

Mas'ha Village Profile : Just One Example of the Impact of the Apartheid Wall on the lives of Palestinians



Mas'ha is about six kilometers East of the Green Line in the Occupied West Bank. The Apartheid Wall's first phase, snaking down from the North of Palestine, has now reached this village in the Salfit district. Mas'ha is the final point in the Wall's 'First Phase', and is now separated from the 'Israel' side of the Wall which includes most of the agricultural land of Mas'ha. In less than six months the fate of the people of Mas'ha has been sealed inside a barrier that steals land and livelihood from the residents.

Economy

Until three years ago Mas'ha was the most flourishing trading market of the whole region. Three years ago the Israeli authorities closed the main road connecting the West Bank to Israel, putting a complete stop to the economic activities of the area. The population of Mas'ha began to decline as traders and other temporary residents moved out. Until recently, most of the men of Mas'ha found work in Israel.

Water

Mas'ha lies on the western part of the upland aquifer originating in the West Bank uplands. Of 600 million cubic meters of water that the aquifer provides in a year, Israel withdraws about 500 million. The Labor governments of the seventies located the first settlements in areas defined as critical locations for drilling wells. Elkana was one of these settlements. Since 1967, the Israeli authorities have prohibited Palestinians from digging new wells, but Mas'ha farmers have wells that have been in use since before 1967.

The Wall

Adjacent to Mas'ha is the Israeli settlement Elkana, situated about five kilometers away from the Green Line. The route of the wall will bring Elkana onto the Israeli side. Most of the land of Mas'ha will be placed in the Israeli side of the wall - between the wall and the Green Line. In addition, the fence cuts Mas'ha off from the Jenin to Ramallah road,



a segment of which will be on the Israeli side of the wall.

Land

The 6,000 dunums (4 dumans = 1 acre) of land belonging to Mas'ha are mainly cultivated with olive trees. For the construction of the wall, 4,000 dunums of land are being confiscated, leaving the village with 2,000 dunums, most of which is the existing built-up residential area. An Israeli military order of November 8, 2002 appropriated a strip of land of approximately 488.5 dunams (length 8.220 kilometers and width varying between 46m and 95m) between Saniria and Mas'ha. Bulldozers started work on April 23, 2003 to uproot olive trees preparing the ground for the wall. All 32 extended families in the village have been affected by the wall. Most families have lost 50-100 dunums of land each.

