



ICAHD

The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions
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OBSTACLES TO PEACE

A REFRAMING OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

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WHAT IS ICAHD? THE ISRAELI COMMITTEE AGAINST HOUSE DEMOLITIONS

The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) is a non-violent Israeli direct-action organization established in 1997 to end Israel's Occupation over the Palestinians. A grassroots organization, ICAHD has focused on the Big political Picture even while engaging in protest, resistance and informational activities "on the ground." We seek, together with our Palestinian, Israeli and international partners, to formulate and achieve a genuinely just political settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian "conflict," one that revolves around the creation of a single democratic state over the entire country.

As its name implies, ICAHD takes as the main focus of its resistance Israel's policy of demolishing Palestinian homes, both in Israel and in the Occupied Territory. A key element of "judaization," of transforming Palestine into the Land of Israel, is the demolition of Palestinian homes and entire communities. During the Nakba some 52,000 Palestinian homes were destroyed, more than 530 villages, towns and urban neighborhoods. Since the Occupation began in 1967, another 54,000 homes have been demolished (as of this writing), while additional thousands have been demolished inside Israel from the time of the Nakba until today. Resisting Israel's policy of house demolitions, then, is addressing the essence of the "conflict": one people displacing another. This has proven a powerful and effective vehicle for reframing the "conflict" from one of security, as Israel portrays it, to one of one-sided settler colonialism, ethnic cleansing and judaization rather than mutual conflict.

ICAHD operates on several levels:

- *Resistance "on the ground."* ICAHD members physically resist the demolition of Palestinian homes and rebuilds homes that Israel has demolished as political acts of resistance, together with Palestinian partners and international supporters. Over the past 20 years we have rebuilt 189 homes.
- *Advocacy within Israel.* ICAHD attempts to reach the wider Israeli society through its informational materials in Hebrew, networking with other Israeli organizations and conducting Hebrew-language tours in the Occupied Territory.
- *International Advocacy.* ICAHD's familiarity with realities "on the ground," combined with its political analysis rooted in Israeli politics and society, gives it unique authority and political insight. Our views are frequently sought by diplomats, journalists, political delegations and fact-finding missions, church and Jewish groups, and the general public. ICAHD conducts extensive and systematic advocacy campaigns abroad supported by ICAHD USA, ICAHD UK, ICAHD Finland and ICAHD Germany, along with many other partner organizations. ICAHD also initiates campaigns abroad and participates in international conferences.
- *Cooperation with Palestinian organizations and communities.* ICAHD can only operate in the Occupied Territory in close collaboration with its Palestinian partners. By the same token, it is engaged with them in formulating an end-game – one democratic state – and strategizing towards its realization.

For more information about our activities or to join us in our efforts, please contact us or our ICAHD chapters abroad:

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FORWARD

This manual is the product of twenty years of activity “on the ground” in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) that has produced a powerful “grounded” analysis. It begins with the basic “facts on the ground,” clearly illustrated by maps produced by ICAHD that highlight key political elements. It then moves on to analysis. We examine here the mechanisms by which Israel has managed to perpetuate its control over the Palestinians and their lands, not least being an effective security framing” by which successive Israeli governments have succeed in “selling” their Occupation as somehow justifiable. How have they managed to convince their own people, let alone otherwise liberal people abroad including much of the Jewish Diaspora, to support policies which are manifestly unjust and downright illegal, fundamental violations of human rights? How have they succeeded in casting Palestinians as “terrorists” while portraying themselves, one of the world’s strongest military powers engaged in a prolonged campaign of displacement and repression, as mere victims?

