



MACHSOMWATCH

A Counterview

Checkpoints

2004



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2004

Aharon Shabtai

It was an evil year.
People now as used to lies
as they are to bread.
Toss them the same lie
for the eighty-eighth time
and they'll scurry to swallow it,
like a flock of geese.
Brainless brutality
patted itself on the back and
grinned at the camera.
Orchids were sold in the nursery
while at barking distance
millions were penned like beasts.

Eyeless in Gaza

Shulamit Har Even

Israeli society's only option is to examine its priorities for the next forty years. Will we choose to remain in this current condition of social sickness? That choice might enable Israel's continued existence in terms of security, lurching from one war to the next, but only as a small, violent, compulsive and unlovable country, where ultimately the best and brightest will become alienated. Or should we opt for a situation where society decides, like in the Eighteen Benedictions, to retreat three paces in the *Oseh Shalom* prayer ["He who maketh peace in His high places"] and to neglect the primary cause of the malaise – our rule over the Occupied Territories? If the latter, we can dedicate the main thrust of our efforts to healing – urgent healing, so we can go back to being good people in a good society, living in a good place. If we can cross that crucial junction, perhaps we will be able to be proud again.

Yediot Aharonot, 26 February 1988



Acknowledgements

The data and findings in this MachsomWatch report were taken from all the reports written by the organization's members throughout 2004. In the course of the year, there were close to 3000 observation shifts conducted at checkpoints across the West Bank and Jerusalem, day after day, in rain and cold, in heat and *khamsin* winds.

The everyday confrontation with inhumane conditions at the checkpoints, the accumulative mental anguish generated by the grim and deteriorating reality – as it carries on and becomes fixated – will not affect our determination to persevere with our observation and reporting efforts.

Most of the Israeli public does not want to know what happens at the checkpoints and in the Occupied Territories, and this attitude serves the occupation policy and its architects. May this report sound an alarm alerting every Israeli citizen to break out of their indifference and rise to extinguish the conflagration that threatens our homes, future and our children's destiny.

Special thanks to all the women who contributed to this report.

All the original testimonies recorded during the shifts are posted on the MachsomWatch website.¹

MachsomWatch activity is entirely voluntary. Donations (to cover expenses) are welcome. Please send your contributions to our bank account: 'Women's Fund for Human Rights Ltd.' Bank Ha'Poalim, #574-333401, Palmach street, Jerusalem.

1 www.machsomwatch.org



Foreword

MachsomWatch is an organization of Israeli women, founded in February 2001. Its main activity is observations at the checkpoints in the West Bank and Jerusalem that are operated by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) and the Border Police, reporting and documenting events there. In cases of gross violations of human rights, severe intimidation and restrictions on movement, we try to intervene and, where possible, to prevent them.

Our cumulative experience and everyday contacts with IDF soldiers and the Palestinians crossing the checkpoints, have brought us all to an unequivocal demand – ‘end the Occupation and checkpoints’. We are working to change the policy that denies the Palestinians freedom of movement within their own territories, and to terminate the occupation that is destroying Palestinian society and has a far-reaching corrosive impact on Israeli society, too.

Close to 500 women are members of MachsomWatch. They are drawn from different backgrounds and have a broad range of personal and social characteristics. All our activities are voluntary. Most women are spurred to join the organization by their opposition to the oppression of people in the occupied territories, where the overwhelming majority long for peace and are innocent of any crime. Some women are also concerned about the future of Israeli society, throughout which the occupation has left its destructive mark. All of us are deeply ashamed that those breaches of human rights are performed in our names, as citizens of the Israeli state.

Members of MachsomWatch set out in small groups, seven days a week, and observe dozens of checkpoints and barriers throughout the West Bank, from north of Jenin to the south Hebron Hills. At most checkpoints, shifts are dispatched twice a day, complying with the peak hours when people pass through them. At the end of each shift, reports in both Hebrew and English are posted on the MachsomWatch website. Each month, a summary of the previous month’s reports is distributed, containing the main findings from the observations. In addition, a weekly digest in English is sent out to an electronic mailing list of several

hundred individuals and institutions, mostly abroad. During 2004, we conducted around 3,000 shifts at the various checkpoints.²

In this report, we address mainly the **internal** checkpoints and barriers which impede movement from village to village, from villages to towns, and from one governorate to another inside Palestinian territory. They are not checkpoints controlling entry to Israel, and their sole purpose is to dissect the West Bank into separate enclaves, isolated from each other and encircled by ever-growing blocs of settlements. The checkpoint regime is arbitrary and random, and the regulations governing them change constantly, often dependent on the whim of a soldier on duty at the checkpoint. All of this goes on although it is feasible to protect Israeli citizens without humiliating and intimidating other people, and without harming the sick, women about to give birth, children and the old.

The policy of oppression and dehumanization is inherent in the very quality of the control over another people. It seeps into the consciousness and behaviour of the soldiers serving at checkpoints and in the occupied territories. The situation gnaws at the capacity to uphold one of Israel's Basic Laws – Human Dignity and Liberty – which speaks of moral and human values towards others. Of necessity, the implications of this situation diverge from conditions at the checkpoints, and they do not halt at the border with Israel. Young people who receive legitimization for assailing human dignity find it hard to internalize the culture grounded on human rights that Israeli society, as a democratic society, aims to impart.

Behind the scenes of the checkpoints is a suffocating bureaucracy of restrictions on movement, orchestrated by the Civil Administration. Every movement by Palestinians from place to place, for whatever purpose, is contingent on receiving a magnetic card, a prerequisite for receiving a crossing permit (the *tasrich*). They can only obtain the various permits at the regional District Coordination Office (DCO). In itself, this is not a simple action for people whose freedom of movement is restricted, and it entails prolonged waiting, at the expense of work-days. At the end of this tortuous obstacle race, there is no certainty that the person will actually receive the permits they require, because many citizens of the occupied territories are classified as **denied entry** by the General Security Services (GSS) or the police: in this case, they are refused magnetic cards.

2 See Appendix: Maps.

At the checkpoints and the DCOs we witness the methodical embittering of the Palestinians' lives – let them stay at home, let them move to the Bantustans³ Israel has allocated them within their territories, and most wished-for – let them emigrate to other countries. The one word that mustn't be voiced but which hovers over all this is 'transfer'. Those who remain should be exhausted by the daily war to survive, until political resistance becomes beyond their capacities. The incessant humiliations, the difficulties and suffering and most of all the hopelessness, are instrumental in terror of the worst kind – perpetrated by suicide bombers who have nothing more to lose.

“...living for four years from checkpoint to checkpoint. You leave in the morning never knowing when they'll arrive, when return. If at all. How many humiliations they'll suffer in silence. If they say a word, or take a little step beyond the instructions (which are written in air, cancelled and changed over the communications systems) they will have to pay the price. The IDF charges a high tariff, they can shoot at them, according to the directives. Soldiers are programmed, bullying with their shouted instructions. Maybe the soldier will be almost courteous. But next time it's an obnoxious one. The soldier is doing his duty, stands at the checkpoint and screens Palestinians who are stained with terror, those who aren't...and at the instructions of the 'world's most moral army', as a gesture, he allows the last ones to go through (Huwara checkpoint, 13 December).

This report presents the 'hard facts' that we witness daily at the checkpoints. The storehouse of testimonies that we've collected is not found in the official reports of any other agency. It reflects only the tip of the iceberg of what is really happening in the occupied territories. Our reports provide people in Israel and around the world with a glimpse of local reality. But while the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) has trouble coping with news items about less than moral behaviour by its soldiers, the Israel public tries to downplay the accounts, claiming they are atypical incidents. Most of the soldiers keep silent, the testimonies by the Palestinians – the victims themselves – are unacceptable to Israeli society, and so we believe our evidence to be vital.

3 Bantustan – the state of the Bantu. The Bantu peoples was the name given by the whites in South Africa to the indigenous people. The programme (The Great Apartheid) was to set up several 'autonomous states' of this kind. Each state would be allocated to land that was unsuited to agriculture, without resources, cities, a coastline, airport, border with any other nation apart from South Africa. Thirteen percent of the area of South Africa was allotted to the Bantustans. All blacks (not Cape Coloureds or Asians) were declared citizens of one of those 'states', and thus became 'foreign workers' in South Africa.

Not only is it important to reveal events to the public eye. We also document and strip bare the everyday routine of occupation, where there are few cases of aggravated physical violence and not many dramatic incidents, but instead considerable sadness, despair and no way out. Anyone who has seen the anxious smile on a man's face as he extends his ID to be checked by an indifferent woman-soldier in the checking-position, cannot forget or disregard the injustice. We document the little humiliations and detentions, day after day, the ignoring of the Palestinian Other's humanity, as well as the expression of the overflowing rage of an occupied people.

In addition to our work at the checkpoints, we file written complaints on intolerable cases. In 2004, we sent around 100 complaints to administration figures, military authorities, the Border Police, the Israel Police, and other agencies. Response to our complaints is minimal and generally insufficient.⁴ Last year, we appeared several times before the Knesset's Constitution, Law & Justice Committee and the Committee for the Advancement of the Status of the Child. We also met with high echelons of the army, the Civil Administration, the Israel Police and Knesset members. There is a dual goal to the meetings – to present the unique information we have gathered, so it will be impossible to say in future “we knew nothing about it”..., and also to protest insistently the very existence of the occupation and the checkpoints.

After four years at the checkpoints, day after day, we can state with a certainty we did not have at the start, that there are two separate groups at the checkpoints. One group, holding the gun, has all the power and is corrupted by it. The other group is oppressed and humiliated but definitely not defeated. Each functions alongside the other, linked by lunatic and tragic ties of humiliators and humiliated, controllers and controlled – soldiers and Palestinians, Palestinians and soldiers. When we watch the soldiers, as women peace-activists, we consider them as agents of the occupation. When we watch them as if they were our sons – flesh of our flesh, bone of our bones, the next generation of our shared society – we are appalled by the intolerable experiences they undergo and the moral values they crush underfoot. Those ties must be unravelled – the checkpoints dismantled, the Occupation terminated. We must reconstruct Israel's moral robustness.

4 See Appendix: Complaints.



A Day at Huwwara Checkpoint Thursday, 12 August 2004

It was a bad day, on which we saw many cases of injustice and human-rights violations. No days are good, but that day was a concentration of incidents representing many of the issues highlighted in this report. So we decided to present the report of this day, encapsulating many of the wrongs that repeat daily at the checkpoints – commonplace breaches of human rights, trampling on the dignity of the Palestinian Other, a violent, ugly and depressing routine.

Huwwara North

Building and development continue at the checkpoint with alarming speed and, after two weeks, the place has become unrecognizable. Whereas previously there was chaos, but some intervention was possible, it is now all bureaucratically controlled and channelled through concrete barriers and specific areas of action.

Waiting due to administrative delays: There were dozens of people in tightly packed lines. When we arrived, the place appeared to be on the verge of explosion.

Delays due to checking IDs with the General Security Service (GSS): Dozens of detainees were held in the pen.

Settlers involved in the checkpoint's functioning: The soldiers, headed by a settler with the rank of captain, were stifling the area in an atmosphere of total and hostile domination. ... his behaviour made it impossible for MachsomWatch to intervene, even marginally, in incidents at the checkpoint.

Violence: Newly created during the construction work was a tiny concrete cell with a blue-painted iron door. When we arrived, we saw a 12-year-old boy imprisoned therein, his terrified face peering over the door, his hands and feet shackled. The detainees briefed us: he was transporting goods in a cart between the two checkpoints. The soldiers

caught him, locked him up, and – according to the detainees – from time to time a soldier (they pointed to him) went in, hit the boy in the stomach with a rifle butt and kicked him. Later, the boy told us he had been there for four hours.

We tried to talk to the soldiers about it but they, including their officer, refused to cooperate or reply. We contacted the District Coordination Office (DCO) whose representative, L., knew about it and justified the incarceration (on the grounds that “the boy had tried to run away ... because the soldiers wanted to remove him from the checkpoint area... that’s why he was incarcerated now”). We contacted the army’s ‘humanitarian’ hotline and let the boy talk to them. He gave his details and his parents’ phone number. When the soldiers realized we were helping him, they approached rapidly with threatening expressions and rifles at the ready. The hotline’s intervention helped, and the boy was released and allowed to go home.

The ‘sacred line’ for taxi drivers: Among the detainees were two taxi-drivers, detained because they had “crossed the green line” as the checkpoint commander informed us. Apparently, it is a ‘virtual’ line beside a green signpost, indicating the route to Nablus, about 200 metres from the checkpoint. It marks how close the taxi-drivers are allowed to approach. A driver who crosses the imaginary border-line is detained.

Humiliation and the withholding of ID cards: The checkpoint commander went to the detainee area, holding their ID cards. This officer’s style is to draw out the release for a whole hour, each time returning a small number of ID cards and conducting ‘farewell ceremonies’ with each detainee, including an interview whose outcome was preordained. He asked each detainee how long he’d been there, and then told him he was lying.

Soldier: Since when have you been here?

Detainee: Since ten.

Soldier: Liar – at the most, you’ve been here since 11:30.

Punitive detention: That question provides grounds for declaring the detainee a liar, and in many cases the ‘liar’ was sent back to the *jora* as an illustrative educational act, although his ID had been inspected and approved. Accordingly, the *jora* becomes an improvised holding-station

for re-education and adjustment of the detainees' moral views, on behalf of the checkpoint's commander. These personal interviews with detainees were accompanied by arbitrary orders relating to the behaviour of each group of detainees, waiting with shattered nerves for their release. The commander ordered them not to sit on the concrete wall, for no apparent reason. Sometimes he told them to turn their backs on the checkpoint again, for no apparent reason. **"Everyone sit down, right away!"** he roars, **with his rifle constantly cocked.**

Turnstiles: There was terrible crowding at the crossing itself. The development boom at the checkpoint has generated a new device – turnstiles, revolving iron gates at the head of the line, before the inspection position. Intended to regulate traffic, the turnstiles are another method of humiliation, creating intolerable stress and suffering.

In fact, these turnstiles are not suitable for people loaded with shopping bags, goods, or gifts, and who are holding babies or children in their arms. People got stuck, parcels were crushed, dragged along and bursting open on the ground. Heavier people were trapped in the narrow space, as were older women and mothers with small children. The children were terrified and had to part from their mothers at the crossing point, and often refused to do so, clinging to their mothers – and once again the gate stalled.

Huwwara South

Settlers involved in the checkpoint's operation: The soldiers are connected to the settlers. One of them is even accompanied by his family. The father, who can hardly speak Hebrew, constantly pesters us, taking photos, launching offensive comments, gesticulating. Masses of food, goodies and drinks are supplied continuously to the soldiers, who are busy chewing as they wave the detainees on towards the *jora*. Now and then, a settler takes a time-out to educate us, sometimes with a pleasant manner, and sometimes with curses.

Turnstiles: The checkpoint is streamlined and improved, with shade for all, concrete tracks and revolving gates. The pressure is now concentrated behind the gates as people – men, women, children, the old and the young, loaded with baskets and parcels – pressed forward

in dangerous fashion. Only after they had reached the checkpoint, after all the shoving and shouting, could they be seen by the soldiers, in an orderly line, one after the other... And then the soldiers showed their concern for democracy by sending back any women and men with babies who had tried to avoid the crowd and the turnstiles....

Detention for GSS inspection of ID cards: The detainees, sometimes 40 of them, were not held more than two hours. The soldiers kept trying to provoke us, accusing us of smuggling out detainees, illegally collaborating with a Palestinian woman journalist to disrupt their work.

Weapons at the ready: All the time, their rifles were aimed at whomever they were talking to.

Denying passage to Arab citizens of Israel: An old woman had come from Lod [in Israel] and wanted to enter Nablus. We called the DCO where they explained the procedure: it was now too late to deal with her because she needed a permit from high up; she should send a fax first and then come to the checkpoint on the following day where the permit might be waiting. In other words – back to Lod.



Restriction of Movement by Means of Checkpoints

The long and nerve-wracking waits at the checkpoints are without a doubt the reason, with a capital T, for the distress and daily humiliation experienced by the Palestinians there. Often, after they have already passed through the checkpoint and continued on their way, they are required to wait at yet another checkpoint, and after it another, and yet another; their documents are checked each time anew. In almost every MACHSOMWATCH report there are descriptions of distress stemming from the lengthy waiting and detentions for the purpose of having documents checked with the GSS [Israeli General Security Service].

The incidents that have been selected as examples for quoting in this section are only a reflection of the events not quoted here, all of which tell the story of the suffering, the harassment, and the great distress – caused, ironically, by the “quiet” routine at the checkpoints. The people waiting never know when – and if – they will be able to continue on their way, or whether they’ll be required to turn back.

“When we are observing at checkpoints where there are hundreds of people waiting at any given time, we often experience the sensation of a pressure cooker that’s about to explode at any moment. The restriction on freedom of movement of the majority of the Palestinians guarantees Israel control on the Palestinian’s time. Setting limitations on lands is tangible, but what about time? It is abstract. But time is a precious, limited resource for any person. The time that’s being robbed from Palestinians’ lives as they wait at the checkpoints and have their documents checked, is lost and can’t be restored. The loss of time that the Israelis deprive each day from three and a half million people, has widespread significance: in impairing their ability to make a living, in economic, family and cultural activity, in leisure time, in studies and artistic creation, and in limiting the scope in which each person lives.”⁵

5 “The Natives’ Time is Cheap,” Amira Hass in *Haaretz*, February 23, 2005

Detention for Checking ID Cards with the GSS

At almost any time, we encounter people being detained at the checkpoints, whose ID cards are taken by the soldier in order to clarify the level of security risk they represent, according to the GSS. (The check is carried out by telephone.) The detention begins even before the individual's guilt is determined. Sometimes the checking is carried out in a matter of 20 minutes, but in most cases it takes longer, even up to five hours and over. Only a very few of the detainees are actually arrested following the check; most are released when the GSS announces clearance, without taking any measures against them at all.

Families accompanying a 'suspected' young person (usually a young man) wait for them, so they too are indirectly detained. Students are usually detained. In the month of August, so were university enrollees. Others include sick people, teachers, medical personnel, and even children. Individuals aged 16-25 (and in the not-distant past, the upper limit was 35) without transit permits are prevented from crossing the checkpoints adjacent to Nablus.

It is unclear what the legal limit is on detaining an individual at a checkpoint. The soldiers insist that it is "according to the law" to hold people three or four hours, though to this day there's no proof of what legal base this rests on.⁶ Lately we've received from the Shomron (Samaria) brigade a copy of a document entitled 'Brigade Commander's Instructions – Procedure for Detention of Palest' at Permanent Checkpoints.' This is an unclear document; it is not possible to operate according to it. It is unsure whether its hastily-drawn up instructions can even be implemented. They are written in the compulsory military abbreviations known only to those possessed of hidden knowledge, but it gives a sense of security – there are written procedures and everything is under control. According to the soldiers' claims, from the moment they place the call to the GSS and until receiving the reply, an average of several hours goes by. Along with this, at the Border Police's unscheduled roadblocks that serve as impromptu checkpoints, checking details takes only several minutes. In the twenty-first century Communications Age, can't a check like this be

6 "The Soldiers are Greatly Upset by the Thuggish Image Leftists have Given Them", Moshe Gorali, in *Haaretz*, 13 June 2004.

done in a matter of minutes and the people be let go when there are no charges against them?

One can learn about the arbitrariness of the detentions (i.e. who is selected for detention) from these sample reports:

Huwwara (6 September): A soldier said that every ninth adult male trying to cross the checkpoint should be detained. • (19 September): Every man whose name is 'Mohammad' was detained, and this is a large population. • (18 October): Again detentions because of a faulty connection with the advanced command post. The checkpoint commander telephoned the command post and raised his voice, "It is unreasonable that you call me only twice during a shift... people have been waiting here since the morning." Only by raising one's voice is it possible to get the system moving. A significant change in attitudes toward the detention of women, including students and mothers of infants. Since the terrorist attack in Jerusalem there hasn't been any hesitation whatsoever in detaining women in holding pens. This results in hardships for the women, because they're obliged to stand in mixed company (i.e. with men), but there's no consideration given to this.

Beit Iba (16 August): Residents of Jenin who entered Nablus this morning were being detained at this checkpoint some four hours. They left a four-month-old baby girl to be watched by an aunt, and the baby's mother needed to get back to breastfeed her. MachsomWatch women turned to B'Tselem and Physicians for Human Rights. After some five hours, the family was released to continue on their way. • (8 September): Valid [passage] permits not being honoured is a common occurrence.⁷ "He looks suspicious to me; if someone wants to pass through my checkpoint, I'm going to check him regardless of his passage permit..."

Al 'Eizariya (26 September): Morning – around 60 yellow cabs were waiting in a queue, most of them filled with students. It was already hot; the people had waited previously for about an hour in a queue to get up to the checkpoint, and the passengers of the six cabs that were being detained had already waited nearly an additional hour to get their documents returned. At 09:00 the roadblock was dismantled.

Detention and Checking of Documents as Punishment

Again and again the phenomenon of punitive detention recurs or as the soldiers call it, "an educational act."

Bethlehem (March 2): Every morning, there's a manhunt in the area for

7 See Chapter: Restriction of Movement by means of Bureaucracy.

'illegals' (Palestinians without residence permits). At the checkpoint they're 'dried out' by being made to stand for hours with their faces to the wall. "It is not humiliating at all; it is purely intended to educate them," said the checkpoint commander.

The soldiers don't know that punishment of this sort isn't according to regulations and is therefore prohibited. The 'leakers', or the people who attempt to get around the checkpoints by alternate routes, are usually punished by particularly prolonged detention. At the end of the detention, almost all of them are released to go on their way. Only on rare occasions is someone arrested as a result of the checking.

Shavei Shomron, the backyard of the Beit Iba checkpoint, is a private checkpoint for the settlers of Shavei Shomron. This is a small checkpoint, concealed from view, commanding the road from Nablus to Jenin and the villages of the North. It appears that the checkpoint is run as a sort of 'no man's land' and the soldiers allow themselves to behave in complete contravention even of the army's practices. As the paved roads have been blocked, the Palestinians must travel through agricultural fields, running the risk of being caught at an unscheduled roadblock and then brought to Shavei Shomron. There they're held in an open field that's exposed to the hot sun, with no access to water. Impounded taxicabs are also diverted to Shavei Shomron.

Shavei Shomron (from the Beit Iba reports): (19 September): A MachsomWatch shift team found 90 detainees here, among them women, children, and infants, red-faced and sweating, elderly people and sick people waiting for many hours. The majority of them were not denied passage [i.e. by age and sex not in the 'profiled' group, that being young men], and it was clear that what was being carried out here was collective punishment. The soldiers at the checkpoint shook off the responsibility, because it wasn't them who took the documents [for checking]. After the order was given to release the people, the search for ID documents began, amounting to another half-hour wait on top of what had already been five hours. • (3 October): People are being held some six hours at Shavei Shomron, including a 3-1/2 year old boy with his father. According to the little boy's father, after long hours of detention he approached a soldier at the checkpoint and asked for a slice of bread and some water for his son, and the soldier replied to him, that he should go to Arafat who would give them water and food. That same soldier told us, "I don't have to supply them with water, that's not my job." • (5 October 2005): People were being held from the earliest morning hours in the hot sun. They were caught in agricultural areas (fields); among them is a pregnant woman who was made to expose her belly [to show that the bulge wasn't made by an

explosive device]. They were marched on foot to the checkpoint with the jeep driving at the head of the column. The women were released after some time, and the men were detained. Two men claimed that they were beaten and showed signs of fresh bruises and marks from a shoe on a shirt.

