

June 2020

List of references to the separation policy

The following are references to the separation policy by Israeli politicians, security officials, analysts and commentators, and the state's representatives in legal proceedings, which have been collected by Gisha and organized by type of reference and in chronological order.

The word used to name the doctrine in Hebrew, bidul, means separation but also differentiation between two things, in this case, quite literally, between Gaza and the West Bank, and between the populations in each area and the rights they are afforded under Israel's policy. Both connotations of the term, separation and differentiation, are expressed in the references below. Many of the references have been unofficially translated to English by Gisha, while others are quoted directly from media reports in English.

Politicians

1. Channel 13 News reported that according to unnamed sources involved in the discussions between the Israeli and American administrations on the Peace to Prosperity plan, Prime Minister Netanyahu and his advisors made clear to senior American officials that they "had misgivings" about the United States' suggestion of establishing a passage connecting the West Bank to the Gaza Strip. Analyst Barak Ravid wrote that **"this portion of the plan demonstrates that the Trump Administration sees the Gaza Strip and West Bank as a single territorial unit, which is contrary to the Netanyahu administration's policy of creating a separation between the two areas."** Jason Greenblatt, White House Special Envoy to the Middle East, is paraphrased in the report, as follows: "The American envoy said that the White House did its best to keep political issues out of the economic portion of the peace plan - however, passage between Gaza and the West Bank crossed that line. **The envoy added that the issue of passage was ultimately included in the economic portion of the plan because of the importance that the Palestinians attribute to the connection between Gaza and the West Bank, as well as an understanding that a connection between the two areas would be critical for the success of the economic plan.**" ([16.07.19](#), Hebrew)
2. Jonathan Urich, a spokesperson for the Likud party and an advisor to Netanyahu, responding to questions about the Prime Minister's political program: **"He [Netanyahu] has managed to achieve disconnection between Gaza and the Judea and Samaria Area, effectively crushing the vision of**

a Palestinian state in these two areas. Part of this achievement has to do with the Qatari money that comes in every month for Hamas. He tried to hand over control of Gaza to other countries, but no one would take it. So it's either managing two million people, or funneling in money that isn't ours, but is being monitored, and that's how one creates a divide." (18.04.19, Hebrew)

3. Prime Minister Netanyahu addressing criticism about his decision to allow transfer of money from Qatar to Gaza: "The real alternative is occupation and control of Gaza. There's no one to give it to. I won't give it to Abu Mazen. **The connection between Gaza and Judea and Samaria has been severed. They are two separate entities, and I think that in the long run, that's not a bad thing for the State of Israel. [...] This money has been covered by the Qataris; it has prevented Abu Mazen's plan from materializing, and also cut Gaza off from Judea and Samaria. If anyone thought there would be a Palestinian state here surrounding us on either side – that's not something that's going to happen.**" (04.04.19, Hebrew)

4. In an effort to deflect criticism on Israel's decision to allow the transfer of money from Qatar to Gaza, an unnamed source paraphrased Prime Minister Benjamin saying that: "Whoever is against a Palestinian state should be for transferring the funds to Gaza, **because maintaining a separation between the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza helps prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state.**" (12.03.19)

5. Danny Danon, then-Deputy Defense Minister, responding to a parliamentary question regarding the official status of the separation policy: "Starting in the summer of 2007, following the takeover of the Gaza Strip by terrorist organizations, Israel has been implementing a separation policy between the Gaza Strip and Judea and Samaria. This policy is backed by the decisions of the Government of Israel. According to this policy, there is no restriction on export from Gaza abroad. However, marketing from the Gaza Strip to Judea and Samaria and Israel is only approved in specific instances and for international organizations." (04.02.14)

6. Moshe Ya'alon, then-Defense Minister, responding to a parliamentary question regarding the fact that Israel refused to make use of a high quality scanner donated to the Palestinian Authority by the Government of the Netherlands for screening goods transiting from Gaza to the West Bank or Israel: "Whether goods from Gaza can be shipped to Judea and Samaria is a different question. It has nothing to do with the scanner. **It has to do with a security policy whereby, according to the recommendation of all security agencies, we should not allow merchandise to be transferred to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank for security reasons.**" (18.12.13)