Besides addressing these fundamental questions, this manual is intended to help advocates of a just peace “reframe” the conflict in ways that offer just, workable and sustainable solutions to the conflict. Since this is a book published by a critical Israeli peace and human rights organization, it does not hesitate to place responsibility for resolving the conflict mainly at Israel’s doorstep. This is not to absolve the Palestinians of responsibility; it simply recognizes the tremendous imbalance of power between the two sides, and thus of their respective abilities to end the conflict. Thus our reframing stresses three key elements: that an Occupation indeed exists and is the center of the conflict (since 1967 Israel has officially denied this fact); that Israel is the strong party in the conflict, the only one that can actually end the Occupation, and which therefore can be held accountable for its policies and actions (rather than Israel’s disingenuous presentation of itself as the victim); and that the Occupation is pro-active, a vehicle for establishing Israel’s permanent control over the entire country, not defensive or reactive. Our reframing also critically questions the concept of “terrorism” and its role in the conflict.

But we go further. ICAHD has always seen itself as a political actor. Not content with protest, resistance and analysis, we understand that without a political end-game our efforts are futile. We also understand that governments, who are supposed to manage our international affairs, will not themselves come up with a political settlement based on human rights, international law and justice. That task rests with us, the people, led by the Palestinians, supported by their critical Israeli partners and ultimately backed by you, the international civil society. Together we must force governments to adopt a just resolution to this “conflict.” Towards that end ICAHD has taken a leading role in formulating a just peace and advocating for it. We played an instrumental role in the establishment of the One Democratic State Campaign (ODSC), and our concept of a shared state is outlined below. A lot rides on our success. Israel's ongoing Occupation represents a profound challenge to a global system based on international law, universal human rights, justice, equality and inclusiveness. Fail here, and we will have a much tougher time prevailing over oppressive regimes in the future. This manual is intended to empower you to act together with us, for a just peace in the Israel/Palestine, a major step towards a new inclusive, just and peaceful world system.

KEY TO MAPS

Map 1: 1947 UN Partition of Palestine

The UN Partition Plan tried to divide the country according to demographic concentrations, but the Palestinian and Jewish populations were so intertwined that that became impossible. Although the Jews comprised only a third of the country's population (548,000 out of 1,750,000) and owned only 6% of the land, they received 55% of the country (including both Tel Aviv/Jaffa and Haifa port cities, the Sea of Galilee and the resource-rich Negev). In the area allocated to the Jewish state, only about 57% of the population was actually Jewish (538,000 Jews, 397,000 Arabs). The Jewish community accepted the Partition Plan; the Palestinians (except those in the Communist Party) and the Arab countries rejected it.

Map 2: Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories

By the end of the 1948 war – called the War of Independence by Israel and the *Naqba* (“Disaster”) by the Palestinians – Israel controlled 78% of the country, including half the territory that had been allocated by the UN to the Palestinians. Some 750,000 Palestinians living in what became Israel were made refugees or “internally displaced” people; only 100,000 remained in their homes. More than 418 villages, two-thirds of the villages of Palestine, were systematically destroyed by Israel after their residents had left or been driven out. Of the Arab areas, now reduced to 22% of the country, the West Bank was taken by Jordan and Gaza by Egypt. The 1949 Armistice Line, today known as the “Green Line,” *de facto* demarcates the State of Israel until today. Since 1988, when the Palestinians recognized Israel within that boundary, it has constituted the basis of the two-state option, with the Palestinians claiming a state on all the lands conquered by Israel in 1967: the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza.

Maps 3-7: Five Elements Defining the Palestinian Bantustan

Israel defines its policy of ensuring permanent control over the Occupied Territories as “creating facts on the ground.” In this conception, Israeli control must be made immune from any external or internal pressures to remove Israel from the Occupied Territories (which Israel vehemently denies is an occupation at all), as well as to foreclose forever the possibility of a *viable and truly sovereign* Palestinian state. Nevertheless, even Israel recognizes that it needs a Palestinian state, since it can neither extend citizenship to the Territories’ three and a half million Palestinians nor deny it to them. It also needs a Palestinian state to relieve itself of the necessity of accepting the refugees. A Bantustan, a cantonized Palestinian mini-state controlled by Israel yet possessing a limited independence, thus solves Israel’s fundamental dilemma of how to keep control over the entire country yet “get rid of” its Palestinian population (short of actual “transfer”). The contours of that Bantustan are defined by five elements comprising Israel’s Matrix of Control as illustrated in the following maps: (1) Areas A and B; (2) the closure; (3) the settlement blocs; (4) the infrastructure; and (5) the Separation Barrier/Wall. A full (if complex) picture of the Matrix of Control is depicted in Map 10, and the truncated Palestinian mini-state Israel is creating in Map 11.

