

# REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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## A SETTLEMENT FREEZE... OR MORE OF THE SAME

*By Geoffrey Aronson*

Never in the forty-two years that Israel has been occupying and settling the West Bank has an Israeli prime minister taken seriously, let alone implemented, U.S. demands for a freeze of settlement expansion. From the administration of Lyndon Johnson, when the United States first noted Israel's violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibiting the transfer of its civilian population to the occupied territories, to the June 4, 2009, declaration in Cairo by President Barack Obama rejecting "the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements," Washington's opposition to settlements has been variously, and always successfully, ignored, outlived, sidelined, or negotiated away.

Israel has built settlements demonstratively, as a "Zionist response" to Palestinian attacks or aggressive American diplomacy. The settlements in Hebron fit this category, as do the "Baker settlements," championed by Secretary of State James Baker's nemesis Ariel Sharon almost twenty years ago. In one of these, Revava, outside of Nablus, a new neighborhood of 52 "villas" is now under construction.

Israel has built settlements quietly, hoping not to excite strenuous international opposition. Until recently, this has been the case with E-1, the vast area of the West Bank east of Jerusalem where for many years Israel has been constructing elaborate infrastructure for future settlement that would effectively divide the north and south West Bank

and seal off East Jerusalem from its Palestinian hinterland. This project continues despite widespread protest, including a recent, unprecedented public ceremony inaugurating a new national police chief in the imposing police headquarters built in the eastern part of E-1.

Prime Ministers Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir trumpeted their settlement achievements. Many others, including Yitzhak Rabin, Ehud Barak, and Ehud Olmert "talked left and built right." Whatever the method, Israel has never stopped building settlements and related transportation and security infrastructure for settlers.

Israel has built settlements without consideration for international opinion, as did Defense Minister Ehud Barak when in June 2009 he authorized the Civil Administration to submit a plan for the construction of 300 housing units in the unauthorized outpost of Givat Habrecha, near the settlement of Talmon east of the separation barrier. Palestinian opposition to settlements is invariably ignored or dismissed.

Is this central feature of the occupation about to change? President Obama's insistent call for a comprehensive end to continued settlement activity is unprecedented in its intensity. Despite the fact that until now all that he has asked of Israel is that it abide by the settlement commitments of George W. Bush's road map, Obama's demand rings all the louder in comparison to the more forgiving U.S. policies of the Clinton and Bush administrations.

It is not surprising that when faced with Obama's demand for a freeze, Israel's leaders are confident that the new president's efforts will be neutralized. Once again they are offering a menu of policy compromises—a freeze of limited duration and scope, construction within existing settlement perimeters, no new settlements or special government incentives, "natural growth" to accommodate growing settler families and their everyday needs, and expansion only in settlement blocs. These artifices have succeeded for almost five decades, enabling Israel to settle close to half a million of its citizens in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Golan Heights in the face of virtually unanimous international opposition. This is an astonishing achievement that reflects Israel's determination, the chronic weakness of American and international diplomacy, and the failure of Palestinian protest and opposition.

"[U.S. special envoy George] Mitchell knows the fraud exactly," says a former top official in Israel's Defense Ministry. When Israelis argued that restricting the natural growth of settlements is like the Holocaust, as they did at a May 26, 2009 meeting in London, the Americans sitting opposite remained unmoved.

While Israel's leaders' discomfort with Obama's demand is genuine, like the incredulity of a child when a parent finally says "enough!" they hope that something will happen to "change the