Beit Iba (17 August): Two young men were incarcerated in a solitary confinement cell as punishment. One of them is a cab driver, “a serial transgressor” whose purported crime consists of crossing the forbidden line every day and advancing to get some passengers in order to make a living (in the words of the checkpoint commander – **a legislative, judicial, and executive power all rolled into one**). The MACHSOMWATCH shift shows a letter from the Judge Attorney General regarding the illegality of this deed, and the transgressor is taken from the cell and put in the general holding pen for detainees for... four additional hours of detention. • Two students who came up close to the passage area were punished; they need to be taught a lesson; they’ll be waiting four hours. **The checkpoint commander is convinced that a four-hour punitive detention is an order!** • (18 August): Two soldiers bring the keys and documents of a cab to the checkpoint commander, noting, “Take care of him that he’ll wait a long time, so they’ll learn...” The driver testified that he crossed the checkpoint line when driving in reverse in order to pick up a passenger. “He knows the rules, he has to learn,” was the commander’s judgment, “I’m allowed to detain him four hours and that’s how he’s going to wait.” The driver was released after a detention of four hours, according to this “practice.”

Barta’a (13 July): At the west side, we saw some 30 detainees, ‘illegals’ [Palestinians staying in Israel without a residence permit]. Their documents were taken for checking and this was an opportunity to “**teach them a lesson**”, as without a permit they shouldn’t enter. The Palestinians explain to me the impossibility of obtaining a permit, and the injustice involved in this; one told me with this imagery: “It is like a saw: every time that we pass through here, the saw cuts us and cuts us up, once to this side, once to that side.”

Hoarding Documents for Inspection

In most instances, soldiers prefer to wait until they have amassed ten, twenty, or thirty identity cards of detainees in order to pass their information on all together for checking [by the GSS], and not as the cases arise. This procedure extends the detention period even further.

Beit Iba (8 April): Sometimes the documents are held by the soldiers for quite some time before they’re submitted for checking, and in other cases the documents aren’t returned even after being checked. The officer instructed the soldiers that no detainee is to be released even after a reply has been received from the GSS, without his express order. He turned off his mobile

phone and went into a lengthy meeting and “was not to be interrupted...” this is a scenario that sometimes ends in an ID card’s being lost.

Huwwara (3 June): The attitude to detainees was shocking. The checkpoint commander harassed them at every opportunity when they tried to stand in the shade. He humiliated them and seated them on the ground. Anyone who tried to speak with him earned a push, shouts, and threats with a rifle. Of course those who tried to move into the shade were mainly the fathers with children, and some of them were attacked [verbally] by the checkpoint commander, causing their children to cry. Only after some twenty detainees had collected, did the soldiers decide that the time had come to sent their ID numbers for checking by the GSS.

Abu Dis – The Cliff Hotel (5 July): Some ten detainees (illegals’) were made to sit with their backs to the hotel, so as “they will not be able to observe the area”. They were detained some four hours. One man’s documents weren’t kept on site but were somewhere with the vehicle that had stopped him four hours earlier. Our impression was that the soldiers, their commanders, and the [GSS] investigators who were in the hotel all the while, never looked into these detainees’ cases until the fourth hour of their being held.

Waiting during Administrative Delays

The Palestinians are often made to wait for prolonged periods while their documents undergo a routine check (i.e. not for suspicion of illegal activity) by soldiers at the checkpoint. These delays are mainly the result of a lack of organization, a lack of adequate staffing, and impaired physical conditions at the checkpoints. The people waiting to pass through the checkpoint appear to be waiting patiently; they’ve already gotten accustomed that their time and personal space are violated for checking and examination. But inside there’s a suppressed fury. One of the [taxi] drivers, describing the daily situation of prolonged waiting at the checkpoints, thus: “You put out fire with water, and they [the soldiers] pour fire on fire.”

Time after time we get the impression that these delays are entirely an exercise of force. At times someone in the military system comes to his senses, perhaps after a call made by MachsomWatch. Do they understand the great danger in this clustering of hundreds of angry people? At some stage the checking is expedited and the queues shorten up appreciably. Why not conduct them efficiently on a regular basis?

One day at Beit Iba (21 January): Lately they've set up a gate here with a metal detector and everyone has to pass through it. Some 300 people stood here in conditions of terrible crowding in a narrow space... The pace of checking is extremely slow and people have waited 4-6 hours. There's no opportunity to see what's going on past the first few rows, and also serious 'humanitarian' cases (i.e. medical or special needs) can't get past the crowded mass of people. A situation like this is liable to end in disaster. A pregnant woman having labour contractions, a man with an amputated leg, a blind man, elderly women, and mothers with infants in their arms, have all been standing for hours while swallowed up in this crowd. A boy of about seven is alarmed by the sight of soldiers standing with their weapons drawn, and runs off into the crowd. A soldier chases after him and pulls him from the crush of the line. The boy wets his pants in fear, and stands weeping and humiliated. Horrible.

Beit Iba again (28 April; closure in effect): When we arrived there was already pressure and a terrible chaos prevailing. Hundreds of people are pressed up to the metal detector gate. The soldiers are occupied in shouting "*Irja, irja*" [Arabic: "get back!"]. Several Palestinians volunteered to help push the crowd back, but except for several people who were squashed in a dreadful manner, it was impossible to move the people. The pressing forward from behind got worse and worse as time went by and people weren't moving [through the gate]. Only women were being let through, on the side, by means of their climbing and stumbling over a steep hill near the passage point; it was their good luck that due to the close crowding of people waiting, the mass of bodies blocked them and prevented their falling. The heat was dreadful, people were irritable, sweating, and exhausted after the many hours of standing. One of the soldiers started getting aggressive, threatening by pointing his weapon, shouting and pushing. The crowd began to sing, and there was a feeling of rebellion in the air, as if something was about to happen. It should be noted that a "closure" prevents entry into Israel, while Beit Iba is an internal checkpoint within the Territories that restricts passage into and out of the [Arab] city of Nablus.

Huwwara (5 December): It was growing cold and dark. More than 150 people waiting to be allowed to exit, gathered around the first turnstiles. The soldiers have received laptop computers and were amusing themselves with their new toys; they typed in the ID number of the person standing opposite them and – voila! the screen displays the exact information detailed on the ID document itself. The computers are of no help to the people being detained.

Wadi Nar (17 August): Some 70 pedestrians of all ages were crowded together under the burning sun, lined up at the concrete barriers. From the direction of Bethlehem, 70 vehicles were standing motionless, and the queue was getting longer. At it's head was an ambulance. The drivers were irritable, sweating. They claimed to be waiting over an hour and a half A Border Policeman let a few vehicles through every so often, then took a generous rest

break, chit-chats, and also returned documents to the people who have been detained. Two Border Policemen had been checking only one line of people, which is why the passage was so slow. At the head of this emplacement, a Border Policeman sat in a lookout post, and a second, a woman soldier, was occupied with eating, reading a newspaper, and napping – this during our entire (two-hour) stay here. The checkpoint commander claims that he lacks sufficient staffing to check the vehicles. Only after an hour and a half, the company's second-in-command arrived and things immediately began to move. Within 10 minutes, the pedestrian queue had been cleared. The pace of releasing detainees picked up, and the endless queue of vehicles shortened.

Labourers being Made to Wait upon Entering Israel

During the year, the rules applied for labourers crossing at Irtah changed twice: in March, following alterations in the course of the 'separation fence' and discontinuing the passage point at Baka al Gharbiyeh, all the labourers who used to cross there have been rerouted to the Irtah checkpoint. As a result, pressure has increased on the single checking station there, and the waiting time has lengthened.

Starting in July (according to the first report on this subject, dated 21 July), labourers living in the Northern West Bank were prohibited from crossing at the Irtah gate. These labourers were rerouted to the distant Jalama checkpoint (in the Northern West Bank). Because some of them work in the area of Natanya and Kfar Saba, this long detour causes them a sizeable loss of time and money (due to the need to arrange transportation), and sometimes the loss of workdays to the point where they lose their jobs. This procedure went on until early 2005. Although it was explained to us that Irtah lacks the physical conditions suitable for carrying out the checking of so many people, isn't eight months enough time to solve this problem?

In March 2005 the construction in Irtah was still not complete, but from time to time it was possible for labourers from the Northern West Bank to cross into Israel at this checkpoint.

Jalama (20 July): Going out to work in Israel in the morning is carried out at a slow pace and without regard for the labourers, who must manage to get to their places of work. Sometimes the Israeli employer gives up on waiting for them, thus they lose a day's work or lose their jobs entirely.

Closure

The imposition of closure prevents entry from the West Bank into Israel in a comprehensive manner. 'Encirclement' refers to a prohibition of entry into and exit from villages and towns within the West Bank. From March to May, a closure was imposed that included full encirclement in many areas of the West Bank. The closure started for the Passover holiday, continued uninterrupted until Israeli Independence Day (several weeks later) and from then to the Likud party's referendum, and it was finally lifted after the Final Four playoff games. At the beginning of September a closure was imposed in advance of the Jewish (New Year's) holidays, that continued into the Ramadan in October. The Palestinians 'have' the Jewish holidays, and then are punished twice, on their own holidays as well.

Closures are declared quite suddenly, with no advance warning (as for example, following the assassination of Hamas leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin on 22 March), but its lifting is done slowly. At the Irtah checkpoint the passage of labourers (with permits) into Israel was prevented for a month after the lifting of the closure was announced. Are the consequences of a prolonged closure upon the fabric of life of the residents taken into account?

Wadi Nar (the 'Container checkpoint') is the single central checkpoint for passage between the Southern and Northern West Bank. This is an internal checkpoint, not involving passage into Israeli territory. From March to May, it was closed; there was no entry or exit through it. The economic and cultural centre of the West Bank was paralyzed; even food, medicine, and 'humanitarian' cases weren't allowed to cross from one side to the other.

Orders regarding crossing change from day to day and from hour to hour. Now every truck requires a special permit from the DCO [District Coordination Office of the IDF's Civil Administration] and coordination in advance; the regular permit is insufficient. In practice this means that every truck transporting vegetables has to apply to the DCO and get a permit. But this doesn't always work; there are days on which a truck is prohibited from crossing the checkpoint even if it has the proper authorization.

On 31 August there was a terror attack in Beersheba, in the aftermath

of which a total closure was imposed on the area of Hebron and South Hebron, that lasted for an extended period also due to the Jewish New Year's holidays in Israel (which last a month).

South Hebron Hills (5 September and additional reports during the month of September): All the checkpoints that had been open lately are closed again. The earth-mound obstructions have been refreshed and built up at the turnoff roads from Highway 60 to many villages, and also along Highways 35, 317, and 356. These obstructions block the access roads into and out of these villages.

Wadi Nar (24 April): Seven trucks were waiting from the direction of Hebron and Beersheba, and three more from Abu Dis and Sawahre. Two of them, loaded with dairy product and fresh produce, had already been waiting 48 hours in their attempt to pass the checkpoint. Despite their holding valid passage permits issued by the DCO, they were turned back and told to return only on Thursday.

Rihan (September, the month of the Jewish New Year's holidays): A truck delivering a monthly food donation from the UN, travelling westbound to Barta'a, was stopped and detained at length as had occurred twice before. A UNRWA 'mobile clinic' ambulance couldn't enter Israel because it lacked a passage permit. When MachsomWatch inquired at the DCO, it was explained that even if ambulances had crossed in the past, from now on they were required to obtain passage permits. This instance reflects the overall increase in stringency at the checkpoints which we've encountered in the past month. According to the DCO officer: "There's been a closure for four years already, to one extent or another." The closure continued also into October and November, from the Jewish holiday of Sukkot to the Moslems' Ramadan. Arab citizens of Israel aren't allowed to cross into the Territories, while the settlers [Jewish residents of the Territories] are allowed to cross freely in both directions (and at clearly illegal speeds). They don't get stopped even for a random check.

The 'Stop All Life' Procedure

This is another form of delaying, that the army calls 'stop all life.' Its name indicates its nature: a total freeze on movement that lasts for hours at a time. A population of hundreds and perhaps thousands of people, among them the elderly, the ill, pregnant women, infants, and nursing mothers, are prevented from moving freely and are ordered to stop the course of their lives.

Following a high-security alert (based on a suspected terrorist act),

civilians may have their passage delayed for up to twenty hours with no regard for serious 'humanitarian' (special needs, usually health-related) cases. Sometimes one checkpoint will be put under closure – ordered from above? a local initiative? – while adjacent ones carry on the routine of the Occupation.

Al-Khadr (Bethlehem checkpoint reports): dozens of people were crowded around since the early morning hours, behind the earth mounds. There was no passage from Bethlehem; it was possible to enter the city but not to leave it. The residents of the villages of Husan, Battir, Nahhalin, Wadi Fukin, and Sa'ir, and of course the residents of Hebron – all those who had left their homes in the morning to go to town to do their business, were unable to return home. No one told them when they passed through in the morning that they'd be unable to return. The army's version is: 'they know'. There was an alert in place regarding a suspected suicide bomber (man? woman? child?) and a military incursion into Bethlehem was in progress; all the entrances and exits to and from the city were closed, as were the checkpoints. (Later it turned out that in Bethlehem it was business-as-usual.) "No one passes!!" The checkpoint commander went around brandishing his rifle with shouts of "*Irja, irja!*" [Arabic: Get back!] and very concerned "that everyone stands behind the barrier." The movement of the human wave continued for hours. All the Palestinians who were waiting get turned back; the soldiers kept their distance and then after several minutes the wave started moving in the other direction, toward the exit. The soldiers shouted, brandished their weapons, threatened to shoot tear gas; the human wave retreated again, and again. During all that time no one went through except physicians and holders of Israeli ID cards. Elderly women sought a corner in the shade, little children, sick people, everyone. Meanwhile, at the rear, MachsomWatch made telephone inquiries to every possible functionary – GOC Central Command, the brigade-commander, journalists, members of the Knesset [Israeli Parliament]. Everyone promised to help and to check and to take care of things. At 4 p.m. the checkpoint remained closed and no one had crossed.

Beit Furik (14 July): Hundreds of people were waiting to cross, exiting Nablus. But the checkpoint was closed – 'Stop All Life' was in place. On the other side lay a man connected to an IV; he had passed out after several hours in the sun. Evacuating him from the area was impossible. In the area where detainees are held, dozens of women had gathered in a closely crowded group. One was standing and changing a baby's diaper; a second held a boy of about five who was wearing hospital pyjamas. The boy seemed unconscious or sleeping heavily, and his mother shouted that he's very sick. At the checkpoint itself, hundreds of people were sitting on the ground, apparently having been ordered to do so.



Restriction of Movement by Means of Bureaucracy

The District Coordination Offices – DCOs – are a part of the Civil Administration in the Occupied Territories and constitute the occupation’s bureaucratic arm. They operate behind the scenes of the checkpoints. It is the DCO’s role to issue crossing permits or permits to enter Israel to work, as well as the magnetic card that is a prerequisite (though not the only one) for receiving them. Without these permits (called *tasrich*, in Arabic), the Palestinians cannot move beyond the boundaries of their homes and villages, even within the Occupied Territories. Much of the populace in the territories (estimated at a few hundreds of thousands), young men in particular, are blacklisted by the GSS (General Security Service) and cannot receive these cards.

This system is ostensibly a method of screening out dangerous people, curbing their movements and preventing their entering Israel. But in fact the vast majority of those blacklisted have never been accused of anything and have never stood trial. Nonetheless, they are confined to their place of residence, condemned to unbearable economic and social predicaments. In actuality, people capable of retaining an attorney to petition against their GSS blacklisting before the Supreme Court are generally removed from the list before the court ever hears their petition. In other words, a priori there were no grounds for the blacklisting to begin with. Israel’s Civil Rights Association has recently started a case-by-case process of revoking GSS blacklisting, with no little success, providing additional proof of the arbitrariness underlying people’s inclusion in the GSS lists.

Preventing freedom of movement is a fundamental violation of human rights. The illegality of that prevention is self-evident, and **in the absence of overt public supervision of the GSS’s conduct**, it calls for intervention by Israel’s legislative body.

A detailed report on the DCOs was published in May 2004.^{8,9} Eight

8 **Bureaucracy of the Occupation – The District Civil Liaison Offices**, Joint Report of MachsomWatch and Physicians for Human Rights, May 2004.

9 <http://www.phr.org.il/phr/>

Israeli DCOs operated in the West Bank in 2004, and in early 2005 a new one was added – the ‘Jerusalem wraparound’. All are staffed by soldiers and operated by the Civil Administration, which is subordinate to the Defence Ministry and the Coordinator of Operations in the Territories. A Palestinian DCO operates in tandem with each Israeli one, but only the latter are entitled to issue permits. On this issue, the decisive factor is the GSS, which dictates whether a person will be granted a security clearance certificate. Representatives of the Labour and Health ministries are also involved in the decisions, but the Palestinians’ direct contact is with the soldier at the DCO counter. It is there they submit their application forms and there where they receive, or don’t receive the requested document.

Our observations at the DCOs have shown that the majority of answers were negative, and were given without explanations or grounds being provided. Even people who were undisputedly entitled to permits fail to obtain them because the DCOs were technically incapable of serving their target populations properly.

There are three types of permit applications:

- a. Application for a magnetic card. It required payment of NIS 50 per application, even if it is ultimately turned down. At the beginning of 2005, the problem of duplicate fees had been resolved. In addition, people blacklisted by the GSS for receiving a magnetic card could make a special application for a one day’s permit, in the case of urgent medical treatment.
- b. Application for a permit to cross at internal checkpoints (within the West Bank) during an ‘encirclement’. Young men in a specific (but frequently changing) age-range must present these permits to cross through any checkpoint at all times.
- c. Application for an entry-permit to Israel, usually for medical treatment, or ‘quotas’– labourers who work in Israel or in the settlements. At the entry checkpoints to Israel, west of the Green Line and in East Jerusalem, every Palestinian man and woman, regardless of age, must present such a crossing permit to Israel.

At least three factors typify the DCOs’ inefficiency:

- a. Bureaucratic blacklisting on various spurious excuses that enhance the DCO’s inability to function effectively. People applying to a DCO

are generally sent back home on trumped-up excuses: “we’re closed today”, “the officer isn’t here”, “you need more documents”, “you might get it this week – but promises”, and so forth. The bureaucratic failure is so glaring as to compel the inference that it is deliberate, that there is no sincere intention to provide the service, thus piling more difficulties on the Palestinians’ everyday lives. At any rate, it is clear that the system is incapable of genuinely meeting applicants’ needs in terms of its personnel, opening-hours, knowledge of Arabic, and so on.

- b. Palestinians blacklisted by the GSS do not receive permits, under almost any circumstances, but they may be summoned to a meeting with GSS people at which they’ll hear the proposition – “If you help us, we’ll help you...”.
- c. Often the DCO’s location is a Catch-22 in itself – to gain access to the DCO Palestinians need a special permit which they can only obtain at that very same DCO.

As a matter of principle the question is why an individual needs a permit to get to his/her workplace, or to go to school, or to the doctor, or to do any other mundane activity? The fact is that the default is that people are **forbidden** to go out to work, or to study, or to a doctor, unless they obtain a permit to do so. Hence the alleged permit system is in fact a system of prohibitions, constantly and ubiquitously enforced by the security forces. Moreover, the combination of the army’s requirement to present a permit and the difficulty of obtaining one, is unreasonable. **It is a deliberate, structured and system-wide failure.**

“The ambiguity of the system is a form of control that is no less effective than the restrictions on movement themselves. No one can be confident that he is not – or will never be – on the security blacklist. Thus uncertainty becomes the ultimate method of control as part of the certainty of the occupation.”¹⁰

Most of the people we met at the DCOs came to submit applications for a magnetic card. An officer once explained to us that people often find themselves (without having done a thing) on the GSS blacklist, only because they are connected in some way with a person who is wanted by the GSS. Brig.-Gen. Ilan Paz, Head of the Civil Administration, has

10 **Bureaucracy of the Occupation – The District Civil Liaison Offices**, Joint Report of MachsomWatch and Physicians for Human Rights, May 2004.

said that not a single terrorist came from the ranks of the Palestinians who received work-permits for Israel.¹¹ So maybe the security logic is that if Israel doesn't want terror attacks it should provide work-permits instead of withholding them? This is wide-ranging collective punishment that is concealed from the eyes of the Israeli public and not grounded in any judicial procedure, thus rendering Israeli rule a dark regime.

D., who lives in a village near Nablus, 45, is blacklisted. He showed us the application he submitted at the DCO for a magnetic card. Seven times the stamp **Cancelled** appears on his application form. D. has worked for 22 years in East Jerusalem, he has a worker's certificate from his workplace. This certificate isn't enough to get him through the series of checkpoints on the way. He needs a crossing-permit also for the internal checkpoints and an entry-permit to Israel for work purposes. To lay his hands on the permits he needs a magnetic card. Even then, if he had a magnetic card, he would have to renew the permits required every month or every three months. Even if he complied with all the demands made by the State of Israel, and would get through with a permit, even then he would be held up for some hours in a nerve-wracking wait at a checkpoint, an encirclement, or closure. For six years he's been illegally taking the road from home to work, from the Nablus area to East Jerusalem. At the start of every week, D. sets out from his village, going through the hills on dirt-track roads around Ramallah and Qalandiya, until he reaches Hizmeh and from there he goes to Jerusalem. Since the Intifada began and the checkpoint policy (and of course the closure policy and the encirclement policy) became more stringent, he bypasses the checkpoints to make a living. This journey from home to work takes him a whole day. The 'separation wall', now under construction, will make it even harder for him to enter the east half of the city. Until six years ago he had a magnetic card. He went twice to the DCO to renew the card and learned that he had been blacklisted by the GSS. Today he came for the third time, and his application was rejected. He's now desperate. "What have I done?" he asks "why is all this happening? I've never been in prison."

The case of D. raises a number of questions. Is D. really an Enemy of the People? Is a 'separation wall' – the largest national enterprise and the most expensive ever built in Israel – being built to keep out people like D.? Is it so likely that he'll commit a terror act that the GSS is justified in blacklisting him? How many times, in 22 years, could he have committed a terror act, placed an explosive charge, or blown himself up – had he been so minded? If the GSS has solid information

11 From an interview with Tzadok Yehezkeili, *Yediot Aharonot*, 23 January 2004.

on his involvement in acts of sabotage and hostility, why hasn't he been tried for it?

The story of the caring son: A., 34, lives in a village in the Bethlehem district, and has been **blacklisted by the GSS** since 1997. On 15 June 2003 (in the presence of MachsomWatch), A.'s mother was wounded in a traffic accident at the Al-Khadr junction. She was evacuated in a grave condition to Hadassah hospital, on Mount Scopus in Israel. Her husband and son were not allowed to accompany her, and – escorted by MachsomWatch – went to the Ezyon DCO to receive an entry permit to Israel. The father stood at one side and cried quietly. Every so often, the son phoned the hospital. He was quiet, didn't shout and showed inner strength. After a two-hour wait, and following our intervention, they received the permits and we drove them to the hospital. The driver who injured her was an Israeli resident of Jerusalem. His car was insured by an Israeli insurance company. The mother underwent long treatments and still needs many more at Hadassah Ein Kerem and Hadassah Mount Scopus. Although an attorney is handling the matter, and although A. has all the documents he needs from the hospital (a doctor's referral, the patient report etc.) he is unable to obtain an undertaking from the insurance company that it will reimburse the treatment. And as for compensation, loss of working days, suffering and working capacity, don't even think about it. The insurance company evades any payment., the mother needs her son to escort her to treatment and to obtain the undertakings from the insurance company. Repeated efforts by MachsomWatch to rescind the GSS blacklisting have failed – these include turning to Lt.-Col. Yair Lotstein, the legal advisor of the Judea & Samaria Division. A. has already entered Jerusalem several times with one-day permits given by the GSS, and nevertheless each time anew he's faced with insurmountable problems to get a permit. First his application is turned down, and then suddenly after we intervene, he's granted the permit. If he wanted to, he could carry out a terror attack easily, but the fact is he simply doesn't want to. All A. wants is to escort his mother to her treatments in the hospital – because he's the caring son.