Map 3: Defining the Palestinian Bantustan. Element #1: West Bank Areas A, B and C

In the Oslo II agreement of 1995, the West Bank was divided into three Areas: A, under full Palestinian Authority control; B, under Palestinian civil control but joint Israeli-Palestinian security; and C, under full Israeli control. Although Area A was intended to expand until it included all of the West Bank except Israel’s settlements, its military facilities and East Jerusalem – whose status would then be negotiated – in fact the division became a permanent feature. Area A comprises 18% of the West Bank, B another 22%, leaving a full 60%, Area C,

including most of Palestinian farmland and water, under exclusive Israeli control. These areas, comprising 64 islands, shape the contours of the “cantons” Sharon proposed as the basis of the future Palestinian state. The emerging Bantustan will thus consist of five truncated cantons: a northern one around Nablus and Jenin; a central one around Ramallah; a southern one around Bethlehem and Hebron; enclaves in East Jerusalem; and Gaza. In this scheme Israel will expand from its present 78% to 85-90%, with the Palestinian state confined to just 10-15% of the country. In January 2020, Prime Minister Netanyahu announced that his government was poised to annex the Jordan Valley, to be followed by “all the settlements.”

Map 4: Defining the Palestinian Bantustan. Element #2: The Closure and House Demolitions

At the very beginning of the Oslo peace process Israel established an ever-constrictive system of permanent “closure” over the Occupied Territories, a regime both arbitrary and counter-productive. Arbitrary because there was no particular rise in terrorism or security threats during this time; the security situation was certainly better than it was during the first Intifada, when there was no closure whatsoever. And counter-productive because, rather than benefiting the Palestinians, it meant that the “peace process” had actually impoverished and imprisoned them, destroying their commerce and industry and de-developing their emerging country. The permanent checkpoints depicted on the map, together with hundreds of other “flying” checkpoints erected spontaneously throughout the Territories and earthen barriers to the entrances to virtually all the Palestinian cities, towns and villages, present some 750 obstacles to Palestinian movement on any given day. They serve to accustom the Palestinians to living in a collective space defined by Areas A and B. When these cantons finally become a truncated Palestinian state, the Palestinians will already be adapted to its narrow confines. So minimal will be the Palestinians’ expectations, in Israel’s calculations, that the addition of corridors linking the cantons will give them the feeling of “freedom.” thus leading them to acquiesce to the Bantustan. Israel’s policy of house demolitions, by which more than 55,000 Palestinian homes and structures (barns, livestock pens, fences, plus schools, clinics, mosques and other public buildings) have been demolished between 1967-2020 is designed to confine the Palestinian population to the islands of A and B as well as small enclaves in East Jerusalem. (It is also a policy that impacts seriously on the Arab population within Israel.)

Map 5: Defining the Palestinian Bantustan. Element #3: Israel’s Settlement Blocs

When Ehud Barak proposed to “jump” to final status negotiations in 1999, he consolidated the settlements Israel sought to retain into “blocs,” leaving the more isolated and less strategic ones vulnerable to dismantling. Thus, instead of dealing with 200 settlements, Barak had only to negotiate the annexation of seven settlement blocs (in pink): (1) the Jordan Valley Bloc; (2) the Ariel Bloc that divides the West Bank east and west and preserves Israeli control over the Territories largest water aquifer; (3) the Modi’in Bloc, connecting the Ariel settlements to Jerusalem; a “Greater Jerusalem” consisting of (4) the Givat Ze’ev Bloc to the northwest of the city, (5) the expansive Ma’aleh Adumim bloc extending to the northeast and east of Jerusalem and (6) the Etzion Bloc to the southwest; and (7) a corridor rising from the settlements in the south to incorporate the Jewish community of Hebron. While the extent of these settlements blocs is to some extent subject to negotiations, their function, however, is to further define and divide the Palestinian cantons. Representing some 25% of the West Bank, their annexation to Israel has been approved by the US in the bi-lateral Bush-Sharon Exchange of Letters in April 2004. (Within the settlement blocs are depicted both the settlements themselves and the master plans that surround and extend them.)

