



No. 28, September 2004

NEWSLETTER

The Center For Religious and Heritage Studies in the Holy Land

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THE SUFFOCATION OF THE WEST BANK PALESTINIAN COMMUNITIES THE CASE OF THE BETHLEHEM DISTRICT

This issue of Al-Liqa' Newsletter will revolve around the theme "the Suffocation of the Bethlehem District: Settlements and Segregation Walls." Thanks to Applied Research Institute Jerusalem (ARIJ) and its director Dr. Jaad Isaac, for providing us with the basic information concerning settlements and Security Wall and fences, known by Palestinians as segregation or apartheid wall part of which is located few yards to the north of Al-Liqa' Center.

The suffocation of Bethlehem District comes in many forms and shapes: belt of settlements that includes Gilo, Har Homa (Abu Ghneim), Tequ', Efrat and Bitar Illit, among others, permanent military check points, mobile military check points, continuous Israeli military incursions, elaborate bypass roads to connect settlements along with security walls and fences. All these Israeli unilateral steps have cut Palestinians off from their economic, educational, cultural and religious lifeline, that is Arab Jerusalem and have turned the West Bank into a prison for residents surrounded by high prison walls and higher watch towers.

The impact of this suffocation has been tremendous affecting the access of patients to hospitals in Jerusalem and causing unnecessary deaths at military checkpoints, preventing thousands of students from reaching their schools, fencing out agricultural lands from its owners as well as uprooting hundreds of olive and forest trees from expropriated Palestinian lands.

(Cont'd on p.2)

BEST WISHES FOR AL-LIQA' CENTER'S DIRECTOR

Al-Liqa' Center's Board of Trustees, its Executive Committee and staff would like to express their heartfelt happiness for Al-Liqa' Center's Director, Dr. Geris S.Khoury, for having undergone a successful operation, wishing him fast recovery, an excellent health and happiness.

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COLONIZATION IN BETHLEHEM DISTRICT

The Israeli activities in Bethlehem District exceeded uprooting trees and demolishing houses. The Israeli policy in the Palestinian territories is to create an ethnic Jewish state in as much of Palestinian lands as possible. The main goal behind the expropriation of Palestinian land for the colonization activities is to expand the Israeli colonies regardless of the displacement of thousands of Palestinian families.

Colonization is one of the crucial issues of conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis since the occupying of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967. Israel worked on a systematic plan to construct and build more Israeli colonies as much as possible to reinforce itself on the Palestinian land. Israeli intention is to make the contiguity of any Palestinian state in the future practically unattainable, and by this Israel breached all UN resolutions and international laws especially Resolutions 446: "...determines' that Israeli colonies are a 'serious obstruction' to peace" and calls on Israel to abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Israeli colonization in Bethlehem commenced in the late 1960s after Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967. Kfar Etzion was the first Israeli colony erected after June 1967, followed by a propagation of Israeli colonies in the district. Israel served the vision of creating "Greater Jerusalem".

Name of the Colony	Date of Establishment	No. of Colonists 2000	Area (Dunums)*
Kfar Etzion	1967	450	600
Rosh Zurdim	1969	260	620
Alon Shavut	1971	1600	610
Gilo	1971	30200	3290
Ali 'Azar	1975	450	420
Har Gilo	1976	350	351
Mizpe Shalem	1977	208	307
Tequ'	1977	1000	955
Hadar Betar	1978	NA	50
Efrat	1979	5930	1700
Ma'ale 'Amous	1981	400	374
Ali David	1982	NA	51
Nave Daniyyal	1982	649	460
Nikodumim	1982	350	269
Giva'ot	1984	NA	90
Betar Illit	1989	9760	3200
Giv'at Hamatous	1991	NA	262
Mshuli Darakout	1991	201	51
Har Homa	1997	NA	1037
Beit Ban (Tsoref)	1989		
Afenat	NA	NA	26
Total	—	52308	15112

Dear Benefactors and Friends of Al-Liqa' Center

We hope this latest Newsletter will find you well hoping that we will continue to keep in touch with each other through AL-Liqa' Center's publications, forums, annual conferences and special events. In order to proliferate our mission throughout the world, Al-Liqa' Center has developed its own Web Site:

www.al-liqa-center.org

We hope you will have the opportunity to visit the site. Besides, we will appreciate any comments and any suggestions that would help us to improve the content of our site.