The Nablus DCO at Huwwara: You must have a permit to get a permit. Access to the DCO in Nablus is particularly complicated. Whoever arrives from Nablus, the northern and western villages near it (such as Huwwara, Burin, Madama, Jit, Sarra, Tel, Beit Iba, Qussin) must cross through the Huwwara checkpoint and present there a crossing permits at the encirclement checkpoints. Those coming from the east must cross at Beit Furiq checkpoint. It is not a matter of only two checkpoints, but of a system of 'apartheid roads', checkpoints and barriers that paralyse Palestinian movement.

Hebron DCO (1 January) – a young handicapped Palestinian taxi driver, who is blacklisted by the GSS. As a result he is obliged to undergo a 'security diagnosis' whenever he requests a passage permit at any of the internal checkpoints. He has to submit a request at the Hebron DCO, explain why he

requires it, wait a few days, and return to the DCO to check whether his request has been approved. All this in order to receive treatment at the Bethlehem hospital. He needs monthly treatment and each time is given a permit for the Ezyon checkpoint, valid for only one day.

Evidence we have heard shows that Palestinians apprehended three times for an illegal stay in Israel are classified as blacklisted by the GSS. A Palestinian from Al 'Eizariya, who has been working regularly in Jerusalem for many years, is obliged, daily, to clamber over walls, flee from Border Police jeeps and evade rolling checkpoints in order to get to work. He has been caught twice on the way and returned to the Bethlehem checkpoint; the third time detectives or GSS operatives in civilian clothes ambushed him at his place of employment. He has been trying to obtain a magnetic card for over a year, but has been refused. He has been working in the same place for eight years, and has had countless opportunities to perpetrate terrorist attacks. Needless to say, he has not done so, and merely wants to work honestly and support his family. His employer is satisfied with his work. Is there any 'security' logic in refusing him an entry permit to Israel?

G. is a resident of **Abu Dis**, holding a Palestinian ID. He is the father of two children who were severely wounded in an accident. The family lives east of the 'separation wall'. The children receive medical attention in Israeli and Palestinian hospitals in Jerusalem. Note that the largest and best West Bank hospitals – Muqassad and Augusta Victoria – are situated to the west of the Wall. The father lacks a magnetic card, being 'denied entry' by the GSS. He cannot obtain a permit to enter Israel, and no reasons are given. G. has received one-day permits from time to time to accompany his children to medical treatment.

Ezyon DCO – throughout the year there have been constant complaints about the opening hours of the police desk. Contacts of MachsomWatch with various authorities in the police have proved fruitless. Nobody has succeeded in disciplining the sole policeman who mans the desk (whenever he feels like it). One example out of many (28 September): the hatch is supposed to be open from 13.00. At 15.00 two people were waiting. Five minutes after we talked to the supervisor it opened and the people waiting in line were received. The policeman staffing it later turned up in the waiting area. It is not clear whether the public had been informed of the change in opening hours, but it was clear that the policeman was making fools of us and our efforts. At a meeting with the head of the Civil Administration, we were informed that traffic fines can be paid at a Palestinian bank. In fact, they can only be paid in post offices in Israeli settlements; in most cases the payer is barred from crossing and the fine can be paid only by an emissary with a permit. The policeman told us unequivocally that even if it is permissible to pay the fines in a Palestinian bank, he will not accept their receipts. Why? Because of the possibility of forgery.

'Potentials'

The relatives, or even acquaintances, of an individual killed by the IDF are considered to have motives for perpetrating terrorist attacks, hence are classified as 'potentials', and appear on the GSS lists as blacklisted. Not only have they suffered bereavement, now they are deprived of the right to livelihood. According to the head of the Civil Administration, Brig.-Gen. Ilan Paz: 'A blacklisted individual is not only someone who once engaged in hostile terrorist activity, but also someone who is likely to do so. If your brother has been killed by the IDF, accidentally or not, you will probably be blacklisted, because it is now considered much more likely that you might become a terrorist yourself.'¹²

Qalandiya (24 November): we met the brother of Arafat Ibrahim Yaqub, who was shot and killed by soldiers in July while sitting and sipping coffee in a kiosk in the camp. His brother, a building worker, and his father are no longer permitted to work in Israel. The reason? Yaqub's death! Note the chilling absurdity!: the moment Yaqub was killed and an investigation was launched, his relatives were transformed into potential security threats and were no longer permitted to enter Israel to work. They are on the GSS list and are barred from receiving magnetic cards, which are the essential condition for receiving movement permits in the occupied territories as well.

Problems of ID Registration

The State of Israel creates numerous difficulties for Palestinians in amending ID details, such as changes of address within the territories. In the past few years it has become impossible to change addresses on IDs, which causes considerable problems for people wishing to go through checkpoints. From time to time we encounter people who have difficulty in obtaining IDs (even Palestinian IDs) or problems with family reunification with Israeli-resident spouses.

The process of giving approval for issuance of Palestinian IDs was suspended by Israel in October 2000. The procedures for family unification in cases where one spouse is Palestinian and the other has Israeli nationality were suspended by a provisional law which has since been extended twice.

¹² See previous footnote.

Huwwara (20 July): Catch 22 – a young man who recently married needs to register the change in his status at the Ministry of the Interior in Nablus. The DCO officer directs him to Salfit because the marriage certificate was issued there. It turns out that he has already been there, and in Ramallah as well, but was still sent to Nablus because his ID was issued there, but he does not have a permit to enter Nablus.

Arbitrary Revoking of Valid Passage Permits

Beit Iba: the lists of drivers permitted to cross the checkpoint change frequently and a driver with a valid permit, sometimes with a truck-full of perishable goods, can unexpectedly find that he is barred from crossing.¹³

DCO Ezyon (2 December): Two Palestinian workers from Wadi Fukin, with permits issued on 10 November were told on 11 November that they had lapsed, because they were issued under Arafat's rule and now the Abu Mazen era had commenced...

Tarqumiya (16 November): Permits held by Palestinians for work in Israel must be valid dating from 11 November (as we know, obtaining a permit from the DCO involves time and money). Anyone holding a permit issued before that date is not allowed through even when the closure ends. (24 November): a Jewish contractor complains to us that his workers are not allowed through even though they have valid passes, because without prior warning today only farm workers are allowed to cross. The checkpoint commander confirms that last night he received this new order, as well as the order to allow only Palestinians with permits dated 11 November onwards to pass through.

The 'Seam area'

The 'seam area' is the term applied to the territory that lies on the Israeli side of the 'separation fence', between that Fence and the Green Line. Trapped within it are entire Palestinian villages and also farm-land belonging to Palestinians who live to the east of the Fence, in the occupied West Bank. Now that those lands have been fenced off, the Palestinian farmers cannot work their own fields without having special permits to get to them. The fact that their land is in the 'seam area' is not considered a sufficient reason for granting such permits, and thus a question-mark hangs over the fate of every agricultural activity that needs to be carried out there. For example, at olive-harvest time,

13 See Chapter: Harassment and Arbitrariness.

considerable difficulties were put in the way of farmers wanting to pick their olives in 'seam area' groves. Difficulties were presented also when it came to cultivating the groves immediately after the harvest. Similarly, farmers living in the 'seam area', whose olive groves are on the other side of the Fence where they also press the oil, are forbidden to bring the oil back to their homes through the fence. To add to the difficulties, the regulations governing all these agricultural activities were changed daily throughout the olive harvest and the oil-pressing seasons.

Figures published in February 2005 by Physicians for Human Rights show that tens of thousands of Palestinian farmers live in the area between the planned 'security fence' and the Green Line.

The following is taken from the Order promulgated by the O/C Central Command, General Moshe Kaplinski, in October 2003.

Order No. 378 concerning the closure of the area S/2/03
(the 'seam area')

2. I hereby proclaim that the 'seam area' is a closed area within the terms of the Order.
3. a) No person may enter the 'seam area' or be found there.
b) Any person found in the 'seam area' must leave immediately.
4. Clause (3) shall not apply to:
 - i) An Israeli.
 - ii) Any person who holds a permit from me, or from a person authorized by me, which allows him to enter the 'seam' area and remain there.

The document makes it clear that tens of thousands of persons from the occupied territories who live in the 'seam area', or own land there, may only be there with the express permission of the Israeli army. In other words, they need army permission to continue living in their own homes.

The Absurdity of Life in the 'Seam Area' – Jubara Checkpoint and the village of Khirbet Jubara: The Jubara checkpoint is separates between an area of the West Bank and the 'seam area'. Thus the village of Khirbet Jubara (some 300 souls) lies to the western ('Israeli')

side of the Fence, while its close neighbours – the villages of Ar-Ras, Far'un, Shufa, and Izbet-Shufa – remain in Palestinian territory, on the eastern side of the Fence. Much of the agricultural land and the hot-houses belonging to these villages lie in the 'seam area'. As a result of the changed circumstances created by the Fence, two things have happened: Khirbet Jubara has been cut off from its natural surroundings and from the people who would normally provide services to its residents, while the people of the surrounding villages have been severed from their lands, access to which has now become almost impossible. In order to reach some sections of their lands, those which lie on the western side of the Fence (south of the Jubara checkpoint and at the edge of the village), farmers have to equip themselves with special permits issued by the DCO. Issuance of those permits requires proof of ownership of the land, a very difficult procedure which drastically cuts the number of people who receive permission to farm the land.

The people of Khirbet Jubara are prisoners in their own village: they are not Israeli citizens and are not even considered as Israeli residents; and although the Fence has now linked their village physically to Israel, they are prohibited from entering the country. At the same time, the Fence has cut them off from the West Bank: to enter that area, as well as to return to their own village is only legally possible by following one route – that through the Jubara checkpoint.

The checkpoint is the sole passage the villagers may use to get to their schools (the younger Jubara children attend elementary schools in Ar-Ras and Kafr Jamal, and the older ones go to secondary school in Tulkarm), to the college of further education in Tulkarm, to clinics and to hospital (also in Tulkarm), to the bank branch, to shops, to all public institutions, including those giving municipal services, and to their places of work. Entry into Jubara village is forbidden to all but its residents, so that all service and maintenance personnel, suppliers, traders and even the residents' families and friends who live in neighbouring villages – all are barred from the village.

The need for special passage permits for the 'Seam area' sometimes makes for special difficulties: thus, in July and December 2004, the village was without food supplies because of changes in the instructions given to the soldiers regarding the suppliers; in June

2004, there was no garbage collection from the village for this reason; medical staff working from a mobile clinic have also been denied entry on occasion, etc. The ban on normal entry to the village by suppliers and craftsmen has also been responsible for the devastation of two important mainstays of the village's economy: poultry farming has been totally destroyed and the hothouses were seriously affected. Jubara villagers, as we have noted, have friends and relatives in the surrounding villages and in Tulkarm, some of them first-degree kin: these people are forbidden entry to the village except by special DCO permission, even for visiting the sick, visiting new mothers and their babies, attending to sick relatives or celebrating family events.

Barta'a East (a large village, now imprisoned in the 'seam area') (25 May): A lorry loaded with flour, sugar, oil etc., a gift to the people of Barta'a East from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), stood at the eastern side of the checkpoint. The entry of goods such as these is permitted only according to the 'back-to-back' system¹⁴ and this facility is not available here, only at Irtah or Jalama. The Back-to-Back system means that another lorry has to be brought to the Israeli side of the checkpoint and another sum of money has to be paid to have the goods taken from there to their destination. The gift of basic nutritional supplies, and the flour that it includes, will enable the villagers to bake bread and thus help them survive the unemployment and poverty that is their present lot. A payment of another 1000 shekels, is just out of the question. None of our efforts were to any avail in changing the soldiers' decision. • **The End of the Story** (30 May): The contents of the lorry were unloaded and since then have been held at a nearby village. The solution: the flour is going to be brought into Barta'a in barrels on a tractor. • (29 November) – Not long ago some buildings in the village were destroyed on the grounds that they'd been built without a licence – among them was the village's olive press. The people of Barta'a applied for permission to build some sort of olive press – even a temporary one to be put in a tent, but they were not given permission. 'Where are we going to press our olives and make the oil?' they asked, 'in Wadi 'Ara?' (within Israel). That certainly was not an option, given that the people of Barta'a have no right of entry to Israel. The DCO staff promised the Palestinian residents of the 'seam areas' that they would be allowed to process their olives and produce their oil in the presses in the West Bank. Pressing the olives and extracting the oil is a lengthy process and at the height of the season farmers spend a long time queuing for their turn. No one leaves his olive harvest unguarded and no one will let someone else press his olives without being present. Since yesterday, the folk of Barta'a have not

14 See under **Back-to-Back** in Appendix: A Lexicon of Occupation Terms.

been allowed to bring home their olive oil for the use of their families on the grounds that these are commercial quantities and intended for sale in Israel.

- **Only Five Boxes** (19 June 2004 and 29 June): For a long time there has been a problem with the movement of goods: there is a very strange order whereby Barta'a greengrocers may not bring more than five boxes of produce through the checkpoint. This is an order that further embitters the lives of the shopkeepers here and damages the livelihood of many families.

Barring Israeli Arabs from Entry into the Occupied Territories

The Israeli army treats Arab citizens of Israel differently than they treat Jewish citizens, detaining them upon their return from Area A¹⁵ back into Israel, and forwarding their ID details to the GSS, just as it does the Palestinians. This is against the law. The alternative is to call the Israeli police which would fine them 5,000 NIS for or prosecute them for illegal entry into Area A.

Reihan (9, 13 and 18 December): – There was no passage into the West Bank today for Israeli Arabs. Settlers had no problems crossing through.

Beit Iba (18 July): There was a young Israeli Arab detained here: his mother, a woman of 70, lives in Nablus and he goes to see her about once in every three months. He was a virtual prisoner at the checkpoint while his ID details were relayed for clearance to the GSS for several hours but, when it was explained to him that the alternative was to call the police to deal with him (which would mean he would have to pay a fine of 5000 shekels), he was almost grateful for his detention.

Jubara (11 December): The place has been declared a closed military area. MachsomWatch women were allowed through, as were settlers from Avnei Hefetz, Einav, Shavei Shomron etc., because this is their home. But for Israeli Arabs entry was strictly forbidden; except, that is, for family reunification cases, and only those with the proper permission. And in every instance, the entry of Israeli Arab vehicles to the area was forbidden. This is a new regulation that is to be applied every Saturday between the hours of 09:00 and 16:00.

15 For the distinction between areas A, B and C, see Appendix: Maps.



The Sick, the Elderly, and Children

No one denies that the sick, the elderly and infants who cross the checkpoints do not constitute a security risk. Nevertheless, we encounter time and again delays and unconscionable harassment directed at these segments of the checkpoint population. The many difficulties entailed in passing through the checkpoints deter these people from embarking on any journey that is not absolutely vital. This then means that many of them reach the checkpoints only when needing medical help, which puzzles the soldiers – are they all sick? The answer is Yes, because they only come to the checkpoint if they have no other choice.

Frequently, sick people in need of medical care arrive at the checkpoint in possession of medical papers, but without crossing permits. An absurd interaction plays out at this point. Young soldiers, completely untrained and inexperienced, must judge the urgency of a medical case. Not only do they not speak Arabic, they are also incapable of understanding what is written in their medical papers. Since they worry that the papers might be forged, they halt the sick and delay them until their ID cards are checked with the GSS. Hours may pass until approval arrives from the GSS, often causing people to miss their appointment with a doctor or for surgery, or even a deterioration in their condition.

Another problem of principle relates the people accompanying the sick, who may not be holding a crossing permit. The patient is then left alone, in most cases frightened and helpless. The soldiers don't understand, for example, that Palestinian women with a sick child always go to physician with a companion. Absurdly, if the patients lack a crossing permit, the soldiers suggest crossing by ambulance, even if there is no medical need for one, because passengers in an ambulance do not have to present crossing permits. However, few of the patients can afford to pay the cost of hiring an ambulance at the cost hundreds of shekels. Of course, ambulances are also held up for checks – though these tend to be relatively quick.

Men with infants in their arms are viewed with no little suspicion by the soldiers. They are sometimes convinced that the baby is just a 'cover' for a dangerous person since 'Arab men generally don't hold babies'.¹⁶ For example, one soldier said to a MachsomWatch observer: "Have you any idea how many times terrorists crossed here with babies in their arms? They use children instead of the *tasrich* (permit). This one won't get through!"

We commend Ms. Dalia Bassa, Coordinator of Health in the Civil Administration, who is very helpful in difficult cases. Ms. Bassa is a single ray of light in the gloom, a sane and constructive voice. But she is alone, and is in charge of all two million citizens of the West Bank. Again and again the question we ask: Why should people need a permit for their mundane activities, not to mention for obviously humanitarian ones?

Every incident described in the reports cited below is an entire world for those involved. Due to space limitations, the events are not described in the appropriate detail.

Qalandiya (28 July): A very dramatic case was that of a young girl who was supported – almost dragged – by her mother on one side and another young woman on the other, going from Ramallah back to her village south of the checkpoint. She had had an operation and was barely walking, pain very obvious in her face. At one time she became very white and was close to fainting. Palestinians cannot travel in cars from the north to the south through the checkpoint if they don't have blue (Israeli) IDs. They cannot go in a car with yellow plates and the only way to pass Qalandiya checkpoint from north to south for them is in an ambulance. Obviously they didn't have money for that and the young girl was forced to drag herself 200-300 meters from where the taxi left them from the northern side to the southern end of the checkpoint.

Beit Iba (29 March): We left the checkpoint. Walking along with us was a father carrying what looked like a 5 year-old child in his arms. He told me the child was 12 years old, had a degenerative illness and was also slightly brain-damaged. He (together with wife and 2 daughters) were returning from Nablus for medical treatment, but he was not allowed to take his car, which had been left at the western side. So the family had to wander from one checkpoint to the next, and he holding the child. It was as sight that epitomizes all the evil of the checkpoints.

16 See under **Arabs** in Appendix: A Lexicon of Occupation Terms.

Jubara (2 May): The young man had recently undergone knee surgery during which metal implants had been inserted. The soldiers ordered him to sit with the other detainees. He didn't sit down since doing so was immensely painful. If we would get a chair, he could sit, but he couldn't sit on the ground. The soldier's response was "A chair?! I'm supposed to get him a chair? F-k, I'm not getting him a chair!"

Delaying the Sick

Beit Iba (18 September): Sick people on their way to a doctor were referred to a doctor in the village – "There'll be a doctor in your village at noon, just wait, it's already ten o'clock." A father (with his small daughter) refused to wait until noon, the child had apparently swallowed a foreign body and was vomiting. Ultimately, they were allowed to enter on condition they returned within an hour – his ID was given as a deposit and he was warned "*Dir Balak* if you don't return within the hour". • (3 October 3004) Among the detainees were two pregnant women, one carrying twins – she had a medical certificate, in English, attesting to the fact that hers was a high-risk pregnancy and she had been told to go to Tulkarm for the birth. To avoid the unpleasantness and risk of being shoved in the packed line, both women had made their way around it, via the line for cars, and were being punished for 'avoiding the checkpoint'. The MachsomWatch shift phoned the District Coordination Office (DCO), which gave the order to release them immediately. • (19 October) – A young man was held back for a long time: he was suffering from diarrhoea. When he finally got his ID back, he was white-faced, holding his stomach from the pain, and his eyes were tearing with the effort. There are no toilets at Beit Iba checkpoint.

Reihan: (30 November): At the entrance from the West Bank into Israel stood a woman with two young children. She needed to get to Rambam hospital in Haifa, to receive treatment for a blood disorder. Her appointment was at 17:00 and a car was waiting for her on the northern side of the checkpoint. The checkpoint commander wouldn't let her through, claiming that she needed to cross through Jalama. MachsomWatch called the Salem DCO, explaining that she would miss her appointment at the hospital, and taking the route through Jalama would mean she had to get through the jammed area of Haifa Bay. At the DCO they weighed their answer. Time went by and there was still no answer. She was allowed through one hour later.

Anata (Qalandiya report) (14 July): A man of 50 was on his way to the doctor. He has a back problem, and apparently has a kidney disorder as well. He was going to get his monthly injection, and took out his referral note. The policewoman reacted bluntly "I'm not a doctor, don't show it to me". She and two other soldiers spoke crudely, joked, one imitated the man's accent, the other disparaged what he said "My grandfather's 80, too..." In the end, he was forced to sign an illegals form, and was sent back.

Huwwara (17 June): A Palestinian with a bandaged leg appeared. The commander barked at him “Take it off, are you trying to con me?” The man took off the bandage, to show a leg all twisted and swollen. The commander continued to shout: “Who told you to take it off ! Get out of here! Go home!” • (5 October): Among the detainees was one unforgettable case: a father and his four-year-old son with a heart disorder, and who stared at the soldiers with large sad eyes. The two had returned on foot from hospital in Nablus, to save the money an ambulance would have cost. They had no permit, only an X-ray of the child’s chest done in the Nablus hospital. Telephone calls to the coordinator of health did not help. They waited for close to four hours, during which the unchanging answer was – the case is being looked into...

The “Bawabe” (“little gate”), Abu Dis (15 September): Rosh Hashana (the Jewish New Year) is approaching and it’s a particularly difficult shift. The closure ahead of the holiday is in force. An older man with a plaster-cast is forced to turn around; an eight-year-old girl who needs an eye doctor in Sheikh Jarrakh is forced to return. The father shows me the medical letter of referral. If she is not seen today, the next appointment can only be made for six months ahead. We try to contact everyone possible – twice to the checkpoint commander, the humanitarian centre, Dalia Bassa, Physicians for Human Rights, MK Roman Bronfman – but to no avail. • (3 December): Later, a man asked to be let through with his wife, in order to go to Al Mukassed Hospital because she was pregnant and not feeling well. The soldier refused even to listen. The woman, supported by her husband, then fainted and collapsed, but the soldier still wouldn’t let them through. MachsomWatch intervened and then the soldiers ordered an Israeli ambulance. The ambulance took a very long time to come – (to get to Abu Dis, Israeli ambulances must be accompanied by military escort). Meanwhile, the woman was waiting in a car, since the soldiers refused to let her wait in the monastery garden. The husband was worried about his wife’s condition and feared that the Israeli ambulance would take her to Hadassah, and so he called a Palestinian ambulance that arrived in a very short while. When the Israeli ambulance finally arrived, the woman was already inside the Palestinian ambulance and they drove off.

Delaying and Denying Passage to Companions

Beit Iba (6 July): It was insufferably hot. An entire family, including children and a baby, was accompanying the mother to hospital. The 27-year-old father was not allowed to proceed through the checkpoint. They waited hours in the sun, the baby was crying, and the soldiers allowed the mother to feed her inside the concrete cube where wanted men are detained. She was closed off behind the scorching steel door. Then – surprisingly, after hours of waiting – the young family was permitted to cross through. • (7 September,): A young

husband was accompanying his wife and their very sick baby to a clinic in Nablus., the soldiers refused to allow him to cross. They are unaware of the fact that Palestinian women with a sick child is always accompanied on visits to the doctor. • (2 October): A young couple – the wife was allowed through, he was not. He explained that his wife (wearing a traditional veil, and looking scared and sick) had miscarried during her first pregnancy and was now in the third month of her second pregnancy, defined as a high-risk one. She had a letter referring her to a gynaecologist in Nablus. He couldn't let her go alone, there was no ambulance and the appointment was for today. The commander adamantly refused to let him through, saying "He can go back to the village and find a woman who will go with his wife!"

