

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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THE LAND OF ISRAEL IS ONE SETTLEMENT BLOC

By Geoffrey Aronson

Only hours before U.S. president Barack Obama's March 3, 2014 White House meeting with Israel prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) reported that the number of construction starts in West Bank settlements had more than doubled in 2013 to 2,534 units, which is more construction than took place in Tel Aviv. Close to 6 percent of all new construction last year was located in West Bank settlements. In absolute terms, the number was the highest in a decade. In addition, there were more housing starts in Jerusalem in 2013 than anywhere in Israel. Most of this new construction is located in the settlement areas of East Jerusalem, almost doubling the settlements' share of national construction.

In a pre-summit interview, Obama acknowledged that "we have seen more aggressive settlement construction over the last couple years than we've seen in a very long time."

Ha'aretz noted in its March 5 edito-

"Unfortunately, prisoners were not released on the Saturday they were supposed to be released. And so day went by, day two went by, day three went by. And then in the afternoon, when they were about to maybe get there, 700 settlement units were announced in Jerusalem and, poof, that was sort of the moment. We find ourselves where we are."

U.S. Secretary of State
John Kerry, April 8, 2014

rial titled, "How Israel has Done Its Part,"

"The 2,534 new housing units built in the occupied territories in 2013 are the Netanyahu government's real contribution to advancing negotiations with the Palestinians. While U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry was running all over the Middle East and making great efforts to obtain an agreement, the Israeli government was building more and more houses in the settlements in an effort to sabotage the chances of any such agreement being obtained. . . .

"There is no more reliable litmus test of its intentions than construction in the settlements. A government that intends to evacuate territory doesn't continue to build in it, and certainly not at such an acceler-

ated pace. . . ."

Housing and Construction Minister Uri Ariel, one of the Israeli cabinet's foremost opponents of a diplomatic agreement that would result in evacuation of settlements and creation of a Palestinian state, agreed. "The [CBS announcement] is proof that there is no way there will be a Palestinian state west of the Jordan River," he declared.

"We need to build more throughout Israel," Ariel continued, "in the Galilee, in the Negev, and in Judea and Samaria. This is part of the solution to the housing crisis [in general] that is in itself a difficult problem. As the prime minister said on the Knesset plenum, we will continue to build in Judea and Samaria. . . ."

Gilo Housing

On April 1, 2014, Ariel announced the reissue of tenders for new housing in the East Jerusalem settlement of Gilo (see page 5).

Minister of Justice Tzippi Livni accused Ariel of "intentionally sabotaging" the talks by issuing the tenders. Ariel charged that Livni "failed miserably" after receiving "unlimited credit to make peace and release murderers," and was now looking to blame "anyone but herself."

The Gilo announcement helped to precipitate a cascading series of what U.S. officials described as "unilateral" and "unhelpful" measures by both the

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TO OUR READERS

As U.S.-sponsored peace talks are near collapse, John Kerry has blamed Israel most harshly. But officials in the U.S. cast equal blame on the Palestinian Authority's "unilateral" decision to join fifteen UN human rights and other treaties as another reason for the breakdown.

This reflects a long-standing U.S. policy that, in deference to Israel, rejects the Palestinians' right to resort to international law and the UN, and insists that all issues must be resolved through negotiations. This is egregiously unfair and self-defeating.

Palestinians, a subject people, most of whom live under military occupation, are the much weaker party. Israel's intention to maintain its occupation and settlements, which violate international law, is now obvious. And U.S. diplomacy has failed to bring forth a Palestinian state exclusively through negotiations. Why, then, must Palestinians, and not just as a "non-member observer state" recognized by the UN, forfeit their

right to resort peacefully to international law and institutions?

True, Article IX of the 1993 Oslo Declaration forbade the PLO from internationalizing the conflict. But Article V of the 1995 Oslo Accords said "neither side shall initiate or take any step that will change the status of the West Bank and Gaza." There were 295,000 settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem then. Today there are 560,000. Must the Palestinians waive their rights forever, while Israel continues to abuse these rights unilaterally?

If the U.S. is determined to protect its own interests and reputation, it should welcome the UN, which originated the two-state principle, as a helpful partner, while using more effectively its relationship with Israel to win a two-state peace.

Philip C. Wilcox, Jr.

COURTESY OF THE JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN HEBRON



Source: Ma'an News, March 8, 2014.

