

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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SETTLEMENT FREEZE OR 'NATURAL GROWTH' IN NEW CLOTHES

By *Geoffrey Aronson*

Demands for a freeze in the expansion of Israeli civilian settlements located in territories occupied by Israel in June 1967 are now at the center stage of

Arab-Israeli diplomacy. The peace initiative promoted earlier this year by the Egyptian and Jordanian governments and the report of a presidentially appointed commission headed by former senator George Mitchell and endorsed by all parties have placed a settlement freeze at the heart of their recommendations for stabilizing deteriorating relations between Israel and the Palestinians.

The effort to win Israel's endorsement for a freeze in the growth of Israel's outposts in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem has an impeccable diplomatic pedigree. Every president since Jimmy Carter has endeavored, with varying degrees of commitment, to cajole, convince, or threaten Israeli leaders to undertake a fundamental change in one of the central components of Israel's security and domestic policy.

These efforts have uniformly failed.

At Camp David in 1979, Jimmy Carter thought that he had won an Israeli commitment to a five year freeze. But Menachem Begin was only prepared to stop for three months. And he forgot to tell Carter that the "thickening" of existing settlements, whose population then numbered 50,000, would continue unabated.

George Bush and Yitzhak Rabin agreed in 1992 to another freeze, excepting the "natural growth" of settlements. Rabin defended himself against right-wing attacks for his concession, noting with some exasperation, "The construction of 11,000 units continues.

Is this a freeze. I don't know whether [Bush] accepts this or not, but he knows that this will happen." At that time there were 250,000 Israelis living over the 1967 Green Line.

At a June 27, 2001 meeting with President George W. Bush, Ariel Sharon refused to entertain the idea of the complete freeze at the heart of the Mitchell plan, offering instead to restrict expansion to existing settlement areas. Asked for Bush's reaction, Sharon replied, "I don't think that he loved it, but this is the Israeli position."

Today, after 34 years of Israeli occupation, more than 400,000 Israelis have been settled in more than 200 purposely built towns, suburbs, and villages in East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank, on lands that at least three million Palestinians consider to be *their* patrimony. Palestinians who have witnessed the doubling of Israel's population in their midst during almost a decade most observers have described as a peace might be forgiven for questioning not only Israeli intentions, but those of their own leadership as well.

Israel's effort to literally transform the landscape has been undertaken in the service of ideology and military strategy, a winning combination that has demonstrated its vitality and staying power in times of war and peace. Settlements are the most emotive expression of the century-old Zionist revolution in Palestine, the most practical illustration of both the power and

NEWS

The June ceasefire agreement sponsored by the United States has failed to end almost daily violent confrontations, including more frequent vigilante actions by settlers.

According to MK Mossi Raz, 1,500 families—about 6,000 people—have moved to settlements since January. Since the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada in September 2000, 300 to 400 families have left settlements for Israel.

Also in this issue:

Sharon's Palestinian State	3
Settlement Statistics	8

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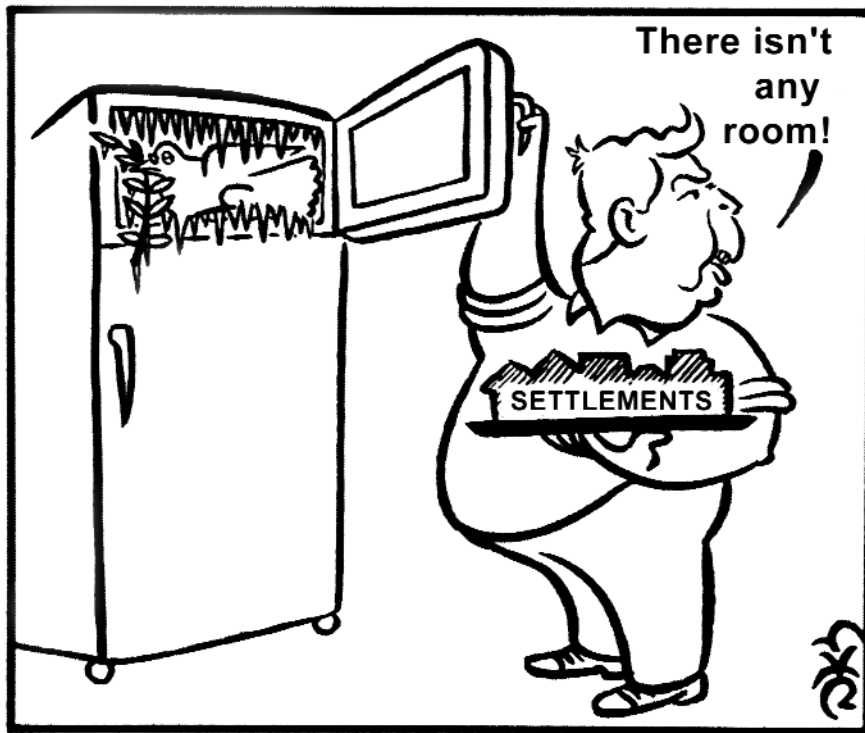
SETTLEMENT, continued on page 7