SETTLEMENT, continued on page 6

## TO OUR READERS

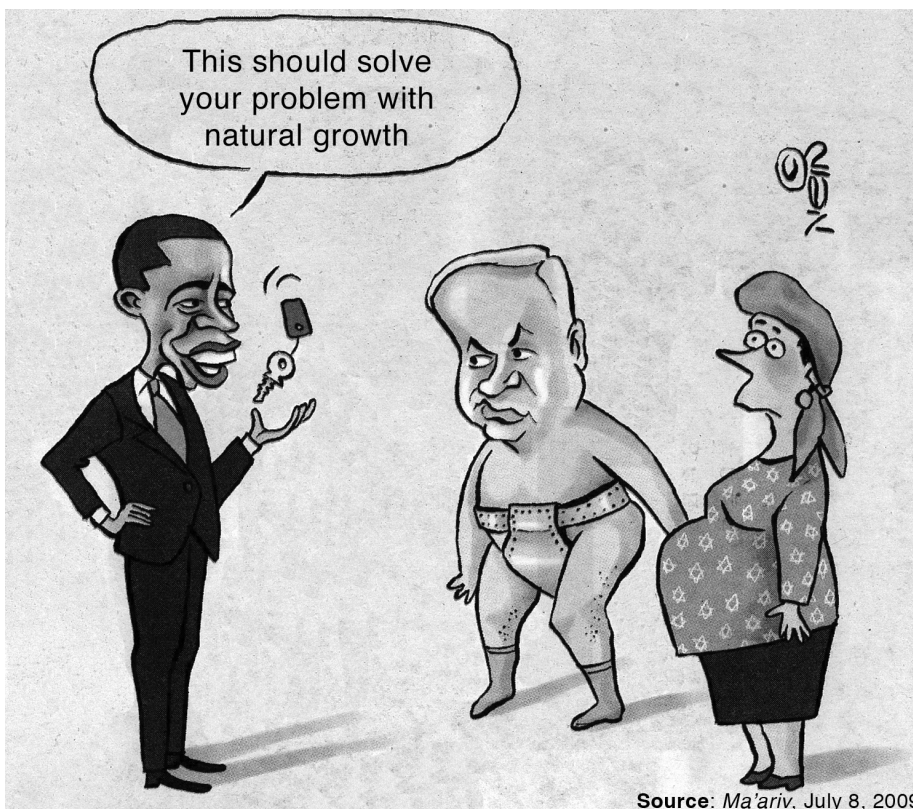
America's commitment to Israel's security has been a constant in U.S. foreign policy. It is based on our national security interest in Arab-Israeli peace, the assumption of shared values, and the belief that Israel would make peace if it felt truly secure. For years, the rationale for massive American military aid to Israel and ensuring its "qualitative edge" against all adversaries was "to give Israel the confidence to make peace."

America's security support for Israel helped move Egypt and Jordan to make peace with Israel, and more recently, influenced the promise of the other Arab League states to make peace if Israel liberates the Palestinians. The main threat to Israel's security today, however, does not come from external forces—not even Iran, given Israeli and U.S. deterrent power—but from Israel's forty-year occupation and settlement of Palestinian territories which now prevent a genuine two-state peace. Unless this project is reversed, Israel will confront permanent strife and violence,

notwithstanding its military might, and its security as a democratic, Jewish state will erode.

Perpetuation of the status quo could also eventually weaken the U.S. commitment to Israel. This commitment reflects a sense of affinity based on the tragic history of the Jewish people and a belief that the Zionist state upholds liberal values of democracy, peace, equality and justice inscribed in Israel's Declaration of Independence. Israel's occupation and settlement policies defy these values and harm its security. If these policies continue, Israel's secular, liberal elements will lose to the challenge of a harsh, intolerant, militant Zionism that worships land and abandons enlightenment values. It is time for Israel and the U.S. to begin an honest discussion of more realistic policies that will make Israel truly secure, bring justice to the Palestinians, and preserve strong U.S.-Israeli relations.

*Philip C. Wilcox, Jr.*



Source: Ma'ariv, July 8, 2009

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## THE BLUE VELVET HILLS OF MY YOUTH HAVE BEEN DESTROYED

*Palestinians will never be able to undo the damage caused by these massive, illegal and politically motivated settlements*

By Raja Shehadeh

I can remember the appearance of the hills around Ramallah in 1979, before any Jewish settlement came to be established there. In the spring of that year I walked north from Ramallah, where I live, to the nearby village of A'yn Qenya and up the pine-forested hill. A gazelle leapt ahead of me. When I reached the top I could see hills spread below me like crumpled blue velvet, with the hamlets of Janiya and Deir Ammar huddled between its folds. On top of the highest hill in the distance stood the village of Ras Karkar with its centuries-old citadel that dominated the area during Ottoman times. I had been following the worrying developments of extensive settlement-building elsewhere in the West Bank and wondered how long it would be before these hills came under the merciless blades of the Israeli bulldozers. I didn't have to wait long. A year later the top of the hill was lopped off and the settlement of Dolev, then a cluster of red-tiled Swiss-style chalets, was established.