Strangulation of Bethlehem District: SETTLEMENTS AND SEGREGATION WALLS

The Israeli occupation has targeted Bethlehem District for decades as any other Palestinian district that suffered the infringements of the occupation over the past 37 years. The status of Bethlehem and its unique location (Christian population and close proximity to Jerusalem) has gained the district no exclusivity as proclaimed by many sources, particularly the Israeli occupation. The residents have felt the wrath of the Israeli occupation in every aspect of their daily lives, which affected them directly over the days, months and years.

Bethlehemites have felt the Israeli fury over the past 3 years of the "Intifada".

Bethlehem district is 9 Kilometer south of Jerusalem over 608 Km². Following the 1995 Palestinian-Israeli Interim Agreement, a part of the district was turned over to Palestinian jurisdiction. The overall population of the district is estimated at 170 thousand residents distributed over three main towns: Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour where the Christian Palestinians reside, in addition to 72 localities and 3 refugee camps in the district's vicinity, where all of the residents are Muslims.

The boundaries of Bethlehem district have changed dramatically since 1967. This is due to a series of Israeli colonization activities in the district. Israel changed the boundaries of Bethlehem district demarcated during the Jordanian rule by eliminating the original boundaries of Jerusalem district and by annexing 163,225 dunums from Jerusalem district towards Bethlehem. . In addition, 133,944 dunums expropriated from Hebron district and added to were Bethlehem. However, 106,546 dunums of Bethlehem district lands were annexed to the district of Jericho and 18,048 dunums of

Bethlehem district were included within the Jerusalem municipal boundaries, which were further



changed after occupying Jerusalem in 1967.

The Israelis has intensified their aggression on Bethlehem District by initiating plans to consume parts of the districts for the intended construction of colonies. The existing Israeli bypass roads stretch over 32 Km in length in and around the district, while the under construction and planned bypass roads count for another 77.5 Km. What makes the bypass roads more dangerous to the standing of the district's area is the designated buffer zone (75 meters on each side of the road, a forbidden area for Palestinians to use or utilize in anyway). As a result, the Israeli bypass roads consumed approximately 19Km² (3.1%) of the district total area causing discontinuity within the district's boundaries by dissecting the district to three separate divisions: the western rural areas, the eastern rural areas, and the remaining area in between.

Table for bypass and military roads in Bethlehem

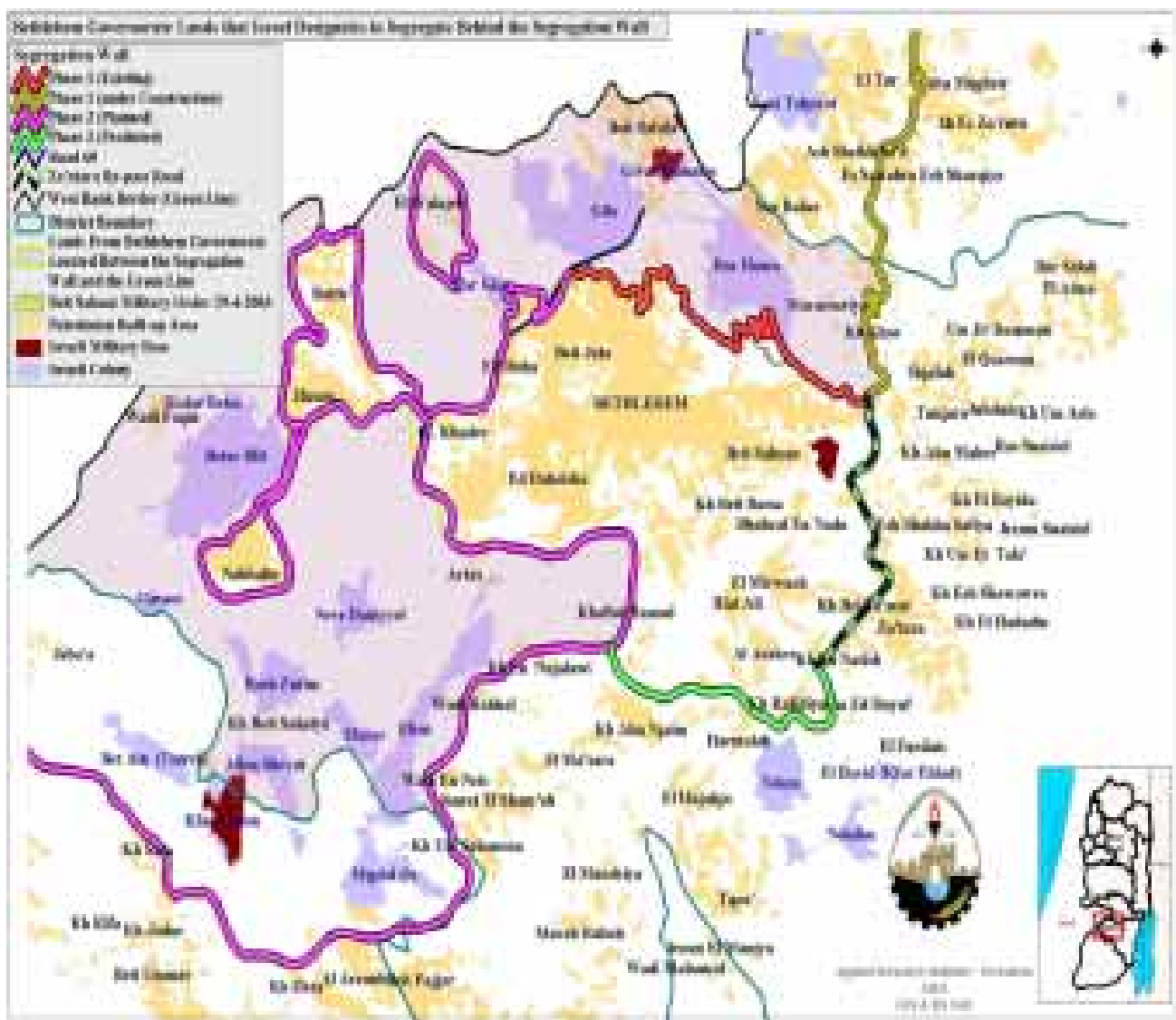
Bypass roads	Km Length of bypass road	Area+150m buffer Zone
Existing bypass road	32	7680 Dunums
Segregation Wall road	15	2250
Planned bypass road	30	5200
Total	77.5	15130