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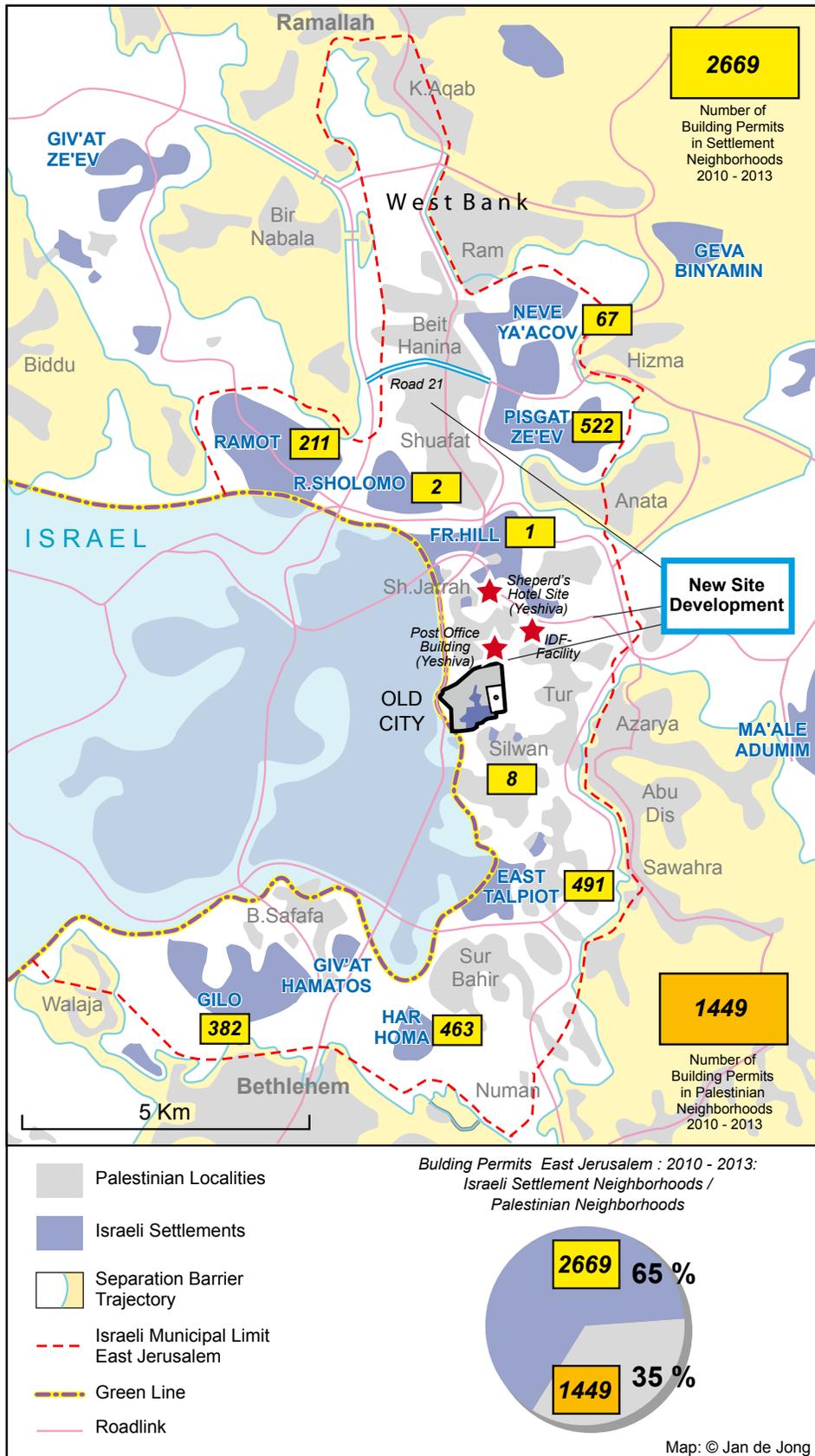
Nicholas A. Veliotis

Philip C. Wilcox, Jr.

The Foundation for Middle East Peace has prepared a presentation of maps illustrating the evolution of the conflict from the UN Partition Plan in 1947, and depicting the growth of Israel's occupation and settlement project from the 1967 War to the present. To download the presentation visit: <http://www.fmep.org/resources/publications-1/map-progression-1948-1967>.

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Settlement Expansion East Jerusalem , 2010 - 2013



PALESTINIAN VILLAGERS ON THE FRONT LINES

Ghassan Daghllass is an official of the Palestinian Authority in the northern West Bank, responsible for tracking settler activity. This interview was conducted by Geoffrey Aronson on March 12, 2014 in Ramallah.

Question: What has changed in the seven years that you have been following settlement activity?

Daghllass: Every day there are developments on the ground. It is true that the settlement project is expanding all the time. What is worse, however, are the “price tag” groups operating in the West Bank.

We have a continuing expansion of settlements. And added to this are the often-violent acts that settler groups are undertaking, and these are expanding as well. Our statistics show that the aggressive acts of settlers are increasing. The protests of settlers have gone from protesting inside their settlements to protests outside of the settlements, then into the mosques and to our orchards and lands. Today there are more than 632,000 settlers in the West Bank and [East] Jerusalem.