Now, more than 25 years later, Dolev has expanded and taken over the hills to its north for vineyards. Numerous highways for the exclusive use of its Jewish settlers connect it to the many other settlements in the area and to Israel's coastline. Those settlers travelling to and from Israeli cities where they work can only see road signs indicating other Jewish settlements. They encounter no Palestinian traffic on the roads nor do they see any Palestinian villages. No wonder then that I was once stopped by an armed settler and interrogated as to why I was taking a walk in his hills. When I asked him what right he had to be there, he answered: "I live here." He then pointedly added: "Unlike you, I really live here."

Not a single year has passed since Israel acquired the territories in 1967 in which Jewish settlements were not built. Had it pursued peace as assiduously, surely it would have achieved it by now. Instead, whenever the U.S. pressed for a peace initiative, the "proper Zionist response" was the creation of [a new] settlement. The pattern of settling the Ramallah hills illustrates well the workings of this doomed policy. The Jewish settlement of Talmon was established in 1989 on the lands of the Palestinian village of Janiya, when the government of Yitzhak Shamir was being pressured to agree to start negotiations with the Palestinians. Talmon B was established, about two miles away, when the US secretary of state, James Baker, arrived in Israel two years later to broker the first ever peace conference between Israel and Arab countries.

At that time, Shamir dismissed the new settlement as "just a new neighbourhood." The signing of the Oslo accords under a Rabin government in 1993 led to the building of a road connecting Dolev to Beit Eil, running through private Palestinian land. This winding road passed through the beautiful wadi linking Ramallah to A'yn Qenya, causing extensive destruction to the ancient rock formations and olive orchards along the way. One rockface that I particularly miss used to be studded with cyclamens during the late winter months, coming down all the way to the spring—which was also destroyed.

The Israeli policy of speeding up settlement construction in the face of U.S. diplomatic pressure shows no sign of changing. Following the latest U.S. administration declaration that Israel must impose a complete freeze on settlements, the country's defence minister, Ehud Barak, declared last week the decision to establish 300 housing units in Givat Habrecha (Hebrew for hill of the blessing), one of the 12 outposts near the settlement of Talmon in the Ramallah hills. A few days later, on 29 June, he announced a further expansion of the

illegal settlement of Adam, where 50 families are to move to a new neighbourhood located on a relatively large parcel of land outside the built-up area of the settlement. This also violates the Israeli commitment in the road map agreement not to expand the area of existing settlements.

This demand for a freeze on new settlements—which is not accepted by Israel even temporarily, as one Likud minister underlined today—falls short of what should happen if a viable peace is to be achieved: a complete evacuation of all the settlements built illegally in the territories occupied by Israel in 1967. Some would say this cannot possibly happen, given that there are around half a million Israeli settlers living in the West Bank. But who would have thought in 1962 that it would be possible to evict a million French Algerians who had been living in the country for almost a century and who represented roughly 9% of the population?

Until this happens, we will have a continuation of the present reality where there is a single apartheid Israeli state encompassing pre-1967 borders and the Palestinian occupied territories. The sad truth is that when Israeli illegal settlements come to an end, as they must, Palestinians will not be able to undo the damage caused to the landscape by this massive, politically motivated development.

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## SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

**May 2** Dozens of settlers from Bat Ayin attack the Umm Safa village, injuring two Palestinians. The incident follows the recent murder of a settler by a resident of Umm Safa. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) arrest four settlers involved in the attack, two of whom are off-duty soldiers. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

**May 3** Army Radio reports that Israeli security officials fear an increase in the number of incidents between settlers and Palestinians because of reports in the Palestinian press about settlement expansion.

Israeli interior minister and Shas party leader Eli Yishai recommends expanding Ma'ale Adumim by 12,000 dunams. The expansion would include 6,000 new housing units in the area between the Ma'ale Adumim and Qedar settlements. (Ma'an News)

Settlers release boars near the Palestinian village of Salim, east of Nablus, damaging sheep barns and beehives. (Ma'an News)

**May 4** Interior Minister Yishai announces plans to develop the City of David as a Jewish residential area in Jerusalem. (Arutz 7)

**May 5** Hatem Abdel Qader, the Palestinian presidential advisor for Jerusalem affairs, confirms the halt to 29 home demolitions in East Jerusalem following intervention by Palestinian lawyers and legal advisors. (Ma'an News)

