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Restrictions on the movement of people and goods within the West Bank**Technical Note****Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs****November 2005****1. INTRODUCTION**

This paper identifies and analyses the key obstacles that are part of the system of internal closure (the system of checkpoints, roadblocks and permits) that impede movement within the West Bank. It aims to provide a basis for a detailed plan to reduce obstacles, as agreed by the Palestinians and Israelis on 15 November.¹

1.1 What is meant by obstacles to internal movement?

The West Bank closure system comprises a series of obstacles that includes: checkpoints, physical roadblocks and permit restrictions placed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) with the aim of controlling Palestinian movement within the West Bank and between the West Bank and Israel. The purpose of these obstacles, as the Israeli Government notes, is to protect Israeli citizens from Palestinian militant attacks that have killed around 1000 Israelis since September 2000.

As of 1 August 2005, these obstacles include:

- A system of permits which require that Palestinians obtain IDF permission to travel within the West Bank.
- 52 permanently and 7 temporarily-manned checkpoints inside the West Bank.²
- A series of physical road blocks have been deployed to prevent vehicle movement. These include 49 road blocks (consisting of rows of 1-metre concrete blocks), 48 metal gates, 200 earth mounds, 8 earth walls (a long series of earth mounds) and 12 trenches.
- Random or 'flying' checkpoints set-up without warning.

1.2 Impact of restrictions on internal movement

Restrictions on movement within the West Bank hinder access to schools, health care services, work, family and religious sites. In addition, they negatively impact the economy and the movement of goods to and from markets and people to and from their workplace. The positive outcome arising from an easing of restrictions would include:

- lowering transport and transactions costs related to moving goods, thereby making Palestinian products cheaper and more competitive;
- boosting private sector investment, by introducing greater predictability;
- improving Palestinians' access to health, education and other services;
- improving access for rural communities to health, education, water networks and markets;

¹ Agreed documents by Israel and the Palestinians on Movement and Access from and to Gaza, Jerusalem 15 November 2005, S366/05.

² As of 1 August 2005, 376 closure obstacles were recorded in the West Bank – a decline of 37% from February this year (OCHA, *Humanitarian Update*, August 2005).

- improving access for international and humanitarian personnel;
- providing an enabling environment for the investment of three billion dollars per year as indicated by donors to the recovery plan of James Wolfensohn, UN Special Envoy to the Quartet on Gaza Disengagement; and
- supporting the Palestinian Authority's capacity to operate according to the Road map, to develop democratic processes and an effective civil administration.

1.3 Current consensus

Improved internal movement within the West Bank will enhance Palestinian access to essential services and markets. This premise is accepted by all parties – Palestinians, Israelis (albeit with security caveats) and the international community.³ The improvement of internal movement in the West Bank is one of the priorities adopted by the Special Envoy to the Quartet for Disengagement, James Wolfensohn.

1.4 The Road map

To ensure consistency with the Road map, the analysis has focused and based its recommendations on easing Palestinian movement on the current road system. Ultimately, therefore, the end point is a return to the pre-2000 situation when Palestinian movement was only minimally controlled. The Road map requires that: "*Israel withdraws from Palestinian areas occupied from September 28, 2000 and the two sides restore the status quo that existed at that time, as security performance and cooperation progress.*"⁴

2. ANALYSIS

The analysis below compares movement throughout the West Bank in 2000 and 2005 in terms of its impact on commercial traffic, public transport and private transportation.

Three areas of attention are identified, which, if movement was eased, would significantly improve economic and/or quality of life issues for Palestinians:

- Key bottlenecks along main economic routes, a function of permits restrictions, checkpoints – either static or temporary – and back-to-back commercial checkpoints.
- Obstacles that impede rural West Bank villages and communities from accessing services and markets in nearby urban centres.
- Access to tightly restricted areas, including the Jordan Valley, East Jerusalem and area between the Barrier and the Green Line ('closed areas').

For each, an analysis has been undertaken that lists the impact of each obstacle, a recommendation for easing movement and indicators to measure progress.

