

# REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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## NEWS

The United States is said to be assuming a more active role in negotiations for a "framework agreement" between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The U.S. may offer bridging proposals during the second round of talks in Eilat, Israel.

U.S. diplomats will have to contend with the still-wide divide between the parties on the territorial division of the occupied territories [see story opposite and on page 2].

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak has signaled a re-energized interest in settlement expansion, authorizing new construction tenders in the West Bank and on the Golan Heights, and blessing settlement in Hebron [see page 3].

Meanwhile settlers report continuing and vibrant increases in the West Bank and Gaza Strip settler population [see page 9].

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## A FINAL STATUS WITHOUT FINAL STATUS

By Geoffrey Aronson

According to U.S. President Bill Clinton, the Israeli-Palestinian talks on final status are "working very well. They've got a real plan for the future."

Perhaps the plan that Clinton is referring to is the revised timetable reached between Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak and PA chairman Yasser Arafat calling for a still-undefined "framework agreement" in June, to be followed by a final status agreement resolving all outstanding issues between Israel and the Palestinians? The purpose of such an agreement is to end the 100 year-old conflict between the Jewish and Palestinian national movements. Then again, perhaps the American president has something else in mind.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, it is true, once hoped that such an all-encompassing final status agreement could be reached. But Clinton must have heard that Barak was all but alone in this assessment. Today, most of Israel's leadership, including Barak himself, has despaired of reaching such an agreement—in September or at any time in the foreseeable future. In its place, Israelis and Palestinians alike have resurrected a plan for an extended interim agreement, first conceived by Ariel Sharon in 1997, that can accommodate both Arafat's desire for a state called Palestine and Israel's desire for territory beyond the June 1967 border.

The formal process for the transition from interim to final status established

by the Oslo agreements never bore much relation to the sentiments and preferences of those Israelis making policy nor did it reflect the ability of the Palestinians to realize such a goal. Former prime minister Yitzhak Rabin had a limited and largely opportunistic view of Oslo; he had no grand design for ending the conflict. Rabin described the rapprochement with the PLO, according to Uri Savir, his chief negotiator, as "a new instrument for reaching traditional [Israeli] objectives."

The failure to think beyond the achievement of short-term goals is not a trait unknown to politicians. From time to time in recent years, Labor politicians such as Haim Ramon have voiced a preference for an interim period lasting years. Even Yossi Beilin and Abu Mazen, in the agreement that bears their names, decided that there were some issues, Jerusalem and refugees among them, that could not be resolved within any agreed-upon timetable, even one measured in decades.

Such conclusions reflect less a well-considered political preference than an appreciation of the simple fact that no amount of goodwill, no building upon the achievements of the interim period, no increase in trust between Israelis and Palestinians can bridge the gap on main elements of a final status agreement—particularly land, settlements, and refugees. The alchemists of the

FINAL STATUS: continued on page 8

## TO OUR READERS

As our lead article suggests, there is an increasing possibility that the Oslo process will not result in formal, definitive peace treaty between Israel and Palestine, but rather in a continuing, and continuous, series of negotiations and timetables, revised to accommodate the failure to address the final status issues at the heart of the Oslo accords—the status of Jerusalem, a settlement of the refugee issue, and the borders and powers of a Palestinian state.

Diplomacy may not be the proper forum for the complete resolution of the conflict between Israelis and the Palestinians—the goal set by the architects of Oslo if not the political leaders who embraced it. But it does serve to set the rules under which Palestinians and Israelis “live together forever,” as Moshe Dayan once described it.

Put in this context, the limitations on the power of the United States to determine this framework, not to mention the context of inter-communal relations, becomes clear. Yet if Washington cannot

impose its vision of the future, at least it should do no harm.

And that unfortunately, is the only way to describe American policy on the one issue at the heart of the conflict—land and Israeli settlement. In October, the Clinton administration violated its own policy when it welcomed the decision of the Barak government to “legalize” some 30 West Bank settlements. And today it watches in silence as Israel flouts an agreement reached regarding the expanding settlement at Ras al Amud, part of an explosion in housing construction in settlements throughout the occupied territories.

The Clinton administration’s willingness to ignore if not disdain its own policy pronouncements impairs Washington’s ability to offer the kind of diplomatic consultation both Israeli and Palestinians expect as they approach yet another final status deadline.



### “The Emperor May Have No Clothes, But He Does Have a Shopping List”

Shimon Peres and Haim Ramon are trying to come up with territorial compromises of their own. One suggests that Israel withdraw from 80 percent of the territory of the West Bank and haggle over the rest with the Palestinian state, while the other favors transferring 70 percent of the territory to the Palestinians and postponing discussion over the fate of the remaining land until better times roll around.

Barak listens to them all, reads all the papers—and does not move an inch from his position, which is in fact almost identical to that of Sharon: a Palestinian state in Areas A and B that have already been handed over to the Palestinian Authority, and another 10 percent to 12 percent to be handed over at the next withdrawal. Altogether, the new state will have between 50 and 52 percent of the territory of the West Bank. After five or maybe 10 years, if everything is OK—that is, if everything is to Israel’s satisfaction—then changes and additions can be discussed.

