

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

A Bimonthly Publication of the Foundation for Middle East Peace

Volume 10 Number 2

March-April 2000

NEWS

On March 19, the Israeli cabinet approved the third and last stage of Israeli redeployments in the West Bank undertaken during the interim period set forth in the Oslo II accords. The transfer of 5.1 percent of Area B and 1 percent of Area C to full Palestinian control (Area A) was implemented on March 21.

The Palestinian Authority now fully controls 17.2 percent of the West Bank (Area A) and has civil control over 23.8 percent (Area B).

On page 5, a map outlines the principal territorial and political divisions of the Golan Heights. Of particular interest is the detailed representation of the three demilitarized zones as they existed on June 4, 1967.

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ISRAEL OUTLINES WEST BANK TERRITORIAL DEMANDS IN FINAL STATUS TALKS

The on again-off again nature of formal talks between Israel and Syria raises legitimate questions about the successful outcome of efforts to arrange a peace between the long bitter enemies. What is not in dispute, however, is the degree to which Israel has reassessed long-held views of its territorial and settlement requirements on the Golan Heights—a transformation in elite military and strategic concepts, if not in public attitudes. Such views have enabled Israeli prime ministers since Yitzhak Rabin to conclude that Israel's strategic interests in the twenty-first century will be better served by a contractual peace with Syria and with-

out Golan settlements.

Israelis are engaged in a vibrant and informed debate on the strategic merits of continuing occupation of the Golan plateau. In this debate, the role of settlements on the Golan has been stripped of any pretense of relevance to assuring Israel's military-strategic objectives. Even the partisans of maintaining a hard line against withdrawal from the plateau do not invoke claims of the military value of civilian settlement, now numbering 17,000 people in 33 locations. They rely instead on an invocation of traditional Zionist

SECURITY, continued on page 6

FEWER SETTLEMENTS TO BE AFFECTED BY LATEST IDF PLANNING MAP

As Israeli redeployments increase the percentage of territory in the West Bank under some measure of Palestinian control to 41 percent, the prospect of some settlements finding themselves all but surrounded by a sea of Palestinian-controlled territory can no longer be avoided. This will particularly be the case after the implementation of the third stage of the second redeployment, scheduled according to the timetable established in the September 1999 Sharm al-Sheikh agreement to have taken place on January 20. This redeployment took place on March 21. All but one of Israel's more than 150 West Bank settlements remain under com-

plete Israeli control through principal access and transport routes. Neguchot, south of Hebron, is a former military location with fewer than 50 inhabitants. In all but a few cases, a buffer of land classified as Area B—under Israeli security control—surrounds settlements, increasing the distance between settlers (Area C) and areas under the sole control of the PA (Area A).

On February 20, Israeli press reports revealed that a map prepared for Israeli negotiators by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) highlighted 21 West Bank settlements surrounded by

SETTLEMENTS, continued on page 7

TO OUR READERS

The February 13 target date for the completion of a “framework” agreement establishing the parameters of a final settlement between Israel and the Palestinians has passed without noticeable progress. Palestinians are taking pains to convince Israelis, Americans, and in no small measure their own people that the concessions made to Israel during the interim period are in no way a precedent for the kind of permanent deal they are prepared to make. If a final-status agreement is to be reached, Palestinians are now arguing, negotiations must proceed as if the interim period did not exist.

This demand is particularly relevant to the question of land and the related issue of Israeli settlements. Today almost 200,000 Israelis reside in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and an equal number in annexed East Jerusalem. Their numbers are increasing at a rate of 10 percent annually, and their continuing expansion attests to Israel’s abiding determination to unilaterally establish territorial “facts on the ground” that Palestinians will have no choice but to recognize.

Some Israelis who have historically promoted settlement in the West Bank as a strategic necessity now are arguing that since settlements control “only” 5 percent

of the West Bank’s 5.5 million dunams, it should not be too difficult for Palestinians to concede this territory permanently as part of a final status agreement.

It is, admittedly, a seductive argument, particularly if Israel is prepared to make a compensatory exchange of its own land in return. To the uninitiated, such a small amount of land seems a small price to pay for peace.