French foreign minister Bernard Kouchner meets with Israeli foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman and demands that Israel halt construction in the settlements and open border crossings to improve the economic situation in the Gaza Strip. (Army Radio)

**May 6** Palestinian residents of Sinjil, near Ramallah, accuse settlers from the Givat HaRoeh outpost of cutting down 45 of the village's olive trees. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

**May 10** Palestinian farmers from Beit Ummar are denied access to their agricultural lands near the settlement of Bat Ayin after the area is declared a closed military zone. (Ma'an News)

**May 12** Hundreds of right-wing activists gather in Homesh to call for the resettlement of the West Bank area evacuated as part of the 2005 disengagement. MK Uri Arieli, Rabbi Dov Lior, and Daniela Weiss are among the participants. (*Ma'ariv*)

**May 13** Israel's High Court of Justice orders the state to explain within 90 days why it has not followed the court's ruling to evacuate the illegal settlement outposts of Givat Asaf, Ma'ale Rihbam, Mitzpe Lak-hish, Mitzpe Yitzhar, and Ramat Gilad. (*Ha'aretz*)

**May 15** Israeli authorities prevent international activists and Palestinians from accessing lands in front of the Kiryat Arba settlement. The Palestinians sought to clean their agricultural lands, which had been declared part of a closed military zone by the IDF. (Ma'an News)

**May 17** Ma'an News reports that an Israeli court will fine Palestinian families in Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood \$50,000 each if they fail to obey orders to evacuate by July 19.

**May 18** Israeli contractors begin planning new construction in the Maskiot settlement in the Jordan Valley. The units will house eight families evacuated from Gaza's Shirat Hayam settlement. (*Ma'ariv*)

Arab League secretary-general Amr Moussa calls on the leaders of Arab states to boycott Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as long as construction in the settlements continues. (*Ma'ariv*)

**May 19** Settlers from the Gilad outpost set fire to land belonging to Palestinian farmers near Qalqiliya. The flames reach the villages of Jit and Far'ata, scorching large areas of wheat fields and olive groves. (Ma'an News)

Settlers injure several Palestinian residents and an Israeli activist at a rally protesting recent settler attacks and civil administration assertions that the farmers do not own the land despite documents proving ownership. (Ma'an News)

**May 20** The Israel Land Authority publishes tenders for private construction on two plots of land and for the construction of apartment buildings on nine plots in the Golan Heights settlement of Katzrin. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

**May 22** *Zeman Yerushalaim* reports that settler activists from the Foundation for Israel Land enter a Palestinian home slated for evacuation in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of Jerusalem and change the locks. They intend on doing the same in 40 homes in the area following a court ruling to evict

their Palestinian residents.

**May 25** Settlers from Ma'on and Beit Yatir attack four Palestinian shepherds on land near the settlements. (Ma'an News)

**May 26** The civil administration releases a full list of buildings targeted for evacuation in 22 outposts. (*Ha'aretz*)

**May 27** Israeli police evacuate the outposts of Hill 18 and the Federman farm near Kiryat Arba. The farm had been previously evacuated. (Army Radio)

Defense Minister Ehud Barak tells the High Court of Justice that nine disputed Ofra homes will not be demolished. (Arutz 7)

**May 31** Clashes erupt between settlers and Israeli security forces during the evacuation of a few West Bank settlement outposts, including one linked to the Yitzhar settlement. Another outpost, Shvut Ami B, was evacuated for the twentieth time. (*Yediot Aharonot*, *Ma'ariv*)

**June 1** Settlers assault and injure six Palestinians at the Qedumim junction, between Nablus and Qalqiliya. Settlers set fire to Palestinian-owned fields of wheat, barley, and olive trees. (Ma'an News)

**June 2** Palestinians attack a group of soldiers and settlers, stabbing one soldier, in retaliation for the previous day's attack at the Qedumim junction. (Ma'an News)

Arutz 7 reports the Interior Ministry's approval of the construction of a new hotel in East Jerusalem.

