

Israeli Perspective on the Security Fence

Source: Israel's Security Fence - <http://www.seamzone.mod.gov.il/pages/eng/default.htm> (Israel's Ministry of Defense)

Terrorism has been defined throughout the international community as a crime against humanity. As such, the State of Israel not only has the right but also the obligation to do everything in its power to lessen the impact and scope of terrorism on the citizens of Israel.

The Security Fence is an operational concept conceived by the Israeli Defense Establishment in order to reduce the number of terrorist attacks whether in the form of explosive-rigged vehicles or in the form of suicide bombers who enter into Israel with the intention of murdering innocent babies, children, women and men. Sadly, this abhorrent phenomenon has become common practice since September 2000.

Security Barrier Q & A (from the Israeli Ministry of Defense)

Source: Israeli Ministry of Defense (<http://www.seamzone.mod.gov.il/pages/eng/questions.htm>)

Q: What is the reason for establishing the Security Fence Area?

The Security Fence is being built with the sole purpose of saving the lives of the Israeli citizens who continue to be targeted by the terrorist campaign that began in 2000. The fact that over 800 men, women and children have been killed in horrific suicide bombings and other terror attacks clearly justifies the attempt to place a physical barrier in the path of terrorists. It should be noted that terrorism has been defined throughout the international community as a crime against humanity. As such, the State of Israel not only has the right but also the obligation to do everything in its power to lessen the impact and scope of terrorism on the citizens of Israel.

Q: Will it be possible to cross the Security Fence Area?

Yes- Israel will establish gates to allow free passage across the Area. The Security Fence, whose only function is to provide security, will not seal off the West Bank.

Special arrangements have been made for Palestinian farmers separated from their lands. Gates along the Security Fence will enable Palestinian farmers and their workers to cross from one side to another. These special gates are for agricultural purposes only; the passage of regular pedestrians and cars will be handled through different gates.

Q: How was the path of the Security Fence determined?

The path of the Security Fence was planned in accordance with security and humanitarian concerns. It does not annex any lands to Israel nor does it establish any borders, a process that remains a matter for negotiations and should be resolved between the sides. Such was the case in the peace treaty with Jordan in which the border fence was adjusted, by mutual agreement by 80 meters.

Q: Why isn't the Security Fence built along the "Green Line"?

The so called "Green Line" has never represented an international boundary. The 1949 armistice agreements specifically refer to this fact. There was never a recognized and legitimate sovereign in the West Bank. The legal status of these areas remains that of disputed territory- to be resolved through negotiations. It is this that is required by Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which call for the parties to start negotiations, inter alia, on "secure and recognized boundaries", and agreements reached between the parties specifically refer to the need for direct negotiations to resolve this issue. The Security Fence that is being built is intended to counter terrorism of the most brutal kind, not to dictate a border that is and remains the subject

of permanent negotiations. It is our hope that by building this fence its very function will become irrelevant and that one day it will be dismantled. On the practical level a fence along this line would create far greater humanitarian problems, arbitrary dividing certain villages, and separating others from access to water and other basic services on a large scale. Moreover, it would ignore the aim of the fence, which is to frustrate acts of terrorism directed against Israeli population centers. It is the terrorists who, by their murderous attacks, have dictated the route, which seeks to protect as many civilians as possible, while seeking to minimize the humanitarian and environmental hardship.

Q: Why has the route been changed in several places?

It should be noted that in addition to security considerations Israel has made every attempt to plan the route so as to avoid any undue hardship to the local population. For example, changes were made after Israeli authorities conducted negotiations with landowners in which their particular needs were taken into account. In certain areas archeological sites, such as the ancient city in Shuweika were discovered, and the route was changed to prevent damage to these historical areas. In other locations Palestinians land registration data was either inaccurate or out-of-date. As new houses were discovered in places which had previously been registered as uninhabited, some of them illegal were buildings, the path of the Security Fence Area had to be modified.

Q: What is the legal status of the land?

The land used in building the Security Fence is seized for military purposes, not confiscated, and it remains the property of the owner. Legal procedures are already in place to allow every owner to file an objection to the seizure of their land. Moreover, property owners are offered compensation for the use of their land and for the damage to their trees. Israel is making every effort to provide local population and landowners with individual solutions to any difficulties caused by the Security Fence.

Q: What is the status of Palestinians who reside between the Security Fence and the Green Line?

Only a small number of Palestinian villages will be included on the western side of the Security Fence. Their residents will not have to relocate and their legal status will remain unchanged.

Q: What will happen to olive trees and other fruit trees?

Farmers who cultivate olive and other fruit trees growing within the Security Fence can designate a new site to which the trees will be relocated which has no free access constraints.

Contractors assigned by The Ministry of Defense to build the Security Fence are responsible for carefully uprooting and replanting the trees. So far over 60,000 olive trees have been relocated in accordance with this procedure. It should be noted that olive trees require scarce treatment, only three weeks a year.

Q: Is the fence effective?

Between Israel and the areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority there is no natural or man made barrier. This enables the almost unhindered entry of Palestinian terrorists into Israel. During the last three years, 117 Palestinian terrorists took advantage of it, entered into Israel and in the act of blowing themselves up murdered 477 people - Jews, Arabs and Christians and wounded thousands others. In contrast, the security fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip that has existed since 1996 has proven its effectiveness and the vast majority of terrorist attempts have been discovered and thwarted.

The first stage of the Security Fence (from Salem to Elkana) which has been operational since July 2003, is already proving itself as an effective defensive deterrent which prevents the repeated attempts to enter Israel and carry out terror attacks.

Members of Palestinian terror infrastructure caught and questioned disclosed the fact that the existence of the Security Fence in the Samaria area forces them to find of other means to perform terror attacks since their previous entry to Israel is blocked.

Q: What is the goal of the fence from a political point of view?

Israel has sought peace with its neighbors consistently since 1947. As recently as at Camp David in 2000 and later at Taba, the government of Israel made generous offers for peace, which were rejected by Arafat. Currently, Israel has accepted the Road Map for peace and is working for its success. However, until the Palestinians end incitement for terror and actually stop terrorists, Israel must defend its citizens. The government of Israel recognizes that the security fence is a temporary tool needed to protect innocents while diplomatic efforts for a lasting peace continue.