Advocates of such a policy, however, fail, either by design or ignorance, to comprehend the true import of such an option. True, 200-odd settlements comprise 5 percent of the West Bank, their built-up areas less than 2 percent. And what about the West Bank’s 400-plus villages and towns? Less than 8 percent.

In the United States, urban areas comprise less than 3 percent of the continental land mass. Would anyone argue that New York City, Chicago or Washington do not exercise a decisive influence out of all proportion to the territory they control?

The game of percentages is, therefore, a misleading exercise—one that the Palestinians play at their own peril.



The Golan Heights—Mapping the Future

The heart of the dispute between Israel and Syria today is territorial. The map on page 5 details the complex territorial divisions resulting from almost a century of competition—first by colonial powers, followed by Israel and Syria—over disposition of the Golan plateau east of the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee. Special effort was made to present in clear, graphic terms the complex hierarchy of competing zones of control and sovereignty that define the region: the 1923 border, the armistice lines of 1949 and the resulting demilitarized zones, and the post-1967 border including the areas under UN control.

For the first time, the actual division of the three demilitarized zones is portrayed, not only visually, but also by percentages of Israeli and Syrian control as of June 4, 1967.

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ONLY THE LEFT CAN BUILD HAR HOMA—AND IT IS

The following article by Baruch Kra appeared in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* on February 6, 2000.

The initiative for the construction of the Har Homa neighborhood in the southern part of Jerusalem, adjacent to the Talpiot neighborhood of Armon Hanatziv and the village of Sur Bahr, was born during the Labor government [of Yitzhak Rabin]. But when [Benjamin] Netanyahu was prime minister, no one actually checked the history books to see who came up with the idea of Har Homa. Anytime the subject of Har Homa came up, the ritual was repeated. The Palestinians would initiate a crisis and left-wing activists would rush to lay down on the ground of Abu Ghneim to confront security forces.

During Netanyahu's term, construction tenders were planned, but no real building was done. Every time Netanyahu needed to placate his right-wing voters—after the signing of the Wye accord, for example—Netanyahu would flex his muscles by making a declaration of intent concerning Har Homa. Then the Palestinians would mobilize, the Americans and Europeans would express their displeasure, and the matter would go into a deep freeze until the next declaration.

6,500 Units Going Up

Ehud Barak's rise to power cast a pleasant darkness over Har Homa. The megaphones, television cameras, demonstrations and Netanyahu's vociferous declarations were replaced by bulldozers and cranes. Five construction companies have already received building permits for work on the site. Taking into account the sorry state of the current real estate market and the political cloud hovering over the lands of Abu Ghneim, Har Homa is a success story.

The construction is moving along at full steam and sales are booming. About 1,600 housing units have already been put up for sale—there are another 650 apartments for sale in stage A of the project and 700 have already been sold. In all, 6,500 housing units are planned for the neighborhood.

The contractors and agents, who were very apprehensive before the elections—at first there was a certain difficulty in marketing the land—are now grinning from ear to ear. The public is thronging. No other Jerusalem neighborhood can offer young couples the easy terms that Har Homa can.

"No one is interested in the political issue any more," says Yair Zagdon, a partner in the sales firm of Tsameret Har Homa. "This morning I saw that someone had spray painted 'Down with the Occupation' on one of our signs, but apart from that, everything has calmed down."

The new road, already in the advanced paving stages, will bring the neighborhood of Har Homa even closer to the [city] center, giving the residents quick access to places such as the Jerusalem Mall in the nearby Malha neighborhood.

Three-room apartments start at \$135,000, a four-room apartment costs \$160,000 and a five-room apartment goes for

\$190,000. For those who are fearful of political problems, Zagdon pulls out a two-line letter from Haim Ramon, the minister for Jerusalem affairs in the prime minister's office, which was sent to a concerned contractor after the elections: "I would like to make it clear that the government has no intention of stopping the building at Har Homa that was endorsed by the previous government."

All the houses are to be built in the typical Jerusalem style. From the upper floors facing the southeast, one can see Herodion in the Judean desert and Bethlehem, and the northern direction affords a view of all of Jerusalem. A small number of private homes with swimming pools will also be built.