The Bawabe, Abu Dis (29 September): Among the people crossing towards Jerusalem were a woman in an advanced state of pregnancy and with her an older man, maybe her father, who was carrying a baby in his arms, the woman had a blue (Israeli) ID, while the man's ID was orange (Palestinian). The soldier permitted only the woman to cross. When the man passed the infant over to her, the baby bellowed until it was returned to the man. The policeman seemed embarrassed. After this ritual was twice repeated, the child crying when he was taken away from the man, the soldier allowed all three of them to cross.

Huwwara (13 December): A couple were standing at one side. They had come in an ambulance an hour ago, with the body of the man's brother, and they had been taken out of the ambulance for checks. They were standing there, grief struck and waiting for the GSS to authorise them. A soldier says triumphantly "d'you know who the corpse is? A terrorist!" two minutes after MachsomWatch intervened, the couple were allowed to continue on their way. The corpse has long since been driven away.

Prolonged Delays of Children, Mothers and the Elderly

Sarra Checkpoint (Beit Iba Report) (1 January): We tried to help an old man, a villager from Sarra, who had returned from Jordan and was carrying a large suitcase. Taxis are not permitted to get close to the checkpoint, and they let off their passengers around one kilometre from it. People have to walk up a hill to arrive at the checkpoint. Soldiers consulted for close to two hours via their communications whether to allow us to bring him by car to the checkpoint. In the end, permission was granted. But once at the checkpoint, the man was refused passage to his home: he held all the necessary papers. Again, phone calls, discussions, the DCO was consulted, and this time to no avail. As night fell, when all hope was lost, we brought the old man with his vast suitcase (too big for the luggage compartment) to the village of Jit and we left him at the taxi-station there. The drivers promised to take care of him at night.

Wadi Nar (28 April): Among the passengers in a taxi was an 80-year-old man, his equally old wife, and their blind daughter, on their way back from Jordan to their home in Beit Sahur. They were denied passage. MachsomWatch women tried to help, but were refused. An hour and a half later, the father – leaning on a walking-stick and aided by a young man, started down the hill. His wife tried to steer and manoeuvre their blind daughter down as well. Several men carried down their luggage. It was terribly hot and it was obvious that there was no way the old man would make it to a vehicle.

Qalandiya (20 October): An 11-year old boy reaches the CP half-running, passes one turnstile, screaming. The soldiers reach out to catch him, the passers-by too, for a second it seems like a game, then it turns out the kid is hysterical. He keeps turning his head back towards the camp, screaming “Samir! Samir!” A man approaches him, the soldiers gather around. “Tell him to come to the side with us”, they instruct the man. But the child keeps screaming, terrified, in desperate need: “Samir! Samir!” He’s horrified by some awful threat. Is it the checkpoint? The armed soldiers surrounding him? The Occupation? The 11 years of his life that suddenly land on him on the verge of adolescence? We offer our help – M. is a psychologist – but are roughly rejected. The soldiers, great experts at deciphering the X-rays of those liars at the checkpoint will know how to handle the minor mental crisis of this boy. The boy finally calms down by himself and goes back. A girl-soldier hisses after him, parting words: “Run, Samir, run”...

Hebron Hills – Road no. 60 at the junction of Shuyukh and Hebron is dangerous. There is no road-crossing and a great many small children cross it on the way to school in the morning. It is a life-endangering site. Reports on the South Hebron area mention this regularly, but nothing has been done about it.



Obstructing the Passage of Ambulances

Infrequent attempts by Palestinians to use ambulances for purposes other than medical does not justify the multiple difficulties that the army sweepingly imposes on the passage of all ambulances across the checkpoints. The necessity to check ambulances and their passengers is understandable, but cannot justify prolonged delays and even absolute denial of passage. **Paralyzing this humanitarian function is a grave violation of basic human rights.**

Unnecessary Delays of Ambulances

Ar Ram (21.07): An ambulance with siren blaring and lights flashing rushes past us, southward bound. A few minutes later, when it is held-up at the checkpoint, we hear about the grave situation. A baby, a few weeks' old and suffering from cardiac insufficiency, is being transferred from the Nablus hospital to Mukassed hospital in Jerusalem. The child's father, a doctor by profession, is also in the ambulance. The driver says he has spoken with the Coordinator of Health Problems in the West Bank, Dalia Bassa. The ambulance moves forward and suddenly stops. A Border Policeman, holding the documents of the driver and the accompanying paramedic, is asking questions: "Who are you? Where have you come from? Where are you going?" In English and broken Hebrew they try to explain that there is a baby whose life is in danger in the ambulance. The policeman persists with his questions. We call out to the policeman that it is a baby who might die, that Dalia Bassa authorized the ambulance to pass the checkpoint, and any delay will endanger the child even more. This time the policeman listens and phones Dalia Bassa, but to no avail. He makes several phone calls to the District Coordination Office (DCO) but gets no answers. Precious minutes pass. We get hold of Dalia Bassa. She says that no one spoke to her and asks who are the people in the ambulance and where they're going. We let her speak directly to the driver. "He was very insolent," she complains later. (Anyone trying to get a very sick baby to hospital and who encounters a brick wall is under pressure, while someone who asks hosts of questions and endangers a baby's life is insolent). More minutes pass. In the meanwhile the driver and the medical orderly, and we too, beg the policeman to let them through. "You're bothering me", says the policeman. The orderly despairs: "It's over". "No it isn't" we shout back. The policeman orders a check of the ambulance. The

back-door is opened and A. sees him: tiny, instruments attached to his entire body, his father beside him. They check. **Only now** do they let the ambulance drive on.

Huwwara (6 November): An ambulance is required to park on the side. A heart patient, a woman, accompanied by a doctor and a nurse is on the way from Nablus hospital to the hospital in Ramallah. The ambulance check took an hour and a half. First, all identity cards had to be checked. Then the checkpoint commander ordered all equipment to be removed from the ambulance. The nurse spread a sheet on the ground on which she placed all the equipment, including sterile gloves, which dispersed on the ground, oxygen masks, etc. It took twenty minutes. Next, the patient was required to walk to a curtained area where a female soldier checked her. The equipment was then returned to the ambulance and the driver ordered to open the hood. The only thing left unchecked was the air in the tyres. Nevertheless, after all that, the ambulance was not allowed to pass. • (8 August): A 4-5 months pregnant woman, with severe abdominal pains, was evacuated from the checkpoint by ambulance. Her husband somehow managed to enter the ambulance. The soldier who saw this immediately ordered the northern checkpoint to apprehend him. • (16 September): An ambulance, transporting a woman in labour, was rigorously and oafishly checked. Sanitary towels were thrown out and all the patients' belongings dispersed on the ground and were soiled.

Wadi Nar (27 April): In a single day we witnessed nine ambulances that were delayed at the checkpoint. One ambulance was not permitted to transport a woman patient to the Bethlehem hospital because her daughter and baby grandchild had accompanied her. "The escorts transfer explosives" stated a Border Policeman. Eventually the ambulance was allowed to drive on with the elderly patient but not with the daughter and infant. Half an hour later the ambulance returned and then the Border Police did not let it through because the ambulance was **empty!** We learnt new rules: ambulances carrying patients are allowed to pass but forbidden to return. In the afternoon another two empty ambulances were delayed on the way back from Bethlehem; they had transported patients, with authorization from Dalia Bassa, the coordinator of Health Problems in the West Bank. One ambulance was held-up for six hours and the other 'only' for four. An ambulance taking a medical team from Ramallah to Hebron was not allowed to pass. We contacted all the relevant authorities, helped by representatives of Physicians for Human Rights. Eventually we heard that an instruction had been given to let the ambulance pass, but the Border Police at the checkpoint had received no such instruction. So the team was forced to wait at the checkpoint for two hours until the authorization was verified. Later that afternoon, the director of the Beit Jallah hospital was delayed for two and a half hours: he was transporting ice-packed medicine, with the authorization of Dalia Bassa. Other patients were

transferred to ambulances on the other side of the checkpoint (back-to-back). There are no facilities at the checkpoint to enable a civilised form of transfer that doesn't expose patients to the weather and the omnipresent dust. Thus, the patients' and their escorts' dignity is violated and they are also exposed to health hazards.

Atara, north of Ramallah (report from Qalandiya) (17 July): Due to a flying checkpoint, an ambulance transporting a very sick child was 'held-up' for 40 minutes.

Wadi Nar (26 April): Ambulances with four patients (two adults with fractures, and two children) arriving from Ramallah on the way to Hebron are delayed for a long time. Due to the closure, every ambulance must have a special permit from the DCO in addition to the regular permit. With the help of the Coordinator of Health Problems permission is given – two hours and fifteen minutes after the ambulances reached the checkpoint.

Qalandiya (8 December): An ambulance with flashing lights, army and police jeeps nearby. It appears that an army jeep ran over a passer-by, injuring his leg. The man – who has a heart condition – is inside the ambulance, but meanwhile discussions are going on over the finer details.

Transferring Patients from Ambulance to Ambulance in the 'Back-to-Back' Method

At many checkpoints no vehicles – including ambulances and cars on humanitarian missions – are allowed through. Passengers, including patients who are incapacitated, must get out of one ambulance and into another one waiting on the other side of the checkpoint.

Near the **DCO checkpoint in Beit Jallah** (reports from Bethlehem) (25 April): A particularly grave situation: on one side there is an ambulance which has transported five cancer patients from the Hebron District. On the other side an ambulance is waiting to transport a patient to the hospital in Hebron. The cancer patients were supposed to join other patients and together set out for treatment already scheduled. The soldiers staffing the checkpoint moved the ambulance away, and did not allow the patients to pass on foot. For one and a half hours, we pleaded with the Coordinator of Health Problems but to no avail. Eventually, following the Coordinator's advice, the patients crossed through the Beit Jallah checkpoint some 500 metres below the DCO. This necessitated climbing over piles of stones and stumbling on mounds of earth.

Anabta (reports from Beit Iba) (14 December): At Anabta there is a large iron gate which permanently blocks the road between Tulkarm and Nablus. There are no soldiers posted there since the gate prevents passage of all vehicles

anyway. An elderly patient on a gurney from an ambulance on one side, in the back-to-back method, is passed under the unmanned gate – an inhumane method. Even goods are transferred with more consideration.

Huwwara (4 October): For over an hour a cancer patient from Nablus is in an ambulance waiting for permission to move to an Israeli ambulance, which is waiting for him (everything has been arranged beforehand). According to the Israeli driver, the reason for the delay is that the photo in the patient's ID does not resemble the patient. The patient's face is bloated due to the treatment he is receiving. The driver (a Jewish Israeli) of the private ambulance is agitated. He has never seen such behaviour, he cannot believe it, cannot calm down. We urge him to tell about what he has seen, to tell the truth. He replies: "No one will believe me".

Delaying Ambulances that are not Transporting Patients

Wadi Nar (23 April): An empty ambulance was sent to return a patient who had undergone heart surgery in Ramallah. The soldiers denied it passage, claiming that special orders for 'complete closure' were in place and it was not an emergency case. With the help of the coordinator of Health Problems, permission to pass was granted. o (28 April): An ambulance coming from the south was not permitted to pass. We saw the doctors (or other hospital staff) climbing up the detour route, under the noses of the soldiers. A van transporting medicines, en route to Hebron, was also denied passage.



Violence

This chapter depicts grave events that unfolded as we watched and in our presence, and they represent only the tip of the iceberg of incidents that occurred in our absence. From the experience we've accumulated over the past four years, we know that soldiers at the checkpoints tend to use less physical violence when we are watching. This bears out our belief that our presence has a moderating influence on the army's conduct in and around the checkpoints. At the same time, it's clear to us that the soldiers act cautiously around us, the watchers and reporters, but lose their restraint when we are absent.

Accordingly, this chapter does not reflect the full scope of violent incidents towards Palestinians at the checkpoints, nor the violence and abuse against them by settlers, on which we have few testimonies.¹⁷ Here is an example of how our presence impacts on the soldiers:

Qalandiya (6 December): We arrived in the middle of an incident between Border Policemen and two young men and heard a soldier threatening "I can break you apart with one hand – you and your entire gang". And to prove this, he swung at them. A Border Police woman soldier tried to move us away, but we stayed, of course. This may have resulted in the incident ending very quickly, with the soldiers returning the IDs to the men and freeing them.

Violence and Harassment at Checkpoints

Beit Iba (25 July): Four students arrived; they'd completed their examinations and wanted to return home, but today was not the 'permitted' day.¹⁸ One of them wouldn't give up, went over to the soldier at the checking post and conducted a quiet conversation, trying to persuade him. Suddenly the soldier – A. – began to shout: "No one calls me a liar!", punched the student twice in the stomach and smashed his face against the concrete barrier. It was covered with blood. At this stage three other soldiers tried to separate the two, and held A. The student moved away and stood beside the exit next to the

17 See Chapter: Settlers and Others.

18 See Chapter: Harassment and Arbitrariness.

checking post. A. wrenched free of his comrades' grip, shouted again: "No one calls me a liar!" and the student fled towards the exit from the checkpoint. A. ran after him, seized a gun from one of the other soldiers and we heard a burst of fire. All the while, A.'s comrades were in hot pursuit, trying to stop him. When we arrived, the student was being led by soldiers standing on either side of him, with a gunshot wound in his arm, his face bloody, back towards the checkpoint. They laid him on the ground beside the dusty, filthy path and gave him first-aid, bandaging and splinting his arm. He couldn't move his fingers and every movement made him scream with pain. His swollen face was wiped clean of blood. Meanwhile the gun had been taken away from A., but he fetched his own weapon and kept repeating: "No one calls me a liar, I'll kill the son of a bitch. I don't care if I go to jail." And at the same time, he was instructing his comrades how to bind up the student's wound; they told us that he was an army paramedic. Meanwhile aid had been summoned. An army ambulance arrived, the bandage was removed and the wound freshly dressed, the student's shirt was cut, an IV drip inserted and a Palestinian ambulance was halted to take the young man to the Rafidiya hospital in Nablus. This needless shooting took place in an area filled with civilians, women and children and vehicles and it was only by a miracle that nobody else was hurt. The subject of the assault is M.K., a student of music and a cello player; his right hand was injured and he may be unable to play again.

The IDF response: "The soldier was jailed, of course...an investigation by the Military Police investigators and the law have its say ...this was an unacceptable and abnormal act...the IDF views it with gravity..." and all the other clichés. In early 2005, the soldier's sentence was published: "Mental health experts found that he suffers from a narcissistic personality disorder and the inability to control violent urges. These mental disorders were expressed in the situation created in the incident and led to the unfortunate result".

MachsomWatch had expressed concern before the assault about the behaviour of that specific soldier; his officers also saw and knew about it. In fact, the outburst and loss of control were totally predictable.

(6 November): In the group of students caught in the hills was a young man who, the soldiers maintained, has behaved wildly and was therefore held in solitary confinement, his hands and feet handcuffed and a rag blindfolding him. That is how he stood, unable to sit or move, from 08:00 (according to the Palestinians) and until 16:00. We arrived at 12:00 and he had already been in that state for at least four hours. At 16:00, upon his release, he was given a special 'parting gift' by a soldier at the checkpoint – who **slammed his head against a wall**. During our shift, we saw the checkpoint commander aiming his rifle at him, and telling him to face the wall.

Ar Ram (10 July): During a security check of documents, a Border Policeman attacked a Palestinian resident of Jerusalem, in the face with a screwdriver.

Although blood was streaming from his face, the soldiers refused to call an ambulance, and handcuffed the man. He reached Hadassah hospital in an ambulance (called at his own expense). Treatment was delayed because the policeman who accompanied him refused to unlock his handcuffs. MachsomWatch women witnessed most of the incident, and also gave evidence to the police. Border Policemen were verbally violent toward them, threatened to take their cameras and said We don't understand why you're so upset, events like this occur ten times a day.

Shooting at Qalandiya Checkpoint

Dozens of shooting incidents occurred at Qalandiya checkpoint in the first half of 2004. It was an almost daily phenomenon in 2003 as well, and took the lives of three youngsters in 2003 and of a man of 31 in June 2004. In every shooting incident, we made urgent phone calls to the entire military authority that is capable of stopping the gunfire, but our interlocutors generally showed no excitement. If the authorities responded in real-time to our countless alarms from the field, this 'chronicle of death foretold' might have been avoided.

Qalandiya (6 June): Soldiers killed a man at Qalandiya. Children were throwing stones, it was dusk, soldiers in a jeep fired and Arafat Yakoub, 31, took a bullet in the head and was killed. He was an invalid from a previous injury, also from soldiers' gunfire, and was confined to a wheelchair. During the gunfire he was sitting in a coffee-house neat the alley leading to the refugee camp, about a kilometre from the checkpoint. • (16 March,): A typical shooting incident: children from the Qalandiya refugee camp start climbing up the hill and throw stones towards the fence. A military jeep shows up, followed by an APC – then the shooting starts, and this game goes on for over half an hour. Initially, the soldiers use dummy bullets, but when one of the boys is hurt and falls down, it becomes clear that we are dealing with lethal ammunition now (as it turned out, those were rubber-coated bullets). At this stage, A. from MachsomWatch decides to intervene and runs uphill to stand between the children and the soldiers. The injured boy is being evacuated, and Aya convinces the children's two leaders (around 16 years old) to tell the boys to retreat downhill. One of them gives the order: "Go home!", and the children obey. Their condition, though, is that the soldiers must retreat too. The APC leaves – the jeep remains. Shortly before leaving, the soldiers fire tear gas as a farewell present.

Dura – Al Fawwar Junction – (South Hebron Hills) (29 March): At a temporary checkpoint, in the early morning when the whole area is teeming with people on their way to Hebron, gunfire wounds the legs of two children on their way to school. They were walking close to each other – one sustained a direct hit and his friend the bullet's ricochet. We saw the bloodstains on the

road and a taxi. The wounded kids were evacuated at once to the hospital in Hebron. We filed a complaint with the police.

Damage to Property

Anabta (7 December): Taxi-drivers in Beit Iba and Anabta told us about intensifying harassment by the army. As well as confiscating IDs, the soldiers are now physically damaging their vehicles – breaking mirrors, kicking the body and so on. We saw some of the damage done. A driver told us that all four wheels of his friend’s taxi had been slashed at night by soldiers.

Detention in Solitary Confinement

The solitary confinement cell is a narrow structure designed to pen one human being in solitary confinement, standing or crouched. A steel door is closed on the occupant. On hot days, the door heats up intolerably, becoming impossible to touch. As we understand it, the cell is designed to detain suspects who are wanted by the General Security Service (GSS) or the police, but our observations show that the cell fills an assortment of roles. In Beit Iba, it has served as a facility for nursing a month-old infant, whose mother was detained for hours at the checkpoint.¹⁹

Beit Iba (16 August): Several minutes after our arrival, a young Palestinian woman was forced into the closed holding cell – the soldiers said she’d sworn at them and spoken rudely. The girl stood there, shouting and banging on the iron door, with her head showing above it. We offered her water. She was released an hour later. • (1 September): A 12-year old boy was held in solitary confinement.²⁰

Handcuffing and Blindfolding

When soldiers detain people at the checkpoint, they are handcuffed, often for hours. The handcuffs used are an updated plastic version of the old-fashioned metal type with a lock. They consist of “zip ties” – thin strips of stiff, ridged plastic which can be tightened around the wrists and ankles simply by pulling. Since there is no lock, the plastic must be cut in order to release the person. It is impossible to release the tightness, so people’s hands swell up immediately and the thin strip

19 See Chapter: The Sick, the Elderly and Children.

20 See: A Day at Huwwara Checkpoint.

cuts into the flesh until it draws blood. Hands are always tied behind the detainee's back, and because of this position, any movement causes extreme suffering. We stress that handcuffed detainees wait in this position just to have their IDs checked, before being accused of anything. Most are ultimately freed to go on their way, and no further penalising measures are applied.

Huwwara (17 April): The soldiers handcuffed a young man and tied him to the barbed-wire fence. A member of MachsomWatch protested and asked them to release him. The soldiers said they "had" to do it because "he'd been cheeky and caused problems, and so everyone would learn a lesson".

Ezyon checkpoint (20 October): A detainee, his hands cuffed behind his back and his eyes bandaged with *flanelit* (army issue flannelette for cleaning weapons). He has been detained for over an hour, and with him all the passengers travelling in the same taxi. When MachsomWatch women approached, a soldier removed the cloth from the man's eyes, cut his handcuffs and told him "I'm sorry, it was a mistake". The other passengers thanked us and said he'd only been released because we showed up.

Extreme Violence by the Border Police

We receive numerous testimonies concerning incidents of violence and harassment at checkpoints staffed by Border Police soldiers. They are verbal testimonies about incidents where we were not present, and they are not always completely coherent, but we've learned that there's no smoke without fire. Terrible incidents occasionally come to light.

Following the revelation of severe abuse of two Palestinians at the Cliff hotel in Abu Dis, the Israeli press reported that "the incident joins a very long list of incidents in which Border Policemen were suspected, accused and sentenced for abuse and even manslaughter of Palestinians. In April last year it was reported that in the Hebron region alone, 30 investigations were being conducted against Border Policemen by the Department for Police Investigations."²¹

The Cliff Hotel in Abu Dis has been 'adapted' into a Border Police base. During our daily visits to the site we often see detainees waiting for hours for their IDs to be checked. Illegals are seized and brought here. What goes on inside – no one can tell. The media recently reported a series of abuses carried out on two Palestinians in the site. We were not there at the time, but we later met one of the casualties. A newspaper report cited one of the

21 *Haaretz*, 28 September 2004.

victims:²² “The police hit us all over our bodies, one after the other, in the crotch, stomach and face. They also forced us to drink urine. They forced my mouth open and poured the urine in. Then they went on hitting me and extinguished cigarettes on my body. In the end they lifted me up and threw me out of the window. I crawled to nearby Palestinians who took me to a clinic and from there to hospital”. “They forced us to smear soap on his face and to wash his face under a tap that didn’t work. Al-Bakri was beaten, later the policemen ordered him to jump out of the window. Al-Bakri jumped, was injured and also treated at a nearby clinic.”

Justice Haim Lee-Ran of the Jerusalem Magistrates Court had this to say about the Border policemen standing trial: “The nature of their acts is despicable and they evoke revulsion. I will go no further than to say that they represent the lowest rung of human behaviour towards other human beings”. Statements by the accused themselves: “This is how we abused Palestinians”: “It was a ghastly act. The force of its brutality is ungraspable. We became crazy, inhuman”, said one of the accused soldiers, when questioned by the Department of Police Inquiries. “It was like the Wild West; the company commander had his own definition of the term ‘output’. By the end of each shift, we had to bring in the specific ‘output’ of illegals that the commander demanded... to work according to quotas”.²³

Soldiers Aiming Weapons

MachsomWatch women are appalled by the custom of pointing weapons at detainees or at people waiting to cross a checkpoint. The soldiers fool around with their weapons, brandish them in the air, point with them (for example, which direction to walk in), and often aim them threateningly at detainees, for example when detainees have to sit on the ground. Similar reports are made at most checkpoints.

