Within the Palestinian lands occupied in 1948, the Palestinian minority and the Jewish majority generally live in separate areas. Even in the mixed cities, where Palestinians and Jews live alongside each other, most of the Palestinian minority lives in its own neighbourhoods, distinct from the neighbourhoods of the Jewish majority.

This geographical apartheid is clearest in the big cities where in some cases Palestinian neighbourhoods are separated from Jewish neighbourhoods by walls and fences. This is only the more visible part of the structure of racist exclusion, discrimination and dispossession Israel is built upon. Land property laws, residency rights, access to education and jobs - an intricate system of "Jewish first" or "Jewish only" allows the Zionist state to oppress and control the remaining Palestinian population.

We present three examples where Palestinian communities within Palestine ‘48 have been isolated behind walls. These examples show a general trend of Zionist urban planning as a tool to limit the possibility of growth of Palestinian residential areas, thus reinforcing expulsion policies.

Palestinian towns and neighbourhoods in Palestine ‘48 - and in particular the neighbourhoods we refer to - suffer from overcrowding, poor planning and the absence of decent infrastructure. There is a great deal of unemployment and poverty and a general neglect for the needs of the population though the cost of living is very high.

Jisr Al-Zarqa and Qisariya

Jisr Al-Zarqa is an Arab Palestinian village on the Mediterranean coast, north of Tel Aviv and Road 2. It has a population of 10,751

The neighbouring area of Qisariya is also on the coast. Until 1948, the population of the town included 960 Palestinians and 160 Jews. In 1948, it was one of the first towns where the armed Jewish Zionist gang known as the Hagana carried out expulsion of Palestinians and destruction of their homes. Today, the population of the town is entirely Jewish.

Jisr Al-Zarqa and Qisariya

In November 2002 the Qisariya Development Company began constructing an earth wall between the two communities, without any lawful permit, without any coordination with the Jisr Al-Zarqa local council and without informing the residents. The length of the wall is 1-1.5 km and it has a height of 4-5 meters. Trees were planted on both sides of the embankment to give it a "natural" look.

Jawarish and Gannei Dan

Ramle is a city half way between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, close to the highway between the two cities.

Before 1948, 20,000 Palestinians lived in the city and there was no Jewish presence. In the aftermath of the expulsion during the Nakba only 1,500 Palestinians remained in the city. Municipal statistics show that in 2003, the city had a population of 63,000, 80.5 percent of whom were Jews and 19.5 percent Palestinians.

Yefe Nof is a well off Jewish neighbourhood of 700 inhabitants, built in the 1980s next to Jawarish. During the immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s, the Gannei Dan neighbourhood was built as an extension on the Yefe Nof community. It is home to 2000 Jewish Russian immigrants. As part of the construction of Gannei Dan, its promoters built and financed a cement wall 2km in length and 4m tall was built separating the new community from Jawarish.
Pardes Snir and Nir Zvi

Pardes Snir and Nir Zvi are neighbourhoods in Lydd, a city half way between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, near Ramle.

Until 1948, Lydd carried a Palestinian population of over 18000. 39,000 were expelled during for the creation of the Israeli state. Jewish settlers began to move to the area and by 2003 there was a population of 74,000. The population is now 72.5% Jews and 27.5% Palestinians.

Pardes Snir is a Palestinian neighbourhood in Lydd whose population was 3000 in 2003. Nir Zvi is an adjacent affluent Jewish neighbourhood. The two communities are separated by several hundred square metres of agricultural land and a small road that has been used by the Palestinian neighbourhood.

In 1999, a plan was put forward for Pardes Snir, for the improvement of dilapidated infrastructure and a widening and repair of roads used by the community. Residents of Nir Zvi took advantage of the situation and opposed the plan. They conditioned their approval on several demands, including that a 4-meter high wall of concrete and bricks be built along a section of approximately 1.5 kilometers, dividing Nir Zvi from the Palestinian neighbourhood. They demanded that the construction and maintenance of the wall be financed by the Ministry of Housing and the Municipality of Lydd.

The Objections Committee of the Central District Planning and Building Committee agreed and decided that the outline plan for the neighbourhood of Pardes Snir would only be approved when a building plan was approved for the establishment of the wall and its implementation was guaranteed. On 21st July 2002, the Israeli government issued a decision approving building the wall between the two neighbourhoods and requiring the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Housing to cover the cost of its construction from their budget at 3 million shekels each. On 23rd July 2003 the construction permit for the wall was approved.

Analysis: Walls around Palestinian communities

"We are not animals - we are humans as well"
- Ahmed Abu Omar, 17, Resident of Pardes Snir

The involvement of the Israeli government, especially in the funding of the wall in Lydd shows a clear official position. All successive Israeli governments have declared their intention to protect the Jewish majority in the Israeli state and pursued policies of racial discrimination against the Palestinian minority. Building walls around Palestinian communities is the logical counterpart to the Apartheid Wall which is isolating communities in the West Bank.

The Israeli government is cultivating the paranoid focus on the 'demographic threat' posed to the Jewish state by an expanding Palestinian population. The response is to build cantons and ghettos for the Palestinian population, and to ensure that these ghettos have no possibility of future development or enlargement, exerting such pressure on Palestinian communities that they eventually choose to leave.

"All the Bantu have their permanent homes in the reserves and their entry into other areas and into the urban areas is merely of a temporary nature and for economic reasons. In other words they are admitted as work-seekers, not as settlers."
- Dr. W. W. M. Eiselen, Secretary of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development. ("Optima", March 1959).