Labor's Responsibility

"Barak's policy is no different from that of Netanyahu," [one government minister] says. "Take a look around the West Bank and see how many houses are going up in the settlements."

Barak, the minister maintains, with the help of Construction and Housing Minister Yitzhak Levy of the National Religious Party, is building far more than his predecessors. "The Barak government has an image of a peace government, and that makes it very difficult for us to explain that it is doing exactly what the previous government did. We don't want to escalate the situation at present. We don't want to have a violent confrontation. Demonstrations at this time could get bloody and seriously escalate and we don't want that," he explains.

And where are the left-wing movements? How is it that they are allowing the bulldozers to clear the ground for a magnificent Jewish neighborhood after lying down in front of them when Netanyahu was in power? Did the election of Barak give a seal of approval to construction at Har Homa?

Levy has a response for all those on the right who raise an eyebrow at his remaining in the leftist government. The construction of Har Homa is moving ahead along with the building in the Ras al-Amud neighborhood on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem and in the settlements. "I don't think that would happen if Yossi Sarid were holding this portfolio," he told *Ha'aretz*.

The first new residents are expected to start moving into their Har Homa apartments within 18 months. It is doubtful whether in a few years' time anyone will remember that the project was initiated and actually built by two Labor governments—the ones before and after Netanyahu. ♦

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

December 1 Israel casts the lone vote against a UN General Assembly resolution stating that Israel's decision to "impose its laws, jurisdiction, and administration on the Holy City of Jerusalem is illegal and therefore null and void and has no validity whatsoever."

December 5 *Ha'aretz* reports that four Israeli families are living in Ma'ale HaZeitim (Ras al-Amud) in East Jerusalem and that more families are expected to move in within a few months. The compound will have 119 apartments. According to Minister for Jerusalem Affairs Chaim Ramon, the construction at the site is legal and, therefore, not possible to stop.

Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) begin discussions about the third and final stage of Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank.

Ha'aretz cites a senior Israeli political source as saying that the government of Ehud Barak is not obligated by the prior decisions of the administration of Benjamin Netanyahu, which fixed the area of the third redevelopment at only 1 percent of the West Bank.

December 6 Palestinians halt final-status talks, demanding that Israel immediately stop all settlement construction.

December 7 Israeli prime minister Barak announces his intention to halt additional tenders for settlement construction for three months. Barak says, "There will be an agreement on final-status principles within three months in any event, such that it makes no difference if there is no construction during this period. It takes two years from the time a tender is issued until an apartment is built. It makes no logical sense to continue with something that hurts us from an international point of view, while it brings no tangible benefits at all."

U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright welcomes the move, saying that success will depend upon each side's ability to avoid steps "that embarrass the other and make negotiations more difficult."

According to Arutz-7, Housing Minister Yitzhak Levy says that he knows of no changes in Barak's construction policy. He suggests that Barak's comments "were likely misunderstood, since the reports of what he said are inconsistent with government policy,

according to which, . . . new settlements will not be built, but existing ones entitled to develop."

December 8 Nabil Abu Rdainah, a senior advisor to PA leader Yasser Arafat, announces that Prime Minister Barak's declaration the preceding day falls short of PA settlement-related demands that must be met in order to return to the negotiating table.

According to Amnesty International's report *Israel and the Occupied Territories: The Demolition and Dispossession of Palestinian Homes*, the Oslo accords have created 227 separate areas under Palestinian control. One hundred ninety of these measure less than two square kilometers. Only 40,000 Palestinians live on Area C lands; however, all Palestinians live within six kilometers of an Area C. The report states that, since Oslo, all of the 200 Palestinian applications for building permits in Area C submitted to Israel have been rejected.

December 9 Housing Minister Levy tells Barak that "the NRP [National Religious Party] will have a problem remaining in this coalition" if the government halts settlement construction.

December 12 Arutz-7 reports that a new neighborhood of 320 housing units was dedicated in the Golan settlement of Katzrin.

Permits for a 52-unit complex in a new neighborhood in the southern Golan settlement of Bnei Yehuda, however, are reported frozen.