Akiva Eldar, in *Ha'aretz*, April 17, 2000

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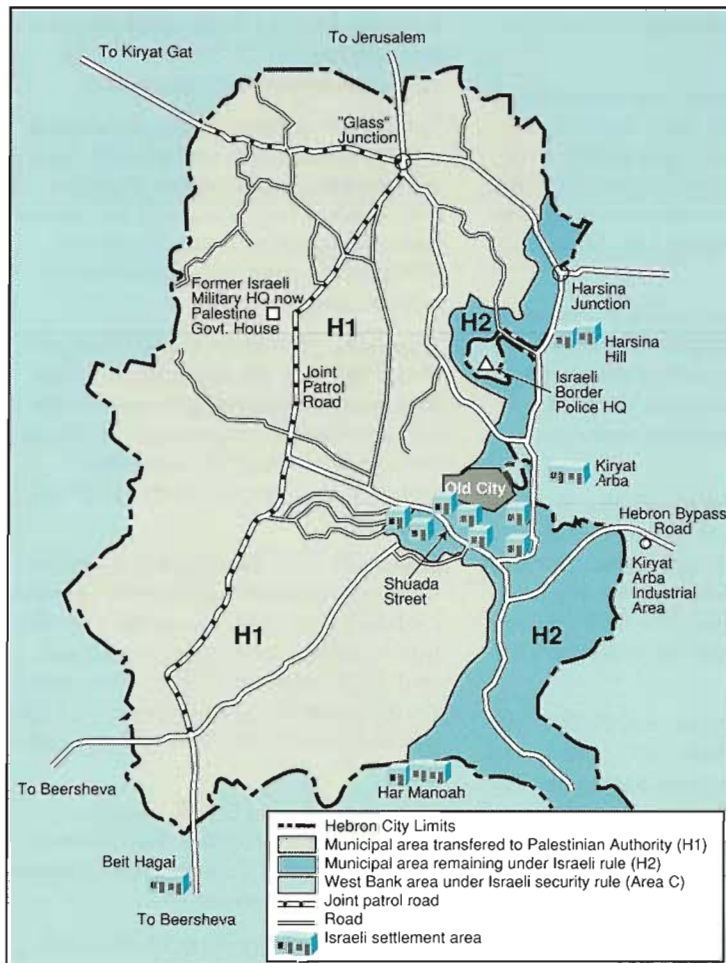
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## HEBRON 2000

### Hebron – 2000



On April 1, Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak sent a congratulatory message to the 480 settlers in Hebron on the occasion of the thirty-second anniversary of the establishment of Hebron's Jewish community. Twelve new families will be moving into recently completed housing in the settlement, which has been characterized since its inception by its extreme antipathy toward the Palestinian residents of the city.

Barak's commendation reads as follows:

The Prime Minister's Blessings on the Thirty-Second Anniversary of the Jewish Community of Hebron

On the occasion of the thirty-second anniversary of the renewal of the Jewish community of Hebron, I am happy to convey to the entire community blessings of success and shalom.

The right of Jews to live tranquilly in the City of the Forefathers securely, protected from all danger, is not disputed. The test of the renewed Hebron Jewish community, which is the same test of the Arab majority, is the ability to develop good, neighborly relationships. Mutual honor and a joint effort are necessary to overcome the scars, the pain, and the difficult reminders left from the despicable carnage which desecrated this holy city. It is my desire to believe that the establishment of peaceful relationships between us and our Palestinian neighbors in the Land of Israel will inspire peace and friendship between the Jewish community of Hebron and its Arab neighbors.

Yours,  
Ehud Barak

## SETTLERS' FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES

By Gideon Levy

The latest development is the prime minister's letter of congratulations and good wishes to the settlers in Hebron. Here too, one hand builds, the other validates. This most controversial of settlements, most of whose residents are pugnacious rabble-rousers, stuck in the heart of the largest Palestinian city in the territories, suddenly receives, for the first time in years, public congratulations from a Labor prime minister.

What good wishes can be sent to them? The wish that they continue to be an obstacle to peace? That they continue to brutalize their neighbors? And why does Barak have to congratulate them? Did he ever congratulate a human rights organization, for example? And with his other hand he builds:

Another 12 Jewish families, we are informed, will join the 54 families who already live in Hebron. That is just what the peace process and Hebron alike need: Another few dozen people to overturn the carts of Palestinians in the market, and all with the blessing of the prime minister of change.

Did Barak ever see the bags of feces and stones that the settler children and their parents throw from the balconies of their homes at the market below? Was it to such people that he sent his good wishes? Is it really necessary to strengthen this violent group? At least Barak's declared predecessor and mentor, Yitzhak Rabin, condemned this dubious enterprise verbally ("a serious mistake"), even if he did not lift a finger to remove it. Barak, on the other hand, sends his congratulations.

*Ha'aretz*, April 9, 2000

## SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

**January 2** *Ha'aretz* reports that the Jerusalem Planning and Building Council recently approved the expansion, by 1,100 units, of the Palestinian suburb of Beit Hanina in East Jerusalem. The construction of 200 units in the nearby Jerusalem settlement of Ramot was also approved.

Construction begins on 39 units in the West Bank settlement of Beitar.

**January 3** Settlers from the Golan and the West Bank agree on the anti-withdrawal slogan, "Evacuation of communities [settlements] splits the people."

