

Non-development of infrastructure and services in Area C

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Road demolished by the civilin administration in the village of al-'Aqaba in the Jordan Valley. Photo: be Anne Paq/Activestills.org 7 April 2011

The Civil Administration is responsible for developing infrastructure throughout [Area C](#), including roads, waste treatment facilities and water facilities, for the benefit of all residents of the West Bank. In addition, because the Civil Administration has full authority over planning and construction in Area C, it is also responsible for granting construction permits for public buildings and infrastructure facilities in villages in this area, as well as for hooking up these villages to infrastructure.

According to the Civil Administration, “the development of medical services and proper access to medical treatment for all, along with the establishment of medical clinics and facilities for Area C residents are a top priority for the Health Liaison Office at the Civil Administration”. Nevertheless, this statement of intent is not reflected on the ground. Palestinian development in all of Area C is rarely initiated by or invested in by the Civil Administration, and in the case of villages not recognized by the Civil Administration – forming the vast majority of Area C villages – the Civil Administration does not grant construction permits, not even for medical clinics or schools, and even issues demolition orders against institutions built without a permit.



Solar panels set up by Comet-ME in Mantiqat She'b al-Baten in the South Hebron Hills. In 2012 the Civil Administration issued demolition orders for solar panels in this and many other villages. Photo: Tomer Applebaum, December 2011

The Civil Administration approves hooking up houses to water and power almost only in villages for which it has approved a master plan. Because of this policy, more than 48,000 Palestinians living in Area C are [not connected to any water supply network](#). Residents of these communities are dependent on rainwater, which they collect in cisterns, and on water purchased from private contractors at a high cost and delivered in tankers. The water consumption of some 42 communities in the southern West Bank is under 60 liters of water per person, per day; herding communities in the northern Jordan Valley consume only about 20 liters per person, per day. This consumption is significantly lower than the 100 liters per person per day recommended by the World Health Organization. As a point of comparison, the average water consumption in Israel is between 100 and 230 liters per person per day.

The Civil Administration has taken measures to disrupt water and power supplies that the residents obtain from alternate sources. From 2009 to 2012, the Civil Administration demolished 90 cisterns, 61 wells and 17 water reservoirs belonging to Palestinians in Area C. In 2012, the Civil Administration issued demolition orders for wind- and solar-powered electric systems erected by the nonprofit Comet-ME in villages in nine villages in the South Hebron Hills (the orders were not implemented). In addition, B'Tselem has documented during summer months instances that the Civil Administration confiscated water containers purchased by residents of the Jordan Valley for drinking and for watering livestock, alleging that the containers are located in firing zones.



Palestinian residents of Khirbet a-Duqaiqah, South Hebron Hills, 19 August 2012. Photo: Nasser Nawaj'ah, B'Tselem.

According to a report by the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), from early 2011 to August 2012 the Civil Administration approved 315 projects in Area C— including paving roads, constructing schools and medical clinics, and laying down infrastructure. The COGAT report provides information regarding 236 of these projects, of which only 19 (8%) are meant for Palestinian villages located entirely within Area C. These 19 projects are designed for the same 13 villages that have master plans approved by the Civil Administration. The remaining projects are meant either for communities all or most of whose land is located in Areas A and B (102 projects), or for the entire population of the West Bank (104 projects – including 58 for cellular communications antennas), or to serve beneficiaries in unspecified locations (11 projects).

In most cases the initiative and the funding for the projects approved by the Civil Administration, as detailed in COGAT's report, came from the international community or the PA. Accordingly, of the 32 road-paving projects recorded in the report as having been approved and implemented in Area C in 2011 and 2012, or approved and currently under implementation, only two were financed by the Civil Administration. The rest were funded by USAID and/or the PA. The Civil Administration did not fund even a single project of the 17 approved during that same period to renovate school buildings or of the six projects to renovate or construct medical clinics. These, too, were all funded by international organizations such as USAID, UNRWA and the Middle East Quartet.

In order to realize their initiatives for Area C, international organizations and the PA must undergo prolonged and wearisome bureaucratic procedures with the Civil Administration. According to the World Bank, the obstacles and delays involved in obtaining approval from the Civil Administration for such projects sometimes lead donors and organizations to give up on their implementation. Therefore, donor financial resources notwithstanding, the level of development in the area is extremely low and the spending on public ventures is minimal. For example, nearly all water-related projects – including drilling wells, transporting water and treating waste water – intended for the entire West Bank population are located in Area C. A number of projects that did obtain approval from the Palestinian Water Committee and the Joint Israeli-Palestinian Water Committee were ultimately, after numerous delays, rejected by the Civil Administration. Sixteen projects for water infrastructure, approved by the Joint Committee more than a year earlier, were still awaiting Civil Administration approval in April 2013.