

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

A Bimonthly Publication of the Foundation for Middle East Peace

Volume 11 Number 6

November-December 2001

BUSH CONTEMPLATES A RESPONSE TO BIN LADEN

Among the many invocations of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, two declarations—those by Osama Bin Laden and President George W. Bush—stand apart. Each of these men, at opposite poles in the international campaign now being waged, nonetheless believe that the unresolved status of Palestine is a critical element in their respective efforts to mobilize international, particularly Arab and Islamic, constituencies in their favor.

Bin Laden's comment was precipitated by the beginning of the October 8 U.S. attack on Afghanistan. Bush's most detailed comments followed at an October 11 press conference.

"I believe there ought to be a Palestinian state," explained the president, "the boundaries of which will be negotiated by the parties, so long as the Palestinian state recognizes the right of Israel to exist and will treat Israel with respect, and will be peaceful on her borders."

Since its inauguration in January, the Bush administration has been prepared to let others attempt to define the parameters of diplomacy between Israel and the Palestinians. A joint Egyptian-Jordanian initiative earlier this year was followed by the Mitchell Report and the security-related understandings reached between Israelis and Palestinians with CIA director George Tenet in June. These proposals aimed no higher than putting an end to the violent Palestinian rebellion—now in its second year—against Israeli rule. Even this limited objective has until now proved beyond their capabilities, because Palestinian Authority chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon find their continuation of violent conflict to be less undesirable than other alternatives.

The events of September 11, however, have transformed the international political environment. The continuing Palestinian rebellion and the broader question of a restoration of diplomatic dialogue on final status issues as the preferred path of conflict resolution are now viewed, in Washington as elsewhere, not only as important objectives in and of themselves but also as desirable ingredients in the formulation of a

grand strategy to defeat "terrorists with a global reach."

The White House, at the instigation of the State Department, is considering what one well-informed Palestinian has described as "a framework for a framework" for a resumption of final status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

The ideas represent President Bush's attempt to make the conflict his own, that is, to establish his leadership over an issue that has been dominated by his predecessor's star-crossed efforts, and the intifada. These ideas have been formulated until now without close consultation with the Sharon government. This lack of coordination distinguishes the Bush effort from the Clinton administration's promotion of final status arrangements (as exemplified in the Clinton parameters), and the first Bush administration's development of the Madrid process.

It is often the case that the process of diplomacy also informs its content. For this reason alone, the Sharon government is concerned that proposals drawn up in Washington have prejudiced its own preferences. Ariel Sharon, as foreign minister during the tenure of Benjamin Netanyahu and as prime minister, has placed a high priority on establishing U.S.-Israeli understandings about the content and conduct of negotiations with the Palestinians.

His well-planned if not well-conceived outburst on October 4—when he

Also in this issue:

Settlers Leaving	3
Settlement Population	4, 5
Settlement Facts	8

To subscribe to the e-mail version of the *Settlement Report*:

majordomo@gdn.org;
leave "Subject" blank.

Write: subscribe settlements-L.

Visit our website, www.fmep.org, for back issues of the *Settlement Report*, maps, and current analyses and commentary on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

RESPONSE, continued on page 7

TO OUR READERS

The deepening cycle of Israeli-Palestinian violence, assassinations, and vengeance, for which the government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority bear responsibility, is a serious threat to U.S. efforts to win support in the Arab and Islamic world against terrorist threats to the United States. An end to violence and a resumption of serious political negotiations is therefore an urgent priority for the United States. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict can no longer be treated as a problem whose solution must be deferred because of the stubbornness of the parties and perceived domestic political opposition to more active U.S. diplomacy.

What can be done? The Mitchell report, while eminently fair, has failed because it requires greater political will and harmony of goals between the parties than exists. U.S. appeals for cooperation after September 11 brought only a brief lull, and violent provocations have continued, as has

Israeli settlement activity. The murder of Israeli tourism minister Ze'evi by the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine to avenge Israel's assassination of its leader in August added fuel to the flames.

Changing this bloody dynamic requires an end to violence and repression and renewed negotiations as an alternative. To return to the political path, both sides need a credible vision of peace at the end of the road that ensures security for Israelis and a viable state for Palestinians. Only the United States can provide such a vision and the sustained diplomatic leadership to make it happen. This project deserves high priority on President George W. Bush's counterterrorism agenda. His recent statement that the administration has such a vision is welcome news.