2.1 Bottlenecks

Bottlenecks restrict interregional movement within the West Bank. They include (i) the permit regime; (ii) checkpoints; (iii) back-to-back platforms where commercial goods are offloaded and then reloaded.

2.1.1 The permit regime

2.1.1.1 Evolution of the permit regime in the West Bank:

³ Office of the Special Envoy for Disengagement, *Periodic Report*, September 2005, p.2.

⁴ A performance-based roadmap to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Annex to Letter dated 7 May from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2003/529).

Since January 2002, traders, bus and taxi companies and private travelers have been required to obtain a permit labelled, 'Special Movement Permit at Internal Checkpoints in Judea and Samaria'.

2.1.1.2 Requirements:

a. Types of permits

The permit system is complex, applied differently from region to region and is not widely understood. Palestinians do not risk traveling between regions without a permit. Possession of a permit eases travel and reduces the risk of being turned back at a checkpoint, including at flying checkpoints. Permits are required for the following purposes (**Table 1**):

- to cross specific internal checkpoints;
- to access the 'closed area' between the Green Line and the Barrier;
- for West Bank residents to access work and their land in the Jordan Valley; and
- for travel to East Jerusalem to access, among other locations, Palestinian institutions such as schools and hospitals, a privately-owned business, the Chambers of Commerce, for worship, to appear in court cases.

Table 1

Checkpoint	Route	Permit needed (by car / bus / truck)	Remarks
Hamra	To the Jordan Valley	All vehicles and pedestrians	Since 19 Oct, only Jordan Valley residents are permitted to use this checkpoint without a permit. Workers in the Jordan Valley and non-resident landowners need to obtain a permit to pass through the checkpoint.
Tayasir	To the Jordan Valley	All vehicles and pedestrians	As above
Ma'ale Efrayim	Nablus, restricting access to Jordan Valley	All vehicles and pedestrians	As above
Al 'Auja	From Jericho to the northern Jordan Valley	All vehicles and pedestrians	As above
Huwwara	Entry / exit Nablus	Buses and cars – no loaded trucks permitted	Pedestrians no longer need permits to pass through the checkpoint.
'Awarta (commercial)	Entry / exit Nablus	Trucks	See Section 2.1.3
Beit Iba	Entry / exit Nablus	Buses and cars	Only trucks with construction material excl. metal and cement are allowed through.
Beit Furik	Entry / exit Nablus	Buses and cars – no trucks permitted	Only Beit Furik and Beit Dejan residents can travel through the checkpoint in private vehicles without permits.
Container (Wadi Nar)	Access between South - middle West Bank	Cars	Since 16 Oct, commercial trucks now require permits.

b. The permit application process

Applying to the DCL for a permit is costly and requires complex documentation (**Table 2**). Traders are more likely to be successful in their permit applications. Private vehicular movement is more difficult and requires a specific and immediate reason for travel. Increasingly, permit applications to access the Closed Areas, such as the area between the Green Line and the Barrier, are rejected for reasons that appear unrelated to security.

Table 2

Requirement	Cost (NIS)
magnetic card	30 - 100 ⁵ (yearly)
driving license	200 (every five years)
vehicle license	750 – 1500 (yearly)
vehicle insurance	1000 – 3500 (yearly)
tax-stamps	35
application form	5-7
Hebrew scribe	15
photos	15
registration with the Chambers of Commerce (trade permits only)	35 (yearly)
Total annual cost - (minimum, including license and insurance)	1850
Total cost per permit (minimum, excluding license and insurance)	70

In practice, few people apply for internal movement permits. Approximately seven percent of licensed private cars have permits for movement inside the West Bank.⁶

Rather than risk being turned back at checkpoints without a permit, the vast majority of West Bank Palestinians have reduced long-distance journeys to a minimum. Travel in private cars is restricted to the locality where they reside.⁷

Instead, West Bank Palestinians use communal taxis and buses. Delays at checkpoints are common and passengers are frequently required to get out and have their papers checked. Several changes of vehicle may be required en route.