Ha'aretz reports that the Tel Aviv District Court has convicted Gur Hamel, 29, for beating an Arab farmer to death near the settlement of Itamar on October 26, 1998. Hamel argued that the court was not authorized to discuss his case because the crime was committed in Area B. The judges rejected the claim, saying that, according to emergency regulations, the Israeli courts are authorized to try an Israeli citizen who has committed a crime in that area.

December 13 *Ha'aretz* reports that the YESHA council in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has reached an agreement with the Committee of Golan settlements to cooperate against a withdrawal from the Golan. YESHA will provide funds and organizational means to the Golan leaders.

The first mass demonstration against a

withdrawal from the Golan Heights is held in Jerusalem, attracting some 30,000 protesters.

December 20 The Archaeological Council calls upon the Israeli government to prohibit the building of a Jewish community in Tel Romeida, Hebron. The council claims that construction might harm the artifacts from biblical and later periods that were found during recent excavations.

December 22 Golan Regional Council chairman Yehuda Volman notes that construction in the Golan continued unabated during the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's negotiations with Syria, but that Prime Minister Barak seems intent on a policy of "drying out" Golan settlements.

December 26 According to Israel Wire, senior Israel Defense Force (IDF) commanders have announced plans to fortify the buildings occupied by Hebron's Jewish community. The military plans to install bullet-proof glass in homes where windows face the PA autonomous areas and other such security measures. The leaders of the local Jewish community object to the planned measures.

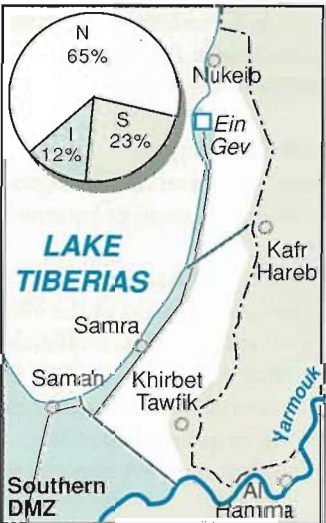
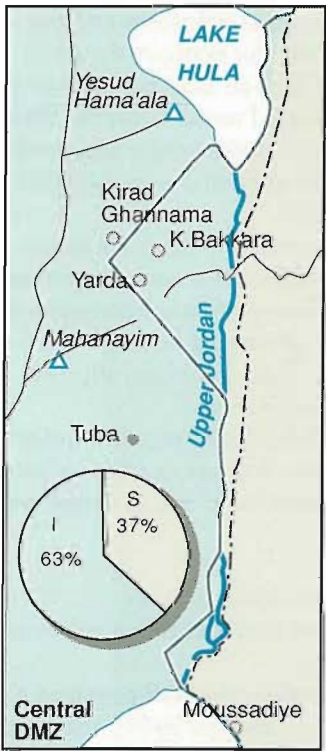
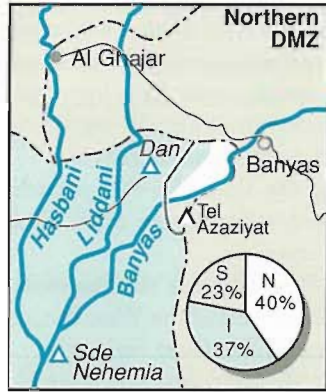
Israel Wire reports that, following an agreement reached between Etzion bloc activists and senior IDF commanders on December 24, residents were permitted to spend the Sabbath at the new "farm" of Lev HaGush.

December 28 *Ha'aretz* reports that Prime Minister Barak has tightened control over the organization that approves the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, banning the Supreme Council from meeting unless he or an aide approves the meeting's agenda in advance. The decision came after the council had approved during Barak's tenure the construction of 2,757 new homes in the settlements (with an additional 2,139 in the pipeline) and the placement of 85 mobile homes on the hilltop outposts of Mitzpeh Hagit, Neveh Erez, Mitzpeh Danny, and Givat Hahish.

Many of the plans approved for construction were not made public, although it is required by law.