The Golan Heights settlement council has opened a public campaign to attract new residents to the region's 33 settlements. Under the slogan "The Quietest Place in the Country – the Golan," the council offers potential settlers 1,260 square foot (140 sq. meters) homes for \$110,000.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who recently visited Katzrin, the largest Golan settlement, with a population approaching 8,000, "said that the quietest place in Israel today is the Golan Heights, and that is just how we feel," explained one settlement leader.

The prospects for settlement expansion in the contested area, captured by Israel from Syrian in June 1967, have increased in the

aftermath of the failure of U.S.-mediated negotiations that ended in mid-2000.

According to a recent survey of Palestinian public opinion, 47 percent of respondents identified the September 2000 visit by Ariel Sharon to Jerusalem's Haram al-Sharif as the reason for the eruption of the intifada, while 26.5 percent attributed the uprising to the failure of final status talks.

A majority of those questioned, 58.3 percent, believe that Israel's settlement policies were the main factor in the negotiations' failure, followed by Jerusalem (19.6 percent), and the refugees (15.7 percent).

FOUNDATION FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Merle Thorpe, Jr.
Founder
(1917–1994)

Philip C. Wilcox, Jr.
President

Geoffrey Aronson
Editor

Efrat Shvili
Jerusalem Correspondent

Dalia Abu Dayyeh
Editorial Associate

Blanca Madani
Webmaster

ADVISERS

Lucius D. Battle
Landrum R. Bolling
Murray J. Gart
Peter Gubser
Jean C. Newsom
Gail Pressberg

TRUSTEES

Peter M. Castleman
Chairman
Lucius D. Battle
Calvin H. Cobb, Jr.
James J. Cromwell
Stephen Hartwell
Richard S.T. Marsh
Richard W. Murphy
William B. Quandt
Sally S. Thorpe

The Foundation, a non-profit, I.R.C. 501(c)(3) organization, receives no U.S. or foreign government funds. It supports peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians through mutual recognition and a negotiated division of historic Palestine.

Copyright © 2001

SETTLERS LEAVING: AN INTIFADA PHENOMENON—ISRAELIS LEAVE SETTLEMENTS IN SMALL BUT UNPRECEDENTED NUMBERS

According to the YESHA Council, 3,000 settlers—comprising 1.5 percent of the settler population of 200,000—in the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip have moved out of the settlements during the last year. This figure is about twice the number reported by opposition MK Mossi Raz as late as June. The summer months of school vacation are traditionally the time when most Israelis change residences. On August 12, *Ha'aretz* reported that the departure rate had exploded to 5 percent—or 10,000 people—from a typical annual rate of 1 percent.

A central objective of the Palestinian uprising has been to force Israelis to abandon the settlements, although sustained or coordinated assaults on settlements themselves have been rare. In contrast to the first intifada in the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, today armed Palestinians have made travel to and from many settlements a life or death proposition. Their assaults have exacerbated economic difficulties in some settlements, particularly in the Jordan Valley, and precipitated the loss of a significant percentage of residents in a few small, isolated and mostly secular outposts whose prospects for building a sustainable life have never been secure.

During the first six months of 2001, forty-four settlements lost population while a hundred increased their numbers. More than half of the net increase of 2,561 in the settlement population during the first half of 2001, however, was due to increases at three religious settlements; Betar, southwest of Jerusalem; Tel Zion (Kochav Ya'acov), bordering the northeast corner of East Jerusalem; and Modi'in Ilit, on the Green Line between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, which has grown by 18 percent since last year, to 19,000.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has watched the potential flight from settlements with concern, worried that it “will prove to the Palestinians that terror pays, and will encourage them to continue on this road until they attain their objectives through force,” according to one report.

In an interview with the YESHA flagship publication *Nekuda*, Maj. Gen. Yitzhak Eitan, head of the IDF Central Command, which includes the West Bank, noted that the decrease in the settler population was not significant.

“The settlers are very strong in spirit, with a firm ideology, and this makes it easier for the army.”

Settler leaders in the Etzion bloc, which saw its once secure connection to Jerusalem via the Tunnel Road transformed by gunfire in the early months of the intifada, anticipated a departure rate of 20 percent, “but we maintained a balance and even a little more, and I am surprised for the good,” observed Shaul Goldstein, head of the local council.

