

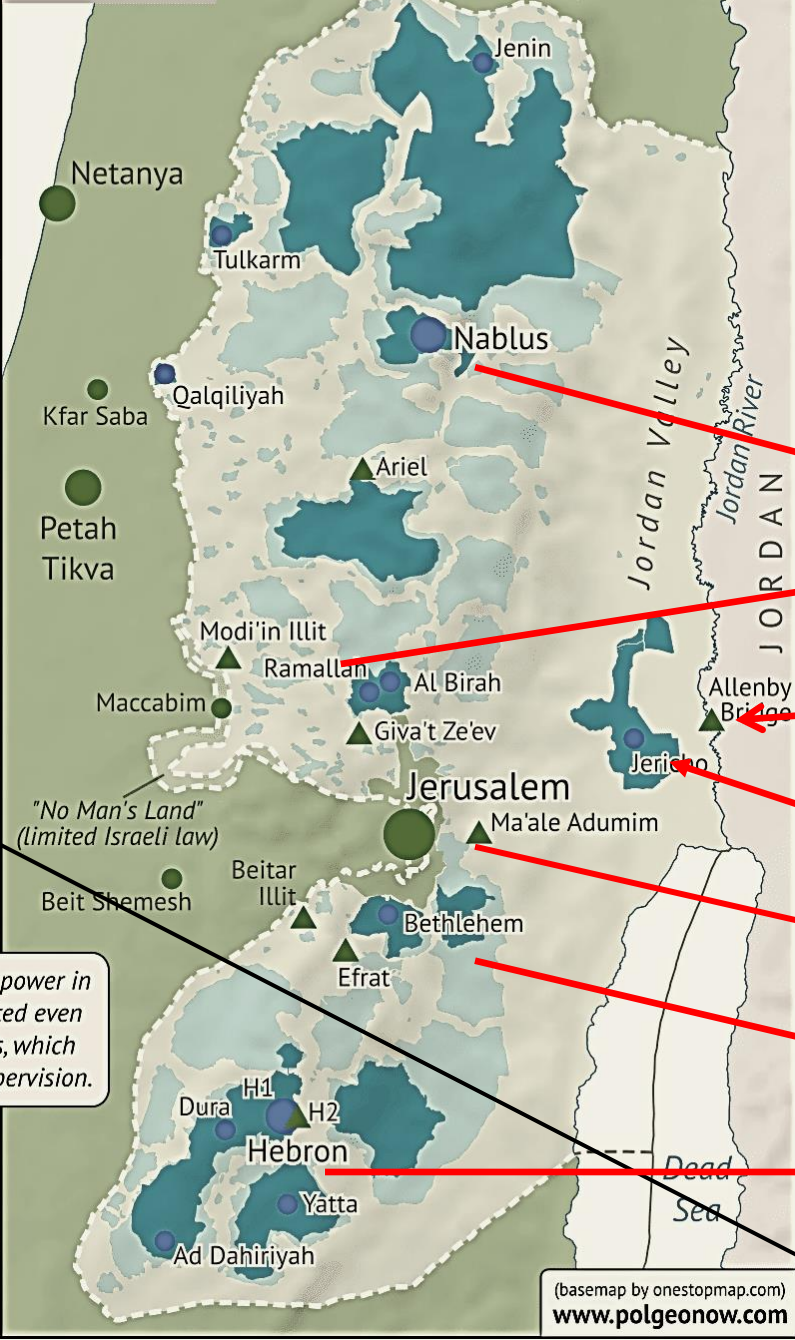
Visit to Palestine

9th – 23rd November 2024



Israel/Palestine

West Bank



Geopolitical map of Israel and Palestine.

Key
 Khaki colour areas show Israel. The light colour near Gaza is also Israel. A military zone.
 The other colours are Palestine including all the Israeli settlements

1. Nablus
2. Ramallah
3. Jordan/Palestine border crossing
4. Jericho
5. Jerusalem
6. Bethlehem
7. Hebron
8. Sderot/Gaza

We only visited Israel once when we went to Sderot. Everywhere else was in occupied territory.



Lorries queuing up to cross the border. We had to find an alternative route

The Allenby or King Hussain bridge between Jordan and Israel

What is left of the Jordan River



Almost every hilltop has an illegal settlement on it. Some are small ones and others such as Har Homa, overlooking Bethlehem, are huge cities.





The **settlement infrastructure** includes **bypass roads**, which are designed to allow Israeli settlers to travel between settlements without interacting with or even seeing Palestinian communities. These roads, along with other forms of infrastructure like **electricity, internet, and military installations**, are being built on Palestinian lands.