December 29 The IDF tears down a shrine in the settlement of Kiryat Arba memorializing Baruch Goldstein, who killed 29 Muslim worshippers in Hebron in 1994. ♦

Golan Heights 1923-2000

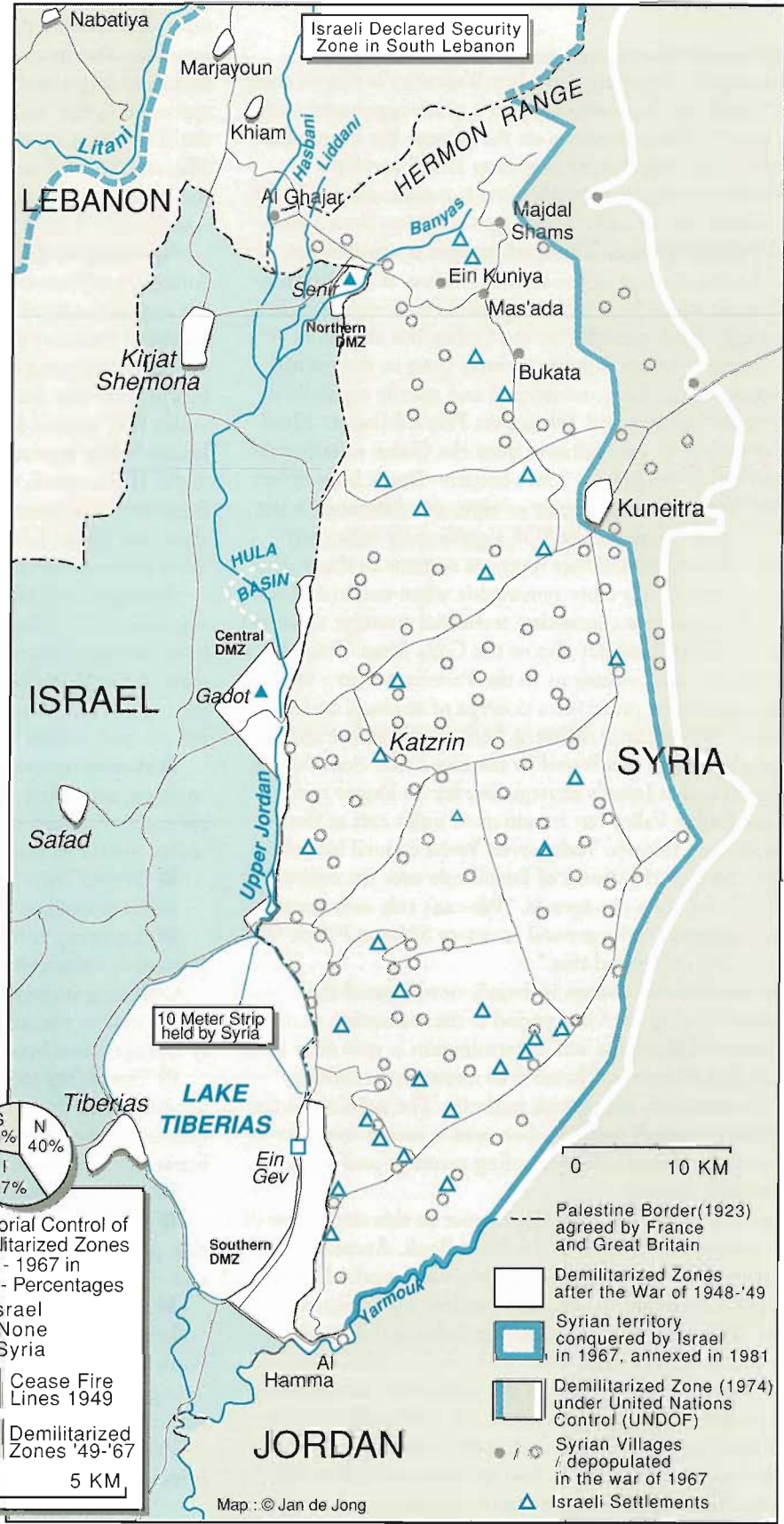


Territorial Control of Demilitarized Zones 1949 - 1967 in Area - Percentages

I = Israel
N = None
S = Syria

--- Cease Fire Lines 1949
--- Demilitarized Zones '49-'67

0 5 KM



0 10 KM

- Palestine Border (1923) agreed by France and Great Britain
- Demilitarized Zones after the War of 1948-'49
- Syrian territory conquered by Israel in 1967, annexed in 1981
- Demilitarized Zone (1974) under United Nations Control (UNDOF)
- / ○ Syrian Villages / depopulated in the war of 1967
- ▲ Israeli Settlements

ideological imperatives. As a result, the disassociation between Golan settlements and Israeli security is almost complete. Indeed, for those who support a peace agreement with Syria, Israel's civilian presence on the plateau has been transformed into an impediment to greater Israeli security.

