

Taking control of land and designating areas off-limits to Palestinian use

btselem.org/area_c/taking_over_land



Warning of firing zone posted by the military, the South Hebron Hills. Photo: Oren Ziv, Activestills, 30 Jan. 2013

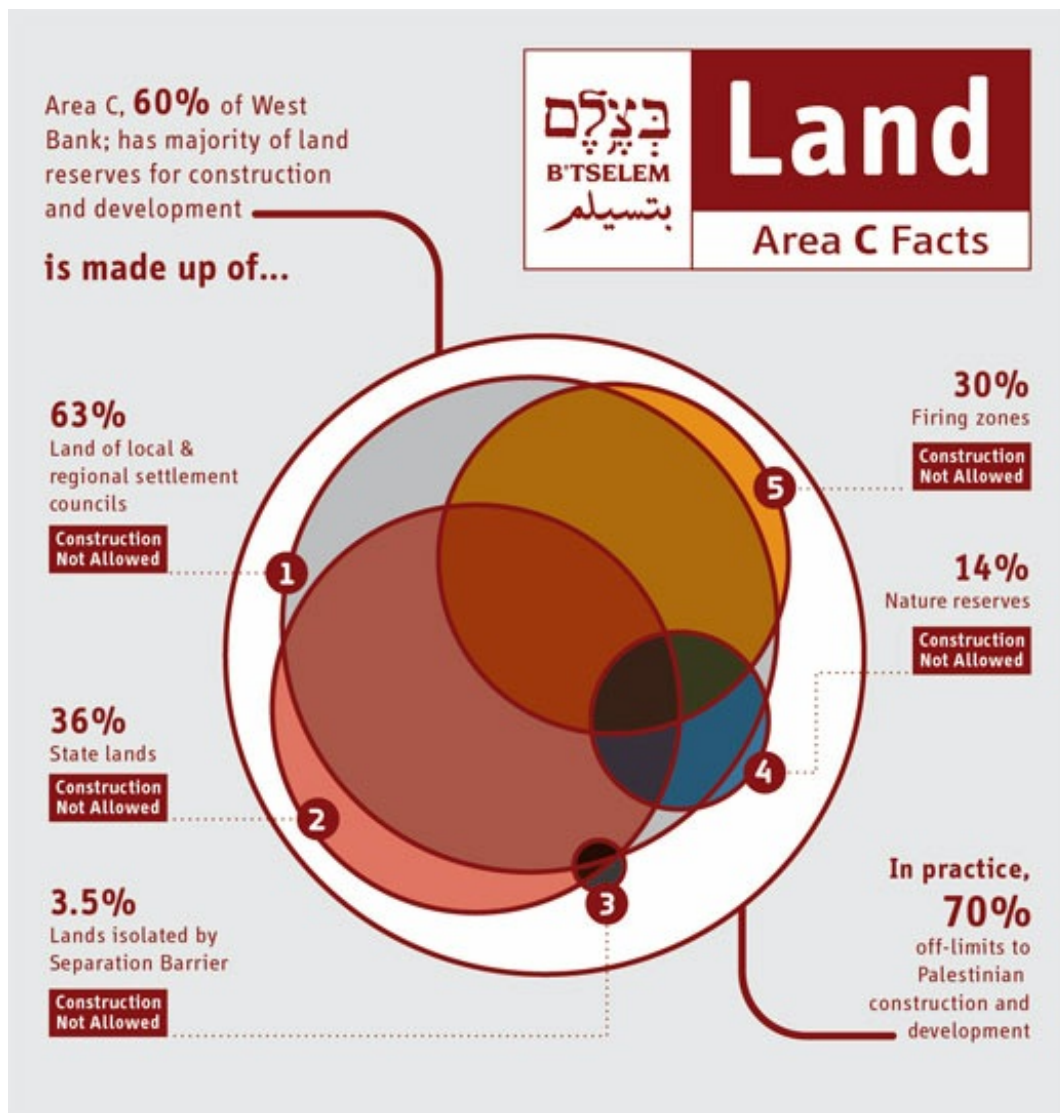
Through a combination of legal, military and administrative means and citing various rationales, Israel prohibits Palestinian construction and development in about 40% of the West Bank - about 70% of [Area C](#), which is under full Israeli control (there is overlap between the following categories). For map click [here](#):

- 63% of Area C lands are under the jurisdiction of the local and regional councils of the settlements and are off limits to Palestinian development. Israel has classified as “state land” 34% of this area. It also classified another 2.5% of Area C as “state land”. Israel virtually prohibits Palestinian construction and development on these lands and designates them almost exclusively for Israeli settlements, the Israeli military and Israeli infrastructure.

Other methods Israel used for appropriating land for use by settlements were requisition for “military needs,” declaration of land as “abandoned property,” and expropriation of land for “public needs.” In addition, Israel has aided its citizens in purchasing land on the “open market.” Simultaneously, settlers independently seized control of private Palestinian land. In almost all cases, Israeli officials refrained from enforcing the law and returning the land to its lawful owners. During the second intifada, Israel even encircled settlements with strips of land off limits to Palestinians. To date, these lands have largely remained inaccessible to their owners. Israel also did nothing to eliminate the phenomenon of settlers fencing in plots of land, on their own unlawful initiative and has retroactively approved such piratical fencing with a variety of means, among them the “special security area” plan.

In late 1993, Israel stopped declaring state lands in the West Bank for a number of years, and in 1997 enacted a regulation “regarding the monitoring and preservation of survey lands, their management and the removal of squatters.” The regulation was designed to examine the status of lands that had neither undergone the process of registration nor had been declared state lands, with a view to keeping them as government property and enabling their use by the state, such as incorporating them into a settlement’s local jurisdiction. Approximately 20% of Area C are classified “survey lands”.

- 30% of Area C land have been designated military firing zones, mostly in the Jordan Valley and some on state land. According to an estimate made by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OCHA), there are 38 Palestinian communities in these areas, with an overall population of approximately 5,000 people.
- 14% of Area C, some which also serve as firing zones, have been declared nature reserves and national parks.
- 3.5% of Area C lands are located between the Separation Barrier – either already built or under construction – and the Green Line, so that Palestinians have no possibility of building there or of developing that land.



Areas off-limits to Palestinian use in Area C

	Area in hectares	Percentage of Area C	Percentage of entire West Bank
Settlements and regional councils	211,666.8	63.50%	36.60%

"State land"	121,846.9	36.40%	21%
Closed military zones	101,714.2	30.50%	17.60%
Nature reserves and national parks	46,466.9	14%	8%
Area closed off by Separation Barrier	11,623.3	3.50%	2%
Total (after decucting for overlap)	234,301.3	70.30%	40.50%
