

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

A Bimonthly Publication of the Foundation for Middle East Peace

Volume 19 Number 6

November-December 2009

NETANYAHU PLEDGES TO RESTRAIN SETTLEMENT EXPANSION— DOES IT MATTER?

By Geoffrey Aronson

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has adopted what he describes as “a policy of restraint regarding settlements which will include a suspension of new permits and new construction in Judea and Samaria for a period of ten months,” along with “a promise to enable normal life to continue for three hundred thousand Israeli citizens, our brothers and sisters, who live in Judea and Samaria.” During this period, construction continues without limitation in East Jerusalem settlements, where 200,000 Israelis now reside (see map, page 3). Construction will continue as well on at least 3,000 West Bank settlement housing units, along with unlimited construction of public facilities, meaning that the rate of settlement expansion will at best be only marginally effected during 2010 by the new policy. “When the suspension ends,” continued Netanyahu in his November 25, 2009, announcement, “my government will revert to the policies of previous governments in relation to construction.”

Although both Netanyahu and U.S. officials describe the policy as a unilateral decision by Israel, it is the result of bilateral negotiations following a demand for a total cessation of settlement expansion, including in East Jerusalem, initially demanded by the Barack Obama administration. The United States will continue to monitor settlement activity, but there is no formal method for third-party enforcement of

Netanyahu’s declaration or for sanctioning violations.

Zalman Shoval, a former Israeli ambassador to Washington and a Netanyahu confidant, explained that “U.S. and Israeli spokespeople stressed that the Israeli decision on a construction moratorium in Judea and Samaria was a unilateral step, and this was in order to spare Washington the need to relate to the question of whether this was with the U.S.’s consent or not. . . . The importance of the official statements in praise of the government’s decision—statements made in Washington—is that they give the seal of approval.”

Washington’s closely worded response was led by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who noted, “Today’s announcement by the Government of Israel helps move forward toward resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We believe that through good-faith negotiations the parties can mutually agree on an outcome which ends the conflict and reconciles the Palestinian goal of an independent and viable state based on the 1967 lines, with agreed swaps, and the Israeli goal of a Jewish state with secure and recognized borders that reflect subsequent developments and meet Israeli security requirements.”

Clinton, whose trip to the region in late October was billed as part of the effort to strengthen Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas caused a diplomatic storm when, in reply to Netanyahu, she explained, “What the

prime minister has offered in specifics of a restraint on the policy of settlements, which he has just described—no new starts, for example—is unprecedented in the context of the prior two negotiations.”

George Mitchell, Obama’s lead negotiator on the issue, noted in a press conference following Netanyahu’s announcement that the freeze idea is an instrument—a vehicle for creating conditions for a resumption of meaningful final status talks—not simply a process. On that score, the original U.S. aspiration for a complete freeze was understandable. An Israeli decision to declare, and more important, enforce a real suspension of settlement would have been “unprecedented” and if implemented on the ground would have reflected an Israeli decision to evacuate settlements. Abbas would indeed have been strengthened by the success of such a policy—which would have pointed the way to an end of occupation.

It remains to be seen how effectively Israel will restrain settlement expansion. Settlers and their allies regularly operate outside the law, undermining any attempt to simply legislate a new policy. Netanyahu will have to invest a significant amount of domestic political capital to enforce his commitment in the face of settler opposition. The support given to the new policy by Minister Benny Begin, a charter member of the Land of Israel club who resigned in

PLEDGES, continued on page 7

TO OUR READERS

Israel's stubborn resistance to President Obama's request for a comprehensive settlement freeze, notwithstanding ten months of patient U.S. efforts, confirms the tough road that lies ahead for U.S. diplomacy. Prime Minister Netanyahu's refusal to offer more than temporary, superficial restraint on settlement building indicates that far more ambitious and persuasive American policies will be needed to create a two-state peace.

Reaching this goal requires a vast transformation of Israeli policy. It means reversing its 40 year project of settlement, and evacuation of most of 230 West Bank settlements and a great many of the 300,000 settlers there, as well as a deal to share Jerusalem. It means sweeping changes in Israel's entrenched bureaucratic, legal, and financial institutions that promote settlements. And it calls for leadership changes in the IDF, in which a growing number of officers are settlers and religious nationalists.

