

Today, the separation wall almost completely surrounds al-Walajah. Once Israeli occupation complete its planned path for the wall, the village will be entirely enclosed.



The wall bars residents from accessing Jerusalem. The wall further restricts access to the village's agricultural land such that residents can only access their land through gates, which the Israeli military usually leaves closed. In some parts, the wall is just meters away from Palestinian-owned homes, which creates the environment of an open-air prison. The wall also restricts the village's ability to expand in step with its natural population growth.

House demolitions

Israeli occupation has subject al-Walajah to house demolitions since becoming an occupying force in the village. As stated, the village falls under complete Israeli control as its land is almost entirely slated as Area C of the West Bank or part of the Jerusalem municipality. Israeli occupation refuses to allow Palestinian construction in the area. Since 1985, around 60 houses have been demolished in al-Walajah. There are approximately 189 houses in the

village that are threatened with demolition by Israeli military orders.

Land expropriation

Despite the takeover of most of the village's land by the Israeli occupation in 1948, Israeli authorities continue to confiscate what little land is left to Palestinian residents of al-Walajah.

The expropriation is carried out in favor of settlements expansion, particularly Har Gilo settlement, which broke ground after Israel confiscated 120 dunams of al-Walajah in the 1970s. The neighboring Emek Refaim Park is another pretext for land confiscation. The Israeli national park is predicated on confiscating 1,200 dunams of al-Walajah land.

Popular Resistance in al-Walajah

Residents of al-Walajah have responded to the discriminatory policies harnessed by the Israeli occupation with organized popular resistance. The resistance movement in the village has adopted a national dimension in the sense that it has emerged as a model for Palestinian activism and symbol of the injustices of the Israeli occupation.

In al-Walajah there are three civic action groups: the Popular Resistance Committee, the Follow-up Committee on Homes Threatened with Demolition, and the Committee for the Defense of the Land. The activities of these committees are focused on organizing demonstrations and legal advocacy and disseminating information.

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Al-Walajah Village

The Bethlehem-area village has become a foreboding microcosm of Palestinian life under Israeli occupation.

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Prior to Israeli occupation control of the area, the village of al-Walajah consisted of a swath of rich agricultural land spanning over a dozen square kilometers from southern Jerusalem to northern Bethlehem.

When Zionist paramilitaries and Israeli occupation forces captured 78 percent of Historic Palestine in 1948, the entire population of al-Walajah – 1,600 people – was displaced, according to United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Many residents fled to refugee camps like Dheisheh in Bethlehem, but around 100 al-Walajah residents fled to a nearby parcel of farmland on the West Bank side of the “Green Line” (1949 Armistice Line). Following the destruction of the original al-Walajah, this farmland became the site of a new al-Walajah, though remaining residents lost 75 percent of the land that once comprised the village.

In 1967, when Israeli forces occupied the West Bank, half of al-Walajah was illegally annexed to the Jerusalem municipality, while the other half remained slated as part of the West Bank.

Today, around 2,400 people live in al-Walajah, nearly all of whom are registered as refugees

with UNRWA. Most of what remains of the village’s land is either illegally annexed and under the control of the Jerusalem municipality or illegally occupied and slated as Area C of the West Bank (i.e. also under full Israeli control). Al-Walajah lies between settlement blocks that Israeli officials want to connect and consolidate.

Water and agriculture

Al-Walajah is famous for its abundance of fresh water springs. Prior to 1948, the village enjoyed 18 water springs. Today, just two springs remain.

Israeli occupation has issued the surviving springs Hebrew names in an attempt to deny their significance to local Palestinians: Yalu spring is Yael spring and al-Alieq spring is Lavan spring.

Last year, the Israeli occupation seized the village’s al-Haniya spring by incorporating it into a national park. In the process, Israeli occupation moved a military checkpoint deeper into the West Bank with the specific intention of blocking al-Walajah residents’ access to al-Haniya spring.



Road closures

The village of al-Walajah is under siege. Israeli occupation typically guard the only road that leads into and out of the village because the road also serves settlers. Israeli occupation closed a secondary road that linked the village to other towns and cities in the West Bank in 2013.

The isolation of the village by military infrastructure is a daily hardship for residents of al-Walajah. Israeli occupation stationed at its only entrance often deny Palestinians living in other areas the ability to visit the village, including descendants of the Walajah residents that fled in 1948.

The separation wall

The Israeli separation wall as envisioned in 2003 would sever al-Walajah in two, with one side restricted as Area C of the West Bank and the other as part of the Jerusalem municipality. However, in 2004 al-Walajah residents secured an Israeli High Court petition requiring that the village remain more intact.