With the exhortation to “Save the Settlements of Samaria! Come Now!” the settlers, along with religious authorities and the government, have adopted a wide range of programs, incentives, and in the case of the IDF, military measures, aimed at sustaining the pool of current and prospective resi-

dents. However, according to *Ha'aretz*, “If the state were to help them financially to move inside the Green Line [to Israel], one settlement council head said some 15 to 20 percent of settlers would take advantage of it.”

Settlements hit hardest by departures include the small outposts of the northern West Bank, Ganim and Kadim, which lost 10 families apiece, and Mevo Dotan and Hermesh, where 20 families from each departed. In Homesh, at least 7 out of 50 have moved. There are no families left in the northern West Bank settlement of SaNur, according to an August 17 report in *Yediot Aharonot*. Near Ramallah, Neve Tsuf, a religious settlement where 2 residents have been killed and 18 wounded in a number of separate incidents, at least 14 families have left the settlement. Other religious settlements in the area, however, have welcomed ideologically driven newcomers. Har Bracha near Nablus added 11 families. Elon Moreh nearby drew 10. Keddumim lost 9 families but added 64. In general, renters are believed more likely to leave than veteran residents, but some owners who have the economic wherewithal have also closed up their homes in settlements and left for Israel.

This latter phenomenon has been particularly true in some of the 14 settlements of the Jordan Valley, where more than 50 families have left. Yafit has suffered the departure of more than one-quarter of its residents since April. “Leaving has become an infectious phenomenon for which there seems to be no cure,” noted an October 5 article in *Ha'aretz*. These outposts, originally settled by the Labor Party and which have long labored under economic strains and political uncertainty, are on the brink of a broader social and economic collapse attributed directly or indirectly to the ongoing Palestinian rebellion. Nevertheless, the settlement of Hemdat has added 5 families, a 50 percent increase. Six additional settlements have each recorded the arrival of a few new families.

The populations at larger, more established settlements, such as Efrat, Kiryat Arba, and Elkana, have remained stable. Ma'ale Adumim, the largest West Bank settlement, is still growing by more than 6 percent annually, three times the Israeli national average. Oranit, situated on the Green Line, is on track to triple its population of 5,000 during the next three years. At Neguhot in the Hebron region, 8 new families have joined the settlement's 12 families; Otniel, 15; Carmel, 3; and Susiya, 6. Ten families have left Livna, which is in a border area with Israel and was marked for transfer to the Palestinian Authority during the stillborn Taba talks, and four families have left Adora.

In the Gaza Strip, where clashes have been the most sustained and violent, the 17 settlements have sustained a small net increase in population. Netzarim has grown by 8 families, Kfar Darom by 6, and Morag by 7. Neve Dekalim, which sits opposite Khan Yunis, has lost 8 families, but the complement of new students in its religious seminary has been filled. ♦

SETTLEMENT POPULATION IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, 1972–2000

SETTLEMENT COUNCIL	1972	1977	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Alfe Menashe						40	570	1,260	1,680
Ariel			700	880	1,340	1,340	2,050	3,220	4,480
Bet Arieh				210	250	250	250	400	590
Bet El			310	420	900	1,030	1,140	1,270	1,450
Betar									20
Efrata						500	710	900	1,170
Elkana			600	650	650	650	720	1,070	1,390
Givat Ze'ev			300	480	450	500	1,440	2,250	2,950
Har Adar									
Hebron	Included in Kiryat Arba								
Immanuel						380	1,120	1,510	1,730
Kaddumim			600	690	810	910	1,030	1,110	1,240
Karnei Shomron			490	520	610	730	850	1,490	1,970
Kiryat Arba (Including Hebron)			3,000	3,100	3,340	3,080	3,540	3,670	3,600
Kiryat Sefer									
Ma'ale Adumim			330	370	1,700	5,380	7,600	9,340	10,300
Ma'ale Efraim									1,100
Megillot						400	450	500	700
Oranit								230	620
REGIONAL COUNCIL									
Benjamin (37 settlements)						4,700	5,550	6,400	5,800
Etzion bloc (18 settlements)						2,600	2,950	3,300	3,400
Gaza district (19 settlements)	700					800	1,250	1,900	2,150
Jordan Valley (18 settlements)						2,100	2,300	2,500	2,000
Mt. Hebron (16 settlements)						200	400	600	700
Shomron (42 settlements)						3,500	5,500	7,800	8,800
TOTAL POPULATION WEST BANK AND GAZA									
	1,500	5,023	12,424			29,090	39,420	50,720	57,840
EAST JERUSALEM									
Atarot									
East Talpiot	100	4,500		14,900					12,200
French Hill	2,400	7,100		8,800					9,100
Gilo									25,100
Har Homa, Givat Ha'matos									
Jewish Quarter	300	1,200		1,800					2,200
Neve Ya'acov, Pisgat Ze'ev									16,600
Ramot Allon	100	7,100		16,800					23,800
Ramot Eshkol	4,000	13,400		16,700					14,900
TOTAL SETTLER POPULATION EAST JERUSALEM									
	6,900	33,300		59,000					103,900
TOTAL SETTLER POPULATION CHANGE IN SETTLER POPULATION Increase Compared to Previous Year (percent)									
	8,400	38,323							161,740