Question: What is the relationship between the settlers and the IDF [Israel Defense Forces]?

Daghllass: Israel is a settler state—100 percent. We are fieldworkers, so whenever there are settler actions we see them with our own eyes. Whenever settlers uproot trees and undertake other actions, we always notice that the [Israeli] army is standing on the side of the settlers, who feel that they are above the law. The punishment imposed on a settler who burns a mosque is simply banishment to Israel for three months. The settler who killed Ibn Qadus in Burin was fined only 30 shekels [\$8.00]. We feel that the army’s actions are simply a theatrical performance between the settlers and the army.

If the Israeli authorities were truly interested in stopping settler violence, they could do it easily. For example, we presented the Israeli authorities with tapes and testimony that show the uprooting of trees and other actions against us. It is ironic that when the Israeli military and legal authorities are presented with such material, they do not give those [Palestinians] who wish to testify a permit to travel to the judicial proceedings.

We have one example where the Israeli authorities succeeded in arresting settlers during the olive harvest. Undercover police were sent to the area and arrested the troublemakers. I saw this with my own eyes. This shows the ability of the Israeli authorities and soldiers to prevent settler attacks. It seems, however, that Israel rushes to punish a young boy or farmer who defends his land, but is keen on defending settlers.

Last week in the village of Luban, I caught a settler with my own hands. We made sure that no one hit him or hurt him. I sat with him until the army arrived on the scene. He admitted that he had stolen a horse and that he was from the nearby outpost. I asked him why he attacked the farmers. He said, “I saw the mare, I wanted to take it.” I asked him why

he attacked us, and he answered, “I want to kick you out of this land and take it.” I informed the Palestinian Authority [PA] coordination office, and Israel came with a military force. I told the settler that he must present this evidence and acknowledge what he had done, so he told the Israeli officer exactly what he told me.

Question: What is your area of responsibility?

Daghllass: My area reaches from the north of Ramallah to Salfit and the Jordan Valley. In every village in a conflict situation, I have a team. In my phone, I have 2,500 telephone numbers. I am in every locality. I built this system. The PA offers no financial support for this effort other than my salary. We are more a popular movement of volunteers than PA representatives.

People feel safer when I am around. We call [ourselves] the Guard Committees. Groups stay up late in the evening, and if they see a settler attack, they call me, and they go to the mosque and announce it to everyone. People wake up and confront the settlers.

Question: How many Guard Committees are there?

Daghllass: There are a number of Guard Committees. We have a crisis, so there are many. They work in a shift system, 24 hours a day. They cooperate with the village council or locality without any financial assistance from the PA. The volunteers come from many walks of life. Whoever offers is taken. Most are farmers. It is a communal organization that is self-generated. We have no arms, and no radios, other than our cell phones. We only look at Area C where settlers are active.

Question: Where are you most active?

Daghllass: Kusra is very active. There we have a great village council leader. Also in the villages of Boreen, Hourif, Haris, Salfit, and Brukhin, where today, for example, settlers appropriated 100 dunams of land. In the Salfit area, there are 23 settlements and 21 Palestinian villages.

Question: Are the Guard Committees effective?

Daghllass: At the end of the day, the most important achievement is that settlers are aware that people are awake and observing. As a consequence, the nature of settler actions has changed. Direct attacks against villages have decreased while attacks have moved to the land and roads. In Dir Istiya, for example, settlers burned the mosque because there was no guard team of observers in the village. When such groups are present, settlers select areas where they see that no committees are active.

Question: Is there more that the PA could do?

Daghllass: At this point, the PA cannot do anything. Only popular committees on the ground can affect the situation. We give all our information to the PA, and we update them on all developments. We help to organize popular protests, and if trees are uprooted, we replace them. The Palestinian liaison officer comes himself and submits a report on every event and also files a complaint [with the civil administration] even though we know that the complaint is meaningless. After

we were told that the settlers were complaining about our activities, we decided to make our own complaints as well.

The cost for Palestinians who confront settlers on their own is high. Settlers often will make a complaint, and someone can be fined NIS 5,000 [\$1,400] and a year in jail. The cost of confronting settlers is very high.

Question: Is the diplomacy having any effect on the situation on the ground?

Dagbllass: Recently 28 [European] consuls recommended all kinds of things, but Israel does not respond in anyway and does not take such suggestions into consideration. Had there been any positive change in settler behavior, the international community would not be calling for a boycott of settlement products.

Question: How often are you able to protect villagers from settler actions?

Dagbllass: Many times. in Koostra, Talfit, Luban . . . many times. We tell settlers that we are not keen on violence. We want peace, but not at any price. We do not want to see the army or settlers. All we want is to be left alone. I am 42 years old. I [first] saw the sea when I was 39. I do not want to see my children denied such pleasures. The presence of settlers and the occupation will not give any hope for peace.

Question: How explosive is the current situation on the ground?