7. Remarks by Avigdor Lieberman, then-Foreign Minister, at the Sderot Conference for Society at Sapir College: "The claim that painful concessions are necessary and that the settlements are an obstacle – that approach is pure fabrication. The people saying this don't want to accept reality. **For example, there was never any territorial or familial connection between Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip.**" (17.11.13)

8. Avigdor Lieberman, then-Foreign Minister: "The ongoing firing [of rockets] bury any chance that there will ever be territorial contiguity between Gaza and Judea and Samaria. **As long as Hamas rules Gaza, there is no chance we will consent to safe passage, or unsafe passage, be it an overhead passage, an underground passage, or any kind of passage.** The Palestinians have sentenced themselves to a rupture which, at this time, looks like it will last for generations." ([12.03.12](#), Hebrew)

Security officials

1. An unnamed military official involved in coordination with the Palestinian Authority: "**The rationale behind the separation policy is to stop Hamas from infiltrating the West Bank. The two ways of preventing Hamas personnel and ideology from entering are not allowing commercial ties or movement of civilians.**" ([14.06.12](#))
2. Eitan Dangot, then-Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), in reference to family visitation rights for Gaza residents imprisoned in Israel: "**Dangot said that the visitation rights were cancelled as part of a government policy to "separate" Gaza from the West Bank in order to pressure Hamas and support the Palestinian Authority.**" ([03.05.12](#))
3. Senior COGAT officials informed Gisha that the ban on marketing goods to the West Bank and Israel is a political decision, which forms part of the separation policy. A COGAT spokesperson acknowledged that decisions regarding sale of goods from Gaza to the West Bank "**are of a political nature, and thus can only be taken by the Prime Minister's Office.**" ([15.02.12](#))
4. Unnamed security officials addressed the directionality of Israel's policy on Palestinians' travel between Gaza and the West Bank: "There has to be a distinction made between the policy on Judea and Samaria and the policy on the Gaza Strip. [...] **With respect to Gaza, we are advancing a policy of separation designed, to put it plainly, to bring Abu Mazen to Gaza instead of Hamas to the West Bank.** Given this policy, it is a problematic to allow passage of Gaza residents to the Judea and Samaria Area." ([08.09.12](#), Hebrew)
5. When asked about the separation policy and its aims, a COGAT spokesperson answered: "...because 'terrorist groups in Gaza' seek 'to relocate the existing terrorist infrastructure to [the West Bank], **Israel has adopted a policy which reduces movement between Gaza and [the West Bank].**" ([07.11.12](#))
6. Unnamed "military sources" were quoted in reference to the resumption of agricultural exports from Gaza to Europe: "They made it clear that at this phase, **there was no intention of permitting sale of goods from Gaza to Israel, as part of the "differentiation from West Bank traders, who are allowed to sell in Israel.**" ([18.11.11](#), Hebrew)
7. Reported remarks by Yuval Diskin, then-Head of the Israel Security Service, during a meeting of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee: "Israel would have a very hard time implementing an agreement, if one is reached, so long as there is no reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah. I can't see the reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah happening. I can't

see a scenario in which the Palestinian Authority returns to Gaza with Hamas' consent, and vice versa, Hamas returning to Judea and Samaria with the Palestinian Authority's consent.

The separation between the Gaza Strip and Judea and Samaria is good for Israel in terms of security. It would be a grave mistake, in terms of security, to reconnect Gaza and Judea and Samaria.

A connection like that would enable building terrorist infrastructure that would harm the State of Israel."

([29.12.09](#), Hebrew)

From the courtroom

1. In response to a petition submitted by Gisha on behalf of a woman and her children against Israel's refusal to allow them to return to the West Bank, despite the fact that they were registered as West Bank residents, the state wrote: "...granting the requested remedy to the petitioner (as in, accepting the petition, or giving the petitioner the option of returning to Judea and Samaria) would **fundamentally undermine the policy of separation and of reducing movement between the areas, as outlined by the government.**" ([14.11.19](#), Hebrew)