*Yediot Aharanot* reports that the first of 132 units being built at Ras al-Amud in East Jerusalem will be ready for occupancy in April, violating a commitment made by Prime Minister Netanyahu to the Clinton administration in late 1997 that the small settlement would not be expanded.

The Israel Land Authority issues a tender for the construction of 122 units in the East Jerusalem settlement community of Pisgat Ze'ev.

**January 4** Prominent rabbis issue a Halachic ruling declaring the Golan Heights to be part of the Land of Israel and "forbid[ding] dismantling communities in the Land of Israel."

**January 5-6** The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) implements Stage II of the Sharm el-Sheikh redeployments, transferring 2 percent of the West Bank from Area B to Area A status, and 3 percent from Area C to Area B. Six military camps will also be evacuated.

**January 7** Israel Wire reports that the Palestinian Authority (PA) is moving ahead with plans for the construction of the Trans-Palestine Highway. According to PA officials, the U.S. government will fund the project, and construction will commence in conjunction with Israeli withdrawals. The highway will run from Jenin to Nablus and Bethlehem, with access roads en route.

*Kol Ha'ir* reports that the Jerusalem municipality issued 141 demolition orders in East Jerusalem during 1999, compared with 38 in 1998. Most citations for building violations (1,381 of 1,880) were located in West Jerusalem.

*Ma'ariv* reports that the Israel Lands Authority is no longer allocating land for

the expansion of settlements in the Golan Heights.

**January 10** Protestors from around the country gather in Tel Aviv's Rabin Square to demonstrate against the prospective withdrawal from the Golan Heights. Estimates of the number of demonstrators range from 100,000 (AP) to 250,000 (*The Jerusalem Post*).

*Ha'aretz* reports that the IDF has reduced by 40 percent the budget allocation for stationing military guards at settlements. Settlers will have to assume increased responsibility for protecting their communities.

**January 16** *Ha'aretz* reports that the Israeli government continues to revoke residency rights of Palestinians in Jerusalem. Although a new policy guarantees that identity cards will not be confiscated from Arabs, it does permit the government to revoke residency rights.

According to *Yediot Aharanot*, the IDF presented the cabinet with a map of the next redeployment in the West Bank, scheduled for January 20, 2000. The redeployment will conclude the second redeployment (FRD) of Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank outlined in the Oslo accords.

**January 17** *Ha'aretz* reports that planning for an Israeli housing complex in Abu Dis has been renewed after years of inactivity. The complex of 220 to 240 units would be on land owned by Jews located in the 10 percent of the village that is inside the city limits of Jerusalem. The PA sought without success to turn the 90 percent of the village that is in Area B into Area A as part of Israel's redeployment in the West Bank. The Jerusalem municipality has already budgeted \$100,000 for planning the project and associated infrastructure.

According to Arutz-7, Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh says that areas the Israeli government intends to keep "do not have to be built up all the time. Our intention is that until the end of the talks—which we plan to conclude by the end of the current year—there will be no changes in the map." But Sneh notes that construction in settlements will not be difficult to approve, and that by-pass roads will not be frozen.

**January 18** Prime Minister Ehud Barak informs his cabinet that he does not intend

to carry out the 6.1 percent pullback scheduled, according to the Sharm el-Sheikh agreement, to occur on January 20.

**January 20** *Ha'aretz* reports that married and unmarried Palestinians who are childless and over the age of 21 will be allowed to enter Israel to work. Previously, only married men over the age of 23 and 21-year-olds with at least 1 child have been allowed to work in Israel.

**January 23** The majority of residents of Ma'ale Ephraim, the largest Jordan Valley settlement, are reported to be ready to evacuate in return for compensation. "This area has been dead already for many years," explained one longtime resident to *Yediot Aharanot*.

**January 25** The West Bank civil administration recommends that plans for 11 bypass roads be put on hold. Among the roads likely to be affected are the Nachliel-Talmon road, the al-Aroub and Jenin bypass routes, the eastern section of the Trans-Judea highway, and a road to the Ta'nach settlements in Israel.

*Ha'aretz* publishes a list of more than forty settlements that have received contributions from U.S., Canadian, and European Christian congregations.

**January 26** *Al-Ayyam* reports PA Chairman Yasser Arafat's statement that this is the year for declaring an independent Palestinian state. At the same time, Arafat ruled out the possibility of reaching a framework agreement on final status issues by the mid-February deadline.

**January 28** *Kol Ha'ir* reports that "in recent months there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Arab residents in Jerusalem applying for Israeli citizenship." According to the ministry of interior, applications increased by 500 percent [158 requests, compared to 115 during the first nine months of 1999] in the last three months of 1999.

**January 30** *Ha'aretz* reports that the IDF moved the Mevo Horon checkpoint three kilometers eastward into the West Bank on January 16. The paper suggests that the relocation of the checkpoint can be interpreted as the "effective annexation of Mevo Horon and the adjacent Canada Park to Israel."



## SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

**January 31** The *Jerusalem Post* reports that Israeli and Palestinian negotiators have commenced talks in an effort to reach a permanent status agreement by February 13. The two sides agreed on a series of three 10-day meetings. During the first 10 days, both sides are to present their positions and put together a skeleton agreement. Over the next 10-day period, they will produce a joint draft agreement and, during the final phase, the parties will address gaps and outstanding details.