2.1.2 Checkpoints

In the West Bank, of the 52 permanently-manned checkpoints, five checkpoints have created severe bottlenecks:

- Container checkpoint (between southern and middle areas of the West Bank);
- Atara Bridge (at the entrance to Ramallah).
- Shave Shomeron, Huwwara and 'Awarta checkpoints (around Nablus).
- Za'atara checkpoint (between Salfit and Nablus governorates).
- Hamra and Tayasir (between the northern West Bank and the Jordan Valley).

2.1.2.1 Container Checkpoint (between south and middle areas of the West Bank):

In 2000, most traffic moving between the northern and southern areas of the West Bank traveled along the Green Line through East Jerusalem on Road 60 and Road 1 passing through Gilo and Ar Ram checkpoints.

⁵ The cost depends on governorate and the card's period of the validity (PMG, *Special Report New Procedures for Obtaining Israeli-Issued Magnetic Identity Cards*, 30 Sept 2005).

⁶ There are 46,166 licensed private cars in the West Bank (PCBS, *Transportation and Communication Statistics: Annual Report 2004*). As of July 2004, 3,412 West Bank Palestinians hold a permit for internal movement (B'Tselem, *Forbidden Roads Regime*, August 2004).

⁷ West Bank Palestinians only travel long distances for urgent reasons and find ways to minimize the time and expense of travel. For example, university students live on campus rather than enduring the daily commute. Workers traveling from other governorates stay overnight at the workplace rather than commute daily.

In 2005, all West Bank vehicular movement through East Jerusalem is prohibited. All north – south movement passes through the Container checkpoint, located on a steep, winding road that runs parallel to Jerusalem.

In addition, southbound traffic cannot approach the checkpoint directly and is redirected on Roads 417 then 398 through the town of Abu Dis. Permits are required for private vehicles' passage through this checkpoint and vehicles are regularly searched.

Container checkpoint separates the southern governorates of Bethlehem and Hebron from the rest of the West Bank.

2.1.2.2 Atara Bridge partial checkpoint (Ramallah):

Access to Ramallah and transit between east and west parts of the West Bank middle area pass through Atara Bridge, north of Ramallah.

In 2000, traffic could move freely along Road 60 entering Ramallah from Jerusalem through Qalandiya (prior to the checkpoint being established there) and via Beit El from the north.

By 2005, travel between Ramallah and eastern, northern and southern West Bank Ramallah is through Atara checkpoint, 11 km to the north of Ramallah city. Travel via Qalandiya no longer occurs as it involves obtaining a permit to enter Jerusalem.

As a result, the Atara Bridge bottleneck separates Ramallah governorate from the north, south and eastern areas of the West Bank.

2.1.2.3 Nablus Area:

Movement into Nablus city is restricted by a combination of permits and checkpoints. In 2000, there were no checkpoints at the entrances to Nablus. Access was from Huwwara or Sarra.

In 2005, movement into Nablus city is through a series of checkpoints - Sara, Huwwara, Beit Iba, and 'Awarta. Most buses, taxis and private cars cross through Huwwara checkpoint at the south of Nablus, involving at least a 30-minute delay. Commercial vehicles enter with the appropriate permit through the Awarta back-to-back commercial checkpoint (discussed below in 2.1.3), with a delay of approximately two hours.

Travel to the north to the districts of Tubas and Jenin from Nablus city is unobstructed via Badhan village.

2.1.2.4 Shave Shomeron, Beit Furik and Hamra checkpoints (access to the northern West Bank):

Prior to disengagement, traffic was able to bypass Nablus to the west via Shave Shomeron and to the east via Beit Furik. These routes enabled traffic from areas to the south to move to the northern West Bank without having to pass through Nablus.

Shave Shomeron checkpoint was closed during disengagement (from 15 August) as the new Road 60 was restricted to the evacuating settler traffic. These restrictions have not been lifted since.

In the past, traffic from Jericho and the southern West Bank to the northern West Bank used Road 90 through the Jordan Valley. Tight permit restrictions mean that only a minimal number of commercial trucks with permits are allowed to use this route (see Table in 2.1.1).