Such dramatic changes will not occur

without a pro-peace political revival in Israel that challenges Israel's right-wing leadership to change. Israel's skeptical, alienated voters, and ultimately its leaders, must be persuaded that there is a credible path to peace. They must also understand that there will be adverse consequences for relations with the U.S. if Israel does not heed legitimate American interests. Such a radical shift in Israeli politics is unlikely to occur without a broader American policy designed to restore hope, encourage realism, and offer an American vision of peace in a way that combines candor, compassion and toughness.

The U.S. also needs a new diplomatic approach to the Palestinians to ensure that their leadership is a willing, credible partner that speaks with one voice. This will require changing current self-defeating policies that discourage Palestinian political reunification, without which negotiations cannot succeed.

Philip C. Wilcox Jr.

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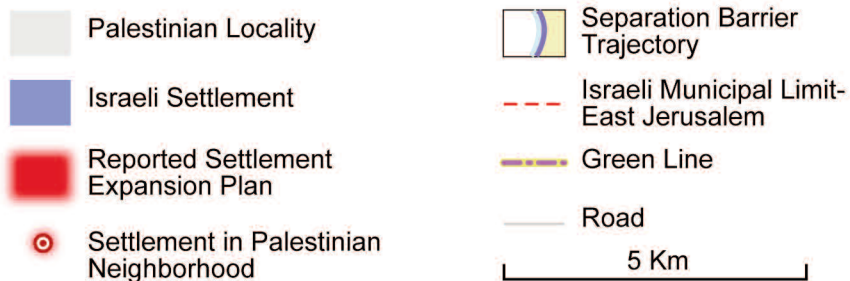
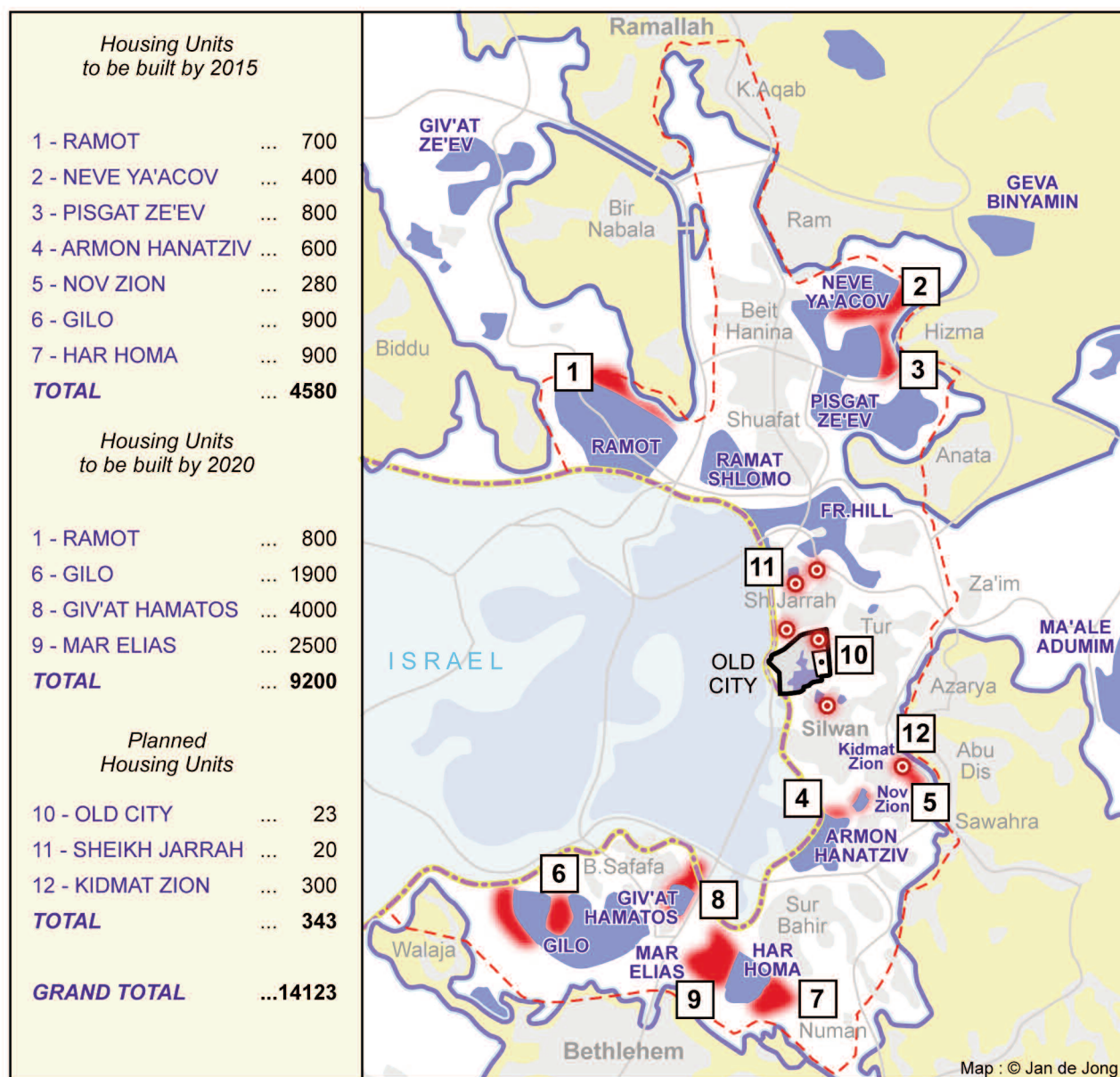
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On November 27, Saar, a sporting goods store in Israel, ran an advertisement for Columbia Sportswear that was directed at settlers. The ad copy reads:

"Suitable for active work in various regions, including outposts. . . ."

The ad appeared in the November 27 *Jerusalem Post* *Friday Magazine* and in the Hebrew language *Makor Rishon* *Hatzofe* Friday political supplement.

Reported Settlement Expansion Plans in East Jerusalem - November 2009



SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

August 2 Israeli police evict two Palestinian families from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem after the Israeli High Court rules that the buildings are Jewish owned. Jewish families move into the two buildings. (Army Radio)

August 3 A U.S. State Department official calls the eviction of Palestinian families from East Jerusalem a violation of Israel's commitment to the road map. (Israel Radio)

The IDF opens the Zion route in Hebron to Palestinian traffic. The route, which connects the Kiryat Arba settlement to settlements in Hebron ending at the Tomb of the Patriarchs, has been closed to Palestinians since 2000. The "disputed" al-Rajabi house and an outpost in the Hazon David synagogue are along the route. (*Ma'ariv*)

August 5 Israeli forces injure eight Palestinians while delivering demolition orders in the al-Bustan neighborhood, in East Jerusalem. The Jerusalem municipal government plans to level the entire neighborhood to build a park. (Ma'an News)

August 6 *Ma'ariv* reports that the IDF has recommended to the State Attorney's Office that settlers who establish outposts and refuse to vacate them be sued to recoup the cost of eviction.

August 7 Israeli reservists refuse to participate in a demolition order for the Shvut Ami outpost, near Kedumim, or to count the number of settlers living there. (*Makor Rishon-Hatzofe*)

August 9 Israel Radio reports that the paving of a road continues between the Eli settlement and the Yovel outpost despite a ruling by the Israeli High Court that it cease until the examination of a claim to the land by Palestinians from Krayut village.