**February 1** Israel verbally presents a final status map to the Palestinians offering 55–60 percent of the West Bank and calling for Israel's annexation of the remaining 40 percent.

**February 2** *Ha'aretz* reports that the PA will agree to Israel's annexation of large groups of settlements in return for an exchange of territory.

The Israeli security cabinet approves a map of the third stage of the second redeployment in the West Bank to be implemented on February 10. The Palestinians' Area A will increase with the transfer of 5.1 percent of the West Bank from Area B and another 1 percent from Area C. Israeli Minister Haim Ramon notes that "the entire diplomatic process improved the security situation in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza in every respect."

Yesha leaders reject the map, noting that six settlements (Ganim, Kadim, Karmei-Tzur, Beit Hagai, Otniel, and Neguhot) are dangerously close to Area A. The redeployment will create 3 additional corridors under Israeli control but flanked by Area A territories (Kiryat Arba-Telem Adura, Beit Hagai-Otniel, and Mevo Dotan-Ganin and Kadim).

**February 3** A meeting between Arafat and Barak fails to resolve differences over Israel's refusal to include in the next redeployment Palestinian areas around Jerusalem desired by the PA—Azariah, Abu Dis, and A-Ram. Barak also refuses Arafat's suggestion to increase the U.S. role in Israeli-Palestinian talks. Barak postpones his cabinet's endorsement of the redeployment map approved by the security cabinet.

"You are destroying the trust between us," Arafat is reported to tell Barak, "while you continue to settle."

**February 4** A cabinet statement issued by the PA condemns continuing settlement expansion. "The stepped up assault adjacent to Palestinian land will not enhance the peace process but will aggravate it further," notes the statement.

*Yerushalim* reports the first meeting of the forum on "Greater Jerusalem" organized by settlement leaders. In a letter to Barak, the heads of local settlement councils demand that the Palestinian towns of Anata, Shufat, Hizme, Atarot, Beit Ikksa, Beit Hanina, Abu Dis, an Azariah remain under Israeli security control [Area B].

**February 7** The PA suspends negotiations with Israel because of a dispute about the areas to be included in the next Israeli redeployment in the West Bank.

**February 10** Minister of Justice Yossi Beilin tells settlement leaders, "If you are raising the flag of non-evacuation of settlements, I am with you. From the beginning I would not have pushed the settlement enterprise, and I opposed it, but it is impossible to tell people, 'We made a mistake, now go home.' I see your coming to terms with the Oslo agreements, and I also see, on my side, the Left, a coming to terms with the fact of the existence of the settlement enterprise." Beilin envisions the annexation of some settlements by Israel while others will exist, with a connection to Israel, under Palestinian sovereignty.

**February 11** *Yerushalim* reports an unprecedented agreement between PA Chairman Arafat and Jerusalem leader Faisal Husseini to distribute millions of dollars to rehabilitate Palestinian properties in Jerusalem.

More than 600 Israelis apply for 230 housing plots offered in the settlement of Har Gilo, outside Jerusalem.

**February 13** *Ha'aretz* reports that Barak has refused to approve building plans for 750 units in the settlement of Ariel. The settlement, with a population of 16,000, currently has 690 units under construction. In Beitar, the settler population of 13,000 will increase to 18,000 when 950 almost completed units are occupied.

*Yediot Aharonot* reports that Defenders of the Law, an organization of rabbis for human rights, claims that the Barak government has closed to Palestinians 100,000

dunams in the Hebron region. The organization notes that "60 percent of the Hebron region has been turned over to settlements, storehouses, nature reserves, bypass roads, and closed military areas. Before Oslo, 400,000 dunams were confiscated and closed, and since Oslo another 200,000 dunams have been confiscated."

**February 14** The paramilitary settlement Sansanna inside Israel becomes a civilian settlement to be developed by Amana, the settlement arm of Gush Emmunim. Fifteen families currently live at the site established during the Netanyahu government, which is set to be expanded across the Green Line into the West Bank.

*Ha'aretz* reports that Israel's Ministry of Transportation will spend \$100 million on roads in and around Jerusalem, with a focus on new corridors in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem.

**February 15** Druze residents of the Golan village of Majdal Shams protest the nineteenth anniversary of the distribution of Israeli ID cards to the local population following the annexation of the Golan to Israel. Police respond with tear gas and rubber bullets.

Peace Now announces that only a small percentage of land claimed for Israeli settlement purposes is actually being used. Through satellite photos, the organization calculates that 78,786 dunams of the West Bank is allocated for settlement purposes. The widest, unused plots belong to the largest settlements. Ma'ale Adumim ranks highest, with 50,000 dunams, but, according to Peace Now, it currently utilizes only 1/16 of the area.

Minister of Regional Cooperation Shimon Peres visits Ariel, where he says that he "does not regret" having contributed to the establishment of Ariel more than two decades ago during his tenure as defense minister. Peres also says that settlements should not be uprooted, but "I don't think that there will be Jews who would want to live under foreign rule."

**February 16** Barak's security aide Danny Yatom confirms that Israel will make changes in the map of the upcoming redeployment, and will allow the Palestinians to

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## SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

TIME LINE, continued from page 5

take part in determining adjustments to the map.