Beit Iba (8 July): A soldier launched himself at a line containing less than ten people, half of them little children, pushed all of them back, bellowing and aiming his rifle at them.

Huwwara (2 September): ...the soldier went up to the Palestinian and started pushing and shoving him with his body, his gun held close to his chest, slapping and shouting at him. The officer from the District Coordination Office (DCO) told him to stop and said he would deal with the man. But the soldier continued shoving and hitting the Palestinian, who shouted back. Then the soldier raised his gun and pointed it towards the man’s belly – his finger on the trigger – and shouted to get away from here.

²² *Ma’ariv*, 22 October 2004.

²³ Same.



Harassment and Arbitrariness

The harassment and arbitrariness at the checkpoints are characterized by an irrationality that is intentional and also typical of the whole system of procedures employed in the Occupied Territories. The system applies a never-ending creativity to tire out and aggravate those going through the checkpoints, crushing their patience and their honour to the bone. Is it done upon instructions from higher places or is it the initiative of hard-hearted soldiers in the field? One soldier is capable of inspiring his comrades at the checkpoint with denseness that even an authoritative commander would not be able to withstand. The tasks assigned to the soldiers by the high-ranking officials and the orders received from above are vague and compel the junior subordinates in the field to confront difficult human dilemmas.

The soldiers have no tools for resolving these dilemmas. They lack prior training, they are young and inexperienced, and are also prejudiced, influenced by the environment and brainwashed. Whoever sends them out on this sort of 'job', has to realize and understand the problematical role of the soldier at the checkpoint. The responsibility placed on the sender is greater than that which is cast on the shoulders of the men in the field.

However, let us not forget that occupation is occupation and a checkpoint is a checkpoint, even if the behaviour of the soldiers is seemingly polite and just.

The events described in this chapter give rise again and again to the following questions: how does all this reconcile with Israeli security? Is there anyone out there reflecting on the kind of hate sown by these harassments? And from what fertile soil will the next terrorist sprout?

Malice: Huwwara (28 June): An Israeli citizen accompanied by the children of her sister who had passed away the day before, tried to cross over to Nablus. The woman wanted to attend to her sister's body before burial. The girls aged 15-16, were weeping woefully, but the army's instructions were enforced. The woman went back home, and the girls continued their journey to Nablus, alone.

Humiliation: The restrooms at the **Huwwara** checkpoint have not been connected to any water supply or sewerage for some months. **Huwwara South** (20 September): A horrible stench all around, and in the back, just a metre or two from the waiting area, there are open pipes with excrement flowing out of them. It was difficult to breathe. We inhaled through our mouths. It was impossible to watch. Are they not repulsed by the stench? Are they not entitled to some hygiene, however minimal? The sewerage was fixed after many months but in February 2005 the place reeks again. There are also complaints about the doors not concealing the people using the toilets (especially females) and the fact that they are deprived of any privacy.

Stupidity: Jubara (28 February). The horse and cart belonging to a farmer were confiscated by the soldiers at the checkpoint since the owner did not have separate permits for the horse and for the cart. Upon the intervention of the Humanitarian Centre, they were released and it also turned out that they actually did not need such a permit (neither jointly nor separately...). The farmer was unnecessarily detained for five hours.

The Violinist, Beit Ibba (9 November): As he was crossing the checkpoint, music student Vassam Thayem was asked to remove his violin from its case for inspection. He did so and played a short piece. A member of MachsomWatch photographed the incident, the pictures reached the media, created a storm and shaded the severe daily events at the checkpoints. The 'Jewish past' made headlines, and soon enough the affair was labelled by the army an 'irregular occurrence. Public discussion in Israel focused mainly on the marginal question of whether the violinist had actually been asked to play or did he do so of his 'own free will'. Those familiar with the facts of life at the checkpoints know that no Palestinian crossing them enjoys the luxury of acting upon his or her own 'free will.

Students: They are allowed to enter Nablus only on Saturdays and to exit only on Wednesdays: "A decision made by the Brigade commander and there's nothing to be done about it". We wondered how come on Wednesdays they are considered amongst 'the Righteous of the Nations' and on Thursdays a potential security hazard? The students are not permitted to go through the checkpoints when they have exams, if those are not scheduled for certain predetermined days (in August). During the vacation there are exams and registration for the coming school year. At the beginning of September the restriction of Wednesdays and Saturdays only was cancelled. However, with the cancellation of the decree prohibiting entry and exit of the students, a new calamity befell them: now they are detained and denied entry even on the days they were permitted to enter and leave Nablus without being bullied. At the beginning of November the restriction was re-implemented. Come 2005, the students are once more allowed to travel all week.

South Hebron (5 September): A taxi driver related that he had been checked eleven times on the way to Jerusalem.

Drivers and taxi drivers in particular must come to a stop before checkpoint inspection and refrain from crossing a 'sacred line', usually one that is invisible and for which no legal road sign gives warning. Those crossing the line, even if absentmindedly, are punished by being detained (the best-case scenario) or by having their car keys and licenses confiscated for a few days.

Beit Iba (8 July): A document diagnosed as a forged one became immediately valid following an appeal by MachsomWatch to the DCO (District Coordinating Office) representative. o (7 December): There are rolling checkpoints within five minutes of Beit Iba. Passengers are told to get out of their vehicles, and are left standing by the side of the road in the dark and the freezing cold. Their documents are collected, among them those of detainees checked and released just five minutes ago by the GSS (General Security Service). They go through renewed ID inspection. • (28 December): Those who are not registered may not pass. A driver with a valid permit for 'travel during an encirclement' wishes to enter the village of Qusin, which is located a few hundred meters from Beit Iba. His truck is loaded with NIS 3000 worth of vegetables (a fortune for him) that will rot if they do not reach the village in time. The vehicle is not registered at the checkpoint and the soldiers refuse its entry. He is sent to Huwwara. But there is no access from Huwwara into Qusin. The soldiers send the driver to register his vehicle at the Huwwara DCO. Following an hour and a half of insistence, refusals and negative answers, the commander of the checkpoint received permission to let the vegetables through.

Huwwara (9 November): A large number of reports arrive from the Northern checkpoint regarding an X-ray machine. The process of checking bags is certainly faster, but bags spill over from the edge of the conveyer and fall straight onto the dusty ground. We saw a woman with four young children sending two of them to the other side to catch the parcels, while the other two stayed behind loading them. Those not nimble enough will find their bread, their clothes or their electrical appliances spread on the ground. The State of Israel is incapable of supplying a counter to gather the belongings. • (14 December): A baby two days old, born with heart complications, is transferred to an Israeli ambulance on his way to surgery at the Tel Hashomer hospital (in Israel). His mother is forbidden to go through with him because the doctor mistakenly wrote his grandmother's name instead of hers. **They are advised to send the newborn with his father. (His father is supposed to breast feed him as well...)** • (6 December): The commander explains that they usually detain only those without the necessary permits, or those missing a document, but in effect, and quite often, the terrorists (the real ones) do have all the permits. For instance, students from A-Najah University are allowed to cross over, and the recent terrorist did have a valid student's card from A-Najah. The commander stresses the importance of even checking permit holders with the GSS as well. For the Palestinians this spells a catch: if you lack a permit, you are a suspect. When you do carry a permit, you are even

more of a suspect. • (22 July): A new ritual. Every morning two Palestinian musicians frequent the checkpoint with their instruments, by order. They entertain the soldiers by giving a morning concert, at the end of which they are allowed to go through. The musicians told us they do not enjoy the deal, to say the least.

Beit Furik (24 January): A veterinarian from Nablus was detained. He left for work that morning from Beit Iba in his car. Now he was permitted to return home but without the car for it lacks a permit. So how did the car leave Nablus in the morning? At this point the doctor was stuck at the checkpoint between the morning's instruction, which allowed him to leave Nablus with the car, and the afternoon's instruction not to let the car through. Following a short conversation with the DCO the matter was settled. It is so easy to resolve the situation...

Some queries to reflect upon:

1. For how long would the doctor have been detained had we not arrived?
2. Why did we have to call the DCO and update them instead of the officer at the checkpoint?
3. Did the soldiers discard all responsibility concerning the detainees?

Al 'Eizariya (Abu-Dis reports) (25 July, 26 September, 28 December): Almost every morning a temporary checkpoint is set up in East Al 'Eizariya, on the way to Ma'aleh Adumim. The checkpoint creates a long queue of vehicles, but around 09:00 it is dismantled. The line dissolves and the security hazard is postponed till the day after. Is the purpose to reduce the morning traffic load at the eastern entrance to Jerusalem for the sake of the settlers of Ma'aleh Adumim and its neighbouring settlements?

Qalandiya (1 January, 4 January, 6 January, 11 January): Crossing this checkpoint is banned for residents returning to Ar Ram from their daily occupations in Ramallah, even though it is adjacent to Qalandiya and its houses are clearly in sight. This reflects the absurdity of the situation whereby the Qalandiya checkpoint is an internal one, and on its southern side reside the bearers of Palestinian ID cards, while north of the checkpoint dwell Palestinians holding Israeli ID's. People are sent to Surda, north of Ramallah, and from there, taking a 'short' ride of 60 kilometres they arrive at exactly the other side of the checkpoint and return to their homes. Towards the summer some concessions were made. Residents of the Ramallah area were permitted to return to their houses south of Qalandiya. However, those going to the southern parts of the West Bank must still drive north to Surda in order to reach the south. These concessions do not prevent the soldiers at the checkpoint from randomly detaining permit holders for a few hours, so as to check their documents with the GSS. **Since every passage permit issued at the DCO, involves checking with the GSS anyway, why do they detain people again at the checkpoint?** In early 2005, further concessions were made and currently passage permits at Qalandiya are no longer necessary for people travelling from north to south.

Israel has already announced its intentions as to the Qalandiya checkpoint, which is designated to become a large terminal and border-crossing into Israel.²⁴ With the completion of the wall, Palestinians bearing blue (Israeli) ID's will be able to cross into Jerusalem, but not to Bethlehem or Hebron.

The “little gate” at Abu Dis: (**Bawabe** in Arabic, **Pishpash** in Hebrew)

The story of the Pishpash goes back prior to 2004. In August 2002, a wall 2.5 metres high was erected in Abu Dis, thus bisecting the neighbourhood and blocking the passage of vehicles and pedestrians on the main route, i.e. the Jericho road. The residents created a crack in the wall to make it possible to jump over it. So as to divert passage, the Police unit of Greater Jerusalem blocked that entrance and opened a small iron gate – the Pishpash – but at a distance, on the road up to Beit Fadji. They claimed it improves the conditions for the neighbourhood's residents.

From mid-2003, the Pishpash was used as the neighbourhood passageway to the schools, the hospitals and for visits of divided families. The Border Police are randomly present there. When there, they let through only blue ID holders and people with permits. In the absence of the policemen, entering Israel via this passageway is unimpeded.

Since the beginning of June 2004, the passage of pedestrians has been barred, but at the side of the temporary wall a narrow gap was opened that enables people to cross over by dangerously climbing over it. The elderly, and women with babies, cannot go through without assistance. A woman carrying a baby must hand the child over to a stranger in order to get through herself. The children react with heartbreaking sobs. Crossing necessitates clambering up and down a steep heap of stones on the brink of a void several meters deep.

In early November, the ‘separation wall’ (eight metres high) was built here and passage was barred altogether. Nevertheless, one can still

24 See Appendix: Checkpoints, Location and Purpose.

pass through the adjacent monastery. What is the logic behind not letting people pass in normal conditions?

More recently, the Border Police is sending everyone crossing over at the closed Pishpash to an unknown destination, where there supposedly exists an orderly parking-lot for the comfort of passengers and a prearranged place for security checks.

The Bawabe (Pishpash) in Abu Dis (November): Many women from the villages arrived carrying huge bags of vegetables in their hands and on their heads, trying to reach Nablus Gate or Sallah-A-Din street to sell their merchandize. Obviously they were not allowed to pass. They were aware of the situation and waited, sitting on the sidewalk till the Border Police jeep drives off and they could go through. o (28 December): We set out to find the organized checkpoint and the parking lots near Az-Za'ayyem. They simply do not exist. There are dirt roads in bad condition, full of puddles, and impassable for private vehicles. These roads ascend towards the wall that ends some hundred meters off the main highway with an observation tower. Two Transit vans climbed up to the tower and collected passengers from there. A few pedestrians tramped around the wall. And a surprise: there was no checking of any kind. Whoever manages to reach this remote and difficult location can enter Jerusalem freely. Hail security...

Wadi Nar (The Container)

This internal checkpoint controls the sole pathway between the north and south of the West Bank. The DCO representative declared that strategically this was a very important checkpoint for it “connects the northern and southern parts of the West Bank and therefore enables the army to control and regulate the traffic”, and in other words, it enables the army to disconnect the two parts of the West Bank. At this checkpoint, pedestrians are allowed to go through without permits, except during closures/encirclements, alerts, etc., and so are public transportation vehicles, commercial transporters and trucks. Private cars require permits, which are very difficult to obtain. The definition of commercial vehicles is somewhat vague and thus passage of pickup trucks and transits is prevented while taxis are allowed through.

Talking to a truck-driver reveals the Via Dolorosa that a Palestinian travelling from Ramallah to Hebron must endure nowadays. Instead of driving straight, they have to wander through side-roads for about three and a half hours, provided they are not detained. Upon arrival at the

Container, they have already been on the road for two hours. That is to say, they left Ramallah around 05:00 and will reach Hebron at 10:30, a five and a half hour drive instead of 45 minutes.

Wadi Nar (Abu Dis report): (8 November): It seems that many Palestinians have not yet heard that commercial vehicles are also not allowed to go through. The sweeping 'they know' assumes that if one of them is aware of the new instructions, so is everybody else. • (25 April): The absurdity of the checkpoints was revealed to us in full. Pedestrians stream down the slope nearby the checkpoint, literally under the noses of the Border Policemen who were not disturbed by it. What is of chief importance is that all is quiet and peaceful at the checkpoint and that no one goes through there. They were awakened from their slumber by our camera. We must not take pictures of them... And altogether we are not allowed to be there. • (22 September): A truck loaded with sand arrived from the direction of Kedar on its way southward. The Kedar road is an 'settlers' one, i.e. Palestinians are forbidden to travel on it. The commander of the checkpoint asked the driver to open his shirt and sent him back via the same road so as to take the roundabout way and arrive at the checkpoint from the 'proper' side. Question: How could the driver know he is travelling on a forbidden road? "Because that is where I stop him" was the soldier's reply. • (3 November): Plastic-covered documents are no longer valid – a decree that was not announced in advance. A Transit van driver carrying olive oil was not permitted to pass through to Bethlehem and had to retrace his tracks. He held all the necessary documents but because the permit had a plastic cover, he was not allowed to pass. The DCO representative told MachsomWatch that if the permit had not had a plastic cover, he would have considered letting him and his 'humanitarian' load through. It turned out that on that day all the plastic-covered permits/documents were being confiscated at this checkpoint. The man had gone through eleven checkpoints that same day and was detained by no one because of the plastic cover. He related that the soldier had given him ten minutes to remove the plastic. He even tried to, but peeling off the plastic ruins the document.

Turnstiles

Towards mid-2004, in many permanent checkpoints, revolving gates were installed – the turnstiles. All our observations revealed that at rush hours, when a large crowd is gathered and pushed towards the turnstiles, the people inside them are crushed, and the turnstiles become dangerous traps.

Whoever had the notion that the turnstile would 'introduce order into the

queues' got the exact opposite. In Beit Iba, where there is (as yet?) no turnstile, passage is more rapid and efficient, and there is less strain and distress during waiting. The turnstile slows the pace of passage, and time is a significant factor when the place is jam-packed. Any delay in checking creates renewed pressure and escalates the danger.

The gap between the turnstile and the fence is extremely narrow. **We warned in advance about the danger of people being crushed by the turnstile or of clothing or parcels getting caught in it.**

Inquiries made by MachsomWatch with the manufacturer of the turnstiles revealed that the Ministry of Defence ordered a smaller model of the turnstiles, compared to those installed in Israel (at the universities, railway-stations, hospitals, etc.). The length of the metal arm of the turnstile used within Israel ranges from 75 cm to 90 cm; at the checkpoints it is merely 55 cm long.

The turnstiles are operated by the soldiers by means of remote control, while positioned behind their post. For various reasons, whether because of the remote control or because of power failures, the turnstiles frequently get stuck and the Palestinians are forced to pass through the gap between the doors. Owing to the double turnstiles, all the congestion and pressure occur far from the soldiers' positions and their view. Everything is carried out at a slow pace, and people go through, one at a time, at the push of a button. Following a discussion with the construction officer of Central Command we were under the impression that they too were aware of the distress caused by the turnstiles and that there were plans to remove them or replace them with a more comfortable model. Actually, although some turnstiles were removed or it was made possible for people to circumvent them, as of February 2005, they are operating again and there is no improvement.

Huwwara (25.10): At the northern checkpoint there is a double system of turnstiles. Anyone passing goes through five stages: the first set of turnstiles, the X-ray gates, the second set of turnstiles, the inspection counter, an X-ray machine for bags. Since the installation of the turnstiles there have been many more incidents of shoving and vocal struggles in the queue. At the first set of turnstiles, people are cramped, almost suffocated, as they attempt to squeeze themselves between the railings. The soldiers control the pace of passage by using an electrical device. Every few seconds they stop the rotation of the turnstile, so that each time two or three people remain caged

inside the narrow triangle between the bars, until the soldiers activate the electrical mechanism again, the turnstile moves once more, and so on to the next round. • (18 November): Women and children are jammed into the turnstiles. The soldiers, at their whim, release and cage them between the short metal bars. They frequently cage them in. Totally indifferent, the soldiers simply let women get stuck there – with their belongings and their tearful children. A woman and three of her children were trapped. The children were bewildered and sobbing, she was helpless and humiliated. To our request that they activate the turnstile and release the jailed, the commander's reply was "You are interfering with my work". The commander would not let us help with the small children beyond the turnstiles, those carried in the arms of their shoved and cramped mothers. No, he was not affected by the congestion or by the threat to small children in the turnstiles.

It seems that only a real catastrophe will make the IDF eliminate this perilous control installation. That will apparently happen only when someone will have to account for an 'unexpected mishap' in front of a committee of inquiry (which will be assembled to prove to the world once again how humane we are). It is then that the guilty party will be pointed at, probably some young checkpoint commander, a weakling who was only doing his job... He will be the one sentenced for the brilliant scheme that enables the army to rule, humiliate, embitter and exhaust the strength of the civilian population. "It is only babies crying", says the dutiful soldier.

Confiscation and Loss of Identity Cards

Article 91c of the edict regarding security orders in the matter of seizing identity cards, says that confiscation is permitted for the duration of up to 96 hours. Confiscation requires that an alternative document be provided, one in which the details of the ID holder are noted, the details of the confiscator, the time and place of the return of the ID. In reality, no alternative document is given, and in many cases the IDs are lost for good.

Without an ID the Palestinian cannot exist. He is liable to be arrested at every permanent checkpoint, roadblock or rolling checkpoint. Claiming the ID got lost at the checkpoint will never be an acceptable excuse in terms of the soldiers. Restoration of the document is costly and a bother. In many instances the ID is taken just for inspection and then vanishes. Many a time, IDs that disappeared were returned only as a

consequence of MachsomWatch's intervention. No one bothered to look for them.

Beit Iba (10 May): We met a man who claims his Identity card was taken from him six months ago by a soldier in a jeep, while he himself was driving a tractor. Since then he has searched for it, but in vain. He has been around twenty times to Shavei Shomron and to Chomesh. Today he tried to cross over to Nablus, in his pocket a document from the Palestinian Authority and a photocopy of his ID card. The photocopy was taken by the soldiers and went missing. According to the soldiers, such a photocopy never existed

• (8 December): To our astonishment, inside the inspection post we discovered a host of IDs scattered all over, some on the floor. It is hardly surprising that IDs get lost.

Huwwara (20 June): The time now is 15:30 and the detainee since morning is still here. Appealing to the IDF Humanitarian Centre was unsuccessful. At 16:30 the detainee was still around. Half an hour later the detainee was still detained. We called the Centre for the Defence of the Individual on his behalf. They were checking. The officer explained that his ID is lost. Apparently the commander of the first shift placed it in his pocket and left. The centre informs us that a complaint may be filed. The detainee refused. He said he desires nothing. All he wanted is to go home and have done with it. The time is 17:30. He remained where he is.

Qalandiya (2 November): Two bearers of blue IDs were detained. They were caught trying to bypass the checkpoint and were now waiting for their IDs to be checked by the GSS. It seems that their cards are in the pocket of some officer patrolling in a jeep. After a while we asked for the officer to be called. The answer is: "He is patrolling... He'll get here... He has more important things to do..." Following the intervention of MachsomWatch, the IDs reached the checkpoint after three hours, and the two Palestinians were released.

Confiscation of Taxis

The predicament of the taxi drivers is unbearable. The army ruins their livelihood and inflicts upon them various restrictions that change every now and then. There is no work inside the cities and they are forced to travel between the checkpoints and the roadblocks, on prohibited and permitted roads, and whatever is in between. Every soldier in a jeep considers himself authorized to confiscate the taxi drivers' car-keys and licenses. Until when? Until he feels like returning them, if at all.

The instruction which mandates providing Palestinians with a signed document when their cars are confiscated, is not always complied with.

Now and then the jeep fades into thin air and with it the precious documents, leaving the drivers to run to and fro between the checkpoints, in desperate search of them. This is especially grave since most drivers do not own the taxis and are only employees trying to make a living for large families. At times, all they make barely covers the rental fees and expenses. Confiscating the taxi is equivalent to confiscating their livelihood.

Confiscating car keys is a common affliction, which we encounter frequently. High-ranking army officials told us that this is indeed an unlawful act, and the army spokesman outdid them by denying completely that such an order exists in the IDF.²⁵ At the exhibition of “Soldiers Breaking the Silence” (Shovrim Shtika), numerous confiscated car-keys were displayed.

Qalandiya (27 February): Transit van drivers holding Palestinian IDs, driving vehicles with yellow (Israeli) license plates, related that their car had been confiscated for a month. The main argument was – they were forbidden to drive an Israeli vehicle since that poses a danger, namely that of their infiltrating Israel as Israelis. On the other hand, vehicles with Palestinian license plates are confiscated, claiming it is the Jerusalem district. Like many other facets of the occupation, it is clearly apparent that confiscation precedes the reason for it, and bullying comes before rationalization. To begin with, one grabs, robs, injures, prevents, and only then comes the justification. Is the cause ‘recruited on the basis of laws dating from the British Mandate, the Turkish rule or the Crusader occupation, or because it is an emergency? Everything is flexible. The constant factor is abuse for the sake of abuse. By the way, why confiscate their cars? The answer is simple: because they need them in order to exist. Thus they will not be able to make a living. Consequently they will suffer. That is all there is to it. Had the vehicles posed a danger, as argued, why then are they back on the road following payment and confiscation time?

Anabta (Beit Iba report) (16 May): Someone drew a yellow stripe on an imaginary line. Anyone caught parking beyond the yellow margins of the road, had his taxi-keys confiscated for at least five hours. A month ago, taxis and their drivers were taken to Jubara and their car keys were held there for 14 days. The drivers were detained till 21:00 and then sent to their homes.

Huwwara (5 May): Ten detainees. Among them two taxi drivers whose car keys had been confiscated because they ‘came too close’. The keys of another two taxis were confiscated but their drivers were not detained. About

²⁵ *Haaretz*, 23 April 04.

an hour later, the two drivers who had not been detained got their keys back. The two who had been detained got their documents back together with a 'note' telling them to come back in three days time so as to get their car keys. When I questioned the grounds for the distinction between the cases, the soldier replied: "The first two were from my shift and the other two from the morning one" (or perhaps vice versa).