August 10 In the Muslim quarter of Jerusalem, Defense Minister Barak joins right wing activists in a celebration during which a Torah scroll is brought to the Ohel Yitzhak synagogue. (*Ma'ariv*)

Israeli interior minister Eli Yishai visits the E-1 settlement area near Jerusalem and declares that construction there must continue despite U.S. opposition. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

August 12 Peace Now urges the civil administration to stop Kokhav Ya'akov settlers from placing caravans on private Palestinian land. (Israel Radio)

Members of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade open fire near Ma'ale Levona settlement, south of Ariel, injuring two people from the Dolev settlement. (Israel Radio, *Yediot Aharonot*)

August 13 Defense Minister Barak approves the recruitment of 20 new inspectors to add to the 40 inspectors already in the civil administration's supervision unit. The inspectors evacuate and demolish outposts and attempt to prevent settlers from constructing buildings without permits. (*Ma'ariv*)

A U.S. Republican Party delegation celebrates a meal with settlers at the Shepherd Hotel. (*Ma'ariv*)

August 17 *Ha'aretz* reports that settlers continue to set up caravans in settlement outposts despite an order from the Israeli government forbidding it. Twelve caravans have been installed at the settlement of Kokhav Ya'akov.

Israeli ministers Eli Yishai, Daniel HersHKowitz, Yuli Edelstein, and Moshe Yaalon visit several settlement outposts in the West Bank, including the site of the evacuated Homesh settlement. Yishai claims that they are only visiting legal outposts. Deputy Prime Minister Ya'alon says that the government should consider reestablishing Homesh and declares his support for the High Court to legalize the outposts. During the visits, unknown parties throw firebombs at the ministers' motorcade. (*Yediot Aharonot*, Israel Radio)

August 18 Settlers at the Bnei Adam outpost ignore the deadline set by the Israeli High Court to evacuate the area. (Army Radio)

Ma'ariv reports the appearance of signs at major intersections in the West Bank that read, "Brother, give a call" and "You can prevent the destruction with a single telephone call." The khaki-colored signs featuring military symbols implore IDF soldiers serving in the West Bank to call an anti-evacuation group to inform them of impending actions against outposts.

Ten right-wing activists break into the al-Rajabi house in Hebron to protest the dismantling of settlement outposts. Border police are subsequently stationed at the house to deter future attempts to break into it. (Army Radio)

August 19 Israeli authorities confiscate 116 dunams of land in the Palestinian town of Ya'bad, west of Jenin near the Shaked settlement. (PCHR, Ma'an News)

The Israel Lands Authority awards tenders for 450 new units in the Pisgat Ze'ev settlement, in East Jerusalem. (*The Marker*)

August 21 Peace Now reports that 15 mobile homes and 14 buildings have been added to 10 of the 23 outposts that Israel has pledged to evacuate. (Israel Radio)

Settlers intend to construct 104 new apartments and facilities in the Palestinian Ras al-Amud neighborhood, in East Jerusalem, across the street from the Ma'ale Zeitim settlement. The land is the former site of the headquarters of the border police, who relocated to a new facility in the E-1 area. (Army Radio)

Residents of the Bnei Adam outpost remove three of the trailers at their site after settlement leaders threaten to cut off their electricity. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

August 24 Dozens of Arab residents of villages north of Jerusalem hold a sit-in to protest efforts by Har Adar settlers to prevent them from accessing their land. (*al-Quds*)

August 31 The civil administration hands down 19 demolition orders for buildings in the Yitzhar and Havat Gilad outposts. (Israel Radio)

September 1 *Ha'aretz* reports that in 2008 \$154 was spent on each Arab primary school student in East Jerusalem, compared with \$632 per Jewish student in West Jerusalem. In preschools, spending per student in West Jerusalem was 2.7 times that of East Jerusalem; in special education, it was 2.5 times higher.

September 3 The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics reports a 33 percent drop in West Bank construction compared to the previous year's figures. (Army Radio)

September 7 Defense Minister Barak approves construction of nearly 500 apartments in West Bank settlements: 149 in Har Gilo, 89 in Ma'aleh Adumim, 25 in Kedar (which abuts Ma'aleh Adumim), 84 in Modi'in Illit, 76 in Givat Ze'ev, 20 in Maskiot, and 12 in Alon Shvut. (Israel Radio)

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

A cornerstone is laid to mark the founding of the Mevasseret Adumim settlement in the E-1 area east of Jerusalem. The settlement will cover more than 10,000 dunams and consist of 3,500 housing units, enough for 15,000 residents. (Army Radio)