The result is that the northern West Bank is separated from the Jordan Valley as well as from the central and southern regions.

2.1.2.5 Za'atara checkpoint (Nablus):

This checkpoint straddles the junction of Roads 60 (north-south) and 505 (east-west).

In 2000, traffic could move easily along Roads 505 and 60. In 2005 Za'atara checkpoint restricts north-south movement along Road 60. It involves unpredictable delays and permit restrictions are intermittently enforced.

2.1.3 'Awarta back-to-back commercial checkpoint (Nablus)

Commercial goods enter Nablus at Awarta checkpoint following a security inspection conducted by the IDF. The inspection requires drivers to offload goods onto the ground for the soldiers' examination; the goods are then reloaded with the help of forklifts either onto the same truck or onto other trucks waiting on the other side of the checkpoint.⁸

Before 2000, commercial goods were transported door-to-door from the supplier (in Israel or the West Bank) to the trader in the city. Goods manufactured in Nablus were transported unimpeded throughout the West Bank or were stopped at checkpoints along the Green Line when entering Israel.

A specific checkpoint for commercial goods was set up at 'Awarta in April 2003.⁹

Currently, approximately 170 - 200 trucks daily approach 'Awarta checkpoint in both directions. These are mostly Israeli trucks which have greater mobility in the West Bank.¹⁰ The checkpoint is operational daily between 6am and 6pm, excluding Friday afternoons, Saturdays and Jewish holidays. During periods of closure or high security alert, the checkpoint is closed by the IDF. It is estimated that the checkpoint is closed to the passage of goods for a minimum of 57% of the time available in a year.¹¹

From 'Awarta checkpoint to Route 60 south, trucks with Israeli number plates are able to use Route 60 whereas Palestinian-plated vehicles are required to use a longer poor-quality back road.

The back-to-back system increases transaction costs significantly¹² and can damage goods as they are transferred or spoiled by delay in the case of perishables.¹³

The back-to-back system reduces the competitiveness of Palestinian goods and increases reliance on more expensive Israeli trucks to transport goods to and from the city. Restrictions on access have reduced the ability of Nablus companies to trade with the rest of the West Bank.

2.2 Closure on rural West Bank communities

OCHA has identified 25 rural clusters containing 112 villages where movement restrictions have severely affected Palestinians' access to basic services. More than 180,000 Palestinians live in these villages.

⁸ Only Palestinian drivers with permits are allowed to pass goods through the checkpoint on the same truck. Israeli authorities provide a limited number of permits (30 permits per month) for Palestinian trucks to exit Nablus, and these permits are for specific trucks carrying specific cargo (Paltrade, *Trade Impediments*, May 2005)

⁹ As of October 2005, Israeli citizens, Palestinian holders of Jerusalem IDs and holders of international passports can only pass with prior coordination with the IDF liaison office. Petroleum products and bulk chemicals are the only goods allowed to pass through Awarta but require special authorization from the Israeli authorities.

¹⁰ Goods crossing at Awarta include construction materials, foodstuffs and agricultural produce (Paltrade, *Trade Impediments*, April 2005, p. 1).

¹¹ Paltrade. This estimation includes Jewish holidays but excludes periods of closure during security alerts.

¹² For example, Palestinian traders have to pay for the use of forklifts and labourers to shift pallets (respectively NIS 100 - 200 and NIS 5 per pallet).

¹³ Paltrade, *Trade Impediments*, March 2005, p. 4

Rural access has deteriorated as movement along the most direct route available pre-2000 is no longer possible. Villagers need to change vehicles and / or travel part of the journey on foot.¹⁴

Response times of emergency services have increased. Ambulances to these villages often resort to the back-to-back transfer of patients rather than coordinating passage with the IDF.

Closures in rural areas have compressed economic activity pushing residents to purchase essential goods within their village. Rural communities have come to increasingly depend on animal husbandry and subsistence farming due to the rise in transport costs and the difficulty to reach markets.