TO OUR READERS

The current U.S. diplomatic effort to implement the Mitchell Report's call for a cease-fire and "confidence building" is getting nowhere. A total end to Palestinian violence that Sharon demands is improbable without prompt relief from Israel's tough policies of collective punishment, including closures, economic sanctions and demolitions, which provoke and exacerbate violence. (A genuine settlement freeze is also a must, though problematical, as pointed out in this issue. But easing other pressures is even more urgent.) Greater dedication by Arafat is unlikely to stop all violence, especially by angry youths and militants who live in Palestinian areas under Israeli control. Moreover, Sharon's demand for a long "cooling off" period after a cease-fire and before confidence-building measures begin is unrealistic. Unless confidence-building is linked more closely to an end to violence, the Mitchell plan will fail.

Understanding that Palestinian violence is in large part a rebellion by a subject population suffering from onerous Israeli policies and deep despair, and not, as the new mythology claims, a weapon Arafat has chosen to destroy peace, does not mean violence is to be excused or rewarded. It must be condemned absolutely, as ruinous for all sides. However, accountability lies, not just with Arafat's inadequate efforts. Israel, on its part, has relied exclusively on often lethal and provocative military responses and on draconian collective punishment and repression. No less important, Sharon's current vision of a peace deal projected in the map on page 3 offers no hope for Palestinians.

Philip C. Wilcox, Jr.



Source: *Ha'aretz*, May 18, 2001.