**February 17** *Ha'aretz* reports that Finance Minister Avraham Shochat announced his intention to annul the tax-exempt status of donations to "encourage settlement across the Green Line." The goal of "encouraging building across the Green Line" was first recognized in 1984, and Shochat canceled it in 1995, during his first term as finance minister. Netanyahu reinstated the tax exemption for such donations in February 1999.

**February 18** *Bonus* reports that housing prices have declined up to 30 percent in two Jerusalem neighborhoods said to be considered for transfer to the PA—Beit Hanina and Shufat.

**February 20** The Barak government has decided not to change, for six months, the map of national priorities established by the Netanyahu government. The map determines which Israeli communities are eligible for benefits and subsidies. West Bank settlements are prominent among those areas entitled to the most generous state benefits. According to Ran Cohen, minister of trade and industry, 25 percent of his budget is spent in West Bank settlements, although settlers comprise only 2.5 percent of Israel's population.

According to YESHA, the population of Israeli settlements (excluding East Jerusalem) grew by 12.5 percent in 1999, the highest growth rate recorded in recent years.

**February 21** The Ministry of Housing reports 1,320 housing starts in West Bank and Gaza Strip settlements since the Barak government assumed power in July 1998, bringing to 7,120 the number of settlement units in some stage of construction.

**February 22** Israel orders the employees of the Khan Yunis municipality in the Gaza Strip to stop building a public park. The park is located on 37 dunams of land owned by the municipality, to the west of Khan Yunis refugee camp, near the Neve Dekalim settlement.

**February 25** *Kol Ha'ir* reports that the Greek Orthodox Church reneged on its agreement with a British-Israeli firm to permit development of 1,200 units on a 160

dunam plot near the Mar Elias monastery between Har Homa and Gilo.

*Ha'aretz* reports that senior Israeli government officials have called upon the Jerusalem municipality to refrain from carrying out demolition orders against Arab homes in East Jerusalem until after the visit of Pope John Paul II in March.

Faisal Hussein calls upon the international Arab community to boycott Burger King unless it closes its Ma'ale Adumim store. A spokesperson for the Israeli franchise claims that Ma'ale Adumim is inside Israel and not in the West Bank.

**February 28** The IDF removes 15 Palestinian families, comprising 100 people, from their homes in caves in the south Hebron region. Evacuation of these and other families began in the wake of the removal of the nearby Ma'on settlement in November 1999.

**February 29** Members of the Knesset Interior Committee visit Arab construction sites in East Jerusalem. Assistant Jerusalem Municipality Director Eitan Meir says that, "We have stopped razing illegal Palestinian construction there. This is due to our consideration of the Palestinian population's needs, with its many children and its tendency to build ground-level homes." Houses constructed in "green areas" or in areas planned for roads, however, may still be demolished.

Israel approves subsidies to two commercial concerns in Golan Heights settlements—\$1 million to a company in El Rom that translates films and \$1.5 million to a plastics firm in Sha'ar Hagolan.

**March 1** *Ha'aretz* reports that the Higher Planning Council for Judea and Samaria has given final approval for the construction of a high tech industrial park on 200 dunams in the Etzion bloc of settlements. No action was taken on requests by settlements in the eastern sector of the area—Metzad and Nokdim—for residential expansion. The government has temporarily frozen construction of a bypass road from these settlements to Har Homa in Jerusalem.

**March 2** Minister of Finance Shochat tells settler leaders, "The only possible agreement with Palestinians will require removal of settlements. Whoever thinks that it is possible to reach an agreement without moving even one settlement is mistaken."

Palestinian officials protest the moving of several IDF checkpoints in the West Bank as an attempt to adjust the borders before the conclusion of a final status deal. Two of the changed posts are near Jenin, a third is in Latrun, and the fourth is south of Hebron, near the village of Yatta. A senior Palestinian official said the IDF began relocating the Area C checkpoints six months ago. He said the Palestinians suspect that Israel wants to create new *de facto* borders in order to annex areas where it has settlements.

**March 3** *Yerushalim* reports that paving has begun on the eastern ring road around Jerusalem.

**March 9** Israeli bulldozers demolish a house in East Jerusalem, claiming that it was built without a permit.

**March 10** *Kol Ha'ir* reports that Barak has extended restrictions first imposed in December 1999 on the issuing of new tenders for construction in settlements.

*Kol Ha'ir* reports initial planning for a 2,000 unit development on 253 dunams near the Jerusalem settlement of Gilo.

**March 13** *Yediot Abaranot* reports that, according to senior Ministry of Housing officials, the Barak government "has frozen building plans [in settlements] around Jerusalem."

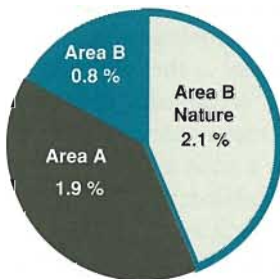
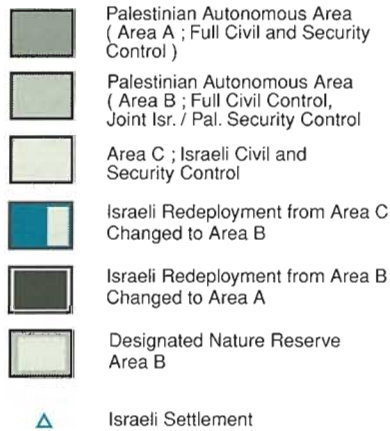
The Prime Minister's Office in response, notes, "All Jewish communities around Jerusalem, like Givat Ze'ev and Ma'ale Adumim, will of course remain under Israeli sovereignty in any agreement, and construction in them will proceed according to their needs."