Sources: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, www.cbs.gov.il; *Israel Statistical Abstract*, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000; Yesha Council Online; Peace Now; *Ha'aretz*, August 11, 1993; *Ha'aretz*, September 16, 2001.

* The numbers for 2000 are from the YESHA Council.

Prepared by Tobias Van Assche.

1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000*
1,910	2,110	2,330	2,560	2,860	3,170	3,720	4,030	4,130	4,310	4,260	4,360	4,400	5,000
5,300	6,160	7,000	8,010	9,050	10,400	11,800	12,800	13,800	14,300	14,300	14,400	15,100	16,100
620	680	730	920	1,120	1,310	1,630	1,910	1,990	2,070	2,160	2,230	2,300	2,200
1,610	2,320	1,840	2,020	2,300	2,690	2,910	3,110	3,330	3,460	3,450	3,570	3,800	4,000
20	40	40	400	1,220	2,610	3,940	4,880	5,540	7,530	9,760	11,300	12,700	14,100
1,490	1,760	2,070	2,420	3,030	3,520	4,050	4,650	5,280	5,730	5,930	6,120	6,200	5,400
1,560	1,690	1,850	2,120	2,360	2,480	2,600	2,710	2,840	2,950	2,840	2,920	2,900	3,000
3,400	3,760	4,250	4,780	5,580	6,080	6,380	6,750	7,120	7,830	8,950	9,720	10,000	10,300
					1,100	1,420	1,430	1,478	1,430	1,430	1,467	1,500	1,500
			400	575	345	400	502	400	400	430	480	480	
1,960	2,280	2,480	2,590	2,900	3,150	3,240	3,360	3,500	3,480	3,260	3,290	3,200	3,575
1,390	1,490	1,570	1,680	1,850	1,970	2,050	2,130	2,200	2,380	2,330	2,400	2,500	2,387
2,610	2,930	3,240	3,520	3,770	4,100	4,330	4,820	5,040	5,230	5,290	5,370	5,600	6,000
3,700	3,750	3,870	4,290	4,670	4,910	5,070	5,120	5,220	5,300	6,030	6,190	6,200	6,200
									5,669	6,000	7,866	13,000	
11,100	11,800	12,700	13,500	14,600	15,200	16,900	18,400	19,300	20,200	20,300	22,200	23,800	25,400
1,200	1,300	1,400	1,500	1,700	1,819	2,100	1,470	1,651	1,590	1,590	1,599	1,700	1,800
650	600	600	700	700	700	700	800	700	800	800	855	855	
1,100	1,600	1,910	2,240	2,580	2,930	3,160	3,380	3,610	3,850	4,340	4,490	4,800	4,750
4,700	9,800	10,400	12,000	14,300	16,600	18,600	22,100	26,213	23,000	21,300	23,200	25,050	
3,800	4,000	4,200	4,700	5,300	5,800	6,400	6,507	7,100	7,500	7,500	8,100	9,200	
2,400	2,700	3,000	3,300	3,900	4,300	4,800	5,100	5,000	5,400	5,700	6,100	6,600	
2,250	2,500	2,600	2,600	2,800	2,900	3,000	3,100	2,600	2,700	2,800	2,900	3,400	4,146
800	900	1,000	1,200	1,600	1,900	2,200	2,300	2,800	3,200	3,500	3,800	4,500	3,092
9,800	11,200	12,600	12,100	10,300	9,800	10,500	11,200	11,700	13,100	14,400	15,400	17,150	14,321
63,370	75,370	81,680	89,550	99,065	109,784	121,900	132,559	142,542	153,409	158,650	170,327	186,935	
				15,000	15,200	15,000	14,934	14,800	14,800	13,300	13,200		
				9,100	9,000	9,000	8,668	8,500	8,500	8,600	8,500		
				30,200	30,400	30,200	30,268	30,200	30,300	26,600	27,100		
										1,200	1,600		
				2,300	2,300	2,300	2,366	2,400	2,400	2,300	2,300		
				27,100	29,400	34,600	39,800	45,100	47,500	51,200	52,500		
				37,200	38,100	37,200	39,166	39,700	40,200	37,100	37,400		
				16,500	16,600	16,600	16,600	16,600	16,700	21,300	23,500		
				137,400	141,000	144,900	151,802	157,300	160,400	161,600	166,100	170,400	
				236,465	250,784	268,311	284,361	299,842	313,809	320,250	336,427	357,335	
					6.06	6.99	5.98	5.44	4.66	2.05	5.05	6.21	