September 9 The Israel Land Administration publishes tenders for 486 apartments for Pisgat Ze'ev in East Jerusalem. The bids cover an overall area of 138 dunams (roughly 34 acres). (*Ha'aretz*)

The Israeli High Court issues a joint decision on four petitions challenging the route of the separation barrier in the section between Tulkarm and Qalqilya. The ruling states that "from the start the fence was put up in a way that seriously harmed the rights of the local residents and their access to their agricultural lands." The court's decision orders the rerouting of this section of the barrier. (OCHA, *Ha'aretz*)

September 10 Settlers enter Oureef village and burn two cars in Asira al-Qibliya. (*al-Hayat al-Jadida*)

September 13 It is reported that the American company TIAA-CREF (Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association, College Retirement Equities Fund) has sold its holdings in Africa-Israel Investments due to the firm's activity beyond the Green Line. (*Ma'ariv*)

September 15 Settlers shoot a young Palestinian shepherd near the settlement of Yizhar, south of Nablus. (*Ma'an News*)

Settlers from the Hivat Gilad outpost throw a firebomb at Israeli police, injuring one officer. (Israel HaYom)

September 16 The IDF begins removing about 100 dirt mound roadblocks from the entrances to Palestinian villages across the West Bank. (*Ha'aretz*)

The District Coordination Office in Hebron reports that real estate prices in the West Bank soared because of an improvement in the security situation and the removal of roadblocks and other restrictions on access in the Palestinian territories. Real estate prices in the settlements are also increasing due to a shortage of empty apartments because of reduced construction nationally. (Army Radio)

September 17 Hatem Abdul Qader, head of the Jerusalem file in the Fatah movement,

reveals a plan to expel hundreds of Mleihat Bedouin families from an area near the town of Mikhmas, east of Jerusalem, in order to expand the Ma'aleh Mikhmas settlement. (*al-Quds*)

September 18 The Trade Union Congress, the umbrella organization of Britain's trade and workers' unions, calls upon its members to boycott Israeli goods produced in the West Bank, Golan Heights, and East Jerusalem. (*Ma'ariv*)

Kol Ha'ir reports that the Jerusalem regional court has rejected a complaint submitted by Palestinian residents of Silwan against settlement construction in their neighborhood. As a result, construction will continue.

September 21 Palestinians attack settler vehicles near Qalqilya. (*Ma'an News*)

A group of Palestinians enter the Hivat Gilad outpost and burn several houses, injuring several residents. (Arutz Sheva)

September 22 Palestinians from Ramallah request that the IDF return land that it confiscated ten years prior but has never used. The land, in the area of Ein Arik, north of Jerusalem, had been initially earmarked for a new settler road. The plan was shelved due to the completion of the separation barrier. The IDF says it is examining the Palestinian request, but the confiscation warrants are unlimited, and the land may be needed for a road in the future. (Army Radio)

September 23 The Israeli Defense Ministry approves the construction of 37 new apartments in the settlement of Karnei Shomron. (*al-Ayyam*).

Ma'ariv reports on the creation of a special unit of soldiers and officers whose sole responsibility is to control violent activity by settler youths in the West Bank. The unit was created in response to increasingly violent clashes between security forces and youths.

September 27 About 150 Palestinians throw stones at Jews who enter the Temple Mount compound. The Temple Mount is open to non-Muslims only at certain hours. Nine Israeli police officers and 15 Palestinian youths are wounded in the clash. (*Ha'aretz*)

September 29 Settlers from Yitzhar cut down 100 olive trees near the village of Burin. (Army Radio)

"We were expecting the Israelis and the Palestinians to be sitting together back in June and July for serious and effective negotiations. But that did not happen. A lot of Arab countries believe that Israel does not want peace. There may be a lot of Israelis who say Arabs don't want peace. The Arab Peace Initiative offers an unprecedented opportunity to resolve the conflict. The initiative is not just about the two-state solution. It is about a 57-state solution—57 nations, a third of the world, that still does not have a relationship with Israel, will have normal relations with Israel within the context of a comprehensive peace."