The housing ministry has prepared plans for the construction of 22,410 new units in the Jerusalem region, whose settler population at the end of 1997 was 40,000. The ministry's objective is to increase the number of Israelis living in this area to 250,000 by the year 2020. The Israel Lands Authority plans to merge the settlement of Beitar with nearby Sur Hadassah in Israel.

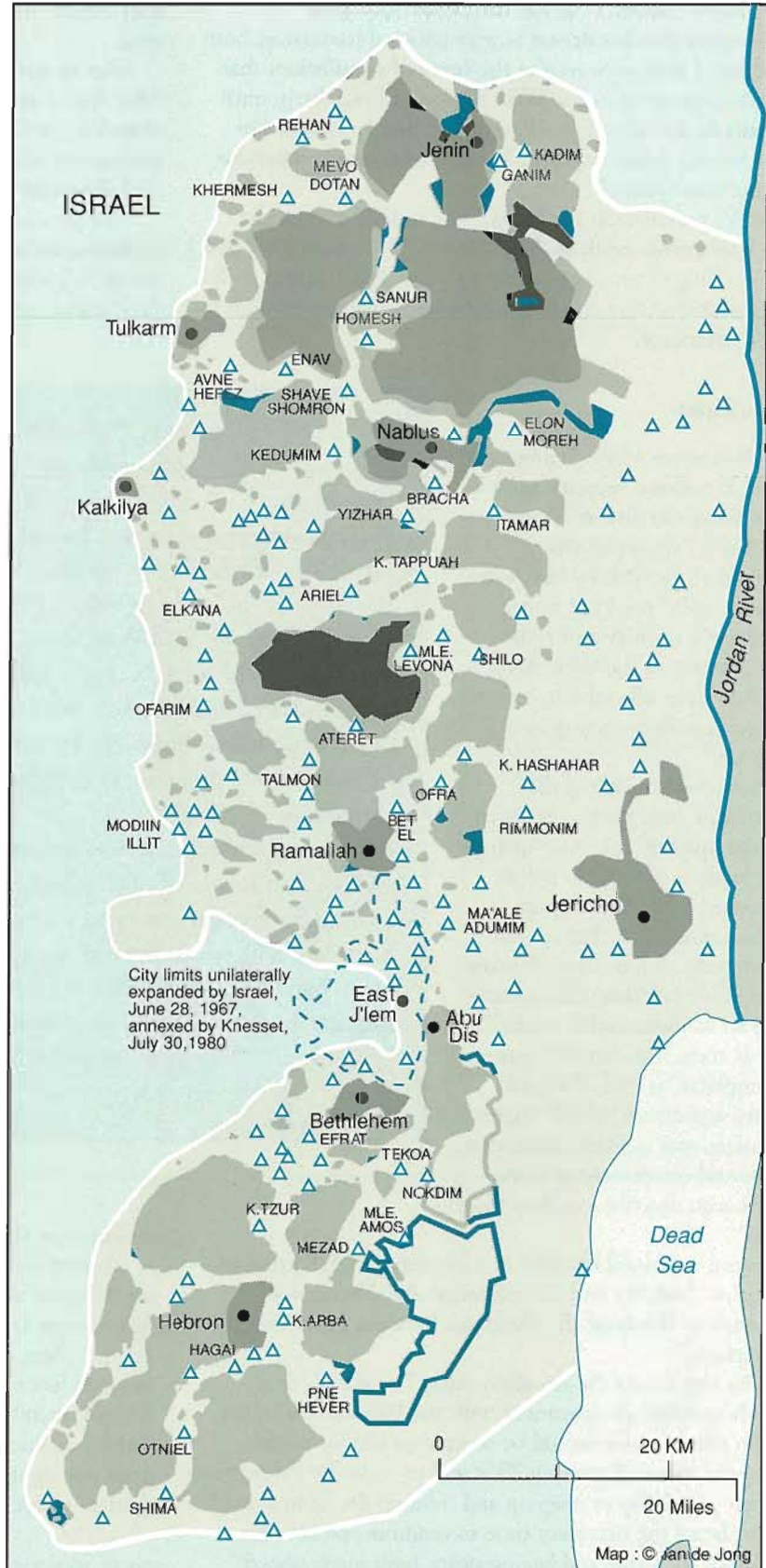
**March 14** After a meeting with Israeli security authorities, Prime Minister Barak announces that the village of Anata, an East Jerusalem suburb, will not be on the next redeployment map. According to Palestinian media sources, the redeployment maps are to include lands in Bethany, Salfit, Jenin, and Hebron. ♦



# *The West Bank After the Second Israeli Redeployment According to the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum (January 2000)*



Territorial Division of Sharm el-Sheikh Phase II - Israeli Redeployment in Area-Percentages



Oslo process cannot, it seems, turn straw into gold.

