

You have been commissioned to make a five minute TV report on Bil'in. On these pages you will find information you can use for your interviews. There are quotes here but you can make up your own using what you know or imagine what people might say.



Resident of Bil'in – Waheed Suleiman Yassin

Waheed Suleiman Yassin lives in a house just 20 metres from the wall. Like many in the village, for him the barrier has meant that most of his farmland, with its rows of olive and fig trees, is now out of bounds.

“ Weapons were forbidden from the start. People decided we should take a prominent role with a peaceful movement because we knew that with an armed struggle we were not capable of taking back one inch of land. If we had fired one bullet, the Israeli army would have found an excuse to kill the whole village ”

“ Many demonstrations take place near my house. Lots of tear gas and stun grenades have been fired into my yard, and live ammunition and rubber bullets fired at demonstrators have hit the house. On numerous occasions, my family choked from the tear gas that was fired at the demonstrators. My flock, too, has been hit by army gunfire and the soldiers destroyed the potato, cauliflower, garlic, onions and beans that I planted ”



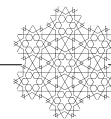
Taking photos – Ibrahim and Rani Bornat

Ibrahim Bornat, a 24-year-old from Bil'in, has held an art exhibition called *From the Scent of Bil'in's Wall*. Ibrahim's bullet collection is the main material he uses for his art. His art is a way of resisting. He says, "eight years ago, at the start of this intifada (uprising against the Israeli occupation), I was shot in the leg and shoulder by rubber coated bullets and decided to keep the two bullets as a sort of souvenir." He has since been injured 78 times.

Ibrahim's 28-year-old brother Rani has also been injured. He was shot in the neck with a kind of bullet that expands in the body once it penetrates the skin, and which is internationally banned. Now he can only move his left arm and head. Rani wanted to continue his struggle against the Israeli occupation and so trained himself as a photographer. The only picture that Ibrahim displays which is not taken by his brother is a picture of him going through a line of soldiers on his wheelchair.

“ Every bullet fired against a Palestinian, or someone standing on the side of Palestinians' struggle for freedom, is a bullet fired against me ”

“ We Palestinians can create life out of their instruments of death ”



Blindfolded Palestinian shot in the foot – captured on film by teenage girl

In Nil'in, a village near to Bil'in and also affected by the Wall, demonstrations started in May 2008. The army placed the village under curfew for several days meaning ambulances could not evacuate the wounded and food and medicine supplies were running low. Ashraf Abu-Rahma, a 27 year old from Bil'in was with other activists trying to reach Nil'in with emergency supplies. On 7 July Ashraf was stopped by soldiers. A young Palestinian girl filmed some of what happened from her house in. Her video shows Ashraf handcuffed, blindfolded and then shot in the foot from 1.5 metres away by a soldier with a rubber-coated steel bullet. Several security forces can be seen including a lieutenant colonel who held the Palestinian's arm while the soldier fired.



The girl sent the tape to B'Tselem, an Israeli human rights organisation, who released it and a military inquiry was promised. The punishment of the soldiers responsible has been criticised for being too soft.

Army spokespeople

Israeli soldiers do not talk to the media (except on very rare occasions). Army spokespeople usually say that demonstrators hurl rocks at the soldiers and the soldiers use approved and proportionate methods to disperse the crowd and that they do their best to avoid injuring civilians in any way. (Civilians just means ordinary non-military people.)

Here are two quotes taken from the Ministry of Defence's pages about the Wall – which they call a security fence.

“ Israel's government realises that the construction of the Security Fence can introduce hardship into the lives of innocent Palestinians and regrets those hardships. All attempts to minimise such problems have been and will continue to be made. ”

“ Israel has tried to avoid including Palestinians villages on the Israeli side of the fence. Owners of the property used for the fence are offered rent for the use of their land and for the loss of crops. If they are not satisfied with the location of the fence or the compensation they are offered, property owners have full and speedy recourse in a court of law. ”

What's in a name?

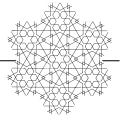


There are disagreements about what to call the construction. Each word that is used creates a certain image of what the construction is and what its effects will be – so none is neutral and each one is controversial.

The official Israeli line is to call it a **fence** or **security fence** – suggesting the main reason for building it is Israeli security. Critics of this view call it a **wall** or sometimes **barrier**. Some add a word, such as **apartheid wall** (apartheid was the name of the system in South Africa that separated blacks from whites and oppressed black people) or they call it a **separation wall**. The International Court of Justice used the term 'wall'.



For your report, think about what word you will use and think about why.



Israeli supporters

One Israeli group that has played a significant role in Bil'in's struggle is called *Anarchists Against the Wall*. Here is what it says on their website

“ It is the duty of Israeli citizens to resist immoral policies and actions carried out in our name. We believe that it is possible to do more than demonstrate inside Israel or participate in humanitarian relief actions. Israeli apartheid and occupation isn't going to end by itself - it will end when it becomes ungovernable and unmanageable. It is time to physically oppose the bulldozers, the army and the occupation. ”

Israeli Friends of Bil'in, a group composed of Israeli individuals and organisations, said in a petition:

“ If the non-violent struggle in Bil'in fails, and the barrier remains in its current route, the message will be that non-violent popular struggle is ineffective in the occupied territories, and that the only mode of opposing the 40-year long Israeli occupation is a violent one. ”

Quotes from an Israeli activist

“ I choose to do it because I see it as my moral obligation. The occupation in general, and this Wall specifically is being constructed in my name without me wanting it. It is being constructed in my name even though I think it's a horrible crime, and I see it as my obligation to try and stop it, to do everything I can do in order to stop it, and to say that the struggle for freedom, wherever it is, is my struggle as well, and until there will be freedom for Palestinians as well, there will be no freedom for anyone. ”

“ I'm sure that the amount of violence that the Israeli army is illegally using is deterring some people from protesting. I don't think it will deter me in the future, but we have to remember that I am under much less risk as I am an Israeli and this is an apartheid state. When I get shot in the head, and I get wounded relatively lightly - I have no permanent damage - this gets coverage in the papers and the electronic media. When a Palestinian just a few days ago, a youth from the village of Saffa, near Bil'in where I was shot, was shot was shot with a rubber bullet in his eye causing him to lose his eye, there was no coverage at all. ”

“ I think that Israel better understand that if it will break the popular and essentially nonviolent resistance, it will only encourage a more violent and brutal resistance, because you cannot expect people to just quietly accept their lives being taken away from them. ”

“ My reception has always been very warm and very welcoming by the Palestinian side. It has never been a problem for them that I am an Israeli. If anything, the opposite. ”