King Abdallah of Jordan in an interview with Akiva Eldar, *Ha'aretz*, October 9, 2009

The IDF unsuccessfully attempts to remove residents from the Homesh settlement, which was evacuated during the 2005 withdrawals. The residents had been prepared for the attempt and avoided detection while the IDF soldiers were in the area. (Arutz 7)

September 30 One settler is wounded in an attack on the Kida outpost in the West Bank. (Israel Radio)

Ma'ariv reports on a plan presented to the Interior Ministry's District Planning Committee to build 14,000 housing units near the Palestinian village of Wallajah, in southeast Jerusalem. If accepted it would be the largest project in East Jerusalem since the construction of Gilo, Har Homa, and Pisgat Ze'ev. The new settlement, Givat Yael, would cover 3,000 dunams (750 acres) and accommodate about 40,000 settlers.

Settler Population in the West Bank Reaches 300,000

There are now more than 300,000 settlers living in West Bank settlements, according to a Israel Defense Forces civil administration report covering the first half of 2009. As of June 30, the settler population has reached 304,569, an increase of 2.3 percent since January. These figures do not include settlers living in East Jerusalem and unauthorized outposts. The highest growth rates by percentage were in small settlements, such as Itamar, Elon Moreh and Kfar Tapuah, all of which are located east of the separation barrier.

Most of the growth occurred in the most religious communities, including the ultra-Orthodox settlements. Modi'in Ilit gained 1,879 residents, a 4.5 percent increase. Beitar Ilit gained 1,074 residents, a 3.1 percent jump. Excluding these two communities, the growth rate in the settlements was 1.75 percent.

Among local councils, Har Adar (near Jerusalem) saw 5.7 percent growth, and Alfei Menashe (near the Sharon region, north of Tel Aviv) reported a 2.7 percent increase. Kedumim recorded 2.1 percent; Emanuel, 1.2 percent; and Kiryat Arba, 0.9 percent.

Population growth in the larger, middle class settlements west of the separation barrier was relatively low. Ma'ale Adumim, home to many young couples, saw a population increase of just 1 percent, as did Efrat, where professionals and American immigrants often seek housing. The population of Hashmonaim, also a destination for many American newcomers, increased by 1.1 percent. Ariel grew by less than 0.1 percent. East of the barrier, Ofra grew by 1.2 percent. Karnei Shomron had a population increase of 0.2 percent—another 15 residents.

The report also noted a 4.4 percent increase—425 people—in settlers living outside municipal areas.

Chaim Levinson, "IDF: More than 300,000 settlers live in West Bank," *Ha'aretz*, July 27, 2009

The commander of the Kfir Brigade, an IDF unit operating permanently in the West Bank, will consider the dismissal of soldiers who, during the oath-taking ceremony, waved banners with "Shimshon will not evacuate Homesh" written on them. The soldiers waved the banners in protest over the fact that the battalion had recently been required to take part in the evacuation of the resettled Homesh several times. Several of the family members and friends of the soldiers waved similar signs from the audience. A brother of one of the soldiers told Israel Radio that the soldiers took this course of action because they believed they had been placed in a sector where the bulk of their activity would be aimed against Jews rather than against the enemy, as he put it. The IDF spokesperson's

office said that this was an irregular and shameful event which would be dealt with. The Homesh First organization gave their blessings to the soldiers and said that they had returned pride to the IDF.

Israel Radio News, October 23, 2009

The High Court issued a sharp condemnation of the state and ordered it to pay NIS 20,000 (\$5,400) in court costs, for failing to fulfill a court order from three years ago demanding that portions of the security fence near the settlement of Tzufim in Samaria be dismantled. The total cost of moving the sections of the fence in question will exceed \$10 million, experts said. . . .

Attorneys for the Arab villages accused the state of "shaming the court by refusing to fulfill its orders." Only then was any action taken to begin dismantling the fence, a project that is still ongoing.