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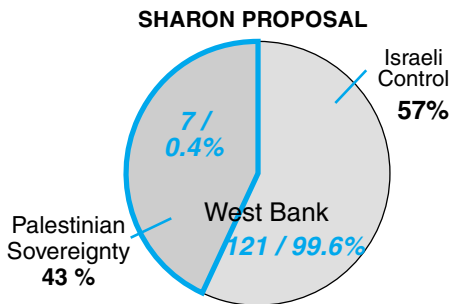
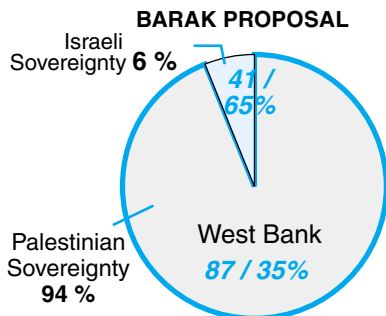
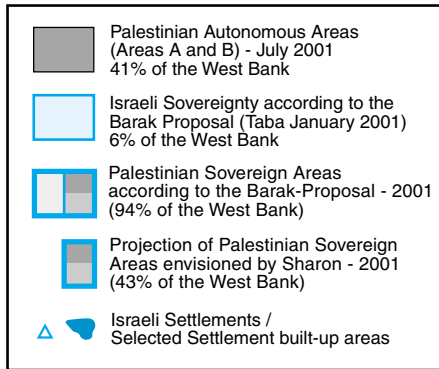
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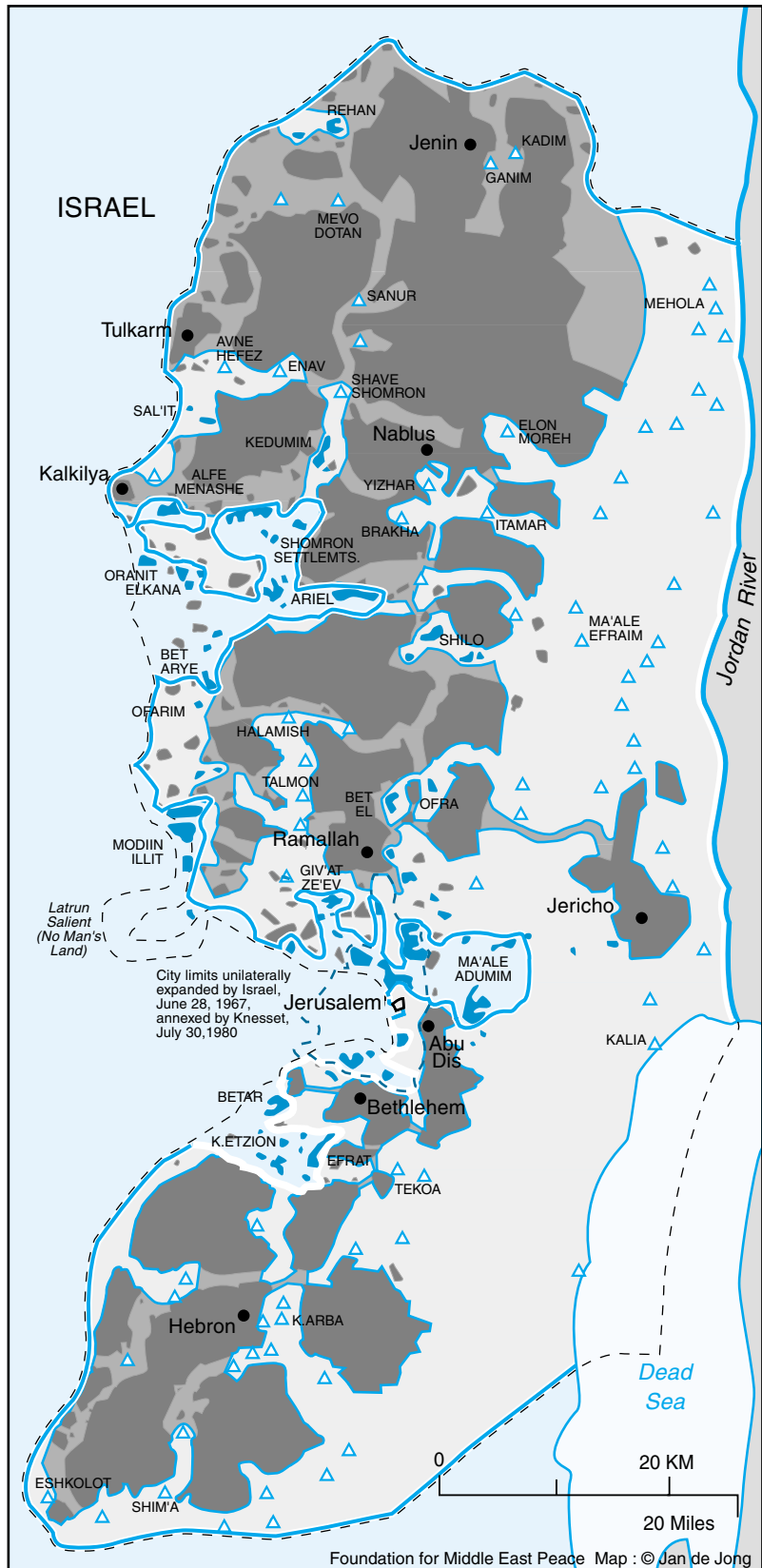
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Palestinian Sovereign Areas According to the Barak / Sharon Proposals - 2001



West Bank Sovereignty Areas, including Number of Israeli Settlements and Percentage of Settlers, **excluding** East Jerusalem



THE MITCHELL REPORT

The following text is excerpted from the Report of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, headed by former senator George J. Mitchell, issued on April 30, 2001.

INTRODUCTION

Some Israelis appear not to comprehend the humiliation and frustration that Palestinians must endure every day as a result of living with the continuing effects of occupation, sustained by the presence of Israeli military forces and settlements in their midst, or the determination of the Palestinians to achieve independence and genuine self-determination. . . .

WHY DID IT HAPPEN?

