

THE WEST BANK FENCE/SEPARATION BARRIER

AMERICANS FOR PEACE NOW PERSPECTIVES

**Edited by Gidon D. Remba, President, Chicago Peace Now
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There is nothing inherently wrong with Israel's erecting a security barrier between Israel and the West Bank. While we believe that Israel must hold out a viable option for a negotiated peace with the Palestinians, we should not hesitate to protect our border until such a peace is possible. However, the security barrier that Prime Minister Sharon is building in the West Bank strays far from the original plan of erecting a fence along the Green Line (the 1967 border between Israel and the West Bank). Sharon strongly opposed the initial concept of the fence because he knows that it has political implications. Building it along the Green Line would imply that the settlements left on the other side would be likely candidates for dismantlement once final borders were established with the Palestinians. As a result, the settlers and their supporters began to clamor to have as many settlements as possible on the Israeli side of the fence, and it is only the prospect of using the fence to reinforce Israeli settlements and Israel's hold on about 50% of the West Bank that has drawn the Prime Minister's support.

As currently planned, this fence would clearly violate another Israeli obligation—not to take actions that undermine trust, including confiscation and/or demolition of Palestinian homes and property. Routing the fence so that it cuts off Palestinians from around half of their territory is certainly a confiscation of property, and it precludes a negotiated settlement, thereby undermining President Bush's vision of ending the occupation of 1967. Official Israeli sources say that 85% of the land confiscated for the fence in just its first stage of construction was expropriated from Palestinians. Further, the proposed fence route will bring tens of thousands of Palestinians who live near the settlements inside Israel's line of defense, Palestinians who will be angered from being cut off from their farm lands, relatives, and social services in the process.

Pushing the fence deeper into the West Bank also will greatly increase the cost to Israel of building the barrier, with the segment enclosing the settlement of Ariel adding about \$224 million to the price, if it is completed. Finally, a longer fence will place an additional strain on the military, which will need to patrol and defend the barrier. (Peace Now Settlement Watch Director Dror Etkes)

Excerpted from Testimony Before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Near East Sub-Committee, by Dror Etkes, Director of Peace Now's Settlement Watch Project, Oct. 15, 2003.

**For APN's Full Position Paper on the Security Barrier between Israel and the West Bank, July 29, 2003, visit <http://www.peacenow.org/Roadmap/securitybarrier.html>
To view the latest map, visit <http://www.peacenow.org/Roadmap/barriermap.jpeg>**