The Israeli flyover avoids all contact or even sight of the Palestinians



A so-called agricultural gate for the Palestinians to access their land. It is rarely open and never for long enough.

Al Makhroun valley, UNESCO-recognised and near Bethlehem is one of the last two remaining green and recreational spaces left for Palestinians. There is a, so-far, small illegal settlement in the middle of it, where a Palestinian family and business were expelled. Today the area is under imminent threat of being annexed, therefore becoming accessible exclusively for Israelis.

<https://www.newarab.com/features/palestinian-christians-demand-settler-stolen-unesco-land-back>





The entrance to the Jordan river and the baptismal site of Jesus. Closed.

Checkpoints are frequently closed for no apparent reason. They were inconvenient for us, but for Palestinians they often mean long journeys on potholed narrow roads, leading to loss of time, extra petrol, and severe wear and tear on vehicles.



Typical red or yellow gate, installed and often closed by Israel, preventing Palestinians from easily accessing their village or land



Israeli roads are widened by just taking more Palestinian land. While Palestinians are forced to drive on old potholed, narrow roads to access their own homes and land

You can see the winding rough back roads that Palestinians are forced to take.





Wi'am , Conflict Transformation Centre next to wall

<https://www.alaslah.org/>

This area of Bethlehem is one of the most teargassed areas in the world.

Israeli's calls the wall their security barrier, but Palestinians call it the annexation wall because 85% of it is built inside the West Bank taking more land.

The Israeli military also use skunk water—a disgusting foul-smelling liquid, which is spayed on and clings to, skin, clothes, buildings, cars, and homes. The smell lingers for days and gets worse when washed with water. It is claimed to be chemical-free, but the lingering smell and its ability to trigger alarms at checkpoints or airports suggest otherwise.



Anastas Walled-In Guest House the original worst view in the world. www.anastasinbethlehem.com



Clair's family paid taxes to Israel. Her property was legally in Israel.

When Israel built the wall, it preserved the house by surrounding it, placing her on the Palestinian side.

It means that she is in a sort of unwelcome no-man's land. She used to make a good trade with her shop and guest house until Banksy's Wall-Off Hotel was established. Now trade is dead.





Teybeh village is the only village left that is uniquely Christian. It is also known for its beer.

We were due to pick Olives with Rabbis for Human Rights. That was prevented as one area after another was made a closed military zone by the IDF and we all had to leave the area. Many olives will not be picked this year. Terrible for the Palestinian farmers



As we left, a French diplomat arrived to also pick olives. We explained the situation and left him and his entourage.



Multiple locks to undo before entering the **Tent of Nations**, southwest of Bethlehem

They are never granted planning permission and only receive demolition orders for structures including for water storage, so caves are used for accommodation.



The Tent of Nations has had a long running battle in the Israeli courts to keep their land.

Over the years their fruit trees have been bulldozed by Israeli forces and they have suffered many incursions from Israeli settlers.



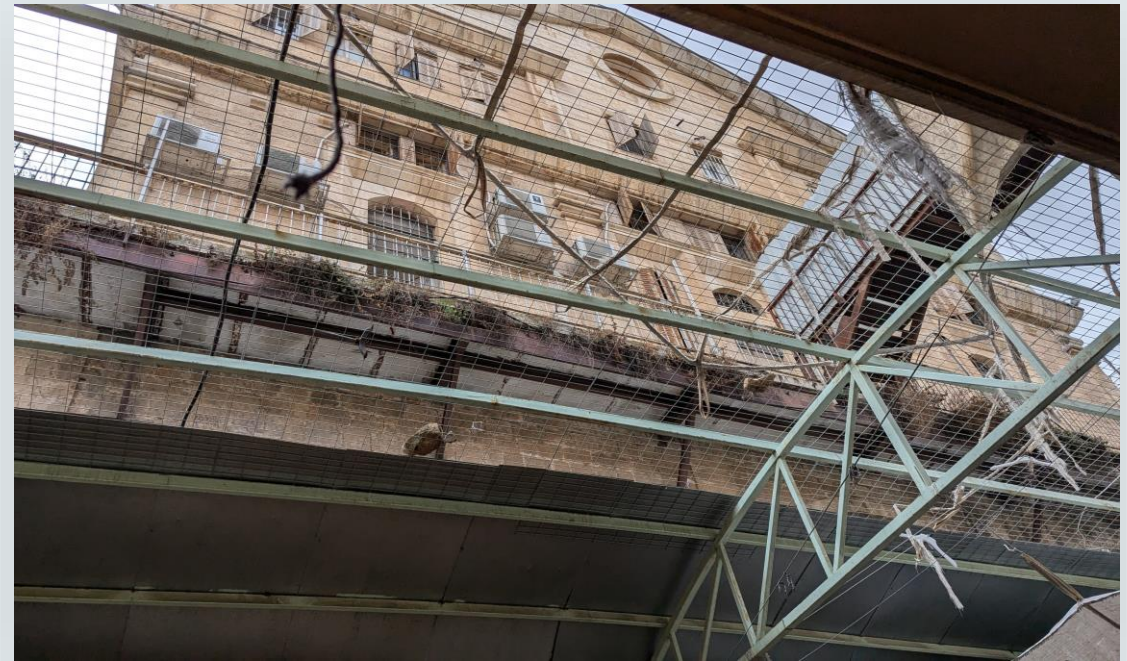
Illegal settlements surround the Tent of Nations, and they are under constant pressure and attack to give up the land.

