutasem, like the majority, refused to demolish his house and consequently he received a demolition bill a month later. He lived there for six months together with

two of his sons who at that time were enrolled in Bethlehem University, while his wife and his youngest son went to live at her parents' house. After a few months villagers offered to build Abu Mutasem a new house. He hesitated at first but they managed to convince him that his existence was a tool of resistance and finally he accepted their offer. In order to avoid repeating the tragedy he applied for a building permit which was denied. "My house stands at a strategic point overlooking the land adjoining the Wall, and because their plan is to build a new colony my home is regarded as dangerous" Abu Mutasem explained.²² The second house was identical to the first, and it suffered the same fate. After three months of occupancy the house was demolished. "I was returning from work in Bethlehem and while walking I looked towards the house but there was nothing there. You know you can lose a pen but not a house," Abu Mutasem remarked. In December ICAHD visited Abu Mutasem in his tent and promised to rebuild the house in July and seven months later construction began in cooperation with the Holy Land Trust (a Palestinian NGO based in Bethlehem). On 11 May 2011 Abu Mutasem received his third demolition order.

What Future for Walaja?

Walaja is a village of 2,300 residents and it suffers from a scarcity of water, lack of a sewage system, and an outdated electricity network to which some houses are connected. The village has no doctor or clinic, only one secondary school, and an overcrowded kindergarten which already hosts seventy children, with no room for the additional thirty who currently have to go to other schools outside the village. By far the greater part of the village's natural resources, its agricultural and grazing lands, will be on the inaccessible side of the Wall together with its natural water sources. A large proportion of the men work in Israel, in the colonies, or in Bethlehem. If the village entrance is shut once the Wall is completed, only women, children and the elderly will remain in the village for much of the work week. Women will have to take on the role of head of the family and they will be overloaded with responsibilities. When the second Intifada erupted in 2000, the village experienced four years of isolation as roads were blocked and movement was restricted to a single point of exit and entrance. In that period, men left the village in order to continue working, and the social structure was completely altered.

Walaja is indeed a "microscopic Palestine," a clear example of apartheid in planning and of how Israel has adopted spaciocide²³ and segregation policies to limit Palestinian villages' natural growth and to expand the surrounding colonies. These policies in some cases accelerate *soft transfer* whilst in the vast majority of cases it strengthens resistance. Will the sealing of Walaja lead in the long run to "exit" or "voice"? Will the Wall inspire survival or resistance tactics? Can the villagers' day-to-day resistance challenge the power of Israel's segregation and separation policies?

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Endnotes

- 1 Nakba in Arabic means catastrophe and it refers to the 1948 mass deportation of 800,000 Palestinians from their cities and villages, the massacre of Palestinian civilians, and the razing to the ground of 418 Palestinian villages by the Zionist military organizations.
- 2 Walid Khalidi, ed., *All That Remains: the Palestinian villages occupied and depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1997), 322-23.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Interview with Sheerin Araj, 8 May 8 2011.
- 5 Bimkom, *The Planning Deadlock: Planning Policy, Land Regularization, Building Permits and House Demolitions in East Jerusalem*”, Abstract, (2005), 1.
- 6 The Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) is a complementary structure of the military conceived in 1981 by Ariel Sharon for governing the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza. The main scope was to protect Israeli settlers and affirm sovereignty over Palestinians.
- 7 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the occupied Palestinian territory (OCHA), *East Jerusalem, Key Humanitarian Concerns*, report, (2011) pp. 29-30.
- 8 The ICA uses the regional plans of the British mandate RJ/5 and S15 and the Jordanian planning law as a double-edged sword. It uses the criterion of development of 69 years ago to deny construction permits to Palestinians, nevertheless these same laws are amended by military orders to convert the use of agricultural land in areas earmarked for new colonies or to allow the expansion of existing colonies (Bimkom 2008).
- 9 Interview with Mr. Ghaith Nasser on 11 July 2011.
- 10 J. Paraszczuk, “Top court turns down Palestinian case on barrier,” *Jerusalem Post*, August 24, 2011, accessed January 15, 2012 at: <http://www.jpost.com/NationalNews/Article.aspx?id=235176>
- 11 See map of planned route of wall, ICAHD (Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions). EDITORS WILL REWRITE ACCORDING TO LAYOUT
- 12 Interview with Mr. Ghaith Nasser on 11 July 2011.
- 13 Interview with Meir Margalit on 11 July 2011.
- 14 M. Margalit, “Wallajah: a Short History of Jewish Colony Now and Forever,” *Occupation magazine*, February 2005, accessed 15 January 2012 at: http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=616
- 15 UNRWA, Al Walaja Miniprofile, August 2011. Accessed 15 January 2012 at: <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2010070915338.pdf>
- 16 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the occupied Palestinian territory (OCHA), *East Jerusalem, Key Humanitarian Concerns*, report, (2011) pp. 54-57.
- 17 UNRWA, Al Walaja Miniprofile.
- 18 Interview with Mr. Ghaith Naser on 11 July 2011.
- 19 Interview with Mr. Ghaith Naser on 11 July 2011.
- 20 Interview with Omar Hajajala on 21 May 2011.
- 21 Interview with Abu Nidal on 16 June 2011.
- 22 Interview with Abu Mutasem on 13 June 2011.
- 23 S. Hanafi, “Spaciocide,” in *City of Collision: Jerusalem and the Principles of Conflict Urbanism*, eds. P. Misselwitz and T. Rieniets (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2006), 92-10