News media are allowed into the controversial E-1 police station between Jerusalem and Ma'ale Adumim to report the retirement ceremony of the commander of the Israel police in the West Bank. (*Ha'aretz*)

In response to increased American pressure on Israel for failing to dismantle settlement outposts, YESHA Council chairman Danny Dayan asserts, "The Americans are employing political terrorism against the State of Israel." (*Ma'ariv*)

**June 3** Israeli authorities issue demolition orders for 28 houses owned by Palestinians in the northern West Bank. (Ma'an News)

Palestinians from the West Bank town of Salfit report an attack by a group of settlers from Ariel who unleashed wild boars. (Ma'an News)

## SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

Israel Radio reports that the Defense Ministry has set up observation posts near the settlement of Eli on Palestinian land. The posts are located on the route of a road intended to connect Eli to the Yovel settlement outpost, but the High Court of Justice has ordered a halt to its paving.

**June 4** *Ma'ariv* reports the rebuilding of four outposts evacuated on June 1. Two additional outposts were also established.

**June 5** Israeli authorities order the evacuation of 18 Palestinian family homes in the Jabal al-Ahmar area, near the Jordan Valley. (*al-Hayat al-Jadida*)

Settler activists construct a new outpost between Jerusalem and the Beit El settlement and call it Givat Obama. Another outpost, Oz Yehonatan, is constructed near the settlement of Kokhav HaShahar. (Arutz 7)

**June 6** Israeli security forces evacuate the Bnei Shiloh and Oz Yehonatan outposts. (Army Radio)

**June 7** *Ha'aretz* reports that the Israeli Interior Ministry will compensate 50 Palestinian families a total of \$64,000 for property damage caused by settlers during the evacuation of the "Peace House" in Hebron. (See timeline entries for December 2, 4, 5, 10, 15 in the *Settlement Report*, vol. 19, no. 2)

*Ha'aretz* reports right-wing activists sending murder threats to IDF Gen. Gadi Shami, the head of Central Command.

**June 8** *Ha'aretz* reports that Interior Minister Eli Yishai plans to transfer millions of dollars to expand the municipal areas of West Bank settlements.

**June 9** The Coalition to Defend the Rights of Palestinians in Jerusalem reports that Israeli authorities issued orders for the demolition of 54 Palestinian homes in May 2009. (*al-Quds al-Arabi*)

*Ha'aretz* reports that Israel intends to drop charges against Ze'ev Baruda, the settler whose shooting of two Palestinians during clashes over the Hebron "Peace House" in December 2009 was recorded on camera. The High Court of Justice held that releasing the tape would help Baruda's defense but also threaten national security.

**June 11** Israeli police present demolition orders for 88 homes in the al-Bustan quarter

of Silwan, south of the Old City of Jerusalem. (*al-Quds al-Arabi*)

*Ha'aretz* reports Interior Minister Eli Yishai's rejection of plans to construct 13,500 housing units for Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

**June 12** *Ha'aretz* reports that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has sidelined an already moribund Knesset committee created under Ariel Sharon to implement the March 2005 findings of the Sasson Report on outposts in the West Bank.

**June 16** Rabbi Dov Lior, chairman of the settlements' Committee of Rabbis, calls on settlers to establish new outposts throughout the West Bank following a speech by Prime Minister Netanyahu on June 14. (*Israel Ha'Yom*)

**Settler leader Pinhas Wallerstein notes that, "all these housing units [currently under construction] have already been sold. There is not a single available apartment. . . . The minimum needed for natural growth in Judea and Samaria is about 2,500 housing units every year."**

**June 21** Army Radio reports that Israel's 2009–2010 budget allocates \$250 million for settlements in the West Bank. The budget calls for \$125 million for various security expenses; most of the remainder is for housing construction.

**June 22** Following reports that groups that promote the human rights of Palestinians in the West Bank had briefed Israeli border police, the settler group, Human Rights in Judea and Samaria, contacts police commander Yisrael Yitzhak to brief the border police on ways to protect the human rights of Jews in the West Bank. (*Makor Rishon-Hatzofe*)

**June 23** *Ha'aretz* reports that soldiers now accompany Israeli government workers tracking and mapping illegal construction in the West Bank following attacks by settler groups.

*Ma'ariv* reports that eight soldiers from the West Bank outpost of Kida alerted their

superiors that they would not report for military duty if their outpost is evacuated.

