

**NORTH KOREA AND SOUTH KOREA:
THE WORLD'S MOST FORTIFIED BORDER**



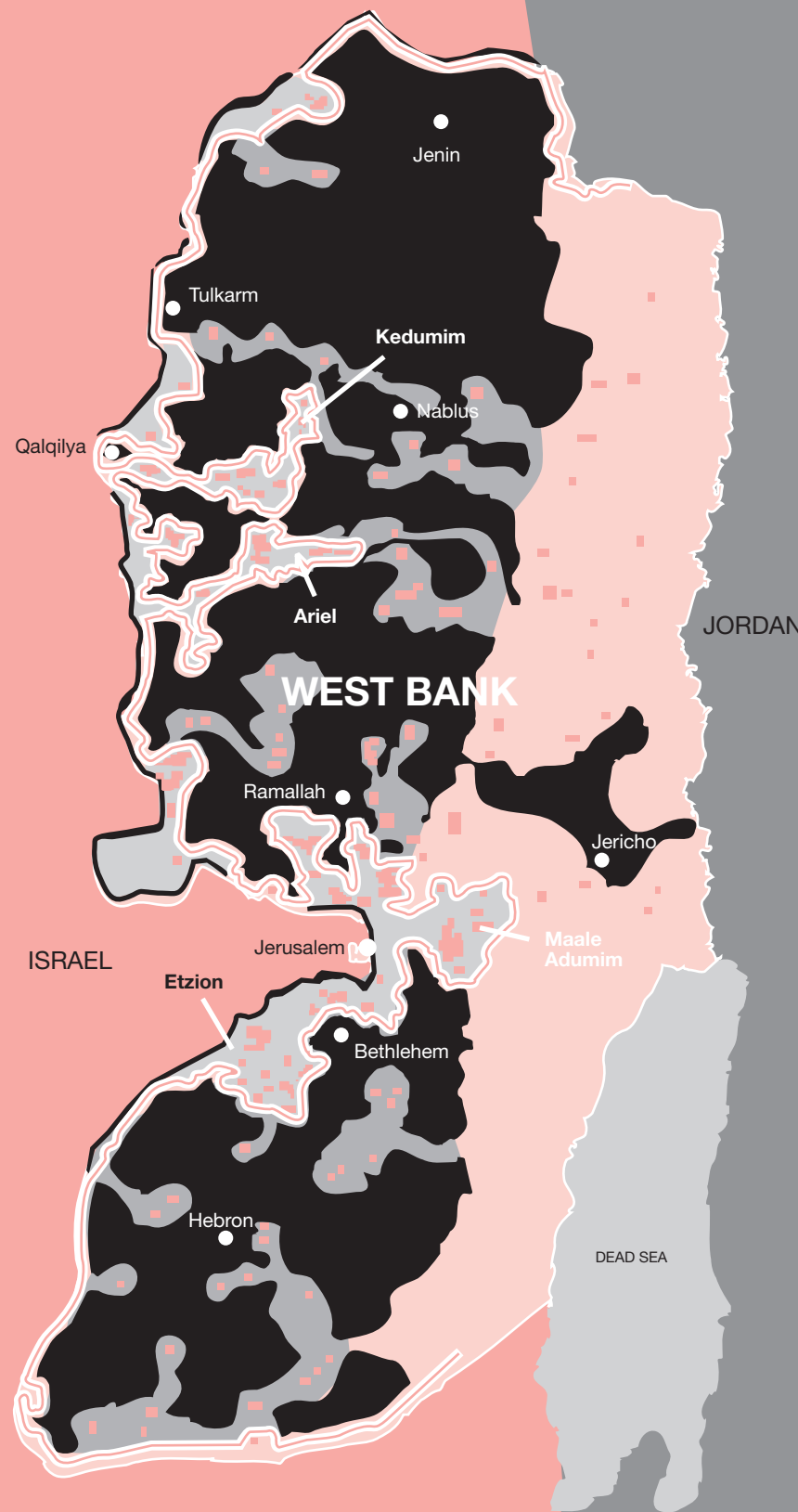
The most fortified border in the world is that which divides North Korea, one of the last communist states, from the democratic Republic of South Korea. After World War II, when Japan ceased to rule over the unified nation of Korea, the country was divided at the 38th parallel by the Cold War enemies and world superpowers of that time, the U.S.S.R. and the United States. North and South Korea have technically been at war since 1950, the fighting ended in a cease-fire in 1953, which also marked the closing of the border and the establishment of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)—a 2.5-mile-wide (4 km) buffer zone peppered with land mines, dividing the two countries—which former President Clinton described in 2003 as “the scariest place on earth.”¹ The DMZ is split along the middle by the Military Demarcation Line, an ultimate barrier that if crossed would revive the war. Today some two million troops continue to patrol both sides of the 151-mile (248 km) DMZ on the perpetual brink of war, as North Korea continues its much contested nuclear weapons program while South Korean and U.S. armed forces remain alert little more than two miles away.

**ISRAEL AND PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES: AN
ETHNIC DIVIDE**



Palestine and Israel share a history plagued with hostility and conflict. During the nineteenth century, many European Jews emigrated to Palestine under the influence of a Zionist movement that called for a homeland for Jews in Israel. This exodus continued in full force during the first half of the twentieth century in the face of World War II and the Holocaust. From the start, the arrival of the Jewish people in Palestine caused strife. The native Palestinians were often displaced due to land purchases made by the immigrants, and tensions increased because Islam and Judaism historically share the same Holy Land. In 1948, after World War II ended, the United Nations General Assembly voted to partition Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states, thus establishing the State of Israel. The partition also demarcated Jerusalem as an international zone, where neither Jewish nor Arab authority would exist, in an attempt to avoid further religious conflicts. The plan failed, however, as Israel’s Arab neighbors were vehemently opposed to surrendering the land. After a period of ever-increasing tension the Six Day War broke out in 1967, resulting in Israel’s seizing control of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights—areas heavily populated with Palestinians. The resulting “occupation,” as it is perceived by the Palestinians, has been a continuing source of contention and bitter hostility. The decades since the war have been punctuated by suicide bombings committed by radical Palestinians, and the Israeli government’s subsequent retaliations.

Map of disputed territories and settlements in the West Bank.



West Bank 2006

- Route of wall, completed and projected
- Israeli settlement areas inside wall
- Israeli settlement areas outside wall
- Israeli settlements
- Palestinian areas
- Jordan Valley (under Israeli control)

Land occupation in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip, 2006.

13% Palestinian
87% Israeli