Jit Junction (Beit Iba report) (9 May): A taxi owner related that he had been asked by soldiers to drive three paying Palestinians to Einav. Upon reaching Jit Junction, he asked the soldiers whether he would have any problems when he returned and was assured he wouldn't. On the way back, at the very same junction, he was apprehended, his taxi keys and documents taken away from him, and he was detained at the Sarra checkpoint along with another driver. We spoke to him at 13:30. We were promised by the DCO that once the confiscation form was signed, he would be released. At 16:30 the form had still not been signed. The representative of the DCO arrived at 17:00, spoke to the soldiers and left from whence he came without talking to the drivers. The taxi driver's reaction was "the soldiers made fun of me". At 22:00 the drivers were moved to the checkpoint at Shavei Shomron. According to the testimony of one of them, the soldiers welcomed them with shoving, cursing, spitting and kicking. At 24:00 the man had had enough. He obtained the phone number of the DCO, called himself, and was guaranteed he would be released immediately. At 01:45 he received his car keys and license and drove home.

Closed Military Zone

From time to time the area around a checkpoint is declared a closed military zone. The law specifies that an edict signed by a major general must be displayed (he can also delegate his authority to the regional brigade commanders), including a map and the duration of the edict. We have never seen such a document and therefore it seems that declaring a zone restricted is the initiative of the commanders in the field. In spite of the declaration, the Palestinians go through as usual. So as to detain the Palestinians in an all-embracing manner, the IDF proclaims a 'Stop all Life' order.²⁶ We feel that declaring a restricted military zone generally occurs in order to get rid of the women of MachsomWatch. In terms of security, what is the logic in barring the checkpoint from us while the Palestinians go through and view all the secrets?

26 See Chapter: Restriction of Movement by Means of Checkpoints.

Ramadan

In 2004, the month of the fast which ends in a holiday, ran from mid-October to mid-November. During this month, the Muslims fast during the day and when evening comes they break the fast with a festive meal. Despite declarations of consideration for the religious customs and the resulting easing of restrictions, we encountered during this period a good deal of harassment and intentional detaining of people who were in a hurry to go home and break the fast.

The Bawabe – Pishpash (in Abu-Dis) (15 October): It is the first Friday of Ramadan. Hundreds of people are denied passage. Border Policemen crossed over to the other side of the roadblock and would not even let blue ID holders pass, claiming they should go through Az Za'ayem. The closure was total and it was said that it would last till 13:00, which means till after the prayer. Following numerous phone calls by MachsomWatch, the restriction was somewhat eased and elderly people above 60 were permitted to pass at 11:00. All the others, only at 12:00. That is to say, they had to clamber up the rocks at the humiliating passage. The instructions change from hour to hour and there is no telling why.

Wadi Nar (8 November): A family from Hebron was allowed to pass in the morning to pray in Jerusalem but was not permitted to return in their car (a white Transit van): "They should try the Bethlehem checkpoint... Let them leave their car here at the checkpoint, and go by taxi..." Finally the family 'set a table' on the floor of the car to break the fast – pitta-bread and juice. They prayed near the little grocery store. Shameful.



Settlers and Others

‘The mutual embrace of army-settlers is all present in the field, although it is at times somewhat concealed. The land of segregation is revealed in its most agonizing junctions, at the checkpoints, whether they are permanent or rolling, manned by weary soldiers, sloppy, dense. While the files of Palestinian vehicles stretch on both sides of the checkpoint, we speed by in our Israeli cars with an embarrassed nod at the soldiers. The settlers, lords of the land, are not embarrassed whatsoever to cruise unhindered in separate car queues or on segregated roads, Jewish roads. Soldiers and policemen do not deter them from harassing the local dwellers, the Palestinians.’²⁷

The violence of the settlers, aimed at the Palestinians for many years, has been concealed until now. Lately, in view of the disengagement plan, the settlers have begun acting violently towards the IDF soldiers as well. This has become a focus of public interest, the public expressing revulsion towards such behaviour.

For the most part, the testimonies presented in this chapter describe acts of violence by settlers and others against MachsomWatch. During 2004, physical and verbal attacks by right-wing supporters (settlers and others), aimed at MachsomWatch women, were quite frequent. They included beating, scratching, shoving, clutching the target while screaming and cursing in deafening tones. It should be noted that this was done so that it would be difficult to tell apart physical abuse from badgering, threatening, or merely verbal abuse. Most attacks occurred at the checkpoints in the Nablus area, but some also in the Bethlehem region.

The criminal aspect of the phenomenon is explicit and clear-cut, but nevertheless, we were not protected by the soldiers, who were present and who witnessed the incidents, nor did we obtain satisfactory assistance from the police. Especially troubling is the so-called ‘balanced attitude’ of the police towards the assailants and the assailed – we who on principle are against violence. It is the duty of

27 “Lords of the Land”, by Akiva Eldar and Idit Zertal. Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir.

the military to implement the law in every criminal situation occurring in its presence until the police arrive. In the overwhelming majority of the attacks against us, the army did not find it fit to defend us; the police, always late, treated assailant and assailed by the same standards. By the time the police arrived, the transgressors had vanished.

The grave political significance of these attacks should be emphasized. This is terror in its most fundamental revelation – intimidation. It is a threat to the legitimate and non-violent activity of minority groups within the fragile democratic structure of Israeli society. It is to be expected that even among rightists, there will be people for whom safeguarding democratic values is important, people who would condemn the aggression and the attacks, and who would attempt to prevent the bullies and their bullying from persisting in this manner. However, the hatred directed at us by the right-wing is so immense, because we, by our actual presence and testimony, obstruct their ability to be ‘lords of the land’, deter them from acting violently, from causing evil and violating human rights. If not for us, it would be easier for them to strive towards their aspired goal – eviction of the Palestinians from their lands and their homeland and transferring them to the “Pale of Residence” – the Bantustans, or even better – out of the country.

Attacks by ‘Women in Blue and White’, an Organization Affiliated with the Likud Party²⁸

Huwwara (21 October): Two women, presumably belonging to ‘Women in Blue & White’, are accompanied by a man. They hand out food to the soldiers, sweets and drinks, and all this in front of the Palestinians fasting during Ramadan. The group, reinforced by three extra women, clings to us very closely and blocks our way. The man pushes us aggressively, and throughout the whole incident they swear at us. • (25 October): A bunch of ‘Women in Blue & White’ circle us with the fervour of Messianic calling, and on the verge of insanity. The women are accompanied by two men, who record the incident with a video camera, and with them is a young and robust settler who threatens us that if we do not leave within five minutes he will call for his associates and they will teach us a lesson. One woman glues herself to us and yells in ecstasy: “Vampires, blood suckers”, scribbles her words on a piece of paper and sticks it on our faces. A. finds herself shielding her notebook from the violent settler and from the shoves of the wailing woman.

28 <http://archive.likudnik.co.il/Newspaper/reports.asp?reportId=2319>

Half an hour goes by till the commander decides to put an end to the pandemonium and to relieve us of the crowd. By law, the army is responsible for maintaining order and the prevention of violence until the police arrive.

- (29 November): Two of us were the first to get caught in the “Blue and White” attack. Bottles of water were poured over the two women, T.’s cell phone was snatched in an unbelievably violent way. And once more, the bearded guy is photographing. R. was also assaulted and an attempt was made at her phone as well. When that did not succeed, her notebook was grabbed, a few pages torn out and thrown over the concrete fence. R. retreated into the soldiers’ post, and called 100 for help. Throughout the ordeal we incessantly asked the soldiers to defend us because we were being accosted, but got no response. At this point the violent assault turned in the direction of M. and S., again with bottles of cold water, hitting and taking pictures. With the arrival of the police, we felt that their attitude towards us was extremely hostile. Apparently the assailants set a trap for us and filed a complaint against us before we did (it turns out that our phoning for help does not count as a complaint), and thus the five of us were in the same position as our attackers. We were detained for questioning at the Ariel police station. We were released four hours later, after our fingerprints were taken, a bail of NIS 3000 each was signed, and we were banned from Huwvara for two weeks (same verdict for both attackers and attacked).

Settlers’ Assaults

Jit junction (Bet Iba report), a temporary checkpoint (6 May): Women on a MachsomWatch shift were attacked by women settlers headed by **Daniella Weiss, head of the local council of Qedumim**. They hit three of our women, broke our flags, tore off our badges and emptied M.’s bag. Moreover, men settlers assaulted our driver N., punching him badly in the face, and broke his car headlight (his face is swollen and his teeth loosened). Obviously all this was accompanied by screams, curses and threats. • (16 June): A settler who recognized MachsomWatch, called for reinforcements and within five minutes a band of three women and a man arrived on the scene, armed with megaphones on which ‘**Qedumim Local Council**’ was stamped in large letters. They stormed at us with battle cries, yelled, screamed, threatened, cursed, shoved and soon began pounding us while pushing the megaphones in our ears and shouting. Even after the assailants managed to tear our notebooks out of our hands and we were already injured, weary, astonished and bleeding – they went on attacking. While under the storm of violence, we tried to dodge in every direction but to no avail. We began trudging on foot up the road, trembling and beaten, and they continued to cling to us and bully us using the same techniques. It took the police 25 minutes to arrive after it was summoned – driving slowly from the Qedumim police station to our destination takes about three minutes, and in case of an emergency it would take approximately 90 seconds. The women settlers now embarked on an attack

against the policemen, shrieking at them, swearing and cursing. The policemen were in no hurry to get us out of the site or assist us in any other way.

Shavei Shomron (28 December): A MachsomWatch team encountered settlers who were waiting for a bus driving members of the disengagement administration who were visiting the settlements. Our meeting with them was the dress-rehearsal for the wild attack launched against the bus. Two women settlers and a few yeshiva students shouted and voiced insults. One of the women settlers seated herself on the car of a MachsomWatch member and retreated only after the driver began going forward slowly but resolutely. They remained behind, yelling and screaming words too foul to put on paper.

Bethlehem – Checkpoint 300 (28 March): A woman wearing a green top (“Women in Green”) inspected our badges and immediately went into action: walking close and almost rubbing into us, vulgar shoving and finally snatching C.’s badge while pushing violently and attempting to tear out of her hands the piece of paper she was taking notes on. Pure physical violence coupled with comments on how she was protecting the Israeli soldiers from the traitors. Our appeals to the soldiers were barely acknowledged, and the lady was permitted to proceed. Upon our demand, the commander arrived shortly. The woman refused to identify herself to him and to her astonishment (“But I am defending you”) he insisted she get into the police car for questioning at the station (the Moriah station). And we followed them. The complaint was filed at the station and so we spent the morning at the police station instead of at the checkpoints.

Badgering and Threats

Beit Ibba (12 May): Settlers arrived, screamed, cursed, threatened and summoned their friends. A car full of settlers (presumably from the settlement ‘Itamar’) showed up. They descended onto the road and in a craze of violence headed straight for us. The clash was avoided only because our driver N. swerved to the edge and zoomed past them. We bolted.

Huwwara (6 September): Blue and White women are in Beit Furik as well. The women slander the MachsomWatch women calling them “Nazis, agitators of Israel, may you blow up in a terrorist attack, a pity you were not exterminated in Auschwitz” etc. • (28 November): The settler said “Go back to the whorehouse you came from”. (To the policeman he said, “I did not curse”).

Bethlehem – Checkpoint 300 (30 March): A group of five “Women in Green” is at the checkpoint, headed by Nadia Matar carrying her baby. They read out to the soldiers a proclamation explaining why they were not obliged to listen to or take notice of MachsomWatch women, who disguise themselves as human rights activists but in effect take the enemy’s side, are traitors, and form an

extreme and deluded group. They added that every soldier we bother is permitted to sue us. Nadia Matar took pictures of us, escorted us right up to our car and promised to become our nightmare.

Settlers and Citizens Do as they Please at the Checkpoints

These are especially disturbing phenomena regarding the obscurity of boundaries between the settlers and the military:

“During the past few years this symbiotic relationship has reached such a peak that there are cases in which the settlers stand at the checkpoints alongside the soldiers and have a say in who will go through and who will not. Parts of the checkpoints map and of the bypass roads, of the circumstances of a closure and encirclement and also of the ‘separation fence’s’ course, were dictated by the heads of the Judea and Samaria settlers council and were aimed solely to please them. Settlers demanded a futile checkpoint between Ofra and Shilo, in Wadi Haramiya, and were accommodated till in March 2002 seven soldiers and three civilians were killed there and the checkpoint was dismantled.”²⁹

What we observe at the checkpoints is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the infiltration of the settlers into the domains of the military and other authorities. Elements debatably soldiers/police/civilians/settlers/private-militias, assume vast authority in the occupied territories without having to account for their deeds. This phenomenon is very troubling and is in contrast to any orderly administration, especially as there is a tendency to ‘privatize’ security services, a fact opening a whole new arena for settler violence.

During our observations at the checkpoints we detect the presence and the influence of the settlers on the way the checkpoints operate.

Jubara (6 January): The checkpoint-commander had a civilian ‘assistant’, a man working on one of the heavy vehicles there. He objected to our stay and did his best to expel us by threatening us, shouting and demanding that the soldiers drive us away. • (21 December): The security personnel of the company paving a road and uprooting olive trees beat up a young man. The results of the army investigation were – the security men’s violence (a shove

29 “The Absence of a Boundary between the Judea and Samaria Council and the IDF”, Gideon Levy, *Haaretz*, 6 February 2005.

for a shove according to them) was in self-defence. MachsomWatch filed a complaint to the Ministry of Defence regarding the incident. To our gratification, the Ministry treated it very seriously and it seems they understand the gravity of the security people's wild conduct. From the reply given by the Ministry of Defence: "The people securing the seam-line are authorized to safeguard the security of the workers so that they will be able to accomplish their job, but are not authorized to be in contact with Palestinian or Israeli civilians. Any contact with civilians is under the responsibility of the armed forces in the area. The security companies are in constant touch with the forces and the commanders in the field and in cases of emergency are totally under their command. The commander of the district is authorized to discontinue the work. In the above case, following the receipt of the complaint and a swift enquiry into it, it was decided, with the consent of the commander of the district, that the work would be discontinued until full investigation of the incident would be carried out. Following the investigation carried out that day at the regional brigade headquarters, the brigade commander decided to expel the security man in question for good".

Huwwara (31 October): The settlers use the fence, built by the IDF between the checkpoints, as a huge billboard for political posters, invitations to a demonstration and to mass prayers at Zion Square (in Jerusalem). If this is a restricted military zone, why are they permitted to do so? • (8 November): Nearby the checkpoint some posters were pasted saying: "Beware of MACHSOM WATCH, collaborators with the Arab enemy". The notices were probably hung up that morning by the Women in Green and Blue & White Women. Identical posters were observed on billboards in Jerusalem as well.

Beit Furik (17 July): "From my point of view you are a murderess", said one of the soldiers at the checkpoint to MachsomWatch. While conversing with the commander of the checkpoint we protested against the statement and the response was: "They are really aggravating at times, but you have to understand – they are settlers".

Bawabe – Pishpash (in Abu Dis) (24 August): A giant bulldozer, as wide as the road, equipped with chains similar to those of a tank, was making deep grooves in the roadway. Behind the bulldozer was a security vehicle with two guys inside, dressed in black. When the residents appealed to the security men requesting they cease their progress which damages the road and blocks traffic, one of the security men answered by drawing his revolver while claiming these were the instructions they received: to shoot at anyone who tried to obstruct the assignment of building the wall. Appealing to the Border Police was of no use. An Israeli police officer took down the details and claimed that the company would have to pay compensation for the damage to the road.

Testimonies of MachsomWatch: Harassment of Palestinians not at the Checkpoints

A document describing a large number of incidents in which settlers from Samaria and South Hebron used violence and other forms of harassment towards Palestinians, was prepared at the request of Shay Nitzan, the Assistant Attorney General. MachsomWatch participated in its preparation. The army, present at many of the incidents, usually does not intervene, or acts 'in defence' of the assaulting settlers. The subject of the document was discussed on 19 February 2005, with MachsomWatch and other organizations present. Despite the grave data presented to the Assistant Attorney General, he would not talk about an all-inclusive policy against the violence of the settlers, but only about the enforcement of the existing procedures. There was no willingness to discuss changes that are essential in face of the circumstances in the field, or discuss the difficulties of implementing the existing procedures, which in fact stem from the occupation and the Gordian knot between the settlers and the military. The Assistant Attorney General added: one can lay down rules, one can punish, formulate procedures for control and supervision, but one cannot guarantee precise execution of the rules and procedures.

At Tuwani (14 July): The episode of the settlers poisoning the well was published yesterday throughout the media. Settlers from Maon poisoned a water cistern in At Tuwani by throwing in a chemical substance and dead chickens. The incident occurred during the afternoon, in front of the villagers. The police arrived two and a half hours later, and opened an investigation with no results. The poisoned cistern is the main source of water in the village. We came to see how we could be of assistance. There was no water, only a dead chicken on the edge of the cistern and a horrible stench of pesticides. And there was a great deal of shame and massive pain. While talking to the commander of the DCO and his men, they promised the army would remove the roadblock to neighbouring Yatta and bring water there. The rest of the cisterns were empty and had to be supplied with one thousand alternative cubes of water. • (18 July): Another visit to the village, but the promised supply of water has still not arrived. • (21 July): A visit to At Tuwani and Susya. The village is getting a water trailer holding 10 cubes from the town of Yatta for two days, and the army brings the water to Yatta (the poisoned well contained 150 cubes and that is the amount the army assured us it would give them). H. is in daily contact with the DCO in order to make sure they will comply with their commitment. We went with N., a Palestinian from Susya, to see the water cisterns. The settlers interfere with water-collection by local people. We put

them in contact with the army and they came with their trailers to take the water out of the cisterns. MachsomWatch continues to follow closely and see if this really happens... There is a dispute over lands between the settlers and the local residents. The settlers do not let the local residents cultivate their fields and graze their sheep on lands belonging to them. • (26 July): We visited the *mukhtar* (the village head) and our intervention is still needed in order for them to receive water and for the roadblock on the way to Yatta to be removed. • (19 October, 25 October): The children of Um Tuba and their father gave up the short way to the school in A-Tuwani because the settlers from the Maon outpost continue to stone them and to 'accidentally' set their dogs on the children walking by. And the army was there and did nothing (the difference in the distance between the two ways is 8 kilometres as compared to 1.5 kilometres). The bullies come down from the forest when the children approach from the direction east of the Maon settlement (the path goes between the settlement and the outpost, all in all a few caravans among the trees). • (9 September): On 2 November 2004, MachsomWatch initiated a discussion at the Knesset committee for the Advancement of the Status of the Child regarding the settlers' harassment of young children on their way to school. During the discussion, an agreement with the army was reached according to which the children from the village of Um Tuba will be entitled to an army jeep escort on their way to school in At Tuwani. The jeep is supposed to protect them against the assailants living in the outpost of Havat Maon. In early 2005, the settlers resumed their bullying of the children on their way to school.



Appendix

Checkpoints: Location and Purpose

Checkpoints Monitored by MachsomWatch

According to the Ministry of Defence and the IDF speak of there being a few dozen permanent checkpoints manned by soldiers or Border Police (BP). But, in addition to these, there are hundreds of other physical barriers throughout the Occupied Territories which severely impede the Palestinians' freedom of movement, sometimes even more than do the manned checkpoints.³⁰

Reliable information on the checkpoints is compiled by a UN body, the Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs (OCHA),³¹ which also acts as a conduit for information on other issues connected with the Israeli occupation. Once every few months, the OCHA issues up-to-date maps showing the checkpoints and other physical barriers, including permanent and partial checkpoints, closed-off roads (made impassable, for example, by heavy cement blocks), road gates, earth mounds, trenches and observation towers. In November 2004 the OCHA counted a total of 719 such physical obstacles throughout the West Bank. In fact, anyone driving along the highways in the territories can easily see these barriers on the network of roads that lead to the Palestinian villages.

Whenever a fanfare of trumpets heralds some easing of the restrictions imposed on the Palestinians, a few checkpoints are opened to free passage. But within a very short time, these same checkpoints are again closed, this time in silence. Such, for example, was the fate of the Ezyon checkpoint.

In July 2004, in the wake of an announced relaxation of restrictions, we received from the office of the Chief of Staff a list of checkpoints and blocked roads that were allegedly removed. But our on-the-spot observations showed that many of the barriers mentioned had never been removed or had subsequently been reinstated.

Apparently, the aim of the changes is, to keep the Palestinian

³⁰ See Appendix: Maps.

³¹ <http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/>

population in a state of uncertainty that leaves no room for any hope for the future. Suddenly holders of Palestinian identity cards are to be 'permitted' to move from here to there, yet at the same time the construction of the 'separation wall' proceeds apace and closes them in. In other words, the possibility of movement from one point to another will always be conditional: dependent on some extraneous considerations and passage will in principle be – forbidden.

MachsomWatch carries out regular observations at some 40 sites (whether permanent checkpoints or other barriers), not including periodic visits to villages in the southern Hebron hills. From time to time we also visit other checkpoints and the Civil Administration's District Coordinating Offices (DCO's). The following is a list of the checkpoints that we visit regularly . In every case, we have indicated whether the checkpoint is an internal one – i.e. whether it separates two areas of the occupied territories only – or whether it is an entrance into Israel.

■ **Bawabe in Abu Dis – the Pishpash (literally – small gate)** Abu Dis is a suburb of East Jerusalem. The Bawabe is on the border between the A-Sheikh and Beit Fadji. This is a **crossing-point into Jerusalem**, but not a checkpoint proper. Rather it is an improvised jumping-off point alongside the 'separation wall'. Documents are not checked here on a permanent basis, but only from time to time.

■ **Al 'Eizariya** Situated at the south-eastern approach to the settlement of Ma'ale Adummim, on road no. 417 (the old road to Jericho). The checkpoint is only operative until 09:00. Is it in order to lighten the weight of morning traffic into east Jerusalem? A similar checkpoint is operated in the region of Mishor Adumim. This is an **internal checkpoint**.

■ **Al Khadr** Three mounds of earth and refuse set up to the west of Bethlehem, close to road no. 60. The earth-mounds stretch across the road that used once to lead into Al-Khadr village and the western entrance to Bethlehem. This is an **internal checkpoint**.

■ **Al Khadr South** An earth barrier alongside the entrance to Efrat North. This spot serves trucks carrying goods being brought into Bethlehem using the back-to-back system. This is an **internal checkpoint**.

■ **Anabta** Situated on road no. 57, this is a permanent, unmanned locked metal gate, that bars vehicular traffic between Nablus and Tulkarm. The barrier is some hundreds of metres to the north of the junction with road no. 557, alongside the settlement of Einav and close to the Palestinian village of Anabta. At the end of March 2005, the gate was opened and removed concurrently with the handing over of Tulkarm to the rule of Palestinian Authority. This was an **internal road block**.

■ **Anata** Situated in north-east Jerusalem on the Anatot road close to the traffic lights on Sderot Moshe Dayan, this checkpoint blocks the road for those **coming into Jerusalem** from Anata and the Shuafat refugee camp. Close to French Hill, this checkpoint is in an area officially annexed to Jerusalem after the Six Day War of 1967.

■ **Ar Ram** At the northern **entrance to Jerusalem**, on the Shuafat road close to the Neve Ya'akov junction. This checkpoint is in an area officially annexed to Jerusalem soon after the Six Day War in 1967.