Settlers uproot 150 trees belonging to Palestinian farmers from Bet Ummar, north of Hebron. (*al-Hayat al-Jadida*)

Settlers level 40 dunams of Palestinian land belonging to residents of Nahaleen. (*al-Ayyam*)

**June 24** Defense Minister Barak authorizes the civil administration to submit plans for the construction of 300 new housing units in the Givat Habrecha outpost, near Talmon settlement. (*Ha'aretz*)

**June 28** B'Tselem reports that the lack of treatment for raw sewage in Judea and Samaria, whether from settlements or Palestinian municipalities, threatens to damage the area's aquifer. Israel has delayed authorization for establishing treatment plants to serve Palestinians and only about two-thirds of settlements are connected to existing treatment plants. (Israeli Radio) (See "World Bank Report: Assessment of Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development–April 2009" in the *Settlement Report*, vol. 19, no. 3)

**June 29** *Ha'aretz* reports that Jerusalem mayor Nir Barkat is set to announce a plan to freeze 70 percent of demolition orders for unauthorized Palestinian construction in East Jerusalem and to negotiate compensation for families evicted from the remaining 30 percent.

Army Radio reports Defense Ministry approval of a plan to build 1,450 new housing units in the Adam settlement, in the Binyamin region near Jerusalem, in an effort to resettle some of the residents of the Migron outpost. The High Court of Justice rules that only 50 housing units are permitted.

Itzik Shadmi of the Binyamin settlers' council states in response to the High Court's decision, "We will not accept any arrangement that implies that we do not have the right to settle anywhere in the Land of Israel, and therefore the arrangement struck between the Defense Ministry and the High Court is unacceptable. . . . The only thing we are willing to do is to move Migron 300 meters and build it as a permanent settlement. There is no reason we cannot be on this hill." (*Yediot Aharonot*) ♦

subject” and draw the American spotlight off settlements, as has happened for decades.

As long as the diplomatic focus remains limited to a settlement freeze, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will remain within his comfort zone. Netanyahu would prefer to discuss and debate *ad naseum* the finer points of settlement expansion, construction perimeters and the like—a contest Israel has always won—than to address the more fundamental issues of borders, settlement evacuation, security measures, Jerusalem, and refugees, which must be resolved to achieve a two-state solution.

Obama’s goals are much broader than a settlement freeze. The appointment of Mitchell is the clearest signal of his

intention to work vigorously to end the occupation and to create a Palestinian state at peace with Israel. Yet there will be a diplomatic “opportunity cost” if the settlement freeze debate is prolonged, and the issues of borders, settlement evacuation, and Palestinian sovereignty are deferred. A continuing impasse risks undermining the momentum and credibility of a U.S. diplomatic initiative aimed at ending occupation and creating a Palestinian state.

Whether or not Israel rejects a freeze, Obama and Mitchell will have to continue a more assertive and convincing diplomacy that addresses the wide range of final status issues—settlement evacuation prominent among them—if it aspires to end Israel’s 42 year occupation and settlement adventure. ♦

SOURCES OF POPULATION GROWTH—ISRAEL AND THE WEST BANK, 1991–2007\*

	Natural Increase			Migration Balance				Total Growth			Annual Growth Rate	
				Israel		West Bank & Gaza						
	Israel (000s)	West Bank & Gaza (000s)	% of Israel	(000s)	% Net Growth	(000s)	% Net Growth	Israel (000s)	West Bank & Gaza (000s)	WBG % of Israel	Israel (%)	West Bank Gaza (%)
1991	71.1	2.7	3.8	153.8	68.4	9.5	77.9	224.9	12.2	5.4	4.9	14.8
1992	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1993	75.9	3.3	4.3	44.8	37.1	7.7	70.6	120.8	10.9	9.0	2.5	10.4
1994	76.5	3.7	4.8	60	45.3	3.7	32.5	132.5	11.4	8.6	2.7	9.8
1995	77.4	4	5.2	59.2	43.3	6.8	63.0	136.6	10.8	7.9	2.7	8.5
1996	82.2	4.4	5.4	46.6	36.2	7.2	62.1	128.8	11.6	9.0	2.5	8.4
1997	83.3	5.1	6.1	45.5	35.3	8.2	61.7	128.8	13.3	10.3	2.5	9
1998	87.1	5.5	6.3	42.3	32.7	6.5	54.2	129.5	12	9.3	2.4	7.5
1999	88.9	5.7	6.4	67.1	43.0	6	51.3	156.0	11.7	7.5	2.8	6.8
2000	92.4	6.3	6.8	53.2	36.5	8.2	56.9	145.7	14.4	9.9	2.6	7.9
2001	92.9	6.6	7.1	36.7	28.3	3.4	34.0	129.6	10	7.7	2.2	5
2002	93.7	7.1	7.6	16.7	15.1	4.8	40.3	110.4	11.9	10.8	1.9	5.7
2003	98.9	7.7	7.8	6.8	6.4	3.9	33.6	105.7	11.6	11.0	1.8	5.3
2004	99.3	8	8.1	9.8	9.0	4.1	33.9	109.0	12.1	11.1	1.8	5.2
2005	96.8	8.1	8.4	12.2	11.2	4.1	33.6	109.0	12.2	11.2	1.8	5.2
2006	100.7	8.6	8.5	10.9	9.8	5.7	39.6	111.6	14.4	12.9	1.8	5.8
2007	102.4	9.2	9.0	10.1	9.0	5.3	36.6	112.5	14.5	12.9	1.8	5.6