The spirit that has driven Israel's political leadership, both Likud and Labor, is to restore the sense of equilibrium that defined its presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip until the intifada. Lamented one Palestinian deeply involved in back-channel diplomacy with Israel, "Barak wants quiet, he does not want peace."

Barak's prescription for "quiet," like today's map of the West Bank, owes much to Ariel Sharon, who since 1997 has been thinking out loud about how to establish a ruling coalition best able to turn the Palestinian state enabled by Oslo to Israel's advantage.

### Sharon's Idea

In November 1997, Sharon met with U.S. national security advisor Sandy Berger to discuss Sharon's view that a Palestinian state, described at the time by him as a "fait accompli," need not undermine Israel's security and settlement interests in the West Bank. One American official noted that, "Sharon appeared pragmatic and moderate."

Sharon was confident that Palestinians were more concerned with the "quality" than the "quantity" of lands to be transferred to their control. For Israel's part, Sharon explained, "a Palestinian state in parts of Judea and Samaria is preferable to Palestinian autonomy in all of Judea and Samaria."

This state, however, was not contemplated as part of a final status agreement, which Sharon recognized was unlikely, but rather as a central component of a concept Sharon described as "less than peace."

Sharon explained his view in a November 1998 presentation titled "Security and Co-existence: An Alternative Approach to Breaking the Deadlock between Israel and the Palestinians."

"The way I view the situation today," he noted, "it is possible to reach an agreement with the Palestinians in the interim phase, which would be somewhat similar to the concept of non-belligerency. This will provide the Palestinians with the possibility of keeping and holding the Oslo accords and for Israel the necessary time to examine and see that conditions for a true and lasting peace have materialized."

Asked whether the U.S. administration believes that Israel and the Palestinians will arrive at an agreement by September on the central issues of Jerusalem, YESHA communities, and the Palestinian "right of return," Israel's former ambassador in Washington, Zalman Shoval, said, "I think that no one who truly understands the essence of these problems believes that they can be solved by September, or even in this generation, for that matter! The Americans understand this. It could well be that in a final-status deal, the two sides may agree to disagree on some matters, without turning the clock back completely; this would require the Palestinians to commit to an approach that rejects violence as a means of achieving their goals."

Sharon's view represented an emerging national consensus, and during 1998 the prospect of a national unity government that would champion such a program was seriously considered.

Sharon also met with both Abu Mazen and Oslo architect Abu Ala' in an unsuccessful effort to convince them to abandon the Oslo timetable in favor of his plan for a semi-permanent interim arrangement that would include a truncated Palestinian state in parts of the West Bank and Gaza.

The idea of postponing or establishing timetables for implementation measured in decades was not Israel's alone. Some Palestinians too believe that a partial resolution of some final status issues, and the postponement of others, is the most realistic prescription for negotiators.

### Final Status Option

Today, it is Barak, not Sharon, who has taken upon himself the task of finding a politically and diplomatically viable alternative to an agreement that ends the conflict. If he once believed that Israeli recognition of a Palestinian state could be traded for Palestinian concessions in the context of a final status agreement, Barak, in the words of one Palestinian, now intends to "trade Palestinian independence for not ending the conflict," that is, as part of an agreement to postpone the resolution of issues like settlements, Jerusalem, refugees, and even borders.

Barak desires above all to see that the declaration of Palestinian statehood, which is coming in the latter part of this year, is placed in the context of the peace process and not simply as a unilateral Palestinian action that further

undermines the diplomatic framework established at Oslo.

To that end, Israelis are beginning to parse the possible meanings of a Palestinian state as the central element of a plan to take the place of an unreachable final status agreement. "There is no reason that a Palestinian declaration of independence will produce a crisis and violence," explains Knesset member Amnon Rubinstein, a former member of Rabin's cabinet. Israel's recognition of such a state, he adds, need not signify recognition of the borders proclaimed by Arafat—most probably all of the West Bank and Gaza Strip,



including East Jerusalem. Israel's experience in this regard—it has never formally outlined its borders yet is recognized and has proper diplomatic relations—is instructive. So too is that of Jordan, whose annexation of the West Bank in 1951 was rejected by most of the international community without effecting universal recognition of Jordan itself.

Even a unilateral Palestinian declaration of independence can be accommodated, argues Rubinstein. Ireland followed such a policy in relation to Britain which duly recognized the new state. Yet a final status agreement between the two coun-

tries, which formally established a recognized border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, took decades to reach.

As long as the new Palestinian state does not seek to impose its sovereignty over areas contested by Israel, and as long as Israel can prevent international—read American—recognition of Palestinian sovereignty over the entire West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, Rubinstein believes there need be no conflict.

Palestinians are hinting that they understand the rules of the game that are now being written.

"The area of our state is known," explained Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Nabil Amr, "If we were to declare the state before having sovereignty over the entire area, we would declare to the world that the areas still not under our rule are occupied." Israel can probably live with such a formulation.

This formulation could also provide for Israel's annexation of West Bank and Gaza territory where Israeli settlements are located, principally around Jerusalem and near the Green Line. This area would also be contested by the new Palestinian state as part of its patrimony, but border disputes between states are a standard feature of international affairs, and need not degenerate into violence.

Just as Israel would not recognize Palestine's declared borders, Palestinian leaders would "acquiesce," in the words of one informed Palestinian, but not formally agree to, the annexation of settlements.