2. In response to Gisha's petition on behalf of a woman and her two daughters, all registered West Bank residents, against Israel's refusal to allow them to return to the West Bank, the state wrote: "One of the significant rationales for the movement policy is the security need to 'differentiate' the Gaza Strip from the Area [the West Bank] [...] **the return of a resident to Judea and Samaria will be examined according to the policy in place at the time with respect to Gaza residents. We note that currently, residents who chose to permanently settle in the Strip may not return permanently to the Judea and Samaria Area.**" ([31.03.19](#), Hebrew)

3. The state's response to a petition filed by Gisha against Israel's refusal to allow two sixteen-year-old musicians from Gaza to attend an international music workshop in Jordan: "**The policy on travel between the State of Israel and the Gaza Strip, including the separation policy pertaining to travel between the Gaza Strip and the Judea and Samaria Area, has been developed according to various security and state policy considerations.** [...] Given these considerations and the balance between them and the humanitarian needs of the residents, entry by Gaza residents into the Judea and Samaria Area is permitted, as stated, in exceptional, humanitarian cases only. [...] Travel from Gaza remains restricted. **One of the key purposes of this is to ensure there is no frequent movement, in uncontrolled prevalence, between the Gaza Strip, Israel, and the Judea and Samaria Area.**" ([25.07.17](#), Hebrew)

4. The state's response to Gisha's petition against Israel's denial of travel permits for three Gaza residents, staff members of the international organization Right to Play, who wished to attend professional training in the West Bank: "Entry into Israel - including solely for the purpose of travel to the Judea and Samaria Area - as well as travel between the areas without transit through Israel - **is limited to exceptional, humanitarian cases only, with an emphasis on urgent medical cases** (hereinafter: the separation policy). [...] According to this policy,

in the absence of a legal obligation and bearing in mind the armed conflict between Israel and Hamas, which now rules the Gaza Strip, travel by Gaza residents to the Judea and Samaria Area is not permitted." (01.02.18, Hebrew)

5. In response to a petition filed by Gisha on behalf of the Deputy Executive Director of The Democracy and Worker's Right Center in Palestine, who was denied a permit to travel from Gaza to the West Bank to take part in training, the state wrote: "Travel from Gaza remains restricted. **One of the key purposes of this is to ensure there is no frequent movement, in uncontrolled prevalence, between the Gaza Strip, Israel, and the Judea and Samaria Area.**" (02.08.18, Hebrew)

6. In response to Gisha's petition on behalf of a Gaza resident who was denied a permit to visit his critically ill father in the West Bank, the state wrote: "The premise for the matter at hand [...] is that the State of Israel has broad authority and discretion to decide who may enter its territory and a foreign national has no legal right to enter the state's sovereign territory, including for the purpose of transit. [...] The policy on travel between the State of Israel and the Gaza Strip is extremely restrictive. [...] **The policy on travel to and from the Gaza Strip - including the distinction it draws between the Gaza Strip and the Area [the West Bank] has been considered and upheld multiple times.**" (02.12.18, Hebrew)

7. In response to Gisha's High Court petition against Israel's refusal to allow an athlete to exit the Strip in order to participate in the Palestine Marathon in Bethlehem, the state wrote: "**The separation policy was established around various political and security considerations**, including Hamas' rise to power in Gaza, the incessant activity against the State of Israel by terrorist organizations in Gaza, which includes firing rockets at Israel, terrorist attacks and other attempts to harm civilians and soldiers, as well as constant attempts by these organizations to set up branches of the Gaza terrorist network inside the Judea and Samaria Area, and to bolster the network already active in the Judea and Samaria Area. [...] **One of the rationales for this policy is the concern that ties between Gaza and Judea and Samaria residents would be exploited for the purpose of advancing terrorist activity, whether knowingly or by deception.**" (07.04.14)

8. From the state's response in a High Court petition filed by Gisha on behalf of four women students who were denied travel from Gaza to the West Bank to complete their Master's degrees: "Therefore, in accordance with the abovementioned resolution of the ministerial committee, **the policy in effect with respect to entry of Gaza Strip residents to the Judea and Samaria Area is a policy of separation between the two areas, which limits the cases approved for entry into the Judea and Samaria Area to humanitarian and exceptional cases only** [...] As aforesaid, in view of Hamas' rise to power in the Gaza Strip, the security-political cabinet has decided, among other measures, to impose restrictions on travel to and from the Gaza Strip (Security Political Cabinet Resolution B/34 dated September 19, 2007). [...] **This policy, which, as aforesaid, has been put in place by the political-security cabinet, forms part of Israel's battle against Hamas, a terrorist organization whose goal is to destroy the State of Israel. Thus, aside from the direct security goal which was specified above, this policy is also designed to create a distinction between the Judea and Samaria Area, where the**