A nearby illegal Israeli settlement has built a school adjacent to their land, a road is being constructed and a caravan and shed have been placed actually on their land, by settlers. They have no recourse they can use to remove them, except the courts, which are heavily weighted against them.





The Old City of Hebron, occupied by illegal settlements



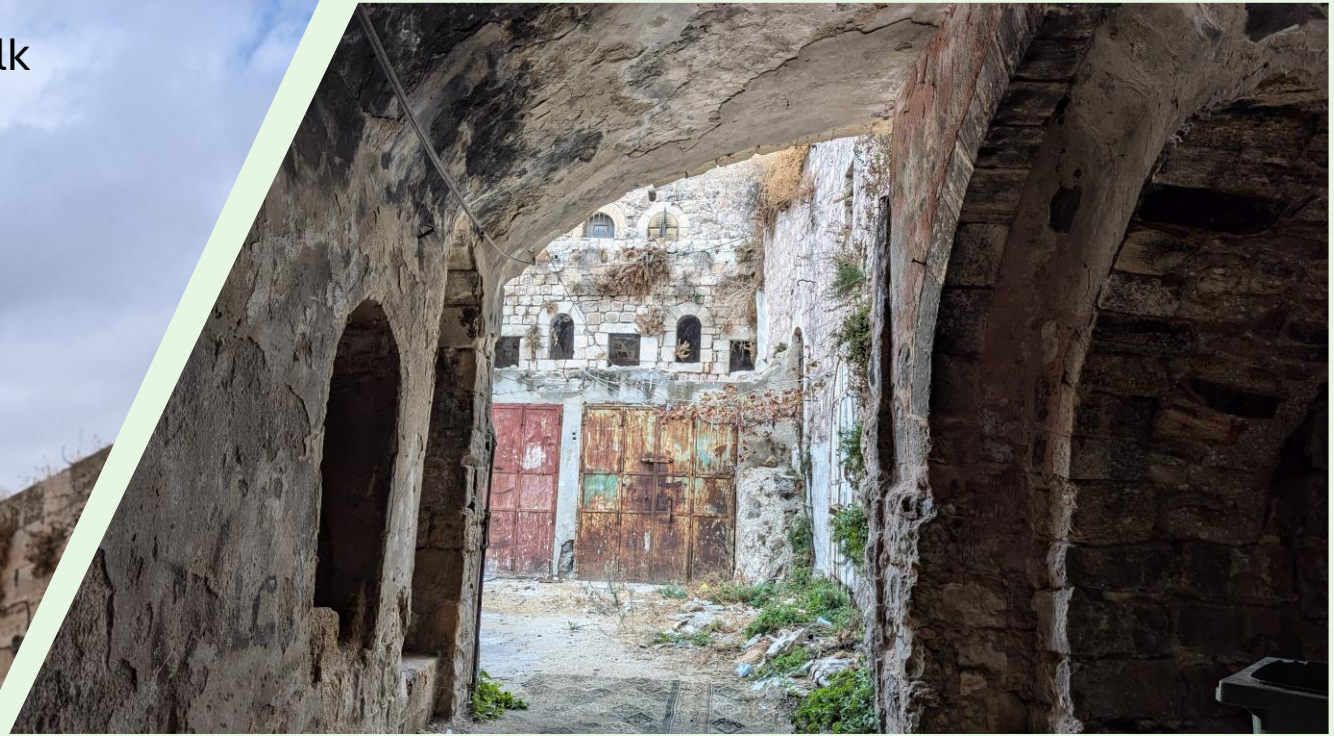
The wire mesh is there to protect the Palestinians from the settlers who throw all sorts of things down