Whether an agreement with Syria is consummated, Israel has embraced the strategic advantages resulting from a withdrawal from the plateau. These advantages are rooted not only in Israel's concept of the transformation of modern warfare, changes which have made it possible to compensate for the strategic depth provided by the Golan, but also in its view of the strategic threats that the country faces in the twenty-first century—the non-conventional and missile capabilities emerging in Baghdad and Tehran. As Prime Minister Ehud Barak conceives it, a withdrawal from the Golan to either the international or the June 4, 1967, border—Barak himself has said that “from a strategic point of view, the difference is not decisive”—will “reinforce the IDF significantly with early warning systems and the best weapons systems in the world.”

This view is all the more remarkable when contrasted with the Israeli view of the continuing territorial strategic value not only of the West Bank but also of the Gaza Strip. This notion has limited Israeli concessions to the Palestinians to a territorial framework that preserves a concept of strategic and territorial requirements little different from that in effect for the past forty years and unaffected by the fact made clear during the Gulf War that Israel's strategic border no longer runs along the Jordan Valley but hundreds of miles east at the Jordanian-Iraqi frontier. Today, even Yesha council leaders acknowledge that the dream of Israeli rule over the entire West Bank is not on the agenda. “We can't rule over another people,” admitted Yesha general secretary Shlomo Filber. “We [settlers] also understand this.”

The fundamental change in Israeli views toward the Palestinians during the Oslo period is the realization that some form of Palestinian self-determination is now seen as an essential *Israeli* interest if Israel is to maintain its existing political institutions and Jewish majority. The solution to the Palestinian's national problem, however, is meant to preserve, not undermine, Israel's long-standing security- and settlement-related demands.

Prime Minister Barak has given voice to this static view of Israel's territorial demands in the West Bank. According to Barak, they include, “broad, united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty; no return to the 1967 borders; no foreign army west of the Jordan River; most of the Judea and Samaria [West Bank] settlers—not even most of the settlements—to remain under our sovereignty in the permanent arrangement; a defense and settlement presence in the Jordan Rift Valley.

“These principles,” Barak continued, “will create an extended corridor, large blocs, and an ‘expanded Allon Plan,’ which is a basis for permanent-status negotiations.”

Israel's demands regarding the West Bank and Gaza Strip

are rooted in a strategy dominated by the past, not only in the sense of a continuing commitment to the idea of a Greater Israel but also in terms of an unchanging view of the security threats to Israel present on its eastern front. This intention is expressed in the “security interests” map, initially prepared by the IDF Planning Branch at the request of then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin during the Taba talks that preceded the signing of the Oslo II accord in September 1995. Barak was the IDF's chief of staff at the time.

According to the Planning Branch's map, the Palestinian Authority will control 40 to 45 percent of the West Bank by the end of the third redeployment. The Gaza Strip was excluded from any additional redeployments. The three blocs of Palestinian-controlled territory in the West Bank outlined by the IDF map are not contiguous; settlements and areas under IDF control separate them. For example, the entire Jordan Valley appears in the map as an area that must remain under IDF control, with unimpeded access across the West Bank to Israel proper. The map includes border adjustments along the Green Line as well as additional areas slated for West Bank settlement expansion.

At final-status talks that opened on January 30, Israeli negotiator Oded Eran presented Israel's security requirements in the occupied territories as the basis for the annexation of parts of the West Bank. While presenting no maps or estimating the percentage of West Bank land, Eran affirmed Israel's need for the following territories:

- A security strip in the Jordan Valley region in order to confront, according to a February 2 report in *Ha'aretz* “possible security threats on the Eastern front” and to defend population centers in Israel.
- Greater Jerusalem.
- An undefined number of settlement blocs.
- A security corridor around settlements that will become isolated in Palestinian territory.

