

# Israel approves security barrier cutting deep into West Bank

By Steve Weizman  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM — Israel decided Wednesday to extend a partly built security barrier around much of the West Bank — including several sections aimed at shielding Jewish settlements, condemned by Palestinians as a major land grab.

To appease the United States — which opposes extending the barrier deep into the West Bank — the new sections will for now be disconnected from each other and from existing barrier sections built closer to Israel's pre-1967 border with the West Bank. The final route will be decided in the coming months.

The barrier was conceived, under public pressure, as a means of keeping Palestinian attackers out of Israel, where hundreds have been killed in the recent years' suicide bombings. But the project has been complicated by efforts to incorporate some of the 220,000 West Bank settlers on the "Israeli" side.

To date, Israel has completed about 90 miles of fences, walls and trenches built fairly close to the border before the 1967 war but dipping slightly into occupied territory in some areas to include Jewish settlements.

The government has struggled with the question of settlements deeper inside the West Bank, especially Ariel, a community of 18,000 residents some 15 miles inside. The settlers

## Israel barrier extension approved

Israel's cabinet approved an extension of a security barrier deep into the West Bank. The fence would include the settlements of Ariel, Kedumim, Karnei Shomron and Emmanuel.

— Approved extension\*  
— Potential extension\*  
— Separation barrier  
— "Green Line"  
— Israeli settlement  
— Palestinian controlled areas  
\*Approximate location as described by Israeli officials



SOURCES: B'Tselem; Associated Press

project — essentially cutting off the entire West Bank — and to begin construction of several sections totaling some 100 miles, with the exact route of the rest of the barrier to be decided later.

In line with the secrecy that has characterized the project, no maps were officially released Wednesday.

But from officials' statements and media reports, it appeared the barrier would stretch all the way around the West Bank to the Dead Sea in the south, sticking close to the pre-1967 border in some areas and cutting into the West Bank to encircle Jewish settlements in several locations.

Four fence sections in the area — as sketched by a senior Israeli official on a map carried by an Associated Press reporter — would start with horseshoe-shaped barriers.

The government official said the plan calls for the sections to be eventually linked to each other and to the main barrier. According to the rough sketch, that would take a bite some 20 miles deep into the West Bank, surrounding an area containing tens of thousands of Palestinians.

The United States made its opposition to such a plan clear, with President George W. Bush calling the barrier "a problem" and some officials saying it could be interpreted as an effort to pre-empt negotiations and unilaterally define the border of a future Palestinian state.

wanted the fence to incorporate them, but the idea angered the United States and Palestinians.

A senior government official said the Cabinet decided in principle to approve completing the

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### China makes it easier for couples to say 'I do'

BEIJING (AP) — On Wednesday, China eliminated a much-resented requirement for couples to obtain their bosses' approval before tying the knot, prompting thousands of couples to wed in what, for

some, was also a celebration of the retreat of outside interference in their private lives.

Couples said "I do" Wednesday at mass ceremonies in city squares, at tree planting ceremonies and even at a Beijing drive-in theater.

The new marriage rules are among social reforms that increasingly are freeing private lives from unpopular government controls.

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