Map 6: Defining the Palestinian Bantustan. Element #4: The Infrastructure of Control

In order to incorporate the West Bank and East Jerusalem permanently into Israel proper, a \$3 billion system of highways and “by-pass roads” has been constructed that integrates the settlement blocs into the metropolitan areas of Tel Aviv, Modi’in and Jerusalem, while creating additional barriers to Palestinian movement. This ambitious project articulates with the Trans-Israeli Highway, now being built along the entire length of the country, hugging the West Bank in its central portion. Shifting Israel’s population center eastward from the coast to the corridor separating Israel’s major cities from the settlement blocs it seeks to incorporate, the Trans-Israel Highway will become the new spine of the country, upon which the by-pass road network can be hung. The result is the reconfiguration of the country from two parallel north-south units – Israel and the West Bank, the basis of the two-state idea – into one country integrated east-west. Besides ensuring Israeli control, the reorientation of traffic, residential and commercial patterns further weakens a truncated Palestinian mini-state; each Palestinian canton is integrated separately into Israel, with only tenuous connections one to the other.

Map 7: Defining the Palestinian Bantustan. Element #5: The Separation Barrier/Wall

The final defining element of the bantustan is the Separation Barrier, known by its opponents as the Apartheid Wall both because it serves to make permanent an apartheid situation between Israelis and Palestinians, and because it rises to a massive concrete wall of eight meters (26 feet) when reaching Palestinian population centers – replete with prison-like watch towers, gates, security roads, electronic fences and deadly armaments. While sold to the public as an innocent security device, the Barrier in fact defines the border between Israel (including the areas of the West Bank and East Jerusalem Israel seeks to annex) and the Palestinian mini-state. It follows not the Green Line but establishes a new demographic line that extends Israel eastward into the West Bank. Although the Barrier’s overall route has been moved closer to the Green Line in light of the International Court of Justice’s ruling, the addition of “supplementary security zones” and “special security zones” to the Barrier’s complex still retains the convoluted route around the settlement blocs in order to ensure they are on the “right” side of the Barrier. When completed the Separation Barrier will be five times longer than the Berlin Wall (some 700 kms versus 155), in places twice as high and will unilaterally annex East Jerusalem and some 8% of the West Bank. As an installation costing \$2 billion, it is not designed to be dismantled.

As is plain when the route of the Wall is superimposed on the settlement blocs, its purpose is two-fold: to incorporate the settlement blocs while defining in concrete the enclaves in which the Palestinians will be confined.

Map 8: The State of Israel and the Emerging Palestinian Bantustan

This map depicts the end result of 70 years of conquest, displacement, occupation and annexation. It is based on the elements of the Matrix of Control depicted in the previous maps and set in concrete by the Wall. It clearly shows how a Palestinian Bantustan is being created, composed of four enclaves occupying about 15% of historic Palestine, with no international borders, no territorial contiguity or internal freedom of movement, little economic viability, limited access to Jerusalem, no control of its water supplies and no control of its airspace. The Bantustan would arise on about 40% of the West Bank, although cosmetic changes – adding the Jordan Valley and the Judean Desert to the east, for example, -- could flesh out the mini-state without endangering the settlement blocs, “greater” Jerusalem or overall Israeli control. Altogether, the Palestinians, who will soon be the majority in the country, will be confined to 10% of the land.

What is remarkable is how much the ICAHD map corresponds to the map that accompanied the Trump “Deal of the Century” in 2020, even though our map was produced 15 years earlier! Besides a few cosmetic additions, all the Jared Kushner/Benjamin Netanyahu team did was color in the area enclosed by the Wall. Both maps confront the international community with a stark choice: either accept and condone Israeli apartheid or support the establishment of a single democratic state between the River and the Sea.