The Palestinian Perspective: Palestinians are genuinely angry at the continued growth of settlements and at their daily experiences of humiliation and disruption as a result of Israel's presence in the Palestinian territories. Palestinians see settlers and settlements in their midst not only as violating the spirit of the Oslo process, but also as application of force in the form of Israel's overwhelming military superiority, which sustains and protects the settlements.

The Interim Agreement provides that "the two parties view the West Bank and Gaza as a single territorial unit, the integrity and status of which will be preserved during the interim period." Coupled with this, the Interim Agreement's prohibition on taking steps which may prejudice permanent status negotiations denies Israel the right to continue its illegal expansionist settlement policy. In addition to the Interim Agreement, customary international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, prohibits Israel (as an occupying power) from establishing settlements in occupied territory pending an end to the conflict. . . . [PLO submission]

According to the PLO, "In the seven years since the [Declaration of Principles], the settler population in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, has doubled to 200,000, and the settler population in East Jerusalem has risen to 170,000. Israel has constructed approximately 30 new settlements, and expanded a number of existing ones to house these new settlers. . . ."

The Israeli Perspective: From the GOI [Government of Israel] perspective, the expansion of settlement activity and the taking of measures to facilitate the convenience and safety of settlers do not prejudice the outcome of permanent status negotiations.

Israel understands that the Palestinian side objects to the settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Without prejudice to the formal status of the settlements, Israel accepts that the settlements are an outstanding issue on which there will have to be agreement as part of any permanent status resolution between the sides. This point was acknowledged and agreed upon in the other agreements

between the two sides. There has in fact been a good deal of discussion on the question of settlements between the two sides in the various negotiations toward a permanent status agreement. [Israeli submission]

Indeed, Israelis point out that at the Camp David summit and during subsequent talks, the GOI offered to make significant concessions with respect to the settlements in the context of an overall agreement. . . .

Settlements: The GOI also has a responsibility to help rebuild confidence. A cessation of Palestinian-Israeli violence will be particularly hard to sustain unless the GOI freezes all settlement construction activity. The GOI should also give careful consideration to whether settlements that are focal points for substantial friction are valuable bargaining chips for future negotiations or provocations likely to preclude the onset of productive talks.

The issue is, of course, controversial. Many Israelis will regard our recommendation as a statement of the obvious and will support it. Many will oppose it. But settlement activities must not be allowed to undermine the restoration of calm and the resumption of negotiations.

During the half-century of its existence, Israel has had the strong support of the United States. In international forums, the United States has at times cast the only vote on Israel's behalf. Yet, even in such a close relationship there are some difficulties. Prominent among those differences is the U.S. government's long-standing opposition to the GOI's policies and practices regarding settlements. As the then-secretary of state, James A. Baker III commented on May 22, 1991:

Every time I have gone to Israel in connection with the peace process, on each of my four trips, I have been met with the announcement of new settlement activity. This does violate United States policy. It's the first thing that Arabs—Arab governments, the first thing that the Palestinians in the territories—whose situation is really quite desperate—the first thing they raise when we talk to them. I don't think there is any bigger obstacle to peace than the settlement activity that continues not only unabated but at an enhanced pace.

The policy described by Secretary Baker, on behalf of the administration of President George H. W. Bush, has been, in essence, the policy of every American administration over the past quarter century.

Most other countries, including Turkey, Norway, and those of the European Union, have also been critical of Israeli settlement activity, in accordance with their views that such settlements are illegal under international law and not in compliance with previous agreements.

On each of our two visits to the region, there were Israeli announcements regarding expansion of settlements, and it was almost always the first issue raised by Palestinians with whom we met. During our last visit, we observed the impact

of 6,400 settlers [400 settlers in H2 sector of central Hebron; 6,000 in the nearby Kiryat Arba settlement] on 140,000 Palestinians in Hebron and 6,500 settlers on over 1,100,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The GOI describes its policy as prohibiting new settlements but permitting expansion of existing settlements to accommodate “natural growth.” Palestinians contend that there is no distinction between “new” and “expanded” settlements, and that, except for a brief freeze during the tenure of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, there has been a continuing, aggressive effort by Israel to increase the number and size of settlements.