\*West Bank and Gaza settlement data excludes East Jerusalem settlements.

All Gaza settlements were evacuated in 2005.

The Israel column figures in this table include settlers in East Jerusalem.

Natural increase is determined by subtracting the number of deaths from the number of births each year.

Migration balance accounts for new residents. In the Israel column, the migration balance is immigrants into the country. In the West Bank and Gaza figures, the migration balance is the net difference between departures and arrivals to settlements.

Sources: Central Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Housing and Construction; “Sources of Population Growth” and “Dwellings, by Initiating Sector, Type of Locality and District,” Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1992–2008.

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## U.S. STATEMENTS ON A SETTLEMENT FREEZE

**President Barack Obama:** I have said before and I will repeat again that it is, I believe, in the interest not only of the Palestinians, but also the Israelis and the United States and the international community to achieve a two-state solution in which Israelis and Palestinians are living side by side in peace and security. . . . Now, Israel is going to have to take some difficult steps as well, and I shared with the prime minister the fact that under the roadmap and under Annapolis that there's a clear understanding that we have to make progress on settlements. Settlements have to be stopped in order for us to move forward. That's a difficult issue. I recognize that, but it's an important one and it has to be addressed.

**Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu:** I want to make it clear that we don't want to govern the Palestinians. We want to live in peace with them. We want them to govern themselves, absent a handful of powers that could endanger the state of Israel. And for this there has to be a clear goal. The goal has to be an end to conflict. There will have to be compromises by Israelis and Palestinians alike. We're ready to do our share. We hope the Palestinians will do their share, as well. If we resume negotiations, as we plan to do, then I think that the Palestinians will have to recognize Israel as a Jewish state; will have to also enable Israel to have the means to defend itself. And if those conditions are met, Israel's security conditions are met, and there's recognition of Israel's legitimacy, its permanent legitimacy, then I think we can envision an arrangement where Palestinians and Israelis live side by side in dignity, in security, and in peace.

Remarks at the White House, May 18, 2009

**Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton:** With respect to settlements, the president was very clear. . . . He wants to see a stop to settlements—not some settlements, not outposts, not natural growth exceptions. We think it is in the best interests of the effort that we are engaged in that settlement expansion cease. That is our position. That is what we have communicated very clearly, not only to the Israelis but to the Palestinians and others. And we intend to press that point.

Press availability with Egyptian foreign minister  
Ahmed Ali Aboul Gheit at the  
Department of State, May 27, 2009

**President Barack Obama:** From the first week that I arrived in this office, I insisted that this is a critical issue to deal with, in part because it is in the United States' interest to achieve peace; that the absence of peace between Palestinians and Israelis is an impediment to a whole host of other areas of increased cooperation and more stable security for people in the region, as well as the United States. And so I want to see

progress made, and we will work very aggressively to achieve that.

I don't want to put an artificial timetable, but I do share President Mahmoud Abbas's feelings and I believe that many Israelis share the same view that time is of the essence, that we can't continue with a drift, with the increased fear and resentments on both sides, the sense of hopelessness around the situation that we've seen for many years now—we need to get this thing back on track. And I will do everything I can, and my administration will do everything I can—my special envoy, George Mitchell, is working as diligently as he can, as is my entire national security team, to make sure that we jumpstart this process and get it moving again.