The court agreed with the Arab villages and on Tuesday reiterated its demand that the fence be dismantled immediately and rebuilt closer to the existing "building line" (the last row of houses currently in existence) in Tzufim.

At issue are some 650 (160 acres) dunams of land owned by local Arabs. The portion of the fence in question is about five kilometers long.

Arutz 7, October 7, 2009

The American TIAA-CREF [Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association, College Retirement Equities Fund] reported yesterday that it had sold its holdings in Africa-Israel, while Adalah—the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel—reported that the sale of the company's holdings was the product of Africa-Israel's activity beyond the Green Line.

TIAA-CREF's holdings in Africa-Israel were negligible, amounting to just a quarter of a million dollars. But the decision comes on the heels of another precedent that was set last week when the Norwegian pension fund announced its decision to divest from Elbit Systems due to that company's involvement in providing equipment for the separation fence. The American company's decision was announced after an open letter was published by 60 academics who were invested in the company and called on it to divest from Africa-Israel because of its activity in the territories.

The connection of late that has been made between political inclinations and financial decisions could prove to be ruinous in the event that it should spread to other and more significant financial institutions.

Ma'ariv, September 13, 2009

protest from the Netanyahu government in 1996 over the Wye Agreement, is telling. Israel has a long history of walking away from commitments to limit settlement: Menachem Begin was the first in 1976. More recently, Defense Minister Ehud Barak declared in September that he will not dismantle outposts until final status talks resume, despite court orders and numerous commitments to Washington. U.S. officials explain to skeptical Palestinians that although Israel is committed to this policy for only ten months, the successful inauguration of final status talks will create conditions for a permanent freeze. Israelis look to the U.S. political calendar—particularly congressional elections in November 2010—to reduce Obama's ability to pressure Israel.

From the outset, Mitchell described the freeze idea as a measure to build Palestinian confidence in the prospects of diplomacy. Yet as the first year anniversary of the Obama administration approaches, Palestinian confidence in the U.S.-led process is at a nadir. There is no freeze, no negotiations (except between Israel and Hamas via Egypt and Germany over prisoner releases), the Palestinian leadership is in crisis, and Netanyahu is more confident of his ability to confront Washington and prevail. Netanyahu announced his restraint policy soon after Abbas decried his "betrayal" by Washington's failure to win a complete freeze and announced his intention not to run for reelection. The increasing probability of agreement between Israel and Abbas's rival, Hamas, on a large-scale prisoner release, perhaps including an easing of the siege on Gaza, highlights the contrast between Hamas's successful dialogue with Israel, in which Washington is notably absent, and the stillborn U.S.-led effort to stop settlement and restart direct final status talks.

The real test of the policy in American eyes is whether it will bring Abbas to the table. Abbas said at a November 28 press conference that "as long as Israel fails to meet its commitment to stop construction in all the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, we will not return to the negotiating table," adding that "Netanyahu's statement about a construction freeze is nothing more than a statement without any backing, both on the declarative level and in practice."

Abbas is in a box. Palestinians have never been able to condition talks on a settlement freeze. It is now clear that the United States will not support them effectively in this demand. If past is prologue, however, Abbas will nonetheless find a way back to the negotiating table. That is clearly the expectation in Washington and Jerusalem.

If he does, and negotiations resume, what happens then?

We believe that through good-faith negotiations the parties can mutually agree on an outcome which ends the conflict and reconciles the Palestinian goal of an independent and viable state based on the 1967 lines, with agreed swaps, and the Israeli goal of a Jewish state with secure and recognized borders that reflect subsequent developments and meet Israeli security requirements.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, November 25, 2009

Mitchell in his November 25 press conference, declared an interest in recasting the issue of settlement expansion as part of the broader task of negotiating a border between Israel and Palestine:

My personal and fervent wish is that we will during this process at some point have a resolution of the issue of borders so that there will no longer be any question about settlement construction, so that Israelis will be able to build what they want in Israel and Palestinians will be able to build what they want in Palestine.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made similar observations during the Bush administration. Mitchell, in contrast to Rice, appears to be promising to focus on *evacuating* settlements as part of the process of setting an agreed upon border.