The subject has been widely discussed within Israel. The *Ha'aretz* English language edition editorial of April 10, 2001 stated:

A government which seeks to argue that its goal is to reach a solution to the conflict with the Palestinians through peaceful means, and is trying at this stage to bring an end to the violence and terrorism, must announce an end to construction in the settlements.

The circumstances in the region are much changed from those which existed nearly 20 years ago. Yet, President Reagan's words remain relevant: “The immediate adoption of a settlement freeze by Israel, more than any other action, could create the confidence needed.”

Beyond the obvious confidence-building qualities of a settlement freeze, we note that many of the confrontations during this conflict have occurred at points where Palestinians, settlers, and security forces protecting the settlers meet. Keeping both the peace and these friction points will be very difficult. . . .

Actions and Responses: We are deeply concerned about the public safety implications of exchanges of fire between populated areas. Palestinian gunmen have directed small arms fire at Israeli settlements and at nearby IDF positions from within or adjacent to civilian dwellings in Palestinian areas, thus endangering innocent Israeli and Palestinian civilians alike. We condemn the positioning of gunmen within or near civilian dwellings. . . .

Economic and Social Impact of Violence: Of particular concern to the PA has been the destruction by Israeli security forces and settlers of tens of thousands of olive and fruit trees and other agricultural property. . . .

RECOMMENDATIONS

Rebuild Confidence: The GOI should freeze all settlement activity, including the “natural growth” of existing settlements. The kind of security cooperation desired by the GOI cannot for long co-exist with settlement activity described very recently by the European Union as causing “great concern” and by the United States as “provocative.”

The GOI should give careful consideration to whether settlements which are focal point for substantial friction are valuable bargaining chips for future negotiations or provocations likely to preclude the onset of productive talks.

The GOI may wish to make clear to the PA that a future peace would pose no threat to the territorial continuity of a Palestinian state to be established in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. . . .

The PA should prevent gunmen from using Palestinian populated areas to fire upon Israeli populated areas and IDF positions. . . .

The GOI should take all necessary steps to prevent acts of violence by settlers. . . .

Official Responses to the Report

The United Nations

“I also appreciate the Committee's focus on the negative impact of settlement policy on the prospects for peace.”

Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan

Israel

Israel must recall that the question of the settlements is a matter that, together with, principally, Jerusalem, refugees, and borders, has specifically been agreed by Israel and the Palestinian side as one for treatment in the permanent status negotiations. There is nothing in the bilateral agreements between the two sides that suggests that the question of settlements is to be regarded as one that could be separated from the others and unrelated to the overall solution of those other problems. Indeed, the Committee itself noted that the issues of settlements is one of the core issues to be negotiated between the sides. The outcome of such negotiations, in which each side has legitimate positions and claims, should not be prejudged.

On the substance, it must be recalled that it is already part of the policy of the government of Israel not to establish new settlements. At the same time, the current and everyday needs of the development of such communities must be taken into account.

The Palestinian Authority

The findings of the committee . . . have gone to the heart of the current crisis—Israel's on-going occupation as most clearly exemplified by Israel's continuing policy of confiscating Palestinian territory and destroying Palestinian property in order to build and expand illegal settlements and related “bypass” roads.

The report points to the connection between Israeli-Palestinian violence and Israel's “settlement construction activity.” The report emphasizes that the international community has universally condemned Israel's settlement policy as either the “greatest obstacle to peace” or, just as accurately, as illegal actions under international law and a violation of Palestinian-Israeli agreements. We wholeheartedly concur with the committee's findings that Israel should cease all of its settlement activity and that Israel should carefully consider dismantling settlements that are particularly provocative flash points. We are also encouraged by a recent Israeli poll indicating that 62% of Israelis favor a settlement freeze as a means of ending the current crisis. ♦

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

December 7 A drive-by shooting near Shavei Shomron injures two settlers and two soldiers. A Palestinian laborer stabs a settler at the Erez industrial area in Gaza.

Ha'aretz reports a decision by the IDF to increase from 500 to 1,300 the number of soldiers deployed to protect settlements.

December 8 Two settlers are shot and killed while traveling from the Beit Hagai settlement to Kiryat Arba. Another settler is shot to death and two more are wounded during an attack in Jericho. The IDF reimposes a curfew on Hebron's Old City.

