



UNRWA

Case Study

Reports on the West Bank Wall/Barrier

JANUARY 2004

The Isolated Life of a Refugee Family Trapped Between the Wall/Barrier and a Settlement Fence



The Amer refugee family is isolated in an enclave between Elqana settlement and Mas'ha. The family is originally from Kufr Kassem. The family consists of Mr Hani Amer, his wife and six school-age children. UNRWA staff visited the family on 13 November 2003 and met with the Mrs Amer. She said that the house was built about 30 years ago (1972). During the construction of the barrier, the Israeli authorities offered to purchase the home from the family. According to Mrs Amer, they were told 'to write any amount on the cheque'. However, Mr Amer refused.

Previously, the Amer family had the house and two dunums of land on which they operated a small restaurant and cultivated fruit and flowers for sale. The land has been confiscated for the construction of the barrier and all that remains is the house. The family used to make a living from the land, shared jointly with Mr Amer's brother. According to Mrs Amer, the income from the land was about NIS 5,000 (USD 1,100) per month which was shared with Mr Amer's brother. Now Mr Amer works as an agricultural labourer three days a week. He makes about 1,200 NIS (USD 270) per month, less than half of what he earned from his land.



*Amer home, with Elqana settlement in the background,
military road for the West Bank wall in the foreground.*

The family is not allowed to have any visitors to their home. The family was told by Israeli soldiers that 'if anyone visits, the home will be demolished'.

In November 2003, Mas'ha residents informed UNRWA staff that the official gate opening hours are as follows: 0600 to 0800 hours; 1000 to 1400 hours, 1600 to 2000 hours. Mrs Amer said that in addition to the gate, a 'private' door in the barrier was installed especially for them to cross to Mas'ha. The main Mas'ha gate has been closed since 6 December 2003.



The home faces a concrete wall to the east (towards Mas'ha) and wire fence to the west (towards Elqana settlement). The wall has blocked the view from the Amer home to Mas'ha. The view to the settlement is unobstructed. The concrete portion of the barrier which is over 40 metres long and 8 metres high is directly in front of the Amer home. The barrier with its concrete portion directly in front of the home has isolated the family from its community.

On 25 December, UNRWA staff members were prevented by IDF soldiers from using the 'private' door to visit the Amer family. A soldier threatened that if UNRWA staff passed through the door to visit the family, he would close the door permanently. After co-ordination with the IDF liaison office, the soldiers allowed UNRWA staff to pass. The family complained that they are constantly harassed by the soldiers. They are afraid to leave their house because they believe they will be locked out by the soldiers. They said that they believe that the Israeli authorities wish to demolish the home.

On 4 January 2004, a day after a pro-barrier demonstration staged by Elqana settlement, children from the settlement threw stones at the Amer home. Mrs Amer went to the soldiers and asked them to make the children stop. The soldiers told her '*they are just children, and all they are doing is throwing stones*'. She insisted the soldiers do something. The soldiers spoke to the children and then left. Later, the children returned with some adolescents and they threw more stones, damaging one of the two solar water heating panels on the roof of the home. When UNRWA staff visited Mrs Amer on 7 January, Mrs Amer said that they have had stones thrown at the home every night in an attempt to harass and intimidate them.