■ **Atara** Situated to the north of Ramallah and close to Bir Zeit and Surda, on a bridge that crosses the settlers' road no. 465. This is a road block that is operated from time to time when it blocks the way onto road 60 and the north of the West Bank. This is an **internal road block**.

■ **Awarta** Close to Huwwara, south-east of Nablus, this is a checkpoint for the checking of goods being transferred between trucks on the back-to-back system. **An internal checkpoint**.

■ **Barta'a** In the north-west of the West Bank, south of Umm el-Fahem. This checkpoint was closed in 2004 and its place was taken by the Reihan checkpoint [see below]. The 1949 armistice line (the so-called Green Line) divided the village into two halves – Barta'a East and Barta'a West – which were re-united in 1967. With the construction of the 'separation fence', Barta'a East has found itself caught between the Green Line and the 'separation fence' in what is known as the 'seam area'.³² This is a checkpoint used mainly by farmers and people with special permits. This is a checkpoint that **leads into the 'seam area'**.

■ **Beit Furik** At the eastern entrance to Nablus. The checkpoint is at the junction of road no. 557 and road no. 5487 which links Beit Furik

32 See Chapter: Restriction of Movement by means of Bureaucracy.

village with Nablus and also serves that village and the village of Beit Dajan. In March 2005, the checkpoint that used to exist at Salem was blocked by earth-mounds and since then the residents of Salem, Azmut and Deir Al-Hatab who wish to travel to Nablus have had to make a detour and use the Beit Furik checkpoint. Nearby settlements include Itamar, various 'outposts' and Elon Moreh. This is an **internal checkpoint**.

■ **Beit Iba** A checkpoint at the western entrance to Nablus. It is on road no. 557 close to road no. 60, between the villages of Beit Iba and Deir Sharaf, in an active quarry (and consequently – a very dusty checkpoint). The checkpoint is close to the settlements of Shavei Shomron, Qedumim Elit and Qedumim. This is an **internal checkpoint**.

■ **Beit Jala** South of Jerusalem, it is also known as the DCO checkpoint. It is situated at the western entrance to the township of Beit Jala, alongside the crossroad from which one road goes up to Mount Gilo and the other descends to Al-Walaja. This is an **internal checkpoint**.

■ **Bethlehem** At the northern entrance to Bethlehem. Also known as Checkpoint 300. It is situated on the Jerusalem-Bethlehem road to the eastern side of the Tantur Christian Institute. It is scheduled to be moved slightly south and to be incorporated into the 'separation wall'. This is a checkpoint that **leads into Jerusalem**.

■ **Children's gate** Also known as the Farmers' Gate and as Gate no.753, it is situated at the edge of Jubara village and is one of dozens of gates that are scheduled to allow and **control passage through the 'separation fence'**.

■ **Cliff Hotel, Abu Dis** This is **not** a checkpoint, but a small Border Police base that has been set up in a building that was once a Palestinian hotel. Palestinians who have no permits to be in Israel and who are caught by the Border Police are brought here for detention while their identity documents are checked by the General Security Services, and/or for interrogation. The Border Police base is at the top of the road that leads to the right after the petrol station on the way to the settlement (comprised of one building only) of Qedmat Ziyon.

■ **Efrat** To the east of the settlement of Efrat. Other name:

Checkpoint 130. It lies on road no. 3157 in the heart of the West Bank, close to the settlements of Noqedim, Teqoa and Ma'aleh Amos. This is an **internal checkpoint**.

■ **Ein Yalow** On the road that leads down from Walaja to the shopping mall in Jerusalem's Malha suburb. This is a checkpoint that **leads into Jerusalem**.

■ **Ezyon** At the Ezyon Block junction, where roads 60 and 367 cross, and close to the settlements of the Etzion region. The checkpoint was operated on a permanent basis before and up to the beginning of 2004. It was removed within the framework of relaxations in some of the restrictions imposed on Palestinians, but within the last few months has again become active on a sporadic basis. **An internal checkpoint**.

■ **Ezyon DCO** The office of the Civil Administration (not far from the Ezyon checkpoint), that is supposed to issue magnetic cards and movement permits.

■ **Halhul** This is a roadblock at the northern entrance to Halhul, alongside the approach road to the settlement of Karmeit Tzur. An **internal road block**.

■ **Halhul – Hebron Bridge** On a road that passes over road no. 35, linking Halhul and Hebron. This is an **internal checkpoint**.

■ **Humanitarian Checkpoint** At the northern entrance to Hebron. Also known as the Al-Jura checkpoint. Situated alongside the junction of road no. 60 and road no. 35. In this checkpoint vehicles carrying only medical personnel and humanitarian supplies can cross. It is an **internal checkpoint**.

■ **Huwwara** At the southern entrance to Nablus. Situated to the north of Huwwara village on road no. 57 close to where road no. 557 branches off to the settlement of Elon Moreh. There are in fact two checkpoints here: Huwwara North for those leaving Nablus; and Huwwara South for those wanting to go into the town. The distance between the two checkpoints is some 450 metres. Recently the southern checkpoint has been abolished and people coming into Nablus are checked only seldom. Checking of those leaving the town

has continued. The settlements near Huwwara are Bracha, Yitzhar, Itamar, and some outposts. This is an **internal checkpoint**.

■ **Irtah** The southern entrance to Tulkarm. Other names: Checkpoint 700, Taibe checkpoint, Tulkarm south gate. The checkpoint is situated to the south of Tulkarm at the continuation of road no. 5614 east of road no. 444 and half a kilometre to the east of the Green Line [the pre-1967 border] alongside the village of Irtah. It is close to Area A of Tulkarm city. This is a checkpoint that **leads into Israel**.

■ **Jalama** In the northern part of the West Bank, to the north of Jenin. The checkpoint is situated next to the village of Jalama on road no. 60 where it forms part of the 'separation wall', which in this area follows the Green Line. In March 2005, work was still in progress on the terminal which is to serve those moving backwards and forwards between Israel and the West Bank. There is an active 'back-to-back' goods checking station here.³³ This is a checkpoint that **leads into Israel**.

■ **Jit junction** Right next to the settlement of Qedumim is a spot where there is frequently an unannounced checkpoint. Here, where roads 55 and 60 meet, an army jeep is almost always on hand and soldiers stop vehicles for checking. This is an **internal road block**.

■ **Jubara** In the Tulkarm region. Also known as Kafriat checkpoint. The checkpoint is situated at the junction of road no. 557, which leads to the settlements of Avnei Hefetz and Einav, and road no. 574, which leads from Tulkarm to the village of Ar-Ras and to the south along a very bad road that is impassable in the winter. Jubara checkpoint is some three kilometres from the Green Line. Recently work has begun on the construction of a tunnel beneath road no. 557 to the other side of Tulkarm and beyond. This is destroying the scenery and also involves the uprooting of olive trees. The checkpoint has three crossing-points, one of which provides **an entrance to Israel**, another constitutes an internal checkpoint, while the third – the gate into the village of Khirbet Jubara – makes an **entrance into the 'seam area'**.

■ **Qalandiya** Situated in north Jerusalem in an area unilaterally annexed to Jerusalem soon after the Six Day War in 1967 close to the now disused airport and alongside the Qalandiya refugee camp. The

33 See Appendix: A Lexicon of Occupation Terms.

checkpoint controls the southern exit from Ramallah. With the completion of that section of the 'separation wall' that is the 'Jerusalem wrap-around', Qalandiya checkpoint will be moved westward from its present site to become one of the **entrances into Jerusalem**.

■ **Reihan** South of Umm Al-Fahem; also known as checkpoint 4.5: from the security fence that surrounds it and as far as the Green Line, there stretches what is known as the 'seam area', within which there are a number of Palestinian villages. Reihan checkpoint started operating in August 2004, with the closing of the Barta'a checkpoint. It is scheduled to form part of a sophisticated border crossing terminal under construction, situated on road no. 596 to the south-east of Rihan. Settlements in the area include Reichan, Shaked, Hinanit, and Tal Menashe. Reihan is a checkpoint at the **entrance to the 'seam area'** which also serves as crossing to and from the West Bank for permit-holders.

■ **Sansana** A checkpoint in the southern Hebron Hills, on road no. 60 where it crosses the Green Line, close to the Israeli village of Meitar. The checkpoint was put up in September 2004, when the one at Shim'a was removed. This is a checkpoint that **leads into Israel**.

■ **Sarra** Situated close to the Jit junction and the settlement of Qedumim, alongside the village of Sarra. The checkpoint was removed in the second half of March 2005 but at night the area is closed off by chains slung across the road. **An internal checkpoint**.

■ **Shavei Shomron** Alongside the settlement of Shavei Shomron close to road no. 60 and five minutes by car from the Beit Iba checkpoint. People coming from the north into Nablus must go through both checkpoints, and periodically they are also held up for some considerable time at an unannounced checkpoint between the two. Shavei Shomron checkpoint was abolished in 2004, yet from time to time there is some military presence and some checking of documents there. **An internal checkpoint**.

■ **Shaked gate** A locked and otherwise unguarded gate in the 'separation fence' to the east of the settlements of Shaked and Reichan: it is opened twice daily specially for the children living in the 'seam area' who attend school in Palestinian villages to the east of the fence (Tura Al-Gharbiya and Ya'bad). At times, older people living

nearby are also allowed through with the children, but this is always at the whim of the soldier on duty. A gate that **leads to the 'seam area'**.

■ **Shima'a** In the southern Hebron Hills, this checkpoint was abolished in September 2004 when the Sansana checkpoint came into being. It was situated on road no. 60 close to the Shim'a junction where it meets road no. 317 and alongside the settlement of Sham'a. Although it was some distance away from the Green Line, it was nevertheless one that **lead into Israel**.

■ **South Hebron Hills villages** This is an area of mainly agricultural villages that are clustered around the three central towns of Hebron, Halhul and Yatta, all of them in Area A. All the villages here have been almost totally isolated and shut in by earth mounds that block their approach roads. The mounds prevent the passage of any vehicles between the villages themselves and between the villages and the towns: they also prevent any passage to or from road no.60 – the road that leads to Bethlehem and Jerusalem – road no. 35, and roads 356 and 317. Palestinians who have no permits to do so may not travel along these main road. Thus, most movement between the various villages and towns in the area is by licensed taxis (always providing that the taxi-driver can obtain a licence, and even then only on specified sections of the road). People also move around by donkey, bicycles and on foot. Traffic is for most part sparse. Generally, it is only pedestrians who are permitted to cross over the main roads. These are **internal road blocks**.

■ **Surda** Situated to the north of Ramallah on the road to Bir Zeit University. There is no permanent checkpoint here, but instead there are earth-mounds on the road at two kilometre intervals. Throughout 2004, they were removed and replaced several times (at the time of compiling this report, March 2005, the road was clear). In the period when passage through Qalandiya was limited, all those who sought to travel to the south of the West Bank were sent north to Surda.³⁴ This is an **internal checkpoint**.

■ **Tapuah junction** Situated on road no. 60 at the junction with road no. 505 which leads from the settlement town of Ariel to the Jordan Valley. Settlements in the area include Tapuah, Rehelim, Eli,

34 See chapter: Harassment and Arbitrariness.

Ma'ale Levona, Ariel, Migdalim, and Ma'aleh Efrayim. This is an **internal checkpoint**.

■ **Tarqumiya** On road no.35, close to the junction with the approach road to Tarqumiya township, north-east of Hebron and about five kilometres east of the Green Line. Under the Oslo Agreements this was scheduled to straddle the land corridor linking Gaza and the West Bank. **Entrance to Israel**.

■ **The Tunnels** This checkpoint is situated on road no. 60, south of Jerusalem, opposite the Gilo junction and some 200 metres from the southern entrance to the tunnel road on the eastern lane of road 60. The only vehicles checked are those travelling north in the direction of Jerusalem. There are no pedestrians here. This is a checkpoint that **leads into Jerusalem**.

■ **Wadi Nar** Also known as the **Container**, this checkpoint is situated to the east of As-Sawahra ash-Sharqiya on an unmarked road. The checkpoint itself is in Area B, on the border with Area C, fairly close to the settlements of Qedar and Ma'ale Adumim and very close to Al-'Ubeidiya, which is in Area A. This **internal checkpoint** controls the only north-south road through the West Bank and thus it permits the army to control and isolate both halves of the area.

■ **Al Walaja** South of Jerusalem. This **internal checkpoint** operates from time to time at the entrance to the village of Al-Jalama close to Mount Gilo.

■ **Za'tara** At the foot of Tel Herodion, this checkpoint is also known as Noqedim or Herodion and is situated at the outskirts of Za'tara village on road no. 356 which by-passes Bethlehem to the east. This is a road that serves traffic that must also pass through Wadi Nar as it travels between the northern part of the West Bank and Hebron. **An internal checkpoint**.

Sites visited by MachsomWatch from time to time

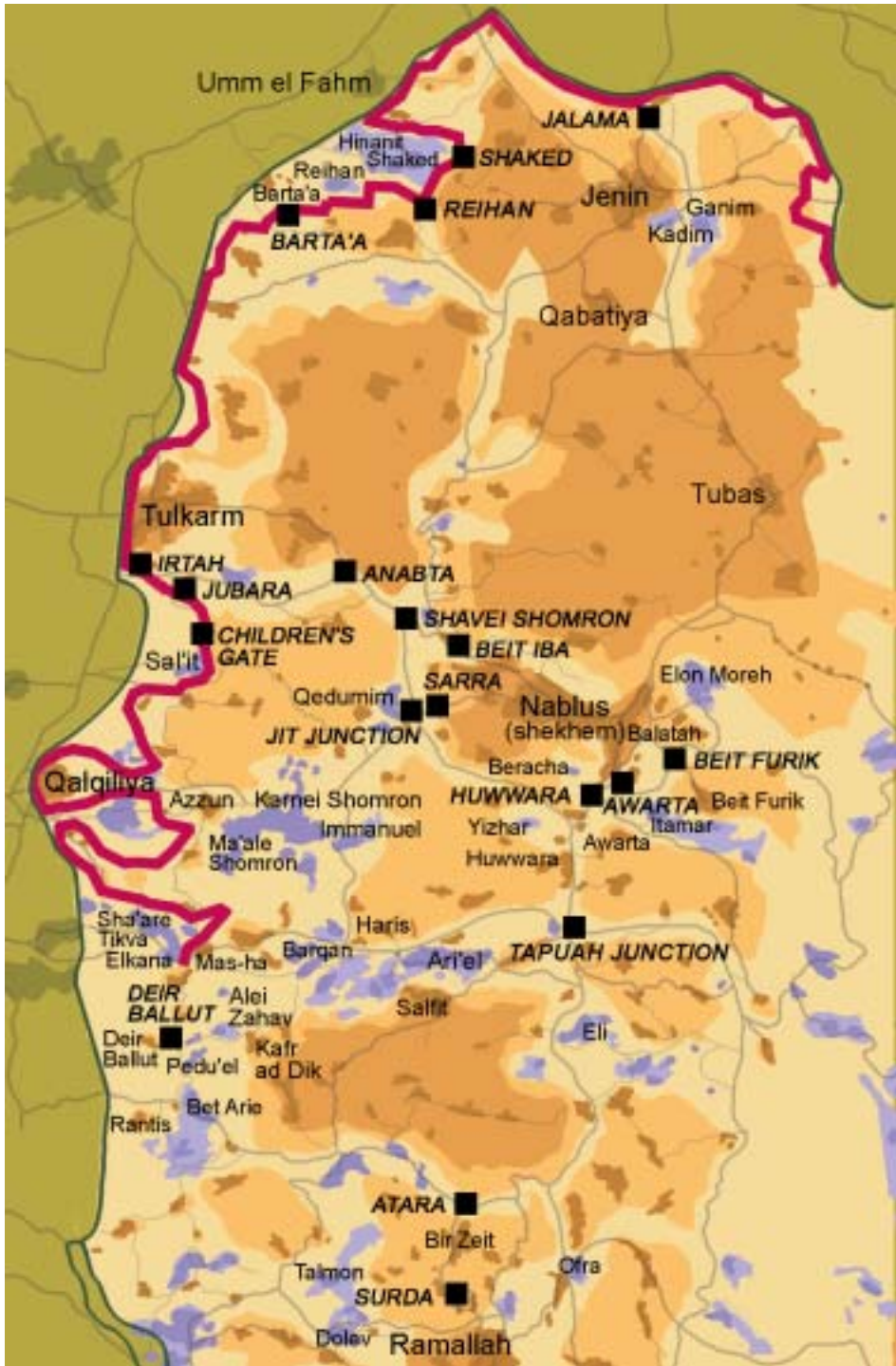
■ **Checkpoints:** Beit 'Awwa, Ni'lin, Deir Ballut, Az Zawiya, Jericho, Hamra, Baqa.

■ **DCOs:** Hebron, Beit El, Tulkarm, Huwwara, Salem.

- SARRA** ■ Checkpoints monitored by MachsomWatch
- The Green Line
- Jerusalem Municipal Boundary
- Separation Wall
- Area C
- Area B
- Area A
- Built up Area (Palestinian)
- Built up Area (settlements)
- Municipal Area (settlements)









Near Khirbet Jubara – the children’s gate in the ‘security fence’



Handcuffing at gunpoint



This is where people clamber over the wall – the Bawabe ('pishpash') in Abu Dis



Crowds waiting at Beit Iba checkpoint



A MachsomWatch member helps a handcuffed man to drink



Improvised 'ambulance' at Jubara checkpoint



Sign at Tapuach checkpoint: "The laws of the Torah supersede human laws"



Behind the bars at Qalandiya checkpoint



Huwara checkpoint – a jammed turnstile



Huwwara checkpoint – penned, and handcuffed with plastic restraints



Huwwara checkpoint



The permanently locked gate at Anabta: to reach the ambulance, the patient is passed under the gate on a stretcher



Jammed turnstiles



Appendix Complaints

During 2004, MachsomWatch sent over 100 complaint letters to the IDF, the Border Police, the Israeli Police, the Civil Administration, the District Civil Liaison offices, the Ministry of Defence, to Knesset Members and to others. 13% of the complaints were answered in full; 30% of the cases received an unsatisfactory answer; 5% of the cases received a letter confirming receipt of the complaint, while 52% of the complaints went unanswered.

Complaint letter statistics

Topic	%
Violence: shooting, beatings, use of teargas	19
Delaying ambulances	4
'Stop all Life' procedure: total cessation of movement	2
Restrictions on movement: barricaded villages, 'forbidden' roads, populace denied movement	19
Inappropriate conduct by the security forces: harassment, bullying, arbitrariness, humiliating attitude	15
Confiscation of papers: identity cards, vehicle licences, and vehicle keys	7
Physical conditions at the checkpoints: narrow turnstiles, limited opening-hours, lack of shading, lack of water, lack of toilets, luggage-checking counter	15
Settlers: causing damage to Palestinians' property; violence towards MachsomWatch women	4
Other: "grass-widows", use of checkpoints to extort taxes, issuing of nitpicking traffic tickets, policy of the District Coordination Offices, requests to cancel unjustified fines, requests for removal from blacklists of the GSS, harassment of MachsomWatch shifts.	15

Following are three representative complaints:

1. Complaint dated 6 May 2004, concerning violence and intimidation at Jubara checkpoint in the Tulkarm district. No answer was received.
2. Complaint dated 12 May 2004, concerning intimidation of a handicapped man at Ar Ram checkpoint. No answer was received.
3. Complaint dated 1 October 2004, concerning the blocking of access roads to the village of Ramin, in Samaria, and the confiscation of identity cards for several hours. In 17 February 2005, a response was received, confirming receipt of the complaint and noting that the 'matter is under examination'.



נשים למען זכויות אדם
לשגא מן אגל חקוק האגשאן
WOMEN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
machsomwatch@hotmail.com
054-5300385 • 01-84-FA8
www.machsomwatch.org

Brig.-Gen. Ilan Paz
Head, Civil Administration

6 May 2004

Dear Brig.-Gen. Paz,

Re.: Behaviour of a DCO representative at Jubara checkpoint

In the afternoon of Tuesday, 4 May 2004, we were appalled to witness the behaviour of O., a DCO representative at Jubara checkpoint. Furthermore, the behaviour of a seamline volunteer bordered on the criminal. The DCO employee confiscated valid crossing-permits from Palestinians, claiming that "due to the closure, the permits had been cancelled". After we contacted the commander of the Tulkarm DCO, he ceased his behaviour.

O.'s attitude towards the Palestinians at the checkpoint was boorish, and there were cases when he had hindered or prevented crossing, but the checkpoint commander permitted it. O. used his rifle-barrel to prevent a Palestinian from crossing through the checkpoint.

The seamline volunteer lunged at a Palestinian, bending his hand to the extent that the man writhed on the floor with pain.

In two situations where tension at the checkpoint intensified due to false alarms, that volunteer was at the head of the assailants and was particularly violent. In the first situation, he halted and then hit a Palestinian who was driving from the checkpoint back to the village of Tzur: for some reason, his car appeared suspicious to soldiers at the checkpoint. Once the car stopped and the driver got out, the volunteer hit and handcuffed him. (The Palestinian was freed after the assault when which turned out to be a false alarm). In the second case, soldiers – led by the volunteer – launched themselves at a Palestinian who appeared to be crossing the checkpoint. The soldiers stopped him and beat him. Later it transpired that they had made a mistake.

We view very gravely such physical violence towards the Palestinians, lacking any base, by soldiers staffing the checkpoint. To the best of our knowledge, the seamline volunteers, who serve as reservists, are supposed to assist the soldiers. With their boorish and hostile behaviour towards the Palestinians, all they do is heighten the tension, pressure and impatience – in conditions that are a priori difficult – at the checkpoint.

We expect you to deal with these cases with full severity and to report back to us.

Yours sincerely,

E.M.

On behalf of MachsomWatch

Copies: Kamil, Head of the Tulkarm DCO
Abrasha, Judea & Samaria Division
Tamir, Commander – Ephraim Brigade

12 May 2004

Maj.-Gen. David Tsur
Commander, Border Police

Re.: **Appalling bullying of a handicapped civilian
by Border Policemen**

At 17:45 on 5 May 2004, two members of MachsomWatch at the Ar Ram checkpoint witnessed the following horrifying spectacle:

A man on crutches, with a 100% disability (difficulties in moving his lower limbs, convulsions of the mouth and body) arrived at the Ar Ram checkpoint. He lives in Bethlehem and receives treatment in Ramallah. He was on his way home. This is the only route that a person with such a handicap can take, admittedly with great difficulty, since it does not entail climbing over stone barriers. He said that he frequently takes this route, without hindrance.

A Border Policeman at the checkpoint took away his invalid's certificate and did not let him through. The invalid begged for his certificate to be returned, and the soldiers threatened to confiscate it. After a while, it was indeed returned but he was still not allowed to go on his way. He was **delayed for half an hour, despite being unable to stand. When he fell, the soldiers claimed that he had done so on purpose.**

Ultimately he was allowed to cross, but only after we had sought the intervention of the commander of the Border Police in Jerusalem.

We are aware of the immense pressure and difficulties facing Border Policemen who staff the checkpoints, and of the security needs of the state of Israel. However, nothing justifies the bullying of a handicapped man. None of the soldiers exercised the minimum discretion or human sensitivity. The impressions we gained from our conversation with you is that you do not support this sort of behaviour, and so we are approaching you with the request to find the bullies and to ensure that their behaviour does not recur.

Yours sincerely,

M.R.

