

Up Against The Wall

Fifth Estate Collective

2003

November 9—the fourteenth anniversary of the popular uprising that destroyed the Berlin Wall—was also an international day of protest against the more than 400 miles of wall being built by the Israeli government around and through Palestinian communities in the West Bank. All over the globe, special events and actions took place in solidarity against this construction project.



The barrier between Abu Dis and East Jerusalem, June 2004 (Wikimedia Commons)

Work on the Wall began in June 2002 and is expected to take three years to finish at the cost of \$1.7 million per mile. To date, about 90 miles of the Wall have been completed through the Jenin, Tulkarem, and Qalqiliya regions, adversely affecting the lives of more than 200,000 people.

Additionally, the construction project has enabled the annexation and legitimization (through the building of by-pass roads) of almost a dozen Israeli Jewish-only settlement-colonies. Estimates are that, upon completion, the Wall will expand the size of Israeli territory in the West Bank by nearly 50% through relocation and by isolating communities into commercial cantons, ethnic enclaves and military zones.

Israel's right-wing religio-nationalist Likud Party, led by war criminal Ariel Sharon, mildly describes it as a "security barrier" or a "safety fence." Twice the height of the wall built by Ulbricht and Khrushchev through Berlin in 1961, it bristles with armed guard towers and is insulated by a buffer zone between 100 and 325 feet wide consisting of razor-wire, electric fences, patrol trenches, surveillance cameras, motion sensors, and heavily-armed soldiers.

Complicated Israeli security passes are required for anyone who tries to pass through the checkpoints set up at the gates in order to regulate and monitor the everyday movements of Palestinians who seek access to their own homes, market places, groundwater wells, gardens, and grazing lands. This disunification of Palestinian regions in the West Bank and Jordan River valley allows Israel to seize and control ever more land and water resources while creating townships for the Palestinians that resemble both penal colonies and Indian reservations.

Palestinian nationalists insist that Israel's "Apartheid Wall" will destroy any chance for the establishment of a viable state for their people's future. Once assembled, these barriers and cordons will effectively destroy the territorial contiguity said to be needed to fabricate a Palestinian state and, in so doing, will reinforce the bulwarks safeguarding the spatial integrity of Israel.

The Wall, then, performs two basic, interlocking functions: the continued colonial partition of the Palestinian people and the further augmentation of Israeli state power. This requires mention because the popular rejection of this Wall by outraged people all over the world needs to be made on grounds that are more meaningful and

fundamental than the authoritarian fantasies of statist. Instead of meekly acknowledging that the Wall threatens the two-state solution by crippling the process of Palestinian integration, anarchists could be making the point that the Wall also menaces the no-state solution by amplifying the power of Israel.

Fences have always been central to the capitalist project to dominate space. The primary functions of caging and segregation bind fences to the cults of property, identities of national sovereignty, and imperialist expansion, all of which encourage grotesque outbursts of self-absorbed possessiveness, dumb patriotism, militarism, and genocide.

Fences are used to enclose areas in order to keep what's inside in: following the Nazi invasion of 1939, a ghetto was created in Warsaw with the aid of a nine-foot wall that forced 400,000 Polish, German and Austrian Jews into an area of 100 square blocks. Fences are also xenophobically used to keep the outside out, as in the fifteen-foot high, 300-mile long militarized metal wall between the US and Mexico, patrolled by a joint US Army-US Border Patrol task force on behalf of the Immigration and Naturalization Service's "Operation: Gatekeeper" and "Operation: Safeguard."

Restraint, confinement, and incarceration are concepts inseparable from the delineation of property lines, the enforcement of racial-ethnic quarantines, and the hardening of borders. The social history of barbed wire—its invention and use in western North America during the range wars of the mid-nineteenth century; its ubiquity in no-man's land between the trenches of the First World War; and its role in the development of jails and forced-labor compounds during the last century, from the pestilential concentration camps of the Transvaal during the Boer War to the Nazi quarries at Mauthausen and to the Bush Administration's Camp X-Ray at Guantanamo Bay—cannot be told without mentioning the number of people robbed of their freedom (and their lives) by forced relocation and brutal detention.

Radical anti-statists and anti-militarists should speak out and unequivocally condemn the erection and existence of this and all other iron curtains. Don't let unimaginative pro-Palestinian statist monopolize anti-Wall discourse; hostility towards Israel's wall should not be misinterpreted or misrepresented as support for some sort of theocratic or nationalistic Palestinian initiative—a State will never set you free.

States demand borders, and borders require walls and fences. Because of their crucial role in the development of nationalist coercion and the capitalist accumulation of private property, all fences are succinct architectural representations of everything that disgusts anti-authoritarians—note that the most advanced types of wall construction are showcased in prisons, schools, psychiatric hospitals, luxury condominiums, and national border crossings. We need, then, to act accordingly. Spaces must be opened in our neighborhoods, in our work places, in our regions, and all over the world. Borders and barriers must be rendered ineffective and porous through our individual and multi-directional efforts in the service of common areas and wilderness.

A comrade from the Tel Aviv-based "Anarchists Against Fences" reports that on November 9 some two hundred Palestinians, 35 Israelis and a similar number of internationals tore down about 65 feet of fence with bolt cutters, rakes, and long-handled drag hooks near the village of Zububa. During the demolition, Israeli soldiers arrived and dispersed the wreckers with a half-hour barrage of gunshots, concussion grenades, and tear gas. The actions of these protesters are not exactly ironic, modern-day re-creations of the bloody Zionist folktale of the siege before the walls of Jericho, but the reference is difficult to ignore. And so is the moral of that story: this is just one of the many walls that need to be torn down.

Graffiti Voices

Excerpted from a report issued at gushshalom.com

In Sawahre, it really looked like a replica of the Berlin Wall, that wall which had fallen exactly fourteen years ago—a long row of giant concrete panels planted in the middle of a pastoral landscape. In no time, the dull gray was overlaid by an enormous lot of graffiti, as Israeli, Palestinian and international activists simultaneously pulled out spray paint and cheerfully set to work:

Barrier for peace / No more ghettos! / No to the apartheid Wall! / There are no good walls / Arabern
raus: this is Sharonistan / Zionism of dispossession / Pull down the wall / The Wall will fall / The IDF

is a terrorist organization / Remember the Warsaw Ghetto / Another future without a wall / This is Israeli supremacy and Apartheid / This is not security, this is stupidity / Ghetto Palestine / Wall = ethnic cleansing / Stop the shame! / Concrete is not security / No hands meet when walls are built / Somebody is calling from the other side, do you listen? / Down With Zionist terrorism / Remember, the Maginot Line / Remember the Bar-Lev Line / This occupation is killing us / Love without borders.

And, in some places also the standard inscription of each block—Ministry of Defense, Department of Construction—was transformed: Department of Destruction / Department of Occupation / Department of Apartheid / Ministry of Oppression.

There were demonstrations against the Wall in the US, England, Scotland, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Australia, South Africa, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Bangladesh and Jordan.

Details on: <http://www.stophewall.org/worwideactivism/62.shtml>

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<https://www.fiftheestate.org/archive/363-winter-20032004/up-against-the-wall>
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