Settlers from Kiryat Arba close all bypass roads and attack Palestinian cars and homes with live ammunition. The YESHA council demands that all private Palestinian cars be barred from West Bank roads.

Armed settlers take over a home in Hebron's Baqa' area (Givat Harsina). Settlers shoot and wound a Palestinian boy in an attempt to take over his house in the village.

A European Union statement draws a connection between Palestinian violence and Israel's settlement policy.

December 9 A 13-year-old Palestinian boy dies from a gunshot wound inflicted by Israeli settlers in Hebron. According to Palestinian sources, settlers from Kiryat Arba and Hebron had raided and vandalized Palestinian homes in response to the shooting of two settlers the preceding day. The settlers contend they were attacked while attempting to occupy a Palestinian home that they believe was illegally built.

Settlers hold violent demonstrations in Hebron, protesting the deaths of two settlers on December 8.

December 10 Shots are fired at workers constructing a new bypass road connecting the Beit El and Psagot settlements.

Hear Palestine reports settlers shooting at homes and a school with live ammunition in Sila.

The IDF announces new measures designed to curb shooting attacks on West Bank roads: private Palestinian cars with male-only passengers will not be allowed to travel; army activity will increase at night; Areas A are to be placed under closure and Palestinian villages cut off from cities. The army recommends settlers travel in pairs of cars to reduce their vulnerability.

December 11 *Hear Palestine* reports settlers shooting at homes in Burqa, which has been under curfew for four days.

Settlers from Mitzpeh Jericho and Neve Tzuf block roads to passage by Palestinian cars.

Settlers from Moshav Patza'el burn tires and obstruct traffic on the Jordan Valley highway, protesting the Mekorot company's decision to cut water supplies for agricultural purposes.

Settlements in the Jordan Valley close schools until enough armored buses are supplied to transport children.

Palestinians fire on Gilo, injuring one woman, and on Kfar Darom and Psagot. Two Israeli cars are shot at on the French Hill-Ma'ale Adumim road.

Ha'aretz reports that PA chairman Arafat has not visited the West Bank since early October due to fears that settlers may try to assassinate him.

December 12 Two settlers from Morag in Gaza are wounded in a drive-by shooting. A settler from Talmon is wounded in a drive-by shooting near Na'aleh. An employee of the Bezeq telephone company is wounded in a roadside shooting attack in the Jordan Valley.

Settlers set fire to a furniture storage building and a tile sawmill in Salfit. Settlers also destroy several commercial shops and factories.

Israel begins construction of a new bypass road from Deir Sharaf to the Homesh and Enav settlements near Nablus.

Gunfire penetrates the Neve Dekalim settlement in Gaza. The head of the Neve Dekalim community center states that, "there is a feeling of war here . . . the army would like nothing better than to close up the building altogether, but we object; we expect protection like everyone else."

December 13 Settlers block Palestinian traffic at dozens of intersections, including those near Ateret, Beit El, Kiryat Arba, Neve Tzuf, Ofra, and Talmon. Neither the police nor the army intervenes.

The Palestinian Islamic and National Committee to Resist Settlements calls on Palestinians to boycott Israeli-made goods, saying "the most dangerous phenomenon is that of buying Jewish settlement products."

The Jordan Valley settlements end their school strike following the acquisition of a bullet-proof bus.

December 14 Settlers from Gilo demonstrate in front of Prime Minister Ehud Barak's house, calling for a strong security presence in the settlement.

The IDF prevents all Palestinian cars from using Route 60 near Kfar Etzion and Beit Jala. Settlers place themselves at the junctions of Ofra and Kfar Etzion, closing the roads and stoning Palestinian cars.

A settler is wounded in a drive-by shooting near the Halamish junction between Ofra and Shilo. A settler from Negohot is fired on in his car near Hebron. A settler is injured by rocks thrown at her car near Alei Zahav. Gunfire closes the Tunnels Highway.

Settlers in Morag enter bomb shelters after exchanges of fire between the IDF and Palestinians.

December 16 According to *Arutz-7*, more than 11 attacks are mounted in the occupied territories, including the wounding of a motorist near Mevo Dotan, a bus shooting near Ofra, shootings at the settlements in Hebron, and the throwing of grenades at an army jeep near Rafah in Gaza.