The short but significant Clinton statement of November 25 includes language establishing the June 4, 1967 line as the Palestinian point of reference for an agreed border and recalls Israel's interest in UN Security Council Resolution 242's call for "secure and recognized boundaries." Clinton describes the

U.S. objective as "reconcile[ing] the Palestinian goal of an independent state based on the 1967 lines, with agreed [land] swaps, and the Israeli goal of a Jewish state with secure and recognized borders *that reflect subsequent developments* and meet Israeli security needs" (emphasis added). The reference to "subsequent developments" recalls the George W. Bush letter to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in April 2004. In it, Washington noted, "In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli populations centers, it

is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949." The Obama administration has refused Israeli entreaties to reaffirm the Bush letter. Nevertheless, *Ha'aretz* reported on December 4 that Washington tried unsuccessfully to commit the Quartet to Clinton's formulation. "The Russians argued that they did not agree with stating that Israel will be a Jewish State, and that the borders will be altered on the basis of 'developments' on the ground, namely Israeli annexation of the large settlement blocks. The Russians stressed that such formulation of the Quartet's text predetermines the results of the negotiations."

The United States can claim for its diplomatic efforts a limited Israeli commitment that will, at best, only temporarily reduce settlement expansion. The U.S. goal, repeated by Mitchell on November 25, of a "re-launch of negotiations as soon as possible in an atmosphere in which they can succeed" remains as distant as ever. ♦

SETTLER POPULATION IN EAST JERUSALEM, 2000–2007

	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2000
East Talpiot	12,241	12,078	12,158	12,238	12,439	12,591	12,845
French Hill (Givat Shapira)	6,897	6,724	6,589	6,630	6,628	6,631	8,193
Gilo	27,087	27,173	27,258	27,309	27,425	27,569	27,637
Giv'at Ha-Matos, Har Homa	7,545	6,040	4,604	3,354	2,152	1,125	763
Giv'at Ha-Mivtar, Ramat Eshkol (east)	2,860	2,901	2,912	2,959	2,958	2,948	2,912
Ma'alot Dafna, Kiryat Arye	3,735	3,765	3,675	3,647	3,664	3,617	3,645
Neve Ya'akov	20,230	20,149	20,156	20,218	20,306	20,250	20,288
Jewish Quarter (Old City)	2,555	2,546	2,476	2,451	2,387	2,348	2,279
Pisgat Ze'ev	41,882	41,653	41,208	40,665	39,747	38,684	36,469
Ramot Allon	41,448	40,837	40,367	40,027	39,383	38,992	37,934
Ramat Eshkol (west)	3,316	3,299	3,252	3,180	3,123	3,046	2,917
Ramat Shlomo	14,911	14,658	14,318	13,888	13,390	12,822	11,348
Sanhedriyya Ha-Murhevet, Har Ha-Hozvim (industrial zone)	5,001	5,034	5,084	5,021	4,999	4,994	5,018
Total	189,708	186,857	184,057	181,587	178,601	175,617	172,248

Source: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, *Statistical Yearbook of Jerusalem, 2000–2008*.

The declared positions of the United States of America regarding settlement activity and the Judaization and annexation of Jerusalem are well known and we appreciate them. We were surprised by its bias towards the Israeli position. But the problem that needs to be solved is that Israel, especially its current government, rejects all of this and is asking for negotiations that are not based on any term of reference. Meanwhile, it is pursuing its settlement activity throughout the West Bank, especially in occupied East Jerusalem, the Arab character of which is being altered in an unprecedented way. This includes the destruction of Palestinian citizens' houses, taking over their houses and limiting the existence of its Christian and Muslim inhabitants. This has reached the point of inflicting harm to the city's religious institutions, especially around and underneath the al-Aqsa Mosque. This threatens to turn the conflict into one of the nature of a religious war, with dangerous ramifications to the entire world and not just the region.

Mahmoud Abbas, from a speech announcing his decision not to run for reelection to the presidency of the Palestinian Authority, November 5, 2009

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