

# *Bethlehem Signs Petition Against Israeli Wall*

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Tel Aviv, January 31 (RHC)-- The Bethlehem governorate has filed a petition against the Israeli regime's plan to build a wall that will isolate two Palestinian villages, Press TV reports.

The governorate filed the petition in the Israeli high court against the plan that would separate the two villages of Battir and Cremisan in the occupied West Bank.

Tel Aviv claims the barrier is imperative for security reasons, but Palestinians say it is part of the regime's expansionist measures.

The village of Battir, which has been proposed as a UNESCO world heritage site, is famous for a Roman-era terraced irrigation system that the locals say would be destroyed by the wall. Battir Mayor Akram Bader said: "They are going to destroy these terraces," adding that the wall would be extended six kilometers into the village.

Villagers in Cremisan have been also staging demonstrations on a weekly basis, protesting the plan for the illegal construction of the wall. Palestinian media analyst Fayeze Abbas said: "This movement significantly affects the Palestinian side for so many reasons. The first is that they (Israelis) will take the lands and cut the entire area into sections. They will further destroy the historical remains which existed from the Roman era." The presence and continued expansion of Israeli settlements in occupied Palestine has created a major

obstacle for the efforts made to establish peace in the Middle East.

More than half a million Israelis live in over 120 illegal settlements built since Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 1967. The United Nations and most countries regard the Israeli settlements as illegal because the territories were captured by Israel in a war in 1967 and are hence subject to the Geneva Conventions, which forbid construction on occupied lands.

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