December 17 Two settlers from Neve Tzuf are arrested in connection with the death of a Palestinian whose body was found near Abud. The settlers claim they were attacked with stones and shot in self-defense.

A settler from Kiryat Arba is charged with aggravated assault in connection with the wounding of a Palestinian. The settler claims he shot after being attacked with stones.

According to *Arutz-7*, more than 15 attacks are perpetrated against settlers including shootings at Beit El, Givat Harsina, Neve Dekalim, and Shdermah. Palestinian gunfire closes the Tunnels Highway.

A settler from Mevo Dotan is shot in his car. Shots are fired at a bus traveling from Morag.

December 18 After two and a half months, the IDF lifts the curfew on the Old City and industrial areas of Hebron.

Settlers open fire on and attempt to break into the Hawara High School in Nablus, wounding two students. The settlers surround the school before the IDF arrives and stops them.

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

Hundreds of religious teachers march in Jerusalem, calling for Barak to “act aggressively in order to keep the shooting away from the settlements . . . and from Gilo.”

According to *Ha'aretz*, settlers fire on two Palestinians near Nablus, seriously wounding one.

Palestinians fire on Gilo, near Givat Ze'ev, settlements in Hebron, at Israeli cars on the Nablus bypass road, and near Ofarim and Bracha.

December 19 Shots are fired at Kfar Darom, Neve Dekalim, and at an Israeli car traveling between Elon Moreh and Itamar.

December 20 Shots are fired at a bus stop near Ofra, Israeli vehicles near Itamar and Neve Tzuf, and at Gadid in Katif Bloc. A roadside bomb explodes between Elon Moreh and Itamar. No injuries are reported.

Housing and Construction Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer reports that 1,400 settlement housing units have been started in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since January 2000.

December 21 An Israeli is shot and killed

while traveling along the Jerusalem-Modi'in road, west of Givat Ze'ev.

The IDF shoots and wounds two Palestinians after an anti-tank missile is fired at Kfar Darom. Shots are fired at military outposts in Dugit and Katif Bloc and at the Erez checkpoint in Gaza.

Settlers from Yitzhar attack Hawara and destroy more than 100 olive trees near the settlement junction. Settlers fire at Palestinian cars traveling in Salfit.

Ma'ariv publishes tenders for 496 housing units in Ma'ale Adumim and 212 units in Alfei Menashe. A later edition of the paper prints a statement canceling the tenders.

December 22 A Palestinian farmer is shot while working in his field near the Netzarim settlement.

Hear Palestine reports seven Palestinians injured while attempting to stop a bulldozer working on land to be annexed to the Kfar Darom settlement.

A Palestinian detonates a bomb, killing himself and three Israelis at an inn near the Jordan Valley settlement of Mehola.

December 23 IDF forces based in Elon Moreh fire at Azmout and Salem villages causing severe damage.

More than 200 settlers from Betar, near Bethlehem, throw stones at Palestinian cars near the entrance of Nahaleen village.

A roadside bomb explodes near Ariel. Palestinians shoot at Israeli cars near Elon Moreh, Kfar Darom, and Neve Dekalim.

December 24 The U.S. Agency for International Development earmarks \$70 million dollars for a highway in the West Bank linking Jenin and Nablus. The project will be funded from aid given to the PA following the Wye accords.

An Israeli bus is fired on at the Netzarim-Karni crossing; a grenade is thrown at IDF forces near Netzer Hazani. Shooting is reported at the Nili settlement.

Settlers block Palestinian traffic on the Jordan Valley highway at two intersections. One settler calls the action “a way of releasing steam” because “the media acts as if the Jordan Valley has practically been given away already.” ♦

SETTLEMENT, continued from page 1

the tenacity of Jewish nationalism. In the occupied territories, this ideological imperative has been married to a military strategy intent on assuring Israel's permanent military control west of the Jordan River. Civilian Israel settlement throughout the territories was essential to the realization of this goal, explained Moshe Dayan, who remains the most important architect of Israeli policy, “not because [settlements] can ensure security better than the army, but because without them we cannot keep the army in those territories. Without them the IDF would be a foreign army ruling a foreign population,” rather than an army defending the “right” of its citizens to live in their homeland in peace and security.