Map 9: Municipal Jerusalem, with the Separation Barrier

In 1967 Israel annexed an area of 70 sq. kms., which it called “East” Jerusalem, to the 38 sq. kms. that had comprised Israeli “West” Jerusalem since 1948, even though the Palestinian side of the city under Jordan was just 6 sq. kms. It gerrymandered the municipal border according to two principles: incorporating as much unbuilt-upon Palestinian land as possible for future Israeli settlements (depicted in blue), while excluding as much of the Palestinian population as possible so as to maintain a 72% Jewish majority in the city. As the concentrations of Palestinian population show (in brown), the municipal border cut in half a living urban fabric of communities, families, businesses, schools, housing and roads. Its placement of settlements prevents the urban development of Palestinian Jerusalem – the economic and cultural as well as religious center of Palestinian life – transforming its residential and commercial areas into disconnected enclaves. There are today more Israelis living in “East” Jerusalem (more than 200,000) than Palestinians. Since Palestinians cannot live in “West” Jerusalem, Israeli restrictions on building (combined with an aggressive campaign of house demolitions) have confined that population to a mere 6% of the urban land – although they are a third of the Jerusalem population. Discriminatory administrative and housing measures have led to the “Quiet Transfer” of thousands of Palestinian families out of the city, and to the loss of their Jerusalem residency.

Map 10: The Three Jerusalems: Municipal, Greater and Metropolitan

Jerusalem is being turned from a city into a region that controls the entire central portion of the West Bank. In addition to municipal Jerusalem whose boundaries were established by Israel unilaterally as political facts in 1967, an artificial urban entity defined by an “inner ring” of settlements, a “Greater Jerusalem” with an “outer ring” of settlements is in the process of extending the city far into the West Bank. If “Greater Jerusalem” is intended for annexation, an even wider area – Metropolitan Jerusalem – is a planning unit designed to ensure that Ramallah and Bethlehem remain undeveloped satellite cities dependent upon Israeli Jerusalem even if they eventually fall across a political border separating Israel from Palestine.

The map also shows the “E-1” area, 4000 acres annexed to Ma’aleh Adumim in a combined move by the Netanyahu and Barak governments. With the addition of E-1, Ma’aleh Adumim’s master plan extends entirely across the West Bank from Jerusalem to Jericho, effectively severing the northern West Bank from the south. Palestinian traffic will likely be diverted into Israeli territory (along the “Eastern Ring Road” now being constructed in East Jerusalem), allowing Israel to control Palestinian movement even in the event that a Palestinian state emerges. E-1 reveals the subtle, sophisticated and effective use of planning for control employed by Israel.

Map 11: The “Judaization” of the Old City

Jerusalem, of course, represents one of the keys to a genuine solution to the conflict. Not only is it absolutely central to Palestinian political, cultural and religious life, but it represents the economic heart of any Palestinian state. Some 40% of the Palestinian economy will revolve around tourism in Jerusalem and its related industries.

Rather than share the city, Israeli seeks to keep Jerusalem's resources exclusively to itself while denying a Palestinian state any developmental potential. "Judaization," Israel's own term for its policies of cleansing the country of any Palestinian presence, takes place on many levels. But physically taking over the urban space of the city while fragmenting Palestinian areas into small enclaves and isolating Palestinian "East Jerusalem" from the wider Palestinian society is key to this process. How this is done in radiating circles of control is illustrated in the following maps.

On the map are marked more than 50 locales *outside of the Jewish Quarter* where Israel has either established settlements or other types of "judaization," such as tunnels and archaeological parks which emphasize the Jewish connection to the city while destroying all the others, Muslim and Arab in particular. It is clear, as the settlers continually assert, that the entire Old City is considered "Jewish" property. Thus the settlements extend into the Muslim Quarter (dubbed on Israeli maps "the New Jewish Quarter"), including a large Israeli-only apartment complex in the heart of the Muslim Quarter, along the northeast walls by Herod's Gate. There is also a large settlement in a Palestinian building next to the Holy Sepulchre, in the Christian Quarter, taken over by Israelis in 1990.