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

June 1 Settlers place four caravans on a hill south of al-Khader village near Bethlehem. The preceding week, more than 30 settlers took over a hilltop in al-Khader as well. (*Hear Palestine*)

The Israeli Housing Ministry approves 314 additional units in the Adam settlement in Givat Benjamin. (*Hear Palestine*)

June 3 Israeli authorities ban all private Palestinian vehicles from traveling on Israeli-controlled roads in the occupied territories and set up additional roadblocks around Palestinian villages. (*Ha'aretz*)

According to the Palestinian Authority (PA), a settler kills two Palestinians and wounds a third while they were driving near Ramallah. (*Ha'aretz*)

June 4 Fifty dunums of Palestinian land in Deir al-Balah is leveled and annexed to Kfar Darom. Israeli officials claim that the area was being used to fire mortar shells at the settlement. (Palestinian Media Center)

PA leader Yasser Arafat issues orders to his forces and all paramilitary organizations to stop firing at soldiers and settlers in the territories. His orders also include keeping Palestinians away from friction points and preventing bombs and bombers from entering Israel. (*Ha'aretz*)

Settlers open fire on a Palestinian in the al-Baqa quarter in Hebron. Attacks on Palestinians in Hebron by settlers continue throughout the day. (*Hear Palestine*)

Settlers from Neve Ya'acov attack Palestinian residents of Dahiyat al-Barid. (*Hear Palestine*)

June 5 Settlers burn Palestinian wheat and olive trees in Jeet, near Nablus. Settlers from Yitzhar burn 20 dunums of cultivated land and three floors of stored grain in Hawara and Beita villages. (*Hear Palestine*)

A six-month-old Israeli boy is seriously wounded when Palestinians stone a settler's car at the Shilo junction north of Ramallah. (*Ha'aretz*)

In the wake of Arafat's call for a cease-fire, a Hamas official states, "The Intifada will continue and this means targeting the [Israeli] army and settlers in the West Bank and Gaza." (*Reuters*)

In a meeting with YESHA Council members, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon

denies requests for additional bypass roads and settlement construction.

YESHA Council head Benny Kashriel states, "I don't think that Sharon is turning his back on YESHA, as some others might have said. I rather think that his policy of trying to score points with the Americans and Europeans is mistaken. . . . We have always built on YESHA, we continue to build, and we will build—period. Almost all of Judea and Samaria was built out of struggles with the government, unfortunately; it is strange that our own government, and especially this one, should fight against settling the Land of Israel, but if that's how it is then that's how we'll do it." (*Arutz-7*)

June 6 Settlers from Shilo raid the Palestinian village of al-Sawiya, setting fire to three homes and a greenhouse and destroying property. Settlers set fire to greenhouses and homes in Luban Sharqiya in the northern West Bank. Palestinians are attacked by settlers in Hebron. (*Reuters*)

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) releases figures citing 5,289 Palestinian bombing and shooting attacks against Israeli civilians and military targets in the territories between September 29, 2000, and May 31, 2001. According to the Israeli police, there were 2,227 reported stoning attacks against settlers from January to April 2001. (*Mideast Mirror*)

