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## The Segregation Wall

### What Palestinians Can Learn From the Civil Rights Movement

by NATASHA ROTH

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Some people call the wall in the West Bank a ‘security fence’; others refer to it as an ‘apartheid wall’. The International Court of Justice, in its 2004 advisory opinion declaring the construction illegal, called it simply ‘the wall’. Media style guides tend to suggest ‘West Bank barrier’ or ‘separation barrier/wall’.

But the wall doesn’t only separate; it segregates. In 1963, Malcolm X gave a speech in which he spelled out the difference: separation is between equals; segregation is forced on the weak by the strong. A segregated community is ‘regulated from the outside by outsiders’.

The wall was undertaken unilaterally by Israel (originally proposed by Yitzhak Rabin). Its route and dimensions are exclusively Israel’s to decide. Palestinians do not get a say in where the wall will run or how much of their land they will get to keep. The wall is unfinished – and, in some places, easy to cross; every day, up to 40,000 Palestinians enter Israel illegally from the West Bank in order to work – but it is already twice the length of the Green Line, snaking deep inside the West Bank in order to bring Israeli settlements ‘inside’ Israel.

In rare instances, tireless campaigning and endless demonstrations have succeeded in rerouting it, but they are exceptions and the outcomes are by no means final. Some Palestinian villages are sliced in two by the wall; others are cut off from their land; al-Walaja will be entirely circled by the wall once it is completed. In East Jerusalem, neighbourhoods on the 'other' side of the wall face chronic water shortages and lack of municipal services. The impact on the economy of many villages located on or near the route of the segregation wall has been catastrophic. In all that it does and signifies, the wall is segregation in theory and in practice.

The Civil Rights movement in America is an inspiration to the ongoing struggle against the Israeli occupation. Its vocabulary can help us too.