Dagbllass: The olive harvest [that occurs in the fall] marks the peak of confrontations between settlers and the people. The “outposts” will become full-fledged settlements. All the numbers indicate that Israel is not keen on establishing peace.

It is worrying that things might develop into an explosion. It is worrying that settlers enter into the hearts of villagers. The stalemate on the political level contributes to this feeling. When I see Israelis marching with huge numbers of Knesset members, we are demoralized. ♦

SETTLEMENT EXPANSION ANNOUNCEMENTS, 2014 (units)

Settlement	6-Jan ²	10-Jan ³	21-Jan ³	22-Jan ³	5-Feb ⁴	19-Mar	1-Apr
Adam		75					
Alei Zahav						694 ²	
Alfe Menashe		78					
Almog						31 ²	
Ariel		40		5		839 ⁵	
Beit El						296 ²	
Betar Illit		24					
Efrat		227					
Elkana		169					
Emmanuel		102					
Gilo ¹							708 ³
Givat Ze'ev			381			56 ⁶	
Har Homa ¹					389	144 ⁴	
Karnei Shomron	22	86					
Kochav Ya'akov						38 ⁶	
Neve Ya'acov ¹		56			136		
Nofei Prat				256			
Ofra	250 ⁷						
Pisgat Ze'ev ¹		182			36	40 ⁴	
Ramot Shlomo		600					
Ramot		294					
Shavei Shomron						65 ⁵	
Shvut Rachel						353 ⁵	
Subtotal	275	1,933	381	261	561	2,556	708
Total: 6,672							

Notes:

1. Located in East Jerusalem.
2. Approved for validation.
3. Tenders (re)-issued.
4. Building permits.
5. Approved for deposit.
6. Deposited.
7. Of which 53 were retroactively approved (after they had already been built).

Sources:

- Al Jazeera, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/01/israel-approves-more-illegal-settlement-homes-201412118492665411.html>.
- USAToday, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/01/06/israel-oks-west-bank-apartments/4341839/>.
- Ma'an News, <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=667486>.
- Yediot Aharonot, January 12, 2014.
- Ha'aretz, March 19, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/1.580684>.
- Ha'aretz, February 5, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.572616>.
- Jerusalem Post, March 21, 2014, <http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Israel-advances-plan-for-2371-units-in-West-Bank-settlements-346073>.

EU RAISES ALARM ON JERUSALEM

European Union diplomats stationed in Jerusalem and Ramallah are warning of regional conflagration over the Temple Mount. A March 18 internal report to Brussels raises caution around the changing status quo at the holy site and the growing tension triggered by the demands of right-wing Jewish groups.

“There remains a significant risk that incidents at this highly sensitive site, or perceived threats to the status quo, may spark extreme reactions locally as well as across the Arab and Muslim world, and have the potential to derail the peace negotiations,” according to the report.

The report also says that almost 100,000 East Jerusalem residents are in danger of losing their homes due to building restrictions Israel places on them.

The report spells out how Israel infringes on the rights of Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, pointing to limitations on their freedom of movement and access to housing.

Israeli policies in Jerusalem are aimed at “cementing its unilateral and illegal annexation of East Jerusalem,” according to the report.

The EU delegates also sound the alarm about the idea of dividing the Temple Mount and allocating separate prayer times for each religion, as was done at Hebron’s Cave of the Patriarchs, known by Muslims as the Ibrahimi Mosque. . . .

The report points to “the unprecedented surge in settlement activity” since the [Israeli-Palestinian] negotiations resumed in July 2013. This appears to be part of Israel’s strategy to use the settlement construction and infrastructures “to expand Jerusalem deeply into the West Bank” so that it includes the settlement blocs of Ma’ale Adumim, Gush Etzion and Givat Ze’ev. . . .

While 39 percent (372,000) of Jerusalem’s 800,000 residents are Palestinians, only some 10 percent of the municipal budget is allocated to them, the report says.

According to the report, 200,000 of the residents are Israelis living in East Jerusalem settlements. The population in these areas has grown far more slowly than the number of new dwelling units constructed. For example, since 1993 thousands of new units have been built in East Jerusalem, including the entire settlement of Har Homa. Yet East Jerusalem’s settler population, including natural growth, has increased by only 40,000, in large part due to emigration from the city.

“Around 53 percent of the Israeli-defined municipal area of East Jerusalem is unavailable for development and 35 percent has been designated for settlement use,” the report noted, leaving less than 13 percent for the housing needs of Palestinians.

“Much of this land is already built up; the permitted construction density is limited and required planning and building standards are hard to apply for. Together these make the application process difficult and expensive. At least 33 percent of all Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem lack Israeli-issued building permits, which puts over 93,000 Palestinians at risk of displacement,” the report says.