Independence in the absence of a final status agreement, a Palestinian state claiming all of the West Bank and Gaza but in de facto control of approximately half of it, and Israel's annexation of 10 to 20 percent of the West Bank need not exclude both security cooperation and reasonably peaceful relations between Israel and Palestine, and an interminable peace process to decide ownership of the remaining 20 to 30 percent of the disputed area that remains under effective Israeli sovereignty. Such is the vision animating Israeli and Palestinian policy-makers today. ♦

### Settlers Report Population 12.5 Percent Increase— to 195,000 in West Bank and Gaza

<i>Regional Council</i>	<i>Population* Dec-98</i>	<i>Population** Dec-99</i>	<i>Numerical Increase</i>	<i>Increase</i>
Oranit	4,490	4,800	310	6.9%
Alfe Menache	4,360	4,900	640	12.4%
Elkana	2,920	3,300	380	13.0%
Efrat	6,120	6,600	480	7.8%
Ariel	14,400	16,100	1,700	11.8%
Bet El	3,670	4,000	430	12.0%
Bet Arie	2,230	2,500	270	12.1%
Betar Ilit	11,300	13,500	2,200	19.4%
Benjamin	23,200	25,050	1,850	8.0%
Jordan Valley	2,900	3,400	500	17.2%
Givat Ze'ev	9,720	10,500	780	8.0%
Etzion Bloc	8,100	9,200	1,100	13.5%
Har Adar	1,380	1,500	120	8.7%
Mt. Hebron	3,800	4,500	700	18.4%
Hebron	480	480	0	0.0%
Kiryat Arba	5,710	5,900	190	3.3%
Gaza	6,100	6,600	500	8.2%
Ma'ale Adumim	22,200	25,200	3,000	13.5%
Ma'ale Ephraim	1,430	1,700	270	18.9%
Emmanuel	3,290	3,900	610	18.5%
Kadumim	2,400	3,000	600	25.0%
Kiryat Sefer	10,500	13,000	2,500	23.8%
Karne Shomron	5,370	6,000	630	11.7%
Shomron	15,400	17,150	1,750	11.4%
Dead Sea	800	900	100	12.5%
Total West Bank/Gaza Strip	172,270	193,680	21,610	12.5%

\* According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, *Ha'aretz*, April 2, 2000.

\*\* According to the Yesha Council.

Note: Population figures reported by the CBS are historically lower than those provided by YESHA. The percentage increases therefore somewhat exaggerate the dimension of population growth.

## FROM THE ISRAELI PRESS

The current crisis has produced great disappointment among many in the Palestinian leadership who thought that the current Israeli government would be prepared at least to stop the expansion of settlements. They expected that government ministers would begin to prepare the Israeli public for the evacuation of settlements—places like Netzarim, in the suburbs of Gaza, or Tel Rumeina in Hebron—as well as other places that almost every minister in this government believes should already have been evacuated.

Yasser Abd Rabbo, the minister in charge of negotiations on the final status, lives in al-Bireh in a house only meters away from the fence of the settlement of Psagot. He has said to members of the Israeli negotiating team that when he wakes up every morning, he sees his neighbor, a settler, through the window, and he asks himself how much time will

it take before the son of this settler, or his own son, takes a gun and shoots at the other.

Instead of a discussion on evacuating settlements, the Palestinian delegation receives daily reports on the growing numbers of apartments for the settlers, on the expansion of their lands, and on the explosion of construction in the new Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem—Har Homa and Ras al-Amud—projects that were stopped by the Netanyahu government.

“Ehud Barak speaks to us in sweet phrases but implements the most dishonest policy,” notes Hassan Asfour, a member of the Palestinian cabinet and one of the heads of negotiations since Oslo.

Danny Rubinstein, *Ha'aretz*  
February 28, 2000

### “End the Cease Fire”

It is useful to remember two things. One is that the entire conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is about land. The long history of fights, wars and resistance have been about Palestinians trying to defend their land and prevent the Zionists from seizing it.

Second is that the terms of reference of this peace process and articles in signed agreements like the original Declaration of Principles stipulate that neither party may undertake unilateral actions that prejudice the issues to be negotiated.

The Israelis are continuing the war as viciously as ever. Daily they take more land from Palestine. The Palestinians once countered this Israeli aggression by resisting and fighting back in wars or guerrilla fights or diplomatic battles against Israel, as well as inciting the Arab masses and governments to boycott Israel.

But this struggle has stopped. It has been replaced by cooperation with Israel against those who try to resist Israeli aggression over land. It has also been replaced by Palestinian efforts to encourage Arabs to end the boycott of Israel and to contribute to Arab-Israeli joint activities and projects that most Arab people consider unnecessary.

The tragedy is that while Israel unilaterally continues the war, the Palestinian side is unilaterally ceasing fire. This is adding negatively to the imbalance between the two sides in terms of power and action. Israel, therefore, is enjoying having its cake and eating it, too. The only way to stop this is if the Palestinian side offers Israel one of two options: either we both cease fire, i.e., Israel stops its settlement expansion policy or that peace negotiations should not be the only type of relationship between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

Ghassan Khatib, *publisher of the Palestine Report, April 12, 2000*

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