

**With the help of the Bush administration and a naive press, Israel has succeeded in redirecting the world attention to a false and illusory election and continue its plans to gradually swallow the whole of the occupied territories. A road is the best example of the difference between realities in occupied Palestine and the rhetoric that passes for international diplomacy.**

# Road No 60

Road No 60 represents one of the important new strategies designed to link these settlements to pre-1967 Israel. The goal is to make it much easier and faster to travel between the New Israeli settlements and Israeli cities across the "Green Line".

The basic plan behind Road No 60 and similar projects in other parts of occupied Palestine is to keep the Palestinian areas undeveloped, gradually take more and more Palestinian land using a variety of deceptive ruses, and as a consequence to make a truly independent Palestinian state all but impossible in reality, whatever the theory of political debates.

Planning for Road No 60 began before the Intifada but the massive project itself has moved forward with a new boldness and

urgency in the face of the challenge the Intifada represents to Israeli designs.

At present, Israeli settlers and businessmen travelling between occupied Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron drive south from occupied Jerusalem on a normal two-lane road that takes them past Tantur, then past the Bethlehem-Beit Jala interchange—site of the West Bank's only Stop Light, now disconnected as Israelis are too fearful to stop when it use to turn Red—then past the high barbed wire fence of Deheisha refugee camp and eventually to Hebron.

When Road No 60 is completed, a modern four-lane expressway will extend from the suburbs of occupied Jerusalem all the way to Hebron connecting Jewish settlements as it goes.

The road will begin with a major bridge connecting the massive Gilo settlement to Beit Jala, then continue through a special tunnel avoiding Arab areas, and end in Hebron where new Jewish housing has just been announced in the very middle of the city.

In an unprecedented statement trying to block this Israeli scheme, residents of Beit Jala recently issued a courageous appeal to "Local and International Public Opinion."

"We appeal to you to intervene with the Israeli authorities to cancel and stop constructing this road," the statement concludes. "The implementation of the scheme will cause irreparable damage. Now it is the high time for the international community to be more drastic in

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approaching the illegal acts of the Israeli authorities in the occupied land."

Bribes and pressures with local officials have been used by the Israelis to put a veneer of legality on their actions and plans. But of course what Israel is doing is not only contrary to international law but specifically designed to prevent the kind of peaceful settlement—the mutual recognition, two state solution—that much of the world is talking about and expecting.

Road No 60 is a very expensive undertaking. The bridge and the tunnel are unique in this part of the world. And what it proves is that the Israelis remain disingenuous when it comes to the very idea of reaching any kind of acceptable political compromise with the Palestinians;

and that the Americans are just as disingenuous with their professed intentions to stop the Israelis from moving ahead to absorb all of the territory west of the Jordan River.

According to the appeal from the residents of the area where the bridge and tunnel are now beginning to be build, "this scheme is considered in itself a political plan to dismember the lands of Beit Jala".

Actually, the scheme is much more. It's nothing less than a stepped-up effort to reconfigure the area of the West Bank and to bind it irrevocably to Israel. And the money to make it all possible continues to flow from the United States government and world Jewry—regardless of occasional statements to the contrary.