In 2013 the Israeli authorities demolished 98 buildings in East Jerusalem, almost twice as many as in the previous two years together. Thirty-nine of the demolished buildings were commercial and 24 of them residential. As a result 298 people, including 153 children, lost their homes in 2013, while 400 others lost their work place and livelihood, the report says. . . .

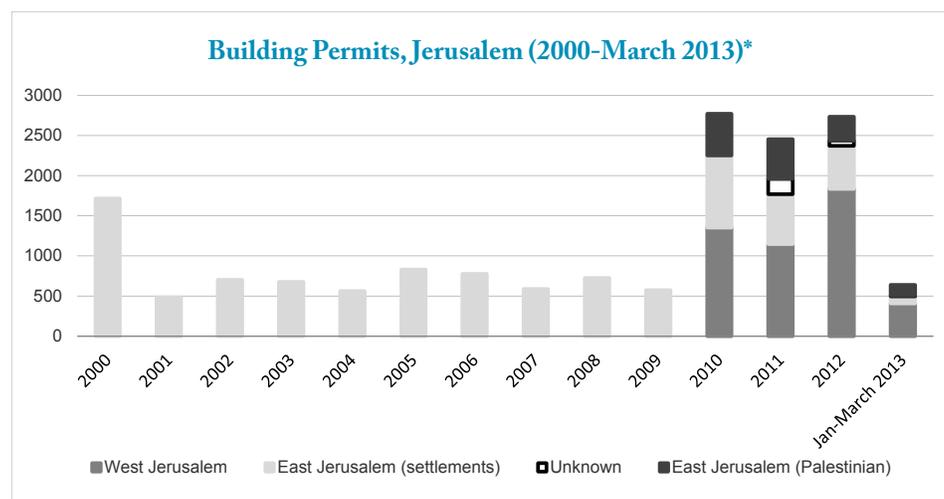
Due to the separation barrier, restrictions on movement, and the severing of East Jerusalem from the West Bank, the city has ceased to be the center of economic, commercial and cultural for all Palestinians in the West Bank, the report says.

Before the signing of the Oslo Accords, East Jerusalem’s economic activity comprised 15 percent of the Palestinian economy, but today it’s only 7 percent. Eighty percent of Jerusalem’s Palestinian population and 85 percent of its Palestinian children live below the poverty line as of 2013.

The report makes the same recommendations it has made in previous years. It calls to help strengthen the Palestinian population and preserve the potential for Jerusalem to serve as a capital for both peoples.

It also urges close supervision over the Temple Mount and over the neighborhood of Silwan in East Jerusalem. It calls on the European Union to act against Israel’s plan to forcibly transfer Bedouin out of area E-1 near Jerusalem. Lastly, the report says the EU should consider banning settlers involved in violence from entering Europe.

Ha’aretz, March 28, 2014



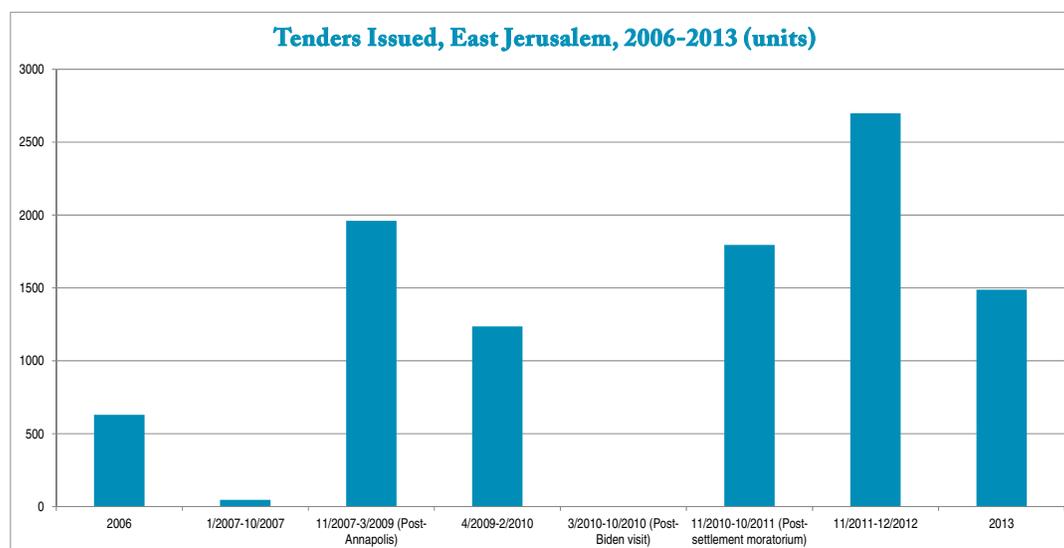
*Building permits are the final stage in the approval process, before construction begins.

Source: Jerusalem Municipality.

BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED, EAST JERUSALEM SETTLEMENTS, 2000-March 2013 (units)

Neighborhood	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Jan-Mar 2013	Total
Airplane Hill				3				3							6
French Hill											1				1
Gilo	0	31	144	137	189	179	176	46	141	90	246	136	0	0	1,515
Givat HaMivtar														0	0
Givat Shapira												0			0
Har Homa	1,010	80	342	393	79	563	575	459	466	366	355	29	79	0	4,796
Kfar Shiloah (Silwan)											3	5			8
Ma'a lot Dafna											0	0			0
Neve Ya'acov	16	38	18	0	50	6	0	2	16	16	6	0	0	61	229
Pisgat Ze'ev	271	43	44	35	4	1	0	1	1	0	25	201	80	26	732
Pisgat Ze'ev East	298	9	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	14			324
Pisgat Ze'ev North	9	15	14	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	6	12		71
Pisgat Ze'ev South	18	1			2		1	1	0	3	0	126	28	0	180
Pisgat Ze'ev West		162	0	12	0		0	10		0					184
Ramat Shlomo	1	54	124	66	16	10	23	17	6	8	1	1			327
Ramot	91	2	14	1	64	71	0	50	94	63	32	21	158		661
Talpiot East	0	50		17	159	0	0	0	1	28	226	85	180		746
Total	1,714	485	701	675	563	830	777	589	725	574	899	624	537	87	9,780

Source: Jerusalem municipality.



Sources:

"East Jerusalem: Developments and Trends." *Terrestrial Jerusalem*, November 15, 2011. Peace Now, "Settlement Watch." *Ha'aretz*, February 5, 2014 <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.572616>. *Ha'aretz*, March 19, 2014 <http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/1.580684>. *Yediot Aharonot*, January 12, 2014.

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

November 1 Israeli settlers damage 300 olive trees in Qalqiliya, stone several residents as they harvest olives in Awarta, burn tires in Nablus and plant several trees on Palestinian land in Salfit. (Palestine Monitoring Group–Negotiating Affairs Department)

Construction company Givat Yael sues the Israeli government for \$3.3 million after the government confiscates 50 acres of land to construct the separation barrier. (*Kol Ha'Ir*)

November 2 Israeli settlers throw rocks at residents and homes in Nablus. In Bethlehem, settlers stone residents and cut down 20 olive trees. (PMG–NAD)

November 4 Israeli settlers from Beitar Illit vandalize two acres of olive trees belonging to Palestinians in Bethlehem. (Middle East Monitor)

Israeli army bulldozers raze Palestinian land west of Salfit and uproot 25 olive trees in preparation to expand a nearby settlement. (*Ma'an* News)

Israeli settlers attack a Palestinian resident of al-Nabi Elisa village with pepper spray and damage over 40 olive trees near Qalqiliya, Nablus, and Bethlehem. (PMG–NAD)

November 6 Israeli settlers seize and level two acres of Palestinian land to construct a road east of Hebron. (PMG–NAD)

November 8 Palestinian assailants throw a firebomb at a car near the settlement of Tekoa, southeast of Bethlehem. The vehicle caught fire, injuring a mother and her daughter. (*Ha'aretz*)

November 9 Israeli settlers run over a Palestinian resident of Qalqiliya, stone vehicles in Nablus, and close roads leading into the neighborhood of Taqou in Bethlehem. (PMG–NAD)

November 10 Israeli settlers uproot 100 olive trees in the village of Jit, near Qalqiliya. (PMG–NAD)

November 13 Israeli settlers stone and damage a vehicle in Nablus, while others torch four olive trees in Bethlehem. (PMG–NAD)

November 14 In a price tag attack, Israeli settlers burn a Palestinian home in the village of Sinjil. Graffiti left behind indicated that the attack was motivated by revenge for an Israeli soldier who was killed by Palestinian assailants the previous day. (*New York Times*)

November 16 Israeli settlers stone residents and vehicles in Qalqiliya and chase away several shepherds from agricultural land in Hebron. (PMG–NAD)

November 17 Israeli settlers stone vehicles near the settlement of Beit El, near Ramallah, uproot olive trees in the village of Burin, and vandalize olive trees near Nablus. (PMG–NAD)

November 18 25 Palestinian university students are injured during confrontations with Israeli forces in Abu Dis and another resident was injured after being assaulted by Israeli forces in Jerusalem. (PMG–NAD)

Israel's High Court of Justice gives the government six months to evacuate settler houses on Palestinian land in 3 West Bank outposts in response to a 2007 petition by Israeli human rights organization Peace Now. In the ruling, court President Asher Grunis and Justice Miriam Naor write that it is no longer possible to rely on the government's commitments on such matters. (*Ha'aretz*)

Israeli settlers uproot and damage 106 olive trees in Hebron. (PMG–NAD)