In Ramallah, European Union Middle East envoy Miguel Angel Maratinos tells reporters, "Settlers attacking villages and destroying houses is not the best element to create confidence between the two sides." (*AFP*)

Israeli forces confiscate 200 dunums from Deir Qadis village for annexation to the Kiryat Arba settlement. More than 1,000 olive trees in the area are razed in preparation for the construction of bypass roads. (Palestine Media Center)

Tens of thousands of Israelis demonstrate in Jerusalem calling for the defeat of Arafat. (*Jerusalem Post*)

June 7 Settlers establish a new settlement point on the bypass road around Nablus where a settler was killed the preceding week. Israeli forces ask the settlers to leave and declare the site a closed military zone. (*Hear Palestine*)

June 8 *Ha'aretz* reports that since the beginning of the al-Aqsa intifada, 30 Israelis (including 22 civilians) have been killed by Palestinian gunfire in drive-by shootings or from ambushes of passing Israeli vehicles.

Settlers set fire to Palestinian fields, including four dunums of wheat, in Kafr Qalil, south of Nablus and to fields in al-Sawiya village, which remains under curfew for the second consecutive day. (*Ramatta Daily*)

Settlers attack Palestinian homes and shops on al-Wad Street in Jerusalem from midnight to dawn. (*Ramatta Daily*)

Israeli authorities begin razing large areas of Palestinian agricultural land near Anin, Baqa al-Sharqiya, Um Rihan, and Tura, which border the Green Line north of Tulkarem. (*Al Quds*)

Israeli authorities continue "shaving" lands adjoining the Abud bypass road near Neve Tzuf, where Palestinian gunmen had fired at passing cars from behind the trees on at least 15 occasions in the preceding months. (*Arutz-7*)

June 9 Israeli authorities level vast areas of Palestinian land in al-Kader and Bethlehem in preparation for the construction of a bypass road to newly established settlements. (*InfoPal*)

Israeli forces place a number of caravans in the al-Qarinat area in Sorif, the site for a new settlement. (*Hear Palestine*)

Seven mortar shells are fired into Atzmona in Gush Katif, lightly injuring a worker from Thailand. (*Arutz-7*)

June 10 *Yesha News* reports that for the first time in months, there has been no reported shooting in the West Bank for the previous 24 hours.

June 11 The Israeli Ministry of the Interior demolishes a Palestinian home in East Jerusalem that had been built without a permit. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Israeli Ministry of Education extends the school year by one month for kindergarten through ninth grade in Gaza and West Bank settlements to compensate for lost school days since the outbreak of the intifada in September 2000. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Israel infant injured June 5 in a stoning incident dies. (*Arutz-7*) ♦

Prepared by Dalia Abu Dayyeh.

warned Washington, “Do not try to appease the Arabs at our expense. This is unacceptable to us. Israel will not be Czechoslovakia”—can be viewed in part as a response and a warning to the Bush administration about the costs of unilateralism and as an expression of concern that Israel will be forced to negotiate with the PA under conditions not of its own choosing.

In the aftermath of these contretemps, a series of high-level consultations have been planned, and Israeli sources believe that any U.S. demarche “will not surprise Israel.” Nevertheless, observed an Israeli official, “The American position on a final settlement is different than ours, for example, on the settlement issue, and that’s legitimate.”

The Bush initiative, if and when it is presented to the public, will be cast as a formal statement of U.S. policy, unlike the Clinton parameters, which were consciously portrayed as limited in application to the negotiations then under way.

The Bush ideas attempt to establish an overall vision for the talks, defining in general terms the basis for relations between an Israeli and a Palestinian state. By noting support for the concept of two “national homes,” Washington conveys its opposition to the demand for an unlimited Palestinian refugee “right of return” to Israel. Jerusalem is conceived in general terms as a capital for the two states.

“We’re not at a moment when somebody is going to plunk down a map of Jerusalem,” explained the State Department spokesman on October 10.

Settlements are mentioned indirectly, within the context of support for the recommendations of the Mitchell Report, which advocated a freeze in settlement expansion.

Palestinians define this general outline as a “step forward,” and it is clear that they will welcome any U.S. policy that can be portrayed as a political achievement. For the Sharon government, in contrast, almost any U.S. initiative will be opposed by some members of the cabinet, and indeed by the prime minister himself.