Little wonder then that Palestinian efforts during the last decade to condition diplomacy on an Israeli agreement to freeze settlements have never been

seriously entertained by Israel, which recognizes that such calls are motivated by an intention to force an Israeli evacuation not only of settlements but also of the Israeli army from the contested territories themselves. Only when PLO leader Yasser Arafat agreed to drop settlements from his agenda in 1993 was the road to the historic Oslo process opened.

The failure of final status talks earlier this year, the defeat of Ehud Barak at the hands of Ariel Sharon, and the rebellion against Israel mounted since last October by Palestinians in the occupied territories have created a diplomatic vacuum that the call for a settlement freeze is meant, in part, to fill. Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres is searching the extensive diplomatic lexicon to conjure a formulation that will satisfy the freeze's partisans while leaving unfettered Prime Minister Sharon's extensive settlement vision.

If a working ceasefire results in seri-

ous debate on a settlements freeze, Palestinians need to be reminded of the old adage: Watch what you wish for, because it might come true. They have been surprised by the renewed resonance of the freeze idea in the international diplomatic community, but they are much better prepared to attack Israel's refusal to concede this point than to consider how exactly such a freeze might work, or indeed, if it could work: What should it include? How is it to be monitored? What penalties would be exacted for transgressions? The Palestinian strategy is to rely on the United States and the EU to negotiate the details of a freeze. Yet the historical record suggests that negotiations to determine the practical meaning of this notion could well result in Palestinian acquiescence in a settlement “freeze” that, like all of its antecedents, leaves intact Israel's settlement prerogatives. ♦

Housing Starts in Israel and Settlements in West Bank and Gaza, 1990–1999

Year	Construction Starts in Israel* & Settlements (units)			Construction Starts in Settlements (units)**			Settlement's Share of Construction Starts (percentage)***		
	Public	Private	Total	Public	Private	Total	Public	Private	Total
1990	19,380	23,030	42,410	830	980	1,810	4.3	4.3	4.2
1991	61,730	21,780	83,510	7,040	1,070	8,110	11.4	4.9	9.7
1992	22,700	23,330	46,030	5,000	1,210	6,210	22.0	5.2	13.5
1993	6,820	30,160	36,980	400	1,830	2,230	5.9	6.1	6.0
1994	10,460	32,860	43,320	550	740	1,290	5.3	2.3	3.0
1995	27,460	41,440	68,900	1,870	660	2,530	6.8	1.6	3.7
1996	19,440	37,000	56,440	1,000	670	1,670	5.1	1.8	3.0
1997	15,700	36,330	52,030	1,000	900	1,900	6.4	2.5	3.7
1998	9,970	33,730	43,700	1,740	2,160	3,900	17.5	6.4	8.9
1999	9,120	28,090	37,210	1,550	960	2,510	17.0	3.4	6.7

* Including East Jerusalem settlement areas.

** Excluding East Jerusalem (data unavailable).

*** The population of Israel and the settlements is 6.3 million. The settler population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is approximately 200,000 or

3.2 percent of the total (2000 Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel).

Sources: Statistical Abstract of Israel: 2000 (Table 16.5), 1999 (16.5), 1998 (Table 16.5), 1997 (16.5), 1995 (Table 16.4), 1994 (16.4), 1992 (Table 16.5, pp. 472–73).

The Oslo idea was right. Because the idea of Oslo was to go with the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] as a partner. And I am still convinced that the idea was right. There was no better alternative in 1993 and there is no better alternative today. The biggest mistake was to adopt the interim settlement model put forward way back, by [Prime Minister Menachem] Begin.

But there were another two important mistakes, particularly in the term of the Ehud Barak government. One mistake was that we didn't treat the incitement problem as seriously as it deserved. I admit that I did not take into consideration the gravity of Palestinian incitement. And the second mistake was the settlements. Because we all believed that peace was just around the corner, we did not devote enough thought to the fact that in the Barak period the number of settlers increased by 12 percent. I think that my and my colleagues' silence in the face of the expanding settlements was a mistake.

Former Labor Party minister Yossi Beilin, Ha'aretz, June 14, 2001

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