November 21 The project to build a national park in Mount Scopus near the Palestinian neighborhood of Isawiya and al-Tur is approved by Jerusalem District Planning and Building officials despite efforts by Environment Minister Amir Peretz to stop it. (*Kol Ha'Ir*)

November 25 Settlers from Brukhin uproot 15 olive trees near Salfit. (*Ma'an*)

Israeli forces, accompanied by settlers, uproot over 60 olive trees in the Bethlehem village of Taqou. (*Ma'an*)

December 6 Israeli settlers torch a Palestinian car and spray "price tag" graffiti on the owner's house in the village of Jalud, south of Nablus. (*Ma'an*)

December 7 A 14-year-old Palestinian boy is shot and killed by IDF soldiers near a school in the Jalazun refugee camp, north of Ramallah. (*Ha'aretz*)

December 10 Talks concerning whether to allow construction workers from Romania to enter Israel are scuttled over a disagreement on whether they will work beyond the "Green Line" in Judea and Samaria. (*Arutz 7*)

The al-Musadiyya park in the Palestinian

village of Burqa, northwest of Nablus, is attacked by dozens of settlers, who attempt to pull down a number of park structures and damage a first aid facility. (*Ma'an*)

Vitens, a Dutch water company, cuts ties with Mekorot, the Israeli national water company, due to Mekorot's presence over 1949 Armistice lines. (*Arutz 7*)

December 31 Settlers vandalize Palestinian cars in the West Bank town of Dahiya al-Zaraa in a price tag attack. Graffiti on the cars reads "regards to John Kerry" and "Blood will be spilled in Judea and Samaria". (*Ha'aretz*)

January 5 In the village of Tel Rumeida, near Hebron, Israeli forces level a large tract of Palestinian land, destroying fifty-year-old trees, to construct a new settlement outpost. The land had previously been leased by the Abu Heikal family, dating to 1949. (*Ma'an*)

January 6 Violent confrontations erupt between a group of Israeli settlers and Palestinian farmers in the south Hebron hills, leaving one farmer and three settlers injured. Israeli forces detain two Palestinians and seven Israelis, accusing the farmers of attacking the settlers. (*Ma'an*)

Six settlers from Yitzhar vandalize a school and water reservoir in the Nablus village of Urif. When violent confrontations erupt between the settlers and Palestinians, Israeli forces arrive and fire tear gas at the Palestinians. (*Ma'an*)

In East Jerusalem, a settler assaults a twelve-year-old female student from Silwan, leaving her with bruises on her head, back, and abdomen. (*Ma'an*)

Approximately 18 settlers from the Esh Kodesh outpost are apprehended by a Palestinian village security detail while attempting to destroy village property and uproot olive trees. The settlers were carrying out a price tag attack in retaliation for the Civil Administration's decision to uproot the outpost's olive trees, which had been planted on private Palestinian land. The settlers are transferred to Palestinian security services, who hand them over to the IDF. (*Ha'aretz*)

Netanyahu government and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) that have produced the gravest crisis in relations in years—a crisis that threatens Washington’s diplomatic effort with failure.

Strategic Impact of Settlements

Settlement expansion continues to destroy Palestinian confidence that diplomacy will end the Israeli campaign to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state. Expansion is occurring everywhere.

■ Settlement activity is increasingly focused on carving out Israeli areas in the heart of Arab East Jerusalem, including the strategically located Post Office opposite Herod’s Gate, even as housing expansion in existing settlement areas aims at preempting the territorial basis on which to realize Palestinian claims to East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. (See map page 3)

■ In settlement “blocs” east and west of the separation barrier, government and private construction continues. National housing policies are well on their way to accomplishing the strategic objective set out by Ariel Sharon decades ago to “thicken” Israel’s narrow waist by expanding the area of permanent Jewish settlement east into the West Bank. The most recent reflection of the success of this effort is the growing equalization of housing prices east and west of the Green Line in metropolitan Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, notwithstanding generous subsidies for homebuyers in settlements. This important development is the consequence of :

■ national housing policies that have created a housing shortage in metropolitan Tel Aviv, leaving prospective purchasers “no choice” but to buy in settlements;

■ the equalization of services and infrastructure between Israeli localities on both sides of the Green Line; and, as explained in by *The Marker’s* real estate correspondent Erez Cohen,

■ the “recognition [by Israelis] that the settlement blocs of Ma’ale Adumim, Gush Etzion, Elkana and Ariel will remain within sovereign Israel as part of a final status agreement.”

“With in 4 to 5 years and with out any connection to the results of discussions with the Palestinians,” Cohen wrote, “an equalization will be created between the real estate prices in communities within the Green Line and those that are located in the settlement blocks of the consensus. . . . The big paradox is that this change will not be principally because of political changes in one direction or another, but first and foremost

because of pragmatic economic decisions of the Israeli public.”

