

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

A Bimonthly Publication of the Foundation for Middle East Peace

Volume 13 Number 4

July-August 2003

SHARON GOVERNMENT'S SEPARATION PLAN DEFINES PALESTINE'S PROVISIONAL BORDERS

By Geoffrey Aronson

The territorial division of historical Palestine has entered its most decisive stage since Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in June 1967. Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon is the prime instigator of this process, against which the vaunted road map, a creature of multilateral diplomacy now championed by the Bush administration, struggles to remain relevant.

In a variety of roles over the last generation, Sharon has labored to undermine an Israeli withdrawal to the June 1967 lines. He has masterminded the settlement map that is the template of the "separation zone"—popularly known as the "fence" or the "wall"—that is fast dividing the occupied territories between Israel and an ersatz Palestine—

the "state with provisional borders" whose creation is called for in the road map.

"The map of the fence is the same map I saw during every visit Arik [Sharon] made here [Ariel] since 1978," explained Ron Nachman, mayor of the settlement of Ariel, near Nablus. "He told me that he's been thinking about it since 1973."

Sharon has not only been thinking of this map, he has been busy fashioning it on the ground. His long-held vision of the territorial division of Palestine is now well on its way to being realized. He views the border now taking shape in the West Bank—Gaza's separation into Israeli and Palestinian enclaves on the same model is all but complete—as his historical contribution, on par with David Ben Gurion's creation of the state in 1948 and Menachem Begin's peace treaty with Egypt in 1979, to the consolidation of Israeli hegemony over the Land of Israel.

The map now being carved out in the hills and plains of the West Bank confirms most but not all of Sharon's historical strategic objectives:

■ Israel retains strategic command over the entire area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

■ Arab populations in Jordan and Egypt are separated from their brethren in Palestine by Israeli-controlled or settled territory.

■ Palestinians are separated from each other and from Palestinian citizens of Israel by borders based upon settle-

ment blocs.

■ Territorial continuity is established in the Palestinian areas of the West Bank and Gaza by a small number of bridges or tunnels and in the Jerusalem area by a ring road.

Sharon is under no illusion that such a prescription will "end the conflict." He is convinced that this will only come about when Palestinians surrender completely. In the meantime he is determined to realize his ambition of establishing the territorial and political parameters for the "long-term interim agreement" that he has championed for many years. As with Israeli efforts during the Oslo era to design a model for ruling the territories, Sharon aims at an internationally recognized agreement—pace the road map—with acknowledged Palestinian leaders, not as a prescription for ending the conflict but as a way to manage it, as Israel has done, albeit at increasing cost, for almost 30 years.

The one concession Sharon is prepared to make to his long-held beliefs, and the one that has so shocked his comrades in the settlement movement, is his prescription for Palestinian statehood as a reluctant accommodation to the Palestinian's unassailable demographic lead in the populated heartland of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In contrast to his views as a settlement visionary in 1976 and to those held by many settler leaders today, Sharon is now prepared to pay a price in West Bank and Gaza ter-

Check out our web site for recent articles, reports, and pictures: www.fmep.org.

For back issues of the *Settlement Report*, maps, and current analyses and commentary on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Arabic and Hebrew translations of recent *Settlement Reports* can be viewed at www.fmep.org.

SEPARATION, continued on page 4

TO OUR READERS

The Bush administration's active engagement in diplomacy to press Israel and the Palestinians to carry out phase one of the road map is a welcome change. Agreements to date, although tentative and modest, show that Washington can bring results. Israelis and Palestinians are fed up with the status quo. Their leaders know this, and neither can defy strong, even-handed U.S. leadership that offers real hope for peace.

Still, the focus of U.S.-led efforts has been almost exclusively on security. Unless Israel moves quickly to ease living conditions for Palestinians, the cease-fire is likely to be short-lived. Preserving security so that negotiations on other issues can resume and prosper over time will depend, as the Mitchell Report predicted, on halting settlements.

Yet, as Geoffrey Aronson points out in this issue and an accompanying map illustrates, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon has a very different vision: Palestinian

enclaves hemmed in by settlements and a massive wall, with only token sovereignty in less than 50 percent of the territories. Critics describe Sharon's plan as creating "bantustans," with good reason, and no Palestinian leadership could accept such an outcome as a substitute for the "independent, democratic, and viable Palestinian state" called for in the road map.