2.3 Closed Areas

2.3.1 Jordan Valley¹⁵

Access from the West Bank to the Jordan Valley (home to an estimated 53,000 Palestinians as well as several Bedouin communities) is restricted by permits¹⁶, military and protected 'green areas' and difficulties crossing checkpoints. Restrictions to the Jordan Valley have prohibited through traffic along Route 90 which has traditionally been a key access corridor to the northern West Bank (see section 2.1.2.4).

Since May 2005, only Palestinians with an identity card from the Jordan Valley have been allowed to stay in the Jordan Valley north of Al Auja.¹⁷ Others who own land or property in the Jordan Valley but live in the West Bank can no longer access the area without a special permit (see Table in 2.1.1). Permits do not allow overnight stay.

At peak times, delays at Jordan Valley checkpoints range between 30 and 90 minutes.

Before 2000, Palestinians were able to move freely between the Jordan Valley and other areas in the West Bank. No permit restrictions were in place.

Workers are required to have a permit to work in the Jordan Valley. Work permits are issued by the Israeli DCO or the settlements within which the farmhands work. Permits are valid for a limited period of time, and are subject to security restrictions.

Restrictions on movement can result in the loss of crops as workers are not available to harvest a field or the goods are not able to leave the area. Transport delays can also lead to deterioration in the quality and value of goods.

2.3.2 Area between the Green Line and the Barrier

The construction of the Barrier, most of which lies inside the West Bank, has created a number of closed areas between the Green Line and the Barrier. An estimated 49,000 Palestinians will live in these areas once the Barrier is completed.

¹⁴ In August 2004, OCHA field surveys of 130 villages across the West Bank showed an average increase by 50% of both the time and cost required to move from rural communities to reach basic service providers and the nearest markets.

¹⁵ The Jordan Valley refers here to the section of the Valley within the boundaries of the West Bank stretching from Tubas governorate in the North to the Southern tip of Jericho governorate. Its current *de facto* delineation is made by the Jordan River to the East and Tayasir, Hamra, Maale Efrayim and Yitav checkpoints to the West. Today this area consists of Israeli military zones, national reserves, settlements and Palestinian villages. Since 1967, five military outposts and more than 20 settlements have been established throughout the Jordan Valley on either side of road 90.

¹⁶ In the second half of 2005, residents of the Jordan Valley were required to obtain permits to pass through the checkpoints in the area. Non-residents of the Jordan Valley are forbidden from entering the area unless they have a work permit issued by one of the settlements in the Jordan Valley.

¹⁷ Only residents of Bardala, Kardala and 'Ein Al Beida, and permit-holders can pass through Tayasir checkpoint. People who live in Bardala and have Tubas as a birthplace on their identity card face difficulties crossing the checkpoint.

Palestinians need to apply for a permit to continue living in these closed areas as well as to access these areas from the other side of the Barrier. Increasingly, the UN observes that Israel is narrowing the eligibility requirements for Palestinians wanting to pass through the Barrier. In addition, the erratic operation of Barrier gates means that those who successfully obtain a permit are not guaranteed regular access to these closed areas.

According to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (9 July 2004), the construction of the Barrier in the oPt together with any restrictions on access through are illegal.

2.3.3 East Jerusalem

The combination of the Barrier, Israeli settlements, permit restrictions and physical obstacles serve to separate East Jerusalem from the West Bank. This undermines East Jerusalem's role as a centre for commerce, education, health and other services. It also means that travel between the northern and southern parts of the West Bank involves a time-consuming and costly detour around East Jerusalem.

Prior to September 2000, travel through East Jerusalem was the most direct and widely used route between the southern and northern West Bank. East Jerusalem also served as a central market for West Bank produce.

Movement between East Jerusalem and the West Bank is crucial for future socio-economic and political development. Employees of education and health institutions regardless of their position or specialization should not be required to request permits from the Israeli authorities. Recognised and registered business owners from the West Bank with established businesses in Jerusalem should have access to their place of work.