The prospect of an Israeli retreat to still-undefined settlement blocs as part of a final status agreement has become a cornerstone of today’s diplomatic narrative. Nevertheless, the consolidation of the 100 or so settlement outposts established since 1996 continues apace. Israeli commitments to evacuate these new settlements have not been realized. For example, the civil administration demolished only 19 structures among all the outposts in 2011–2012, the last year for which such figures are available. These actions are far less extensive than the construction of permanent facilities—houses, farms, irrigation, and roads—that most such locations now boast.

These outposts, located on the periphery of older existing settlements, are at the center of the almost daily confrontations over control of the land. Settlers, secure in older settlements and increasingly so in the newer outposts, are undertaking efforts to expand their control by not only denying Palestinians access to lands for agriculture or grazing, but also by increasing their sense of overall insecurity.

The Israel Defense Forces, despite being required by international law to protect Palestinians’ well being, serve the higher mandate of protecting the settlers. The security services of the Palestinian Authority are not permitted to exercise any authority over settlers or to protect villagers against settler depredations, which often take place in Area C, where Israel’s writ is supreme.

Palestinian villagers on the front lines of such strife are adapting to the absence of protection by establishing informal, volunteer observers in and around villages where

settlers are most active. (See article page 4). Citing a former security official, *Yediot Aharonot* noted on April 7 that “in nine out of ten instances of disturbances by Jews in Judea and Samaria, [Israel’s security service] knows who is responsible for the reprehensible acts. The idea that ‘Price-Tag’ actions against Palestinians and IDF commanders severely damage the State of Israel and settlement in Judea and Samaria is contemptuously rejected by the perpetrators and those who are close to them. They see themselves as modern-day sicarii [armed Jewish zealots in Roman Palestine] who know better than anyone what is good for the State of Israel.”

In this spirit, Minister of Economy Naftali Bennett, whose Jewish Home Party is a key member of the ruling coalition, recently declared that “the whole Land of Israel is a single bloc. There are those who say we can build inside the settlement blocs,” he continued, “and others who say we may not be able to hold onto the towns outside the blocs. I have come to tell you what the Arabs already know—that the Land of Israel is one [settlement] bloc.” ♦

If you see no peace deal and continued aggressive settlement construction—and we have seen more aggressive settlement construction over the last couple years than we’ve seen in a very long time—if Palestinians come to believe that the possibility of a contiguous sovereign Palestinian state is no longer within reach, then our ability to manage the international fallout is going to be limited.

**President Barack Obama,
March 2, 2014**

ISRAEL'S OPPOSITION SPEAKS

It is clear to everyone that instead of freeing these prisoners Israel needs to commit to freezing construction in settlements. The Israeli public will benefit twice from such a decision.

Mr. Prime Minister. To be clear. On the construction freeze, we, the Labor Party, will support you. The Israeli public will support you and the world will support you.

Abu Mazen is a difficult partner to be sure, but the increase of 123 percent in construction in Judea and Samaria is something that has isolated us throughout the world.

Perhaps you enjoy being at the head of a government in

which on one side is a minister responsible for negotiations and on another side sits a minister that explains that there will not be peace in his lifetime. Perhaps you enjoy being in the middle, sitting on the fence, one foot here and another there without a plan, without ability. How do we continue in our generation to protect Israel as a Jewish and democratic state when you yourself are building a binational state?

Opposition leader Yitzhak Herzog,
in the Knesset, March 19, 2014

WEST BANK CONSTRUCTION UPDATE (units)

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Starts	1,369	2,057	1,988	1,889	1,516	1,487	2,324	1,963	737	1,110	1,133	2,534
Under Construction	4,081	4,101	3,842	3,537	3,161	2,780	3,192	3,295	2,215	1,789	1,707	2,895
Completions	2,139	2,376	1,794	1,746	2,171	1,748	1,601	2,063	1,670	1,682	1,271	1,365

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Monthly Construction Bulletin.

I have witnessed the systemic humiliation of Palestinian men, women and children by members of the Israeli security forces. Their humiliation is familiar to all black South Africans who were corralled and harassed and insulted and assaulted by the security forces of the apartheid government.

In South Africa, we could not have achieved our democracy without the help of people around the world, who through the use of non-violent means, such as boycotts and divestment, encouraged their governments and other corporate actors to reverse decades-long support for the apartheid regime. The

same issues of inequality and injustice today motivate the divestment movement trying to end Israel's decades long occupation of Palestinian territory and the unfair and prejudicial treatment of the Palestinian people by the Israeli government ruling over them. Those who turn a blind eye to injustice actually perpetuate injustice. If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.

**Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus and
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, March 23, 2014**

Foundation for Middle East Peace
1761 N Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: 202-835-3650
Fax: 202-835-3651
E-mail: info@fmep.org
Internet: <http://www.fmep.org>

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