



MEMO

AIPAC

July 30, 2003

The Security Fence: A Defensive Obstacle to Terror

The Israeli government, responding to the concerns of the Israeli people, is currently building a security fence near the porous border between Israel and the West Bank for one reason: to prevent terrorist attacks against its citizens. Since the violence began in Sept. 2000, Palestinian terrorists have launched more than 18,000 attacks, killing more than 800 Israelis and wounding 5,600. The fence—a defensive physical obstacle mostly consisting of ditches, barbed wire and electronic sensors—is not a political border and could easily be shifted to adhere to any agreed upon future borders or dismantled as part of an Israeli-Palestinian agreement.



A worker installs a section of the Israeli security obstacle near the West Bank town of Jenin, which has produced dozens of suicide bombers.

The fence being erected by Israel is a security tool necessitated by continuing Palestinian terrorism.

- Israel's construction of a defensive physical obstacle, like a fence, is a valid precaution to protect Israeli civilians as Israel transfers security control of Palestinian areas back to the Palestinian Authority (PA), given the PA's record of not fulfilling past agreements requiring it to stop terrorism.
- If the PA had met its obligations to end terrorism—especially during the past three years—the building of the fence would not have been required. During the 35 years since the Six-Day War in 1967, there was no barrier between Israel and the West Bank.

• Nearly 70 percent of the Israeli people, according to a June Peace Project poll, support the fence as a way to improve security along the porous border between Israel and the West Bank, from which 122 successful suicide attacks have originated during the past three years of violence.

- Both the Labor and Likud parties support the security fence. The Labor government of Ehud Barak originally proposed the idea, which has been endorsed by a majority of the Labor Party leadership and backed by the current Likud-led government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.
- Not one of the 122 suicide bombers that killed 454 people in Israel during the past three years infiltrated from Gaza, which is separated from Israel by a defensive physical obstacle similar to the one now being constructed along the West Bank.

While the security fence will create problems for some Palestinians, it is a less punitive way to stem terrorism than military action, and Israel is seeking to mitigate such issues as it constructs the fence.

- The security fence is a less punitive and non-lethal way for Israel to protect its citizens while significantly lessening the hardships on Palestinian civilians by reducing the number of Israeli soldiers within Palestinian areas and minimizing curfews and other security measures. Prime Minister Sharon, speaking recently at the White House, said Israel will take “every effort to minimize [the barrier’s] infringement on the daily life of the Palestinian population.”
- Israel is creating dozens of agricultural passageways to enable those Palestinian farmers who are separated from their fields by the fence to tend to their crops, while several other major crossings will allow people and goods to cross the fence.
- To date, Israel has carefully uprooted and replanted 60,000 olive trees in areas designated by Palestinian farmers so the trees would not be damaged by the fence’s construction.
- Israel has altered the path of the fence as part of agreements to settle legal challenges. In one case, a compromise was reached in order to avoid damage to a water reservoir that served Palestinian farmers in the area between two Palestinian towns in the northwest part of the West Bank.
- Qalqilya, a key center of terrorist activity adjacent to the Israeli city of K’far Saba, is the only major Palestinian population area that will have a defensive physical obstacle installed around its perimeter under currently approved plans for the fence. During times of calm, residents will be able to travel east into the West Bank via the major road out of the city without any security checkpoint. Ninety-eight percent of Palestinians living in the West Bank will not be affected by so-called enclaves.

The Israeli government has approved only two sections of the fence, both of which run close to the 1967 “Green Line” border. Contrary to some reports, no final decisions have been made about the placement of future sections of the fence.

- The first section of the fence (Stage A on the map), which is near completion, runs 90 miles from the northern tip of the West Bank to east of Tel Aviv. The second section (Stage B), which is scheduled to be finished by the end of the year, stretches 60 miles southeast from the northern tip of the West Bank.

Approved Sections of Israel's Security Fence



- The Israeli government is seriously taking into consideration American concerns—raised as part of ongoing discussions between the two allies—about the location of potential future sections of the fence. The United States and Israel have established a high-level working group to continue discussing the issue.
- If Palestinians took concrete steps to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure, Israel would have less motivation to spend \$1.6 million per mile to construct additional sections of the fence.



Israeli border police patrol along the fence separating Israel from Jenin. Security patrols complement the electronic sensors and other features of the defensive barrier.

The fence can be moved or dismantled to meet any future borders agreed to as part of an Israeli-Palestinian agreement, just as Israel has done in the past to fulfill commitments.

- Prime Minister Sharon has said the “fence is not a political border, it is not a security border, but rather another means to assist in the war against terror.” It is a defensive physical obstacle composed of ditches, barbed wire, sensors and other technology that could be dismantled or shifted to adhere to any future borders agreed to as part of an Israeli-Palestinian agreement.
- Large, concrete stretches of fence exist only in three places, representing less than 10 percent of the entire defensive obstacle. In these select locations, the walls run right along the 1967 border. The walls next to Qalqilya and Tulkarm have been erected because terrorists have used the cities as bases to carry out sniper attacks against Israeli motorists using the Trans-Israel Highway, one of the country’s key arteries. The wall separating Matan and Habla was erected to stop terrorists from shooting from buildings in Habla into the Israeli town.
- Fences, even elaborate and expensive ones, have been moved by Israel in the past in order to comply with political agreements. For example, parts of the fence on Israel’s border with Lebanon were moved more than a dozen times. Most recently, Israel shifted the location of the fence as part of its fulfillment of U.N. Resolution 425, which called for Israel’s withdrawal from southern Lebanon.