Israel faces a fateful choice between control and settlement in the territories on the one hand and peace and security on the other. The United States must focus urgently on settlements before it is too late. All settlements—not just "outposts"—are illegal under international law. Even more to the point, they stand in the way of a genuine two-state solution, freedom and justice for Palestinians, and the preservation of Israel as a secure, Jewish, democratic state.

Philip C. Wilcox, Jr.

FOUNDATION FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Merle Thorpe, Jr.
Founder
(1917–1994)

Philip C. Wilcox, Jr.
President

Geoffrey Aronson
Director, Research and Publications, Editor, *Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories*

Mallika Good
Editorial Assistant

Maisa Sarsour
Monica Ager
Interns

ADVISERS

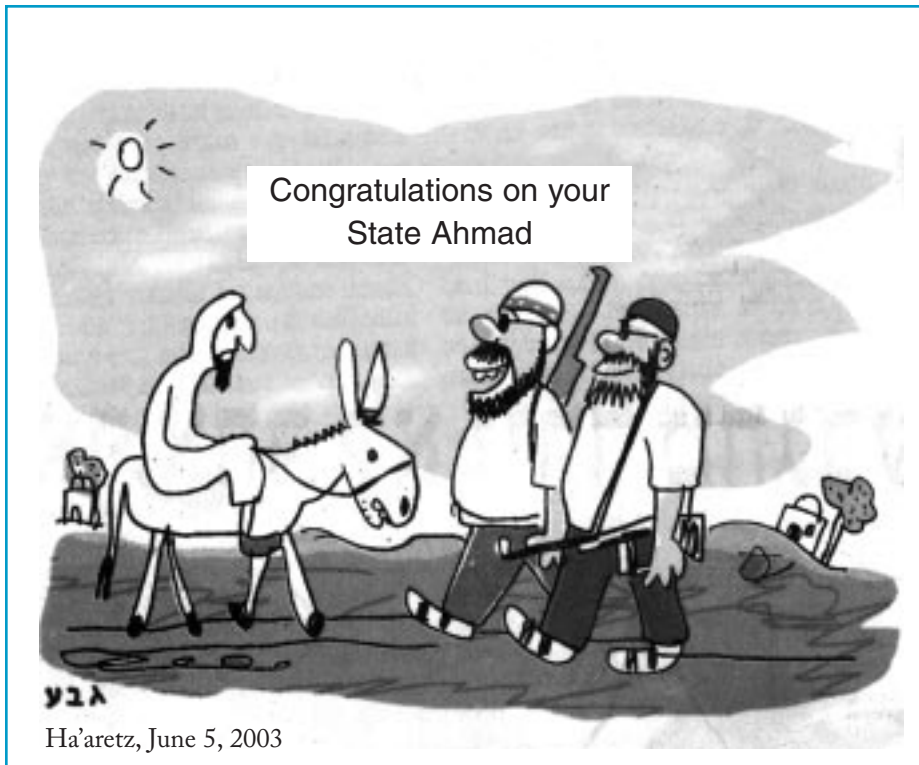
Lucius D. Battle
Landrum R. Bolling
Peter Gubser
Jean C. Newsom
Gail Pressberg
Nicholas A. Veliotos

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, supports peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians through mutual recognition and a negotiated division of historic Palestine. It publishes the bi-monthly *Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories*.

Copyright © 2003



SHORT TAKES

Israel has got responsibilities. Israel must deal with the settlements. Israel must make sure there's continuous [contiguous] territory that the Palestinians can call home.

President George W. Bush remarks to Arab leaders, Sharm al-Sheikh, Egypt June 3, 2003

The root of our suffering and the source of our pain is the occupation and its detestable oppressive policies. We all commit to ending the occupation in all of its shapes and forms. The military and colonizing occupation with its practices that include assassinations, detentions, checkpoints, sieges, demolition of homes and properties is the root of our suffering, has deepened our suffering, and is the main source of our problems. The occupation impedes our growth and therefore ending the occupation in all of its forms and from all of the territories occupied since 1967, including our eternal capital Jerusalem, is our national priority. . . .

Settlements, which violate international law, continue to be the major threat to the creation of a Palestinian state with genuine sovereignty. Thus, settlements are the primary obstacle to any peace process. . . .