Sharon too has a vision of the future—“a process of gradual advances on the basis of a long-term interim agreement without any time frame.” There are two security zones at the heart of Sharon’s map—a wide area in the Jordan Valley and a narrower strip east of the Green Line, both of which are to be

under Israeli control. To some extent, the separation plan implemented unilaterally by Israel on September 16, when it created a “closed military zone” between Jenin and Tulkarem, reflects the spirit of Sharon’s territorial demands. When added to other areas of the West Bank, Sharon sees Israel sovereign over approximately 57 percent of the contested region. He has been less forthcoming about Gaza’s future, but he has reaffirmed the strategic importance of Israeli settlements there.

Although Sharon has noted his support in principle for the idea of Palestinian statehood, a battle is still waging within the cabinet and between the IDF and political echelons about whether Arafat and the PA are partners to be engaged or enemies to be defeated. The YESHA Council, an important constituency for the right-wing coalition, calls openly for Arafat’s ouster.

“We say that [Hammas spiritual leader] Ahmad Yasin is better for us,” explained the council’s spokesman. “Our solution is to launch an orderly campaign calling on Sharon to get rid of Arafat and to form a front of cabinet ministers, from Shas rightward, to create conditions in which Arafat will pack his bags.”

An energetic promotion of U.S. preferences risks destabilizing an already unruly coalition, which suffered its first defections in mid-October, when the National Union’s two ministers announced that they were leaving the government to protest the Israel Defense Forces’ October withdrawal from parts of Palestinian Areas A in Hebron that it had occupied some days earlier.

The unprecedented assassination of one of the ministers,

Rehavam Ze’evi by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine placed the advocates of reconciling with Arafat on the defensive.

Not too long ago, the disaffection between President George Bush and Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir proceeded in tandem with the Madrid process in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf War and led to the election of Yitzhak Rabin. The current situation, in contrast, offers no such option. Today, there is no prospect of a more accommodating Israeli political alternative to a Sharon government. ♦

The authors of the Oslo accords dealt with the issue of settlements in a negligent manner, as though they were not familiar with their own [Israeli] people, and as though they didn’t understand that Israel would not allow the freezing of the settlements and their expansion by tens of thousands of additional people. We all know the final result.

Israel finds itself in a situation in which it can neither accept the settlements nor put an end to them, and thus end the occupation.

**Ze’ev Schiff, *Ha’aretz*
September 14, 2001**

WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP SETTLEMENT FACTS—JANUARY-JUNE 2001

One hundred thousand Israelis, comprising 50 percent of the settler population, reside in 8 settlements. The average population in the remaining 140 settlements is seven hundred fourteen.

Homes sold (publicly financed)	238/466 ^a	Settlements' share of public housing starts nationally	10.5 percent
Homes sold (public and private sector)	609/862 ^b	Settlements' share of housing starts (public and private) nationally	9.5 percent
Housing starts (publicly financed)	339/1,943 ^c	Settlements' share of tenders nationally	32.6 percent
Tenders published (units)	789 (settlements)/ 2,423 (nationally)	Settlements' share of private construction permits nationally	8 percent
Permits issued for private construction	156/626 ^d	Settlements' share of ILA sales nationally	8.2 percent
Land sales by Israel Lands Administration (ILA) (units)	628 (January-July 2001)		
Settlements' share of public sector sales nationally	7.5 percent		
Settlements' share of sales nationally	5.88 percent		

a. January-July 2001/January-July 2000.

b. January-May 2001/ January-May 2000.

c. January-June 2001/January-December 2000.

d. January-May 2001/January-December 2000.

Source: *Ha'aretz* August 9, 2001.

Even with 6,000 soldiers deployed in the [Gaza] Strip in order to defend 6,000 settlers, with respect to Gaza I have no doubt that we have nothing to seek there. This is the moment that sweet illusions are bursting like bubbles. It is in Israel's interest at the moment to prevent killing and to prevent situations like that in which two young people were killed last night. We must look the public honestly in the eye and say that we—with all our military might, and we are big and strong—can't provide a security answer for the people who live there.

*Zehava Gal-On, chair of the Meretz Party in the Knesset,
after a Palestinian attack on the Gaza settlement of Ale Sinai,
Ha'aretz, October 3, 2001*

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