Palestinian Authority is present and the Gaza Strip which, as aforesaid, is controlled by a terrorist organization." (16.08.12)

9. A decision by the High Court upholding Israel's decision to deny a resident of Gaza a permit to visit his critically ill brother in the West Bank, stated that: "We did not find cause to interfere with the decision of the military commander. **The respondents' response indicates that the prevailing policy, which stems from the current security-political situation, is to separate between the areas. According to this policy, passage from the Area to the Gaza Strip will be allowed only in exceptional cases involving a humanitarian need.** It should be noted that this court has examined this policy in the past and found no justification to interfere therewith. In the present case, no such need arose for now." (10.06.12)

10. The State's response to Gisha's High Court petition on behalf of a Palestinian living in the United States, registered as a resident of Gaza, who wished to enter the West Bank from Jordan via Allenby Bridge Crossing in order to be engaged to a resident of the West Bank: "The policy currently in place with respect to entry by Gaza residents into Judea and Samaria is a policy of separation between the areas. This policy is based on security reasons **and limits cases approved for entry into the Judea and Samaria Area to humanitarian and exceptional cases only.** [...] The rationale for this policy is based on general security grounds relating to family ties, the capacity to transfer information and resources to hostile entities, and the exploitation of the affinity between residents of the two areas." (18.12.11, Hebrew)

Analysts and commentators

1. Nadav Shragai, journalist, Israel Hayom: "The economic part of the "deal of the century," as it was presented this week in Bahrain, raised an interesting paradox: **that one of the diplomatic assets the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is paying a heavy price for is the continued separation and isolation between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and fostering the schism between Hamas, which rules the former, and the PA, which controls the latter.** To protect it, Israel has for years refrained from a full-scale incursion into Gaza that would toppled the Hamas leadership there." (01.07.19)

2. Asaf Gabor, Palestinian affairs correspondent, Makor Rishon: "The separation between Gaza and the territory of the Palestinian Authority is the major achievement that has been maintained so far since Operation Protective Edge. **The reality of separation certainly helps Israel on the operational, civilian, political and international levels. Israel is able to handle the two different arenas, each with varying levels of intensity. Most of the population is focused on making a living and on daily life rather than terrorism, and neither population has an impact on the other. Internationally, Israel can keep touting the Palestinian rift as an obvious reason why there is no possibility for real political developments.**" (08.07.19, Hebrew)

3. Ben Dror Yemini, columnist, Yedioth Ahronot: "The current Israeli government, however, does not want any agreement and is therefore happy with maintaining the status quo. **When Hamas is kept alive by Israel, the ensuing Palestinian division creates a diplomatic deadlock that in turn facilitates the slo-mo disaster of annexation.** And it is for this that the Israeli government has sacrificed its residents in the south." ([05.05.19](#))

4. Zvi Bar'el, Middle East commentator, Haaretz: "But Egypt is also trying to achieve a broader aim: a Fatah-Hamas reconciliation that would allow the operation of a consensual Palestinian government in Gaza, one that could run the border crossings and take responsibility for common administration of Gaza and the West Bank and accept the necessary foreign aid to rehabilitate Gaza. Herein lies Egypt's main difficulty: **This goal contradicts Israeli policy, which for years worked to separate Gaza from the West Bank in order to thwart the peace process based on the rationale that the Palestinian Authority and Mahmoud Abbas as its head do not represent all the Palestinians in the territories and therefore cannot be a party to negotiations.**" ([05.05.19](#))

5. Asher Susser, Senior research fellow at Tel Aviv University's Moshe Dayan Center: "The 'economic warfare' policy of the previous government was a foolish idea. The very notion that it is possible, using force, to engineer another society has no basis. [...] **In my opinion, what lies under the idea of differentiation/separation is the desire to push aside the concept of two states.**" ([14.05.12](#), Hebrew)