A very dirty nappy thrown down from the settlement

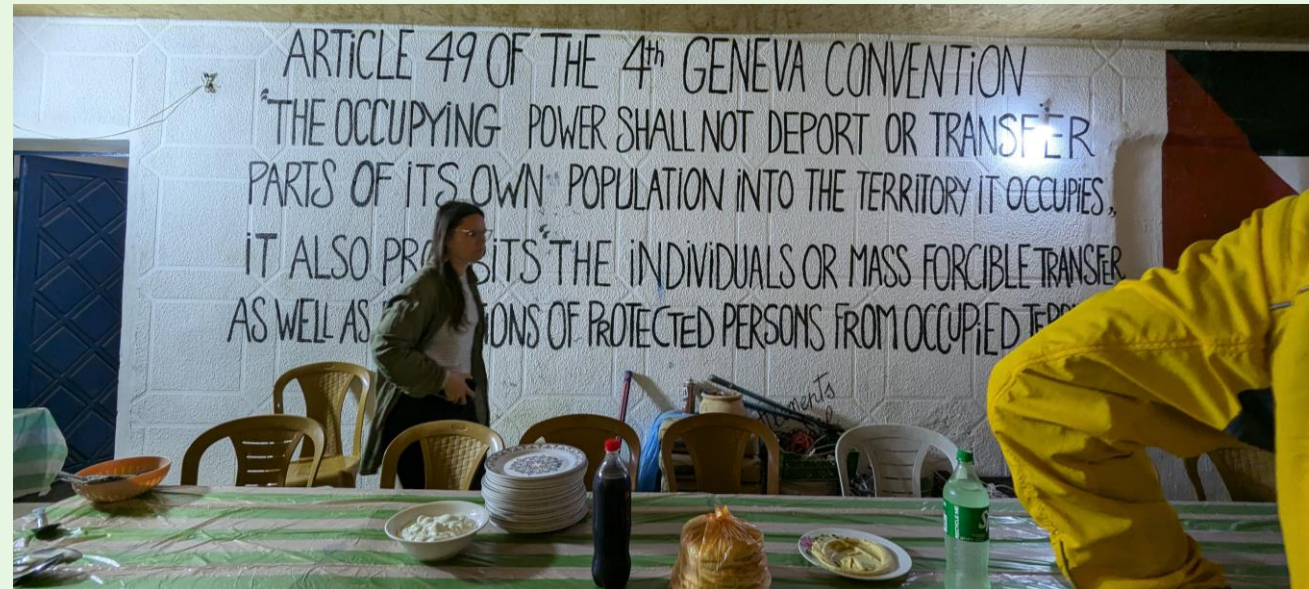


Shuhada Street, closed to Palestinians. We can walk there. Palestinians are not allowed to. Many old city shops are closed and decaying



Issa Amro and Youth Against Settlements

https://www.hebronfriends.org/youth_against_settlements



At the checkpoint by the Ibrahimi mosque, the soldiers confiscated a large wooden spoon and 2 walking sticks that were apparently dangerous weapons! We did get them back eventually, but before that, we met with Issa Amro at Youth Against Settlements, [Amro / Youth Against Settlements - Right Livelihood](#).



On our way out we were prevented from leaving until the IDF commander gave permission!! No threats but causing us inconvenience.

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ya' crossing





This is the car park for the **Armenian Quatre** of the Old City of Jerusalem, known as The Cow's Garden. There has been a dispute about the ownership of this land as well as the dining hall of the Armenian seminary, the private garden and parking of the patriarch, as well as the homes of five Armenian families.

There has been a year long battle over it and you can see in the photo the remains of a blockade set up by the young people of the church who camped out here when settlers turned up with bulldozers.

On 18 February, Armenian - activists launched a legal case based on documents dating back more than 400 years showing the land was held in trust for the community



Jerusalem was rather surreal. Except for the war planes going overhead late every evening, there was no indication in the Old City that there was a war on or even that there were hostages.

Al Aqsa Mosque Compound.

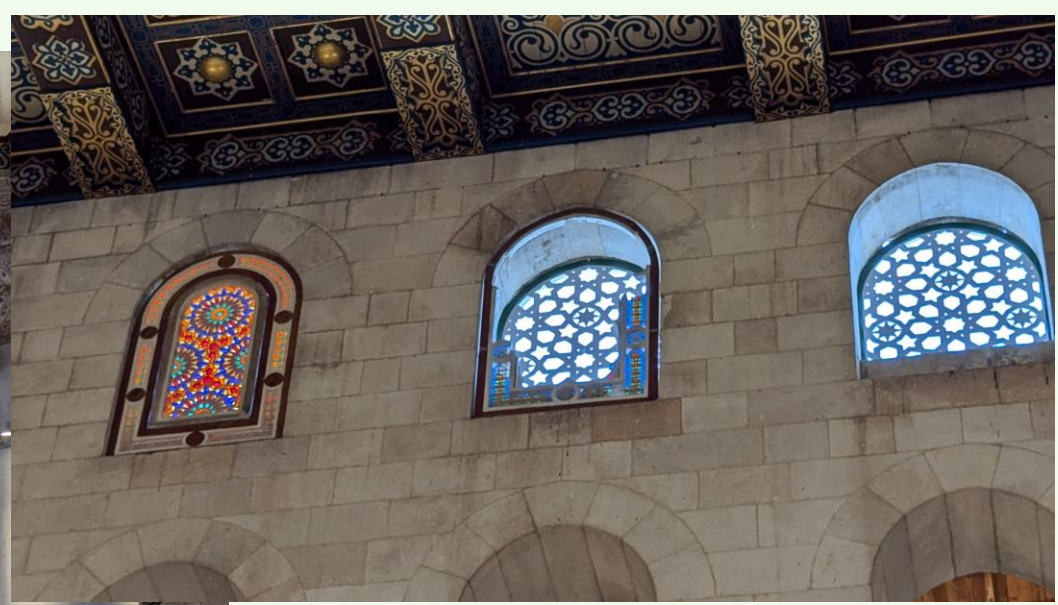
One of the joys of travelling with Sabeel is the access that they have to places such as the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa Mosque. Our official tour guide has an office in the grounds and Israel will not allow any maintenance or repairs to the building.



Broken plug socket



Broken window needs repairing and basic maintenance is necessary.



You can see the damage around the Al Aqsa Mosque caused by the Israeli forces in a raid 18 months ago. which Israel will not allow them to repair. Broken decorative windows and a door. It is made very difficult to maintain the religious and cultural heritage sites under occupation.



As we travelled towards the border with Gaza there were yellow chairs at the side of the road with the pictures and names of the hostages. There were also yellow flags and ribbons on cars





Rabbis for Human Rights,
<https://www.rhr.org.il/aboutus>
 Plus, a local Israeli resident who agreed to being questioned

The viewpoint over Gaza, partially funded by the USA.
 We saw Israeli children and tourists enjoying the view.



We met a woman who lived in a small village nearby and with Rabbis for Human Rights. Both had been traumatised by 7th October. The woman told us how she had worked toward making life in Gaza more comfortable in any way she was able to for those living in Gaza prior to 7th Oct but seemed not to understand that caging and blockading people in a tiny area indefinitely was not sustainable. Rabbis for HR were much more aware and understanding.



White smoke shows demolitions
Grey smoke is caused by missiles

You can see part of Israeli barriers
with Gaza

Before we left Palestine, we visited UNWRA in Jerusalem and heard about the Israeli actions against them and what it will mean for them and for all Palestinians, especially Gaza. There really is no substitute for the work they do.

3 new Bills have been passed in the Knesset

- They along with human rights organisations and NGOs have been designated a terrorist organisation
- All their privileges have been rescinded
- All their operations will be stopped in areas controlled by Israel including Area C of the West Bank (60%), East Jerusalem and Gaza.

However, Israel cannot end their mandate, because Israel did not create their mandate.

<https://www.unrwa.org/what-mandate-unrwa-0>

But Israel is putting in place a ‘no contact’ policy between UNWRA and Israel or with those presently co-ordinating with them. This basically prevents UNWRA from any operations in the West Bank or Gaza. It also prevents them from accessing 3 million dollars in an Israeli bank or getting insurance on their vehicles



In Birzeit village, we met the mother, Lulu, of Layan Nasser, a 23-year-old student who was arrested without charge or trial in administrative detention. Lulu has never been allowed to see Layan and her Solicitor has only seen her twice since April.

<https://www.palestinechronicle.com/my-tears-dont-dry-layans-story-sheds-light-on-administrative-detention-of-palestinian-women/>

Image from
article



The road to Amman