Outlining its security imperatives, the IDF presented to Israeli leaders the following four “anchors” to eventual security arrangements between Israel and the PA:

- The ability to spread forces and freedom of movement for defense in the event of an attack from the east, and defense of the “seam line” (near the Green Line border) between PA areas and Israel.
- A demilitarized Palestinian Authority.
- Security separation between Israel and the Palestinians that permits Israeli jurisdiction over the crossings between the two sides.
- Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation.

Israel is demanding sovereignty over all areas of the West Bank defined as necessary for its security, but IDF officials “recognize the possibility of a different political decision that will transfer territory to partial or complete Palestinian rule.”

Palestinian officials consider any map based upon such principles to be a non-starter. For their part, PA negotiators

have reiterated a demand for a complete Israeli withdrawal to the June 4, 1967, border. Many reports, however attest to a Palestinian recognition that there are some settlement “facts on the ground,” that cannot be ignored. *Ha'aretz*, for example, reported on February 2 that “in discussions in limited forums in recent weeks Palestinians presented a more flexible position, according to which they would agree to the annexation of large settlement blocs to Israel in return for alternative territories to be agreed upon in negotiations.” Palestinians denied such an agreement, and Barak is reported to have summarily rejected the suggestion of an exchange of territory.

The territorial situation in Gaza has not changed since the first Oslo agreement in 1994, which established the Palestinian Authority in parts of Gaza Strip and Jericho. At that time, the PA established civil and security authority on 87 percent of Gaza’s 415,000 dunams. The IDF and 16 settlements, whose population has increased to 7,000 today, control 36,000 dunams—the so called “white areas” comprising less than 10 percent of Gaza. The 500 to 800 meter wide “yellow area,” where the IDF retains security authority and Palestin-

ian residential construction is ostensibly prohibited, comprise the remaining 3 percent of Gaza. Additional Israeli redeployments in Gaza have not been discussed since 1994.

According to Israeli strategists, current Israeli deployment in Gaza accomplishes four basic strategic military objectives:

- Settlements in the southern part of Gaza act as a physical barrier to the creation of a contiguous Arab bloc spanning the border between Egypt and Palestinian territory, preventing the transport of military equipment into Palestinian areas.

- Settlement in the northern part of Gaza creates a barrier between Israel proper and Palestinian areas.

- The settlements of Kfar Darom and Morag can oversee and interdict transport and supplies moving along Gaza’s main north-south traffic axis.

- Netzarim, a settlement that has grown from nearly empty to 60 families with a population of 400 during the Oslo period, remains, in the words of one IDF commander, “the last eye into Gaza.” The settlements and accompanying military redeployment also act as a wedge between Palestinian population centers in the north and the south of Gaza, aimed at preventing, in times of crisis, the easy movement of people and material north along the road to Israel. ◆

SETTLEMENTS, continued from page 1

Palestinian-controlled areas—that is, islands of Israeli jurisdiction with a single road exit—and another 16 that cannot be included in any of the settlement blocs that Israel intends to annex as part of a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

The number of settlements compromised by the redeployments already implemented, as well as those envisioned by IDF planners, is far fewer than the scores of outposts identified by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin as “political settlements.” On December 14, 1997, Minister of Defense Yitzhak Mordechai presented to the cabinet two maps drafted by the IDF: a “security interests” map, which calls for the annexation of 52.2 percent of the West Bank and leaves some 45 of 144 West Bank settlements outside Israeli sovereignty but provides for their extraterritorial status; and a “national interests” map, which includes all the settlements, but which does not assure that they will enjoy full Israeli sovereignty.

Mordechai explained that settlements outside the zones of Israeli sovereignty specified in the security interests map would nonetheless have unspecified “special arrangements” that would forestall their disintegration.