Remarks during a visit to the White House by Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas, May 28, 2009

**President Barack Obama:** I do believe that, if you follow the roadmap approach that has been laid, if Israel abides by its obligations—that includes no settlements—if the Palestinians abide by their obligations, to deal with the security situation, to eliminate incitement, if all this—surrounding Arab states, working with the Quartet, are able to encourage economic development and political development, then I think that we can actually make some progress.

Interview by Justin Webb,  
BBC World Service, June 2, 2009

**President Barack Obama:** Now is the time for Palestinians to focus on what they can build. The Palestinian Authority must develop its capacity to govern, with institutions that serve the needs of its people. Hamas does have support among some Palestinians, but they also have to recognize they have responsibilities. To play a role in fulfilling Palestinian aspirations, to unify the Palestinian people, Hamas must put an end to violence, recognize past agreements, recognize Israel's right to exist.

At the same time, Israelis must acknowledge that just as Israel's right to exist cannot be denied, neither can Palestine's. The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop.

And Israel must also live up to its obligation to ensure that Palestinians can live and work and develop their society. Just as it devastates Palestinian families, the continuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza does not serve Israel's security; neither does the continuing lack of opportunity in the West Bank. Progress in the daily lives of the Palestinian people must be a critical part of a road to peace, and Israel must take concrete steps to enable such progress.

Remarks at Cairo University, June 4, 2009

**"The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements."**

President Barack Obama



## SETTLEMENT CONSTRUCTION BOOM IN THE WEST BANK

*According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, at the end of 2008 no fewer than 3,200 new housing units were under active construction throughout West Bank settlements (excluding East Jerusalem). The Ministry of Housing and Construction has longer*

*term plans to construct 73,302 additional dwelling units in Israel and the settlements, including 5,722 in East Jerusalem and 17,000 in the Etzion settlement bloc alone.*

### Settlement Construction Snapshot

#### East Jerusalem

- 200-room hotel approved by the Interior Ministry's district planning office
- Building permits for 20 units in Sheikh Jarrah issued by the Jerusalem municipality's licensing committee.
- 1,200 units planned for the Har Homa settlement

#### West Bank

Ariel	220 houses under construction
Beitar Illit	327 houses under construction
Efrat	Dozens of new villas under construction
Elkana	52 houses under construction
Givat Ze'ev	750 houses under construction and will be populated in August

Hebron	10-story building next to Beit Romano being planned
Kedar	Ground being prepared for construction of 42 houses
Ma'ale Adumim	Approximately 900 houses under construction
Modi'in Illit	617 houses under construction
Ofra	10 houses under construction
Revava	52 houses under construction
Teqoa	Dozens of new villas under construction
Yakir	10 houses in the final stages of construction

Sources: Peace Now; "Immense Construction Boom in the West Bank," *Yediot Abaronot*, June 9, 2009; Akiva Eldar, "U.S. demands Israel halt construction in East Jerusalem market," *Ha'aretz*, June 2, 2009; "Apartments in the Territories: The Prices Are Not Frozen," *Yediot Abaronot*, June 25, 2009.

The president and the secretary of state have made U.S. policy clear: The only viable resolution to this conflict is for the aspirations of both sides to be met through two states. We believe that's the best way to guarantee Israel's long-term security. We believe it's in the security interest of the United States and of the entire region. The president, the secretary, and the entire administration are working vigorously toward a future where Israelis and Palestinians live side by side in peace and security, and where Israel has normal relations with its neighbors.

Our focus right now is to create the context for the resumption and early conclusion of meaningful negotiations. To help achieve this, we're asking all parties to take meaningful steps. Israelis and Palestinians have a responsibility to meet their obligations under the road map, to

which they committed in 2003. It's not just their responsibility. We believe it's in their interests as well.

For the Israelis, that means a stop to settlements and other actions. For the Palestinians, that means continuing their efforts to take responsibility for security and to end incitement. We're also asking the Arab countries to take meaningful steps toward peace and normalization. . . . The United States will not take any action which undermines Israel's security. The Palestinians are entitled to a viable, geographically contiguous state that provides independence and dignity for their people. We do not regard those two objectives as irreconcilable.

Briefing by George Mitchell, U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, June 16, 2009

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