

## Jalal

### Farming beyond the barrier

Jalal is a farmer in the north of the West Bank. His grandfather owned 18.5 acres of land, which Jalal inherited with his siblings and cousins. Here they grow many vegetables, including cucumbers, aubergines and courgettes. The farm used to provide a good income and allowed Jalal's family to live a fairly comfortable life in their small village.



Jalal heading through the agricultural gate to his land on the other side. Photo: EAPPI/EA Hannah

In 2002, however, following the Second Intifada, the Israeli government decided to build a barrier through Jalal's farm. Jalal's land is within the 1949 Armistice line that marks the division between Israel and Palestine, known as the Green Line. Under international law, Jalal's land is therefore Palestinian land. But the Israeli government built the barrier a few kilometres into the Palestinian side where Jalal lives. This land between the barrier and the Green Line has become known as the Seam Zone.

Jalal can still access five acres on the side of the barrier where his village is, but in order to access the remaining 13.5 acres he has to get a special permit to enter through an agricultural gate, also built on his land. The gate is only open three times a day: 6.15–6.45am, 11.30–11.40am and 3.00–3.40pm. By 3.40pm all farmers must be back through the gate or they risk losing their permits altogether for spending the night in Israel. The opening times of the gate are decided by the Israeli government, without consultation with the farmers.



The permits are issued by the Israeli government. When the barrier was first built, every person in the village was automatically issued with a permit to enter the land. But every year since it has got more difficult for Jalal and his workers to pass.



Jalal on the phone to the permit office after being told he could not take small plants onto his farm. Photo: EAPPI/EA Hannah

If he wants to take small plants through the gate, or water pipes for irrigation, or plastic to cover his greenhouses, he must also ask for permission. Sometimes, even when Jalal has permission, the soldiers on the gate still tell him he is not allowed.

Jalal's story is not unique. According to UN OCHA, 85 per cent of the separation barrier is inside the 1948 Green Line. This means that large areas of Palestinian land are caught on the wrong side of the barrier.