BETHLEHEM AND THE SEGREGATION WALL

In the Bethlehem Governorate, the planned Segregation Wall will have a length of 50 kilometers (30 miles) and will segregate more than 70 thousand dunums (17500 acres) from The Bethlehem lands that belong to both Christian and Muslim Palestinians, most of those lands are located in the Western, Northern and Eastern peripheries.

The route of the Segregation Wall in Bethlehem Governorate and how it slays all the agricultural lands and open spaces and how it strangulates Bethlehem and how it enclaves its surrounding villages. Battir, Hussan', Nahhalin, al-Numan, Al-Khas, Al-Walajeh and wadi Fukin are some of the

rural communities which will be isolated by the segregation wall and suffered the devastating environmental and social impacts of the wall, in addition to denial of access to civil (police, ambulances, fire stations ...etc) and medical services (hospitals and emergencies). Other urban areas of the district will lose its rural agricultural expanse, as they will be cut-off for the benefit of the segregation wall. The town of Beit Jala, which is adjacent to Bethlehem, will lose all of its agricultural lands and the only recreational forest area. This alarming situation will lead in the near future to dense populated areas, urban and environmental as well as health disasters.



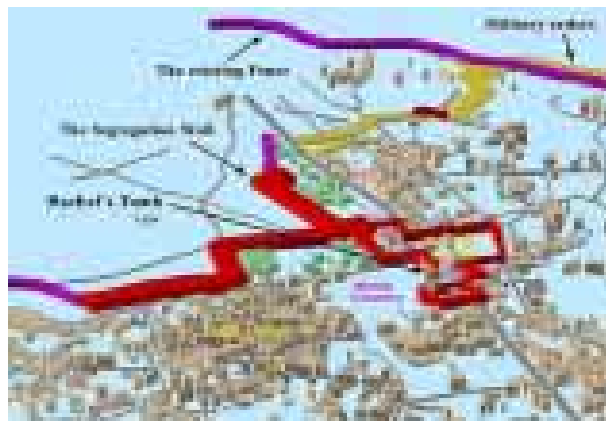
The Israeli Segregation Wall in Bethlehem District

ENVELOPE OF JERUSALEM

THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE SEGREGATION WALL

As any other district of the West Bank, Bethlehem will have its share of the Segregation Wall built by Israel. The projected wall is expected to alter the district's boundaries into new dimensions. The trajectory wall stretch over 50 Km in length along the northeast (Beit Sahour), north (Bethlehem) and northwest (Beit Jala & Al-khader) of the district borders is already under construction. Approximetlly 11Km were completed along the eastern parts of Beit Jala, penetrating the northern borders of Bethlehem towards the east in Beit Sahour and all the way to Al-Nu'man and Al-Khas villages. Along the north and northwest vicinity of Bethlehem district in Beit Jala, the wall will detach a major agricultural part of the town inside the planed route of the wall. Furthermore, the wall will deny the town of its natural boundaries expansion territories putting an end to any possibility expanding the towns' borders to the north or the west. So far, Israel has managed to dissect of Bethlehem district 70,000

dunums all of which were utilized to build colonies, bypass roads or classified as military areas and natural reserves and finally separated by the segregation wall.



Map: The Wall surrounding the Rachel's Tomb according to the adjusted military order issued on August 7, 2003

Professor Thiab Ayyoush Represents al-Liqa' Center in the Islamic-Christian Conference in Ramallah

On 10 August 2004

Professor Thiab Ayyoush, Vice President and member of Al-Liqa's Board of Trustees, represented the Center in the proceedings of the Islamic-Christians Conference which took place on the 10th of August 2004 in the headquarters of the besieged President Arafat in Ramallah. Professor Ayyoush addressed the gathering on behalf of the Center. He focused on the change in the curriculum whereby Christian education for Christian students is now being offered in all schools. He spoke in length about Al-Liqa' Center and its works in the area of national unity.



AL-LIQA' CENTER'S PUBLICATIONS

Seven publishing activities are currently underway. These are:

1. The Arabic language quarterly review, Al-Liqa', now in its 19th year of publication (1985-2004). The review is directed toward the Arab community in the Holy Land, the Arab region and the world.
2. The English Language biannual review, Al-Liqa' Journal, is now in its 12th year, 1992-2004. This review is directed toward the international community. It is a scholarly journal concentrating on Christian-Muslim relations, interfaith dialogue, Christianity and Islam and Palestinian studies.
3. Proceedings of the annual "Conference on Arab Heritage for Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land" better known as the Christian-Muslim Dialogue Conference, now in its 17th session. Contents reflect the activities of the annual conferences, 1983-present.
4. Proceedings of the annual "Conference on Theology and the Local Church in the Holy Land", better known as the Palestinian Contextualized Theology Conference. These reflect the activities of the annual conference, 1987 present.
5. Also available are miscellaneous pamphlets and publications giving brief but overviews of a number of religious, social and cultural topics of current interest. Al-Liqa' documents are included. See list of publications, p.7.
6. The bi-annual English language Newsletter, has been published since 1989. It includes news of the Center's activities and is directed toward the international community.



AL-LIQA'S MOST RECENT PUBLICATIONS

- Al-Liqa' Journal (in English), Volume 22, August 2004: A special issue on the 20th anniversary of Al-Liqa' Center. The content includes brief overviews of Al-Liqa' conferences, indices of the Journal, 1992-2003, publications and activities. The journal contains valuable articles dedicated specially to the 20th anniversary of the center as well as a bibliographical essay on the Palestinian Contextualized Theology.
- Al-Liqa' Arabic-Language quarterly, Vol. 19, no.1,2 (2004): A special issue on Christian presence. The content includes articles on Christian presence between identity crisis and the will of loyalty, Christian Zionism; Edward Sa'id, the politician, thinker and musician, religious messages as well as a book review.

List and Prices Of

Al- Liqa's Publications

(1983-2004)

(All publications are in Arabic unless specified)

Christian - Muslim Dialogue Conference

(1983 -2004)

1. Proceeding of the First Conference, Jerusalem, 1983 (221 pages).	\$6
2. Second Conference, Jerusalem, 1984 (257 pages).	\$6
3. Third Conference, Jerusalem, 1985 (257 p.).	\$7
4. Fourth Conference, Jerusalem, 1986 (289 pages).	\$7
5. Fifth Conference, Jerusalem, 1987 (206p.).	\$6
6. Sixth Conference, Jerusalem, 1988 (216 pages).	\$7
7. Seventh Conference, Jerusalem, 1989 (143 p.).	\$7
8. Eighth Conference, Jerusalem. 1990 (143 pages).	\$7
9. Ninth Conference, Jerusalem, 1991 (149 p.).	\$7
10. Tenth Conference, Jerusalem, 1992 (143 p.).	\$15
11. Eleventh Conference, Jerusalem, 1993 (82 p.).	\$7
12. Twelfth Conference, Jerusalem, 1994 (154 p.).	\$7
13. 13th Conference, Bethlehem. 1995.	\$7
(see no. 9 Miscellaneous)	
14. 14th Conference, Bethlehem, 1996 (107 pages)	
15. 15th Conference, Bethlehem, 1998	
16. 16th Conference, Bethlehem, 2001	

Al- Liqa' Journal (in English)

1992 - 2003

Vol. 1 - 1992	Vols. 7/8 1996	Vols. 18/19-2002
Vol. 2 - 1992	Vols. 9/10- 1997	Vols. 20/21-2003
Vol. 3 - 1994	Vols.11/12 1998	
Vol. 4 - 1994	Vol. 13-1999	
Vol. 5 - 1995	Vols. 14/15-2000	
Vol. 6 - 1996	Vols. 16/17-2001	
Annual subscription:		
Individuals		\$ 15
Institutions		\$ 30
Price per one issue		\$ 7

Al-Liqa' Arabic Language

Quarterly Review

(1985 - 2003)

Year 1-Year 3 (3 issues each)	\$ 20 per Year
Year 4-Year 18 (4 issues each)	\$ 30 per Year
Price per one issue	\$ 7

Al-Liqa' Center's Documents

(Available in Arabic and English)

1. Theology and the Local Church in the Holy Land, (16 pages)	\$ 4
2. In Jerusalem, Justice and Peace Embrace Each Other, (5pages)	\$ 2

Palestinian Contextualized Theology Conference (1987-1996)

Proceedings of the First Conference, Jerusalem 1987 (196 pages).	\$7
Second Conference, Jerusalem, 1988 (208 p.).	\$7
Third Conference, Jerusalem 1989 (193 p.).	\$7
Fourth Conference, Jerusalem, 1990 (234p.).	\$7
Fifth Conference, Jerusalem, 1991 (174p.).	\$7
Sixth Conference, Jerusalem, 1993 (125 p.).	\$7
Seventh Conference, Jerusalem, 1994 (177 p.).	\$7
Eighth Conference, Jerusalem, 1995 (199p.).	\$7
Ninth Conference, Bethlehem, 1996 (Contained in Al-Liqa' Journal, Vol. 9/10, 1997)	\$7

Miscellaneous

1. Fr. Peter Madrous, Paul the Apostle and the Man (67 pages)	\$5
2. Najib Nassar, Under the Protection of the Arabs (91 pages)	\$5
3. Younis Amr, Jerusalem the City of God (152pages)	\$5
4. Louis I. Hazboun, Principles of Sociology of Religion (162 pages)	\$5
5. Western Christian Zionism, (43 pages)	\$3
6. Jerusalem Between Religious Freedom and Political Sovereignty,(in English) (78pages)	\$5
7. Christian Feasts between Unity and Pluralism, (96 pages).	\$5
8. Qustandi Shomali, El-Carmel (534 pages)	\$10
9. Jerusalem: Palestinian Muslim- Christian Studies (600 pages)	\$15
10. Anton Shomali, Collected Poem's (255 Pages)	\$7
11. Fr. Rafiq Shomali, Contextualized Eastern Churches (393 pages).	
12. Jamal Salsa', Palestinian Poetical Message Between Religion and Nationalism (174 pages)	\$6
13. Thiab A. Ayyoush, Social Problems: An Islamic Perspective (212 pages)(in English)	\$7
14. Sami Adwan, Reality of Religious Education, both Muslim and Christian, in Palestinian Schools (404 pages)	\$10
15. Fr. Dr. Rafiq Khoiry, Say Your Word and Go! Quick Inputs into Vital Files (273 pages)	\$7
16. Fr. Dr. Rafiq Khoiry, The Book of Days: In Search of the Lost Word (159 pages)	\$7

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES



Members of Al-Liqa' Board of Trustees, Fr.Dr. Rafiq Khoury and Mr. Mousa Darwish, attended the Arab Working Group for Christian-Muslim Dialogue Conference which was held between the 3rd and the 6th of June 2004 in Cairo, Egypt. The Arab Working Group comprises Christians and Muslim who work to strengthen dialogue between Christians and Muslims in the Arab World. The Conference's proceedings revolved around the following topics: Muslim-Christian relations, the Arab world and the West, reform and democracy in the Arab world and evaluation of the Arab Working Group's work including its future plans and visions.



Al-liqa' Center

In Jerusalem, the city sacred to billions of diverse believers, a Palestinian interfaith initiative led to the establishment of "AL-Liqa' Center", a unique place of research, study and dialogue on the religious traditions, institutions and daily life of the people of the Holy Land and the region. The program includes, interfaith dialogue, Palestinian Contextualized Theology in the Holy Land, international activities, and the publication of journals, newsletters, books, and occasional papers. **Patriarch Michael Sabbah, President, Board of Trustees, and Dr. Geries S. Khoury, Director.**



Location

Al-Liqa' Center's Headquarters are located south of Jerusalem on the left side of the main Jerusalem-Bethlehem road just at the entrance to Bethlehem.