

**This Holiday Season, Please Remember that
Bethlehem is Not Free
Under Israeli Military Occupation**



If Mary and Joseph were traveling today, they might not make it past the separation wall, and Jesus might be born at a checkpoint instead of in a manger. Travel of short distances can stretch into hours when Palestinians are detained at checkpoints or forced to circumnavigate roadblocks to get to work, school, or hospitals.

- Bethlehem is surrounded on three sides by Israel's West Bank wall, which has been deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice.
- There are currently 22 Israeli settlements built on occupied Palestinian land belonging to Bethlehem. As with the wall, all Israeli settlements built on occupied land are illegal under international law.
- In and around Bethlehem, there are some 32 physical barriers to Palestinian movement erected by Israel, including checkpoints, roadblocks, dirt mounds, and gates.
- In June 2012, the Church of the Nativity, where Christians believe Jesus was born, was named by UNESCO as an endangered world heritage site.
- In 2014, Pope Francis made an unscheduled stop of his motorcade between events in Bethlehem to pray at the wall.

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