The list of isolated settlements appearing in the latest IDF planning map contains few surprises for anyone familiar with the principles guiding Israel’s successive redeployments. Kfar Tapuach, which now sits astride one of the most vital transportation junctions in the West Bank, may be marginalized when a new road linking Ariel with the settlement of Rachelim, south of Tapuach, is completed. Inclusion of the Allon Road settlements of Rimonim and Kochav Ha Shahar is said to suggest an Israeli willingness to establish a secure

Palestinian corridor between the Ramallah region and Jericho (and potentially eastward to Jordan). The Allon Plan, devised within weeks of the 1967 war, outlined such a corridor along the Ramallah-Jericho road. There are, however, ways of establishing such a corridor without affecting either of these two settlements.

Both Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Deputy Minister of Defense Ephraim Sneh denied that the settlements on the list are marked for evacuation, but settlement leaders, who convened an emergency meeting to discuss the revelation, assume that that is just what is on offer.

“Whoever splits the country also splits the people of Israel,” declared one settlement leader, “and this is what seems to be happening now by those examining planning options.”

The organization Peace Now was less circumspect, noting that “the published list proves that the government of Israel recognizes the principal of evacuating settlements in return for peace.”

All parties to this domestic Israeli debate appear to have an interest in exaggerating the scope of settlements affected by any change in the territorial status quo—some in order to eventually reach a politically sustainable “compromise” affecting fewer settlements, others in order to promote popular support for a more expansive withdrawal. The inclusion of such settlements as Tapuach, Rimonim, and Kochav Ha Shahar, as well as the eastern Etzion bloc settlements of Tekoa, Ma’ale Hever, Nokdim, Ma’ale Amos, and Metzad, which will sit astride the planned Route 80 running through the West Bank from Arad to Bet Shean, appear to be in this category. ◆

BARAK'S RECORD OF SETTLEMENT EXPANSION

Settlements have continued to expand during the first year of Ehud Barak's government, symbolized by the October decision to recognize the creation of more than a score of new settlements, the first decision in years to establish new settlements.

The settler population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is approaching 200,000. A similar number of Israelis now live in annexed areas of East Jerusalem, where Prime Minister Barak has presided over construction at Har Homa and Ras al-Amud, among other locales.

Barak has temporarily forbidden the issuance of new tenders, a decision that will not be reflected on the ground for years, if ever. This prohibition does not, however, extend to scores of smaller settlements. The Higher Planning Council for the settlements, whose approval is required for all new construction or amendments to existing town master plans, cannot convene now without the express approval of Barak's deputy at the Defense Ministry—a requirement viewed by settlers as further evidence of the prime minister's desire to slow settlement expansion during final-status talks.

"We have asked to expand the settlement of Etz Ephraim in which 150 families currently live by another 100 families," explained one settlement leader, "and we are simply refused. We are talking about changes in master plans which officials

refuse to discuss. The situation is the same for the expansion of industrial areas in the Reihan-Shaked-Hinnanit bloc [west of Jenin]."

According to Peace Now, between October 15 and December 13, 1999, the Barak government approved building plans for 2,757 new dwellings in 6 West Bank settlements, approved the "deposit" of plans for an additional 2,139 units, and approved the placement of 85 mobile homes in settlements "legalized" in October.

The ministry of housing has issued tenders for the construction of 3,196 new units in West Bank and Gaza Strip settlements, excluding East Jerusalem.

At the end of February 2000 there were more than 7,120 units in various stages of construction, enough to increase the settler population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by 30,000. Thousands of others have already been approved and await only a decision by contractors to begin construction. There are no restrictions on settlement expansion in the settlement suburbs of East Jerusalem.

"We have made a strategic decision to speak with the Barak government," explained Benjamin Kashriel, mayor of Ma'ale Adumim and general secretary of the Yesha council, "but if the direction is a freeze, our decision will change." ♦

The Holy See, the Sovereign Authority of the Catholic Church, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (hereinafter: PLO), the Representative of the Palestinian People working for the benefit and on behalf of the Palestinian Authority:

Declaring that an equitable solution for the issue of Jerusalem, based on international resolutions, is fundamental for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, and that unilateral decisions and actions altering the specific character and status of Jerusalem are morally and legally unacceptable;

Calling, therefore, for a special statute for Jerusalem, internationally guaranteed. . . .

Excerpted from the Basic Agreement between the Holy See and the Palestine Liberation Organization, February 15, 2000

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

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