Settlement expansion in and around Jerusalem, with its accompanying house demolitions, confiscation of land and property, in addition to the economic, social, administrative and cultural strangulation in the lives of Palestinians and Israel's attempt to impose a permanent solution for this Holy City by means other than negotiations will only lead to inflaming the conflict and destroying any chance for peace. . . .

As we extend our hand to you in peace, we reiterate that peace cannot be possible with the continuation of settlement activity. Peace will not be possible with the expropriation and annexation of land. The choice is yours: peace without settlements or a continuation of the occupation, subjugation, hatred and conflict. . . .

To be clear, the Palestinian people will not accept anything less than the exercise of our right to self-determination and the establishment of our independent, sovereign state with Jerusalem as its capital—a genuine, contiguous state without any settlements, on all of the territories occupied in 1967.”

Palestinian prime minister Mahmoud Abbas, speech to the Palestinian Legislative Council, April 29, 2003

There is a question in the minds of Palestinians and questions in the minds of many people around the world as to whether or not one can actually bring into being a viable Palestinian state without doing something about the settlement activity and the outposts and the settlements that are there. This will be one of the most difficult issues we have to

deal with. I think dealing with the outposts is easier than ending settlement activity and ending settlement activity is easier than what one might do about settlements in the future as you try to create a state. So, I am not in any way underestimating the difficulties ahead.

Secretary of State Colin Powell, interview with Israel Television Channel 2, May 12, 2003

There will be no limits on natural growth in the Yesha communities. Maybe you don't like the word “conquest,” but that's what it is, and to have 3.5 million Palestinians under our conquest is bad for us, and not only economically.

Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon, speech to Likud MKs, May 27, 2003

Sharon's intentions will be tested by whether he removes 100 outposts or not.

Labor MK Amram Mitzna, Arutz 7 News Service, May 27, 2003

It's either settlements or peace—both cannot go together. It's the main issue for us in the road map.

Former chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat, *New York Times*, May 14, 2003

We can also reassure our Palestinian partners that we understand the importance of territorial contiguity in the West Bank for a viable, Palestinian state. Israeli policy in the territories that are subject to direct negotiations with the Palestinians will reflect this fact. We accept the principle that no unilateral actions by any party can prejudice the outcome of our negotiations. In regard to the unauthorized outposts, I want to reiterate that Israel is a society governed by the rule of law. Thus, we will immediately begin to remove unauthorized outposts.

Statement by Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon, after the Aqaba summit, Aqaba, Jordan, June 4, 2003

I can cite statements I made as far back as 1988 in which I detailed the areas that are vital for Israel's security and those on which the Palestinians should be permitted to establish a state. Today, things have changed. My opinion now is that we don't need to assume responsibility for 3.5 million Palestinians.”

Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon, at a meeting of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, *Ha'aretz*, May, 27 2003

ritory—the 50 percent of the former and 80 percent of the latter that will comprise the new, nominally sovereign state of Palestine—to protect a Jewish majority in Greater Israel.

The division of Palestine according to this prescription is the synergistic outcome of a number of factors: principally Israel's system of settlements and roads, now as always the key elements of Israel's intention to preempt Palestinian control; the settlement "outpost" phenomenon, which aims in part at capturing territory in West Bank areas where the trajectory of the emerging border is still open to internal Israeli debate; and the "fence," which is more accurately described as a border-like separation barrier.

The Israeli preference for the creation of a physical border as a solution to its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is of relatively recent vintage. Since June 1967, Israeli proponents and opponents of the occupation have supported the erasure of the physical border and encouraged a wide range of contacts between the two peoples.

In the new era commencing with the 1991 Gulf War, this conventional wisdom was turned on its head. Since the construction of a short wall along the Green Line in 1995, Israeli public opinion has successfully demanded the creation of a physical barrier that it hopes will ensure its security, if not necessarily demarcate a political border.

Sharon has always been adept at taking an accurate measure of the forces engaged on an issue and turning them to his own purpose. He was initially opposed to a 300 km-long security zone more or less along the 1967 Green Line border, as were most members of the country's political and security establishment. Like Sharon, they saw the project as the result of the Israeli public's search for a simplistic answer to Palestinian attacks, a solution they considered expensive, unwieