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By:
Kholoud Al Ajarma, MedYWat Member, Palestine
Ghadeer Arafeh, MedYWat Member, Palestine
Faisal Aziz, MedYWat Member, Morocco
Lamiss Qdemat, MedYWat Member, Palestine

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K. Ajarma¹, F. Aziz², G. Arafeh³, L. Qdemat⁴

¹ University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands/Palestine  
² University Cadi Ayyad, Morocco  
³ Birzeit University, Palestine  
⁴ Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Palestine  
kajarma@gmail.com, faissalaziz@gmail.com, ghadir.arafa@hotmail.com, lamis.qudaimat@gmail.com

Abstract

The present study analyses the problems and prospects of the Palestinian agricultural and water sector (in the West Bank) and their effect on human migration due to the construction of the Wall.¹ The study highlights the impact of the Wall on access to farmland and water resources necessary for both agriculture and human consumption. Taking three locations in the cities of Jenin, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem, the study surveys the effects of the wall on local residents’ agriculture, access to land and water, and their effect on human migration. The effects of the construction of the Wall according to the findings of the study include: a) loss of agricultural land and water resources; b) movement restrictions and inaccessibility of available land and water; and c) human migration caused by lack of access to land and water and in search for employment. The paper looks into the future impact of the Wall on migration in the area and how migration affects the humanitarian aspect of the lives of affected people. In the last section, the study offers some possible solutions to deal with the problem of non-equitable access to land and water to tackle human migration.

Keywords: The Wall, water resources, migration, West Bank, agriculture, Palestine.

1. Introduction

Palestinian agriculture is constrained by available land and water both of which are major concerns for Palestinians in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Since Palestinian agriculture is a major potential user of land and water, it is important to establish its needs for these resources. The construction of the Wall in the West Bank affects directly and indirectly the Palestinian water resources, both surface and groundwater resources in the West Bank. Over the past fifteen years, the Wall has destroyed a large amount of Palestinian farmland and usurped water supplies, including the biggest aquifer in the West Bank. Today, with its construction, the Wall cuts across

¹In popular discourse, the Israeli Separation Wall is referred to as “Apartheid Wall” by Palestinians. For ease of exposition, that term ‘Wall’ is adopted for the remainder of this study.
roads and water networks for Palestinians and forms a barrier between Palestinians on each side and their agricultural lands, water wells, urban markets, and public services and thus forcing groups of Palestinians to move from places where they have lived and worked for years in search for better access to water, land, and work opportunities. More than eighty Palestinian villages and communities (hundreds of thousands of Palestinians) are affected by the Wall and are being isolated from their land and water (ARIJ 2015).

The study surveys the effects of the wall on local residents’ agriculture, access to land and water, and their effect on human migration by studying the impact of the Wall in three specific areas in the cities of Jenin, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The main effects being analyzed here include: a) loss of agricultural land and water resources; b) movement restrictions and inaccessibility to available land and water; and c) human migration caused by lack of access to land and water and in search for employment.

This paper continues as follows: first, we will offer a brief background to water issues, land and agriculture in Palestine followed by introduction to the Wall and its effects on Palestinians. Then, the methodology will be discussed before analyzing the effects of the Wall on the three case studies: Anin village near Jenin, Beit Anan near Jerusalem and Nahhalin in Bethlehem. The study further looks into the future impact of the Wall on migration in the area and how migration affects the humanitarian aspect of the lives of affected people. In the last section of this paper, the research team offers some possible solutions to deal with the problem of non-equitable access to land and water to tackle human migration.

2. Background to the Study: Water Rights in Palestine and the Wall

Following the 1967 occupation of the West Bank, Israel took control of West Bank’s water resources including the West Bank’s mountain aquifer and the Sea of Galilee which provide Israel with about 60% of its fresh water. The control of water resources was transferred to the area military commander and unlicensed construction of water infrastructure was forbidden. In 1982, Mekorot, Israel’s national water company took control of water resources management. With exclusive control over Palestinian water rights, Israel also controlled access to water from the Jordan river, the most important surface water resource in the region (World Bank, 2009). Further, Israel, and Israeli settlements controlled access to the mountain aquifer taking about 80% of the aquifer's flow, leaving the Palestinians with 20%. The rain which replenishes the aquifer may fall on Palestinian areas, but the water does flow down into the aquifer controlled mainly by Israel. For local Palestinians, water politics are seen as part of a greater injustice of the Israeli occupation. Palestinians are prevented from using their own water resources by military power, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to buy water from their occupiers at inflated prices.

Furthermore, Israel allocates to its citizens, including those living in settlements in the West Bank – which are deemed illegal under international law - between three and five times more
water than the Palestinians. This, for Palestinians, is causing great damage to the local economy based highly on agriculture (Roy 2004).

In summer 2002, the Israeli government began the implementation of a plan of construction of the Wall – a complex series of walls, barriers, trenches, and fences – that cut into the West Bank (PCBS, 2008). Depending upon location, sections of the Wall, comprise meters-deep trenches on either side; a dirt paths “to which access is forbidden” electronic warning or “smart” fences; concrete barriers topped with barbed wire; concrete walls rising as high as eight meters; two-lane military patrolled roads; and fortified guard towers placed at regular intervals. On each side of the Wall, there are “no-go” areas of various widths, confiscating lands of Palestinian farmers and controlling their access at various levels, (Map 1).

The construction of the Wall is negatively impacting the local economies of Palestinians, farmers especially. The Wall cuts off communities from their primary income streams both within the West Bank and Israel. In addition, the Wall restricts the rights of movement for Palestinians and divides Palestinian communities from other Palestinian communities causing social difficulties. The Wall causes also exacerbat es health and sanitation problems in many Palestinian areas (ARIJ 2015).

![Map 1: “West Bank Wall” outlines](image)

Most significantly, what was initially claimed as the first phase of the Wall’s alignment does not coincide with the Green Line separating the West Bank from Israel. In some locales, the Wall is located as much as six kilometers inside the West Bank. As a result, the Wall encloses on its internal side, many Israeli settlements – and Palestinian villages. These communities are being physically separated from the rest of the West Bank by the Wall and from the rest of their lands and communities.

As far as this study is concerned, the construction of the Wall has caused much damage to Palestinian agricultural land and access to water resources. Examples of such damage include the destruction of some tens of thousands of olive groves and other fruit trees, hundreds of dunums of irrigated land (including greenhouses), water networks and agricultural roads. In addition, a total of 238,350 dunums of land (238.3 sq km) are being isolated between the Green Line and the Wall. Most of the isolated land is cultivated, predominantly with olive trees and field crops (Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees, 2002). Many Palestinian landowners report having
been denied access to land traversed by the leveled alignment on which the Wall was built; others are only allowed to cross by foot or donkey cart – making it difficult to work agricultural land or to transport harvested produce to market (Lautze and Kirshen, 2009).

The land on which the Wall is constructed sits over some of the best well-fields in the West Bank. The land in this area (especially the central and northern West Bank) is fertile, providing for intense farming made possible by access to water for irrigation. Israeli authorities claim that the construction of the Wall itself does not impact the overall water allocation between Israelis and Palestinians (which has been agreed upon under the Interim Agreement of September 28, 1995). However, the Wall’s construction is seriously affecting local access to water and could have longer-term implications on water use (OCHA, 2003). Water access problems already observed by Palestinian are likely to worsen in the future and will result in a considerable de facto reduction in the availability of irrigation water by West Bank Palestinians.

The full extent of the Wall’s impact on water management in the West Bank cannot be ascertained as the effects of the existence of the Wall are constant and continue to affect the livelihoods of local communities. Therefore, this study is crucial in assessing the current impact of the wall on water management and how (in the locations included in the study) it causes the forced movement of people in search for water resources. This hypothesis is expected when a significant structure (the Wall in our case) cuts across established irrigation networks and water lines, causing considerable disruption to the communities involved. Therefore, unless specific mitigating measures are provided for, more communities will continue to suffer from lack of water and more human movement might be caused by the ongoing Israeli policies including the Wall (ARIJ 2015).

2. The Wall and its environmental consequences

The literature reviewed on the subject of the Wall and its impact on human migration due to the annihilation of water resources is almost non-existent. There are no statistical data indicating the percentage of farmers who have been displaced due to the construction of the Wall nor on the long-term effects of the allocation of water resources. Some literature, however, discusses the destructive impact of the wall on agricultural lands, farmers and land confiscation. In 2004, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued an Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of the Wall stating that the vast majority of the Wall’s route is located within the West Bank; it separates Palestinian communities and farming land from the rest of the West Bank, and contributes to the fragmentation of the Palestinians land (United Nations, 2016).

In 2004, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, published a study on the demographic and social consequences of the Wall which was the last official Palestinian study on the subject (not to mention studies conducted by human rights organizations and INGOs). The mentioned report highlighted a number of impacts of the Wall on the well-being of the Palestinian population, particularly loss of land, jobs, and income, in addition to serious restrictions on
movement and social relations suffering. According to the report, the Wall led to reduced access to services and negatively impacted the educational experience of Palestinians. What the report did not measure (or it was too early to measure) was the effects of the Wall on migration, gender roles, and access to water resources.

Due to the construction of the Wall, many Palestinians have found themselves caged between the Wall and the Green Line, in an area called "seam zone", "closed area" or "buffer zone". According to the Israeli seam zone authority, the "closed area" is intended to enable command and control through the usage of observation systems as well as the provision of space for the pursuit of suspects.

The seam zone – where some 60,000 Palestinian live- stretches over some of the most fertile lands in the West Bank. According to OCHA, and as of July 2013, the Seam Zone is where tens of thousands of West Bank Palestinians live in 42 villages and towns (some 23,000 people) (OCHA, 2013). Palestinians residing in the area of the Seam Zone, ‘require special permits to continue living in their own homes. There are around 150 Palestinian communities that have parts of its lands isolated by the Wall and require ‘visitors’ permits or ‘prior coordination’ to access their lands.

The Wall separates Palestinians that live in the “closed area” from the rest of the West Bank land and people. Family ties have been disturbed, farmers separated from their families, children from their schools and movement has become more difficult. Palestinians residing in the closed area face an uncertain future in terms of their personal and land status and can be considered to live in a coercive environment, heightening the risk of forcible transfer.

In many Palestinian areas, farmers lost access to their lands or had conditional access through designated gates. During the 2016 olive harvest, for example, many farmers could not get access to their land to harvest their trees. The limited access to the land meant that essential year-round agricultural activities such as ploughing, pruning, fertilizing, and pest and weed management had to be stopped. As a result, there was an adverse impact on productivity and value of agriculture in the affected areas. Data collected by OCHA in the northern West Bank show that the yield of olive trees in the areas affected by the Wall has reduced by approximately 65 percent in comparison with equivalent trees in areas accessible all year round (Humanitarian Bulletin, 2014).

In this research, we build on existing literature, to find how the Wall affects human displacement and migration in three areas in the West Bank. In the next section, the research team describes the research methodology.

3. Methodology
The aim of this research is to diagnose the impacts of the Wall on the water resources and those on human migration. This means how Palestinian loss of their sources of water - which have been used for generations for different purposes- is forcing the people to move from the areas where they live to have better water access all of which has been caused by the construction of the Wall.

The study methodology combines standard data gathering and analysis techniques of environmental sector work and of the updated environmental and social impact analysis, designed to contextualize and deepen the understanding of the effects of the Wall on access to water and human mobility in the studied areas. For the purpose of this study, the research team visited three areas in Jenin, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem. A multi-disciplinary team of four researchers combining an environmental engineer, two water scientists, and an anthropologist with international and local expertise on water resource management, water supply, and sanitation, irrigation, and migration, conflict transformation worked on data gathering and analysis engaging local communities in the process.

The research team visited Anin village (Jenin), the town of Beit Anan (Jerusalem) and Nahhalin (Bethlehem) and conducted extensive field visits to the three areas to provide enough data about the effects of the Wall on local communities and human mobility due to restrictions of movement and water shortage. Interviews with local officials, well owners, and operators, irrigating farmers, and community residents were conducted and a total of 100 families were surveyed in the three locations. In Anin, the focus was mainly on farmers (both male and female) and local officials. In Beit Anan, the focus was on youth (ages 20-35) and farmers and in Nahhalin the focus was on farmer’s experiences and local solutions to water shortage and sanitation problems caused by the Wall and neighboring settlements.

The rationale for the choice of the three locations is based on the need to understand human migration (and displacement) in these areas in relation to water due to their proximity to the Wall. In Jenin, for example, primary studies showed that some local communities had to change their place of residence because of cuts in the networks (caused by the Wall). Jerusalem is largely affected by displacement attempts and migration is a problem that escalated after the construction of the Wall according to local residents. Further, in Bethlehem, farmers in Nahhalin village, as one example, suffer from sanitation water (from nearby Israeli settlements) mixing into their drinking and irrigation water resources. Therefore, by focusing our study on these three areas, we hope to provide a comprehensive understanding of the human migration caused by not only the Wall but its effect on access to water.

4. Case Studies

4.1 Anin Village, Jenin
Anin village is located 17 km to the north-west of the city of Jenin. The name of the Anin village means "springs" of water. The village is famous for olive trees and water springs. There are eight fresh and permanent springs in the village: Ain al-Zaytouna, Ain al-Kharouba, Ein Fadia, Ain al-Duyuk, Ain Qamar, Ain Zureiq, Ain al-Nabaa, and Ein al-Safra. The village has two modern olive presses. The construction of the Wall in 2003 led to the separation of the village from the town of Umm al-Fahm, which had a negative impact on the economy of the village, which was the main crossing point for the neighboring villages.

During this study, the village of Anin was visited and focus groups were conducted with 20 families including male and female farmers. The farmers were asked about their access to their land and water resources in addition to the Wall’s effect on economic and social life. The analysis of the focus groups showed that the farmers stressed the following problems:

A. Access to land and agriculture:
   - A significant portion of the village’s agricultural land has been cut off from access, which meant losing the villagers’ major source of income.
   - Anin village lost 12,500 dunums of land upon the construction of the Wall including fertile agricultural land and olive fields.
   - Some farmers are granted temporary permits to enter their isolated agricultural land two days a week, Monday and Thursday from 3 pm to 4 pm, in order to take care of their trees and crops during the olive harvest. However, this period is not sufficient, which led to the fall in the production of olive oil from 20,000 tanks per year to 3000 tanks. According to the local population, around two-thirds of agricultural productivity of the villagers was cut off by the Wall.

B. Water resources:
   - The wall has directly affected existing water springs and most of them have been permanently disrupted.
   - Villagers have been forced to purchase larger amounts of water through Mekorot due to contamination of village’s water springs which adds to the financial stress on the population.
   - The Wall directly affected the water springs in the village due to reduced water pressure and limited access to the source of the springs.
   - Wells and groundwater resources were lost behind the Wall.

C. Social and humanitarian aspect:
   - The Wall deprived farmers of their lands which meant they had to find alternative employment opportunities.
   - Farmers, who depended entirely on agriculture, were forced to change their profession and move away from their families to work in remote places.
   - Most farmers who looked for employment in Israeli areas see their families once a week and have to find places to stay in Israeli areas where they work.
The Wall affected gender roles in the village due to the greater responsibilities of women due to their husbands’ absence most days of the week.

Many young people left the village and started working in Israeli areas.

4.2 The town of Beit Anan / Governorate of Jerusalem

The town of Beit Anan is located within the Jerusalem governorate to the north-west, 14 km from the city of Jerusalem and has a population of about 5,300 people, with a land area of 12,759 dunums. Most of the people of the town were working in agriculture and raising sheep. After the construction of the wall, the situation has worsened in all aspects of life such as health, psychology, and economy. These factors affected the lifestyle of citizens directly.

The Wall was constructed in the town at the beginning of 2005 (map no. 1). The areas confiscated by the Wall construction reached more than 1,600 dunums, which ranges from 50 to 200 meters with 4,500 meters length. An area of approximately 1,451 dunums has been isolated behind the Wall. In addition, 700 dunums of the isolated land were used as public pastures and grain cultivation. Because of the loss of pastureland, the number of livestock and herders decreased, and most cattle farmers were forced to sell their sheep because of the confiscation of pastures.

The effects of the Wall:
Three focus groups were conducted among the people of the village of Beit Anan to assess the impact of the Wall. The ages of those who attended the focus groups ranged from 20 to 35 years old. The analysis showed the following effects of the Wall on agriculture, water, and human movement.

A. Land and agriculture:
- Destruction of large areas of agricultural land on which the Wall was built.
- Dryness and death of most fruit trees behind the Wall due to farmers’ inability to reach the land and water their trees.
- The decline of natural grazing areas for livestock, a major source of income for the local population.
• Denial of the local community to benefit from the sources of plants for biodiversity, as the treatment of herbs, wild and natural plants are common among the population.
• Deprivation of beekeepers from the practice of this profession as they cannot reach areas of plant diversity needed for bees.

B. Water and environment:
• The Wall led to the inability to expel sewage to places far from the population centers, which in turn spread infectious diseases, as well as affecting the remaining agricultural lands, where the wastewater is discharged.
• The construction of the Wall led to the neglect of agricultural land and this led to damage to the features of the environment, forest and plant life.
• Local people were denied access to water resources and natural springs available in the vicinity of the Wall.
• Many farmers suffered limited access to water and therefore had to change the types of plants they used to grow or stop farming.

C. Social and humanitarian aspect:
• The social fabric of the town was heavily damaged from the Wall due to the limited access between villages that the wall provides such as the access to the village of Beit Iksa and cities, especially Jerusalem.
• The Wall deprived university students of access to institutes and universities in the city of Jerusalem.
• High unemployment rates among the farmers led to higher rates of poverty in the area.
• Many young people from the town (an estimate of 300 people) migrated internationally (mainly to the USA) due to unemployment in the farming sector.
• Many young people from town (as was indicated among each of the focus groups) moved locally into Israeli areas to search for job opportunities.

4.3 Nahhalin, Bethlehem

Nahhalin is located southeast of Bethlehem inside an enclave in the Gush Etzion settlement bloc, surrounded by the Israeli settlements of Gvaot, Rosh Tzurim, Neve Daniel and BetarIllit. Unlike the two previous cases in which the Wall have already been constructed, in Nahhalin the Wall have not been completely constructed yet. However, the Israeli settlements surrounding the village largely affect villagers’ access to land and water. The settlements were established on lands originally owned by Palestinians and continued to expand throughout the years on the lands of Nahhalin and neighboring villages (Battir, Husan, Wadi Fukin, Al Walaja).

Being surrounded by Israeli settlements, Palestinians from Nahhalin face major issues including loss of agricultural land, grazing land and water pollution of the two water springs in
The residents of Nahhalin purchase water from the Israeli Mekorot company as the main source of drinking water provided through the West Bank Water Department (WBWD).

The citizens of the village of Nahhalin are denied access to many services that exist only in city centers, such as police, fire stations, ambulance, hospitals, health centers, and universities, etc. Although the Wall is not yet completed in Nahhalin village, the ‘updated Wall route’ of 2005 suggested separating Nahhalin (along with the villages of Battir, Husan, and Wadi Fukin) in one fully closed section of the Wall with a single controlled exit to Bethlehem area.

The research team visited two local NGOs in the village and spoke to the village council. The analysis showed the following problems,

A. Access to land and agriculture:
- A significant portion of the village’s agricultural land has been cut off from access due to prohibition of opening new roads.
- Farmers had to guard their lands (sometimes during day and night time) fearing attacks by settlers on trees and farmed land.
- Loss of agriculture in the area of Ain Faris in the village due to the dumping of sewage water from the settlements.
- Settlement growth had affected pastoral areas and fertile grazing lands which have been reduced in size and quality.
- As shepherds can no longer graze their animals in areas taken by or close to the settlements, villagers reported a decrease of up to 95 per cent in livestock numbers and decline in this source of living.
- Farmers put up tents on their lands to help them in guarding their agriculture during winter which were later confiscated by the Israeli army.

B. Water access:
- The residents of Nahhalin could not use the water of the two natural springs (Ain el-Balad and Ain Faris) due to their contamination by sewage water from the neighboring settlements.
- Groundwater is contaminated due to sewage water from the settlements.
- Increased dependency on Israel for water supply.
- The cost of purchasing water through Mekorot, Israel’s national water company, is beyond the financial ability of local citizens when comparing the price of water to the land productivity and financial returns of agriculture.
- A system for wastewater treatment which was developed near the village was forced to stop after confiscation of materials (located in area C).

C. Social and humanitarian aspect:
- The water springs of the village, once a social center for the local residents, are now avoided areas due to their contamination.
All families reported family members suffering from health problems which they considered to be caused by water contamination.

Many people from the village had to look for alternative jobs rather than agriculture and large numbers of youth took jobs in Israeli settlements.

Local residents expressed fear of the upcoming implications of the construction of the Wall.

5. Analysis: Study Findings and Recommendations

It is clear from the above-mentioned data that in the three areas surveyed in this study families and farmers were greatly affected by the construction of the wall. The residents of these areas are largely farmers and therefore the loss of agricultural land has highly affected their livelihoods. In the three areas access to water was also affected.

The research showed that people in the three areas lost some income due to their limited access to land and water resources. Therefore, for farmers who were deprived of their agricultural land, many had to migrate (locally in most cases or internationally in the case of a younger population) in search for better employment and income opportunities. This meant that many Palestinians had to leave their areas of residence and search for job opportunities in Israeli areas. However, Israel claims that the wall is a security fence or barrier. But the course of the wall, as well as its effect on the Palestinians who moved into Israeli areas to find jobs (due to the loss of their lands or land-related income), belies that claim. The wall separates villages from their land and water wells, and isolated villages from each other.

The results of the study show that the migrating Palestinians –due to the Wall- are mostly males who leave behind their entire families. The movement of males result in a change in traditional gender roles within the affected families. In many cases, it was found that the heads of households are now women as the men stay (most days of the week) inside Israeli areas where they work due to their inability (physically and financially) to return to their houses every day.

The findings of this study show the negative effects of not only of the Wall but also of settlements and Israeli policies on Palestinian livelihood especially on farmers’ access to land and water resources. In the three locations discussed in this paper, many Palestinians had to move (temporarily or permanently) in order to secure better livelihoods for their families. Although in the three localities, migration was not seen on large scale, the surveyed people stressed a fear of the uncertainty of their lives. If the situation continues to deteriorate, and if limited access to water resources continues, many of those families might have to relocate in the future.

As a result of its measures and construction of the Wall, Israel must uphold its obligations as the occupying power by putting an immediate end to its Wall construction and the restrictions it
imposes on the Palestinians’ access to land and water. In particular, the research team is calling for the following actions:

- As a priority to permit the Palestinians to access and extract an equitable share of water from the shared aquifers and surface water resources being affected by the Wall.
- Permit the construction of water and sanitation infrastructure sufficient to ensure Palestinians’ physical access to sufficient, safe, and regular water, and to prevent damage to water resources.
- Allow Palestinians to drill new wells and rehabilitate or upgrade existing wells and to access springs throughout the areas affected by the Wall.
- Put an immediate end to the destruction of water harvesting and storage cisterns, spring canals, and other water facilities.
- Take concrete measures to put an end to the discharge of sewage and other wastewater from Israeli settlements in Palestinian areas.
- Halt the construction of the Wall and other barriers or other permanent structures that restrict or deny access to the Palestinians to water, land and other resources.

**Conclusion**

This study was an attempt to study and analyze the effects of the Wall on water access and human migration in the Palestinian areas. For the purpose of the study, three Palestinian areas were surveyed, Anin village near Jenin, the town of Beit Anan in Jerusalem, and Nahhalin near Bethlehem. The study was conducted during the months of December 2018 and January 2019.

Through this study, the research team found many negative effects caused by the construction of the Wall (in addition to Israeli settlements and policies) on agriculture and access to land and water resources in Palestinian areas. The Wall strips farmers of their farms, thereby depriving them of a livelihood. By so doing, it impoverishes entire communities. Environmental hazards caused by the process of creating the wall are additional pressures on already stressed communities. Lack of water access made Palestinians in the studied areas dependent on Israel for water supply, for which they have to pay more than they can afford. Loss of land also means that towns and villages cannot experience normal growth and expansion.

Due to the Wall’s severe impact on water access, use, and allocation for communities located close to the Wall’s path, many Palestinians had to relocate in order to find access to jobs that they did not need in the past when they had access to their lands and mostly worked in agriculture. If the Israeli measures, including the Wall, continue to deny Palestinians access to their lands and water resources, there is an increased likelihood for migration among Palestinians in the future.

This study has surveyed three affected communities by the Wall in the Palestinian areas. However, the Wall affects hundreds of villages and communities all through the West Bank.
Therefore, the research team recommends a larger study that scrutinizes in greater depth the effects of the Wall on water and migration among the Palestinian communities, something that is beyond the scope and timeframe available for this study.

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