On behalf of MachsomWatch

Copies: Dr. Menachem Finkelstein, Military Attorney-General
Brig.-Gen. Ruth Yaron, IDF Spokesperson
Association for Civil Rights in Israel, B'Tselem

leave and enter is **illegal**, as well as **inhuman**; it contravenes the undertakings of the IDF at the Supreme Court. In both the cases described above, tremendous and unnecessary suffering was caused to people. The Dir Sharaf fire also caused heavy economic damage, though – miraculously – no injuries were caused. We demand that the barricades be dismantled and that access by vehicle is allowed to the village and its residents.

2. Taking personal documents for purposes other than defined in the law – is prohibited. Whenever we have approached you on this issue, you have denied the use of document-confiscation for penalising purposes. The soldiers' refusal to return the documents for several hours can only be explained as a penalising act lacking any solid grounds. We ask you again to fine-tune procedures among the soldiers.
3. Please check whether there is any connection between the patrol by soldiers in Dir Sharaf and the fire that broke out there.

Yours sincerely,

M.R.

On behalf of MachsomWatch

Copy: Brig.-Gen. Avichai Mandelblitt, Military Attorney General



David Grossman, in his book *The Yellow Wind*, writes as follows in the chapter named for what the writer Amos Elon has termed ‘The Word Laundry’:

A society in crisis forges for itself a new vocabulary. Israel is not the first state to have done this, but for anyone to whom the language is important it is difficult and infuriating to watch its slow corruption. For gradually, a new tongue is emerging, composed of words that have been pressed into special service, traitorous words that have shed their true meaning, words that no longer describe reality, but attempt, instead, to conceal it.

Grossman’s book was written seventeen years ago, a long time ago indeed. Since then the crisis in Israel has deepened and broadened, and with it, above all else, there has grown apace an insatiable need for deception. The IDF, so it seems, has in its employ a special corps of experts in linguistics, (and a very talented group they are, too) whose task it is to render in ordinary language that which is indescribable and unthinkable: to pervert reality, to make palatable that which sticks in the gullet, to present us with a totally false conception of the world in which we live.

The State of Israel’s struggle against the present *Intifada* has been characterised above all by the manner in which it has punished the Palestinian population, *inter alia*, by the strict limitations it has imposed on their freedom of movement. And after the four years in which we have observed what goes on at the checkpoints, it is clear to us that, despite what the army would have us believe, the reason for all these restrictions is certainly not security.

The time we have spent at the checkpoints has sharpened our senses. Today, we see more clearly, we hear more acutely. We have become more sensitive to the routine lies that have become part of our daily lives, to the laundering of language that is so integral a part of the checkpoint reality, that attempts to hide the injustice, the arbitrary treatment, the negation of human rights. This is what we wish to expose to the full light of day, to comment on and explain.

Outsiders are at a loss in every culture strange to them as they listen to the insiders, the native-born, who talk in what sounds like a code that is perfectly intelligible to them. What follows here is a selection from the checkpoint slang.

Animals This is the term that the soldiers habitually use to describe the Palestinians. When one takes a mass of people, all in a hurry, all edgy and nervous, and has them walk towards the checking stations between concrete barriers or some other form of fencing, when they must then go through narrow, cramped turnstiles known, so cutely, in Hebrew as carousels q.v. which all too often become stalled with frightened people inside, and one then behaves very crudely towards them, detains them for hours on end in the heat or the cold and the rain, what, after all that, does one say of them? One dismisses them with scorn: "They're just like animals!" Just for the sake of comparison, take a look at the behaviour of the average Israeli driver when he finds that his parking spot has been usurped...

Arabs Unlike the word 'Palestinians', which is used in 'normal' army language when security is under discussion, the term 'Arabs' occurs in what one might speak of as the 'anthropological' context also noted here, for example, in reference to the use of 'They' (q.v.). Thus we find the following: "The Arabs have a different conception of time..." "Arabs don't feel the heat." "It's well known that it's not proper for Arab men to carry babies in their arms, so no Arab father will ever be seen holding his baby in his arms". See also under 'Animals'.

The Army's Humanitarian Hotline Under international law and, in particular, under the terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention dealing with the protection of the civilian population in time of war or under conquest, it is the occupying power that is responsible for the safety, security and general fabric of life of the civilian population within the occupied area. And all this in order to enable the civilian population to carry on as far as possible with its normal life, even when the occupying power is waging a struggle against terrorism. While Israel is a signatory to the Geneva Convention, it does not accept that the Convention's provisions are to be applied in the occupied territories for the simple reason that it does not define the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as 'occupied territories'. But in order not to look too bad in the eyes of the world, it has set up a body called the Humanitarian Hotline which is in

fact nothing more than a fig-leaf to cover up the absence of any humanitarian approach in its government of the territories. In practice, neither the Palestinians nor the soldiers are aware of the hotline's existence. Yet, for all that, it has to be said that in certain instances the hotline has been of help. But where this has been the case, what has happened is that everyday needs have had to be treated as 'special cases' which were then dealt with under the guise of 'humanitarian' action, as matters of mercy rather than of law.

Baby As the soldiers see it, a baby must provide a Palestinian with a wonderful cover-up for a Kalashnikov: "What have you got there, a baby or a Kalashnikov?" as one soldier is recorded as having said to an obviously pregnant woman.

'Back-to-Back' The system by which goods are transferred from trucks approaching from one side of the checkpoint to trucks taking them onward from the other side. This system, too, is in use for the transfer of the sick from one ambulance to another. At almost all the checkpoints, those using them must walk a considerable distance from the vehicle in which they arrive at the checkpoint to another vehicle which carries them on the next leg of their journeys. This is particularly difficult for the sick, the elderly and people accompanied by several children. The term 'back-to-back' gives no indication whatsoever of the extent of the suffering and injustice involved.

Blackballed by the GSS Israel's General Security Services It is estimated that there are hundreds of thousands of (mainly) young men whose names appear on GSS lists and who thus cannot be granted a magnetic card – the absolutely essential, though not necessarily sufficient, condition for receiving a permit to move around the territories, and in and out of Israel or the 'seam area' (q.v.). On the face of it, this GSS list – from which death alone is usually the only release – is meant to filter out those regarded as dangerous. But in fact, any Palestinian with the means to appeal to Israel's High Court will generally find that even before his appeal is heard his name will be removed from the list, which surely indicates that there was no reason whatsoever for it to have been there from the outset.

Camera A camera at a checkpoint is like a red rag to a bull. For over the soldiers there always looms the long shadow of the International Court of Justice at The Hague. Since the camera can record violations

of human rights, hence any photographic record is potentially threatening. Soldiers will usually try to justify their objections to photography by saying that the checkpoint is a 'closed military area' and thus 'secret' and that photography is therefore forbidden there. This is a patently absurd claim since thousands of Palestinians go through this 'secret' place daily, sometimes – to their regret – even twice daily, and see everything that goes on there.

Carousels (turnstiles) The Hebrew term for the turnstiles harks back to the children's playground... Palestinians negotiating the checkpoints must walk '*wahad, wahad*' (one at a time) through the turnstile on their way to the other side. The turnstile's revolutions are remotely controlled by a soldier standing some ten metres away. In some checkpoints there are two turnstiles to be negotiated one after the other. Use of the turnstiles facilitates the limiting of contact between the soldiers and the 'potentially hostile' population. The width of each wing of the turnstile is less than 60 centimetres (the turnstiles were specially made for the Palestinian population). This should be compared with the 80 centimetres and more that is the width of similar turnstiles in the State of Israel. Completely omitted from consideration here is the fact that people going through the checkpoints are often encumbered by suitcases and large packages, and some of them are stout, or are mothers carrying small children in their arms. The turnstiles frequently get stuck with people caught inside them. In such cases, the burning desire to get out of the checkpoint as fast as possible creates enormous pressure and crowding, tempers flare and patience quickly gets exhausted so that men and women, the elderly, babes in arms, children and the crippled are all crushed up against the metal bars and the turnstile becomes a cruel trap (q.v. 'animals').

Closure An all-encompassing prohibition on any movement from the territories into Israel. Closures are brought into operation at any time when there is any suspicion of some security danger of any sort: warning of terror activities, Jewish festivals and holidays, Moslem festivals and other special occasions as for example the death of Yasser Arafat. If one takes note of what the media have to say, then the closure ends far earlier than it does in reality at the checkpoints. "What do I care if that's where you live? You're not going through, don't you understand. There's a closure on today. I don't know and I don't care

until what time” – these were the words of a soldier talking to a Palestinian labourer who wanted to get to his home in the ‘seam area’ after a day’s work in the West Bank.

Detainees This is the term applied to young men – the age-range affected is varied from time to time – held at the checkpoints while the danger they pose is checked out. Even if the young men have magnetic cards or permits, the checkpoint soldier will take their ID cards from them and relay their numbers to the GSS, and meanwhile send the young people to the detention area. The check lasts anywhere from half an hour to three hours or more, and this in addition to the time the detainees will have spent standing on line before they reached the soldier at the checking station. Detention also serves as an ‘educational punishment’ to be imposed at the whim of the soldier on duty. It should be stressed that, in the vast majority of cases, the detainees are set free to go on their way, without any action being taken against them, at the end of the GSS check.

Who is detained? The ‘leakers’ (q.v.) caught in the hills as they attempt to evade the checkpoint any young man who has dared to talk back to a soldier, or look at him in a way that seems like ‘cheek’, taxi drivers who have crossed the ‘virtual’ line beyond which they may not park (see under ‘sterile’), foreign nationals who want to visit relatives in the territories, ‘liars’ whose accounts of themselves do not ring true in the ears of the soldiers: in short anyone at all can easily find himself in the detention area. Here he will waste half a day or so, whiling away his time on the broken benches, or squatting on the filthy, wet concrete floor. Close by are the stinking latrines, open and with no sewage pipes. If the detainees complain or plead, they are met with orders: “No sitting down!” “No smoking!” or other variants of ‘security’ orders. Women too, it should be noted, are subject to detention, but are only seldom detained.

District Coordinating Office (DCO) A body charged with overseeing civilian life in the territories. The DCO is the all-powerful bureaucratic arm of the occupation and, far from sight, it behaves with a violence that is cruel and sophisticated. It occupies a position of absolute power and its authority increases in direct proportion to the extent of its arbitrary behaviour. The DCO is charged with issuing passage permits that let people move around and yet other permits to work or enter Israel.

Only if they have such permits (and then only after overcoming certain other difficulties) can Palestinians contrive to leave their own homes and move around the West Bank or the Gaza Strip, get work, stay in touch with their families, get to university, or hospital etc.³⁵

Encirclement Whereas a ‘closure’ (q.v.) imposed on the territories prevents Palestinians from coming into Israel, ‘encirclement’ totally closes off every town and village there – nobody comes in, and nobody leaves. And to make all this more effective, the army destroys approach roads to the villages, or renders them impassable with huge cement blocks, deep ditches and high mounds of earth. Necessity means that alternative routes are developed, roads so full of potholes as to wreck the Palestinians’ cars – but worse than this: to create deep hatred and a sense of all-pervading frustration. As one checkpoint commander put it: “They know there’s an encirclement, so it’s better if they all stay at home”.

Gates Because the ‘separation fence’ follows such an absurd route, it has been necessary to install a number of gates that let children go to their schools and permit farmers access to their fields (q.v. ‘seam area’). In actual practice, it is the army that controls these gates and opens and closes them as it sees fit. Thus, for example, during the olive harvest, it is the army which determines the hours when the gates will open and close and thus exactly how long the olive-harvest season can last. In many areas, the Palestinians have simply been forbidden to work their lands at any point in the year, a prohibition whose effect is already visible in the run-down state of the olive groves.

‘Grass-Widow’ Procedure The term for the confiscation by the army of a Palestinian family’s house; the family is allocated some small space, generally a room, but is denied almost all communication with the outside world.

‘Illegals’ the Hebrew acronym is *shabahim*, literally translated as ‘persons staying illegally’. People with Palestinian ID cards staying in Israel without having the proper permits. They are the victims of the arbitrary policies governing the issuing of permits and of the total suspension of the family reunification schemes. When an ‘illegal’ is caught, he is required to complete and sign a lengthy personal questionnaire, all in Hebrew, in which he will be asked a great many

35 See Chapter: Restriction of Movement by Means of Bureaucracy.

detailed questions about his stay in Israel including, for example, the names of those who employed him and where he stayed overnight, etc. On a separate page, he will be asked to sign an undertaking not to repeat his 'offence' and must also post a guarantee of several thousand shekels. Getting caught a second time will land the 'illegal' in jail.

In Abu-Dis, the Military Police turn a blind eye to those slipping through from the Palestinian side of the 'separation wall' into Jerusalem, but they wait in ambush to catch the 'illegals' on their way home again.

'Illegal' in Their Own Homes Palestinians who live in the 'seam' area (q.v.), i.e. west of the new 'separation fence' and east of the Green Line, must obtain permits from the Civil Administration enabling them to go through the checkpoints into and out of the 'seam' area. In other words, they need permits to continue living in their own homes. The permits are given for a limited time only and when they expire new application must be made. They are not automatically given to everyone who meets the necessary criteria and even those who have valid permits (q.v. *tasrich* – passage permit) can find themselves detained at the checkpoints from time to time. In legal terms their personal status – i.e. their citizenship, family status, claim to ownership of land etc. – is by no means clear-cut. Within this category of person are also included the spouses of Israeli citizens – they hold Palestinian ID cards yet are living in Israel. As we have already noted, the family reunification scheme has been suspended in the wake of deliberately slanted bureaucratic problems and, most recently, by a racist law passed by the Knesset.

Leaking, Dripping Those caught evading the checkpoints by walking over the hillsides (and thus sparing themselves the checkpoint detentions, harassment, and sheer daily waste of time) are called 'drippers' or 'leakers'. Punishment for this 'offence' is several hours of detention at the checkpoint.

'Lefties' These, according to the soldiers, constitute the permanent hassle facing them at the checkpoints, and within the term are included journalists, photographers, Arab Knesset members, demonstrators, members of human rights organizations, and especially the women of MachsomWatch³⁶. In short, a leftie is anyone who wants to see and

36 See, "Where and When May One Open Fire at a Person Armed with Binoculars?" (*Ha'aretz*, 13 June 2004).

know about what's going on. 'The lefties have destroyed the army!' proclaimed a sign that for months on end decorated the Huwwara checkpoint.

My Checkpoint It looks like an expression of affection, but let no one be deceived: it is an expression of unassailable control and superiority. The checkpoints are the most frequently encountered instruments of control throughout the territories, so common are they that they seem to have penetrated into the very bloodstream of the soldiers, so that this is how the commander of a checkpoint will refer to it: "This is my checkpoint and you're not going to tell me how to do my job".

The 'Neighbour' Procedure This is a much criticized procedure whereby ordinary Palestinian civilians – neighbours – are used to act as a human shield protecting the soldiers when, for example, it is deemed necessary to break into a Palestinian home. The Israeli High Court has condemned the practice but, whether because it has become a habit or because it is simply convenient, the 'neighbour procedure' is still in use and has even been adopted at the checkpoints. We have observed it at the Beit Iba checkpoints, but it is apparently also used at others, too: The soldiers, fed up with running around on the hillside in pursuit of those who try to evade the checkpoint, pick out one of the detainees (q.v.) – whose ID card they have tucked away for safe keeping in someone's pocket – and order him to take off into the hills and locate and catch the 'leakers' (q.v.) and bring them in to the checkpoint. And what happens if the young man takes off into the hills and decides not to turn in his friends, his neighbours, his classmates, and instead leaves them alone to evade the checkpoint as best they can? Don't worry, the Israeli army is not made up of idiots. High up in his observation tower there's a soldier armed with a special pair of field glasses through which he can see all the 'leakers'. But why should he run around after them? Let the Arab chap do it for him. The chosen detainee may not know for sure that there's a soldier in the look-out tower, but he does know that if he doesn't do what's wanted of him, his ID number will remain hidden there, deep down in the GSS files, and with it he will have buried his livelihood, the welfare of his family, his studies, his health. One can but speculate on what damage this vicious practice does to the in-any-case fragile fabric of Palestinian society.

Ninja Traditionally robed Palestinian women whose faces are almost completely veiled. These women are asked to remove their veils for security or 'educational' reasons: "Come on Ninja, let's have a look at you, take it off!"

Permanent Checkpoints There are some 60 permanent checkpoints scattered throughout the occupied territories, of which only nineteen control entry to Israel. There are in addition 600 to 700 permanent or mobile road-blocks and barriers of various sorts (the numbers are taken from the B'Tselem report of August 2004). The aim of the checkpoints is to isolate villages one from another, to sever them from the urban centres which serve them, to cut off villages from the main roads that run past them, and to keep children at a remove from their schools. Almost every time a Palestinian steps out of his home he will have to go through a checkpoint. The imposition and removal of checkpoints are major cards in a hypocritical game, whose rules dictate that when some American VIPs are due in the area, or when the time has come to announce concessions towards or some rapprochement with the Palestinians, then the army will proclaim that it has removed such and such checkpoints (it usually speaks of tens), and it will be MachsomWatch alone that tracks these pronouncements and points to their falsity.

Potentials Another category of those who appear on the list of persons 'blackballed by the GSS' (q.v.). Potentials are family members, neighbours or friends of anyone suspected of involvement in terrorist activity or who was killed by the army. Such people are seen as having sufficient motivation to take vengeance. Hence, they too find themselves on the endless GSS blacklist. Potentials are twice-punished persons: they are on the dreaded list and they have also lost someone dear to them. This is a term that shows just how well the army itself understands that the occupation creates enmity and the ever-increasing possibility that yet more people will turn to terror acts.

Random Checking Stopping and examining the documents of pedestrians and taxi passengers at the checkpoints in a random manner. How do they know whom to stop? "Just leave it to us. We know exactly whom to stop." Clearly the claims of security can play no role here, for if indeed security was the issue, then surely everyone should be checked.

The Seam Area This is a term that has certainly shrunk in the laundering: the reality is bounded by barbed-wire coils or by an eight-metre high concrete wall. What we are talking about is no broad area, but rather one in which the Palestinians are to be closely confined, locked in enclaves with limits marked by the Green Line and the new 'separation fence' (q.v.) that has been built to its east. Within these enclaves are Palestinian villages and land now utterly cut off from the continuum of Palestinian life in the West Bank. Thus, for example, the seam area includes considerable stretches of Palestinian agricultural land whose owners live in the West Bank proper and now need special permits – not always available to them – in order for them to be able to work those lands or harvest their olive crops. At the same time, Palestinians who live in the seam area find themselves needing permits to leave and come back to their own homes (q.v. 'illegals' in their own homes). There can be no doubt but that the existence of the 'seam area' has seriously damaged the quality of everyday Palestinian life.

Separation Fence (Wall) Of all the injustices associated with the occupation, the fence is the most blatant and the most costly. Its planned length is 680 kilometres, and its estimated cost is close to 1.5 billion US Dollars. The International Court of Justice at The Hague has branded it a 'war crime'. More than anything else it embodies Israel's obsession with restricting the Palestinians' freedom of movement, with annexing more and more territory, and above all with ensuring that we 'keep the Arabs out of our sight'. For, have we not always been taught that: "Out of sight, out of mind"?

Is there any security justification for the fence? Before its efficacy can be proven, we shall have had to pay its full monetary cost; we shall have uprooted tens of thousands of olive trees; hundreds of acres of cultivated land will have been laid waste; farm land and wells vital to Palestinian farmers will have been seized; more and more people will have been robbed for ever of the right to freedom of movement; and we ourselves will become the target of more and more international condemnation. Ehud Barak (former chief-of-staff and prime minister) once said: "We are here and they are there". But the facts give the lie to this claim: long sections of the fence do not divide between 'here' and 'there', but rather between the various members and generations of Palestinian families, between Palestinian farmers and their land, between Palestinian children and their schools, etcetera (q.v. 'seam area').

The 'separation fence' may, in the short term, lessen the number of terrorist incidents. But has anyone weighed these possible benefits against the certain damage this fence will inflict? Has anyone taken account of the depth of hatred being stirred up by this fence? Can there be any doubt but that it distances us further than ever from any possibility of a lasting peace with the Palestinians? Let's not lose sight of the fact that the fence doesn't just imprison the Palestinians in cramped enclaves, it confines Israel too within a ghetto: in other words, it condemns us to remain nothing but an isolated bubble, it ensures that we will never become integrated into the Middle East.

Sterile A racist term that helps minimise contact with a population that is potentially terrorist. There are no Arabs in a 'sterile' area. The area of a checkpoint between the turnstiles (the innocuous Hebrew term is 'carousels') (q.v.) and the checking-stations of the soldiers must be Arab-free. 'Sterile' roads, (sometimes termed 'apartheid' roads), are free of Arab vehicles. In Hebron there is what is known as a 'purified road'. Recently, the term has widened to include (or, rather, exclude) another category: a sterile area is thus one that is free of MachsomWatch women.

'Stop All Life' procedure The decision to adopt this step is taken at a very high level after receipt of information that a terrorist is *en route* to the checkpoint. With the implementation of the procedure, all movement is immediately halted and the checkpoint is totally paralysed for the next several hours.

Tasrich [(Arabic for passage permit)] The magic key that opens checkpoints and clears the way to travelling around the occupied territories, that provides at least some illusion of normal life. But there is a caveat to all this: every closure, or encirclement or curfew immediately renders the *tasrich* invalid. Even worse: a *tasrich* may be acceptable at one checkpoint and rejected at another, and any soldier can, on a whim, decide to invalidate the document. The body that issues the *tasrich* is the DCO (q.v.): "Why have you come to the checkpoint if you haven't got a *tasrich*?" the soldier asked. More than anything else that it may do, this permit underlines the fact that its bearer is not a free man: he is but one level higher than a slave and his fate hangs on the caprice and the mood of anyone in uniform.

‘They’ The use of the third person plural is always coupled with categorical statements: “They are all liars”; “They are all terrorists”. This is the justification for the army’s tough stance vis-à-vis the Palestinians. “They know” (and nevertheless they carry on doing whatever it is that is under discussion). This is the accepted formula used to explain particularly harsh behaviour by the army as, for example, the imposition of the ‘Stop all Life’ order (q.v.), the destruction of homes, the confiscation of taxis, detention at checkpoints, etc. “They know” is the explanation offered for why there are no adequate public notices or announcements of the restrictions and prohibitions that change from day to day.

Thank you In normal circumstances, ‘thank you’ is an expression acknowledging the receipt of some service, of some relationship, of some gift. At the checkpoint, it becomes a heart-breaking word. We watch the Palestinians as they receive back their ID cards from the soldier who says brusquely: ‘Go on!’ First comes the smile, almost all that remains from the attempt to maintain some semblance of human dignity; then a hand is extended to seize that which offers the chance of getting through this day; and then there comes the effort to assume something like a man-to-man stance of equality, and there follows: “Thank you!” – as if to say: “You have rendered me a service, and I thank you for it”.

It is heartbreaking to see all this: to watch the heroic effort made by the Palestinians, day after day, to hang onto some vestige of normality. For here is the occupier in his checkpoint, standing within its concrete ‘sleeve’, operating its turnstiles, guarding its detainees’ compounds, watching its luggage-scanners, standing there behaving so crudely, where the sewage reeks, the tin roof leaks and the benches are broken. Oh yes, the occupier does indeed render a service.

But since the Palestinian knows that he is suspect – for ‘they’ are all suspect, perhaps he really is saying thank you to the soldier: who could have detained him, arrested him, turned him over to the GSS, hit him, put him in handcuffs, torn up his permit, thrown his text-books away, and so on, endlessly. So perhaps it really is ‘Thank you’ : for the soldier believed him, he let him through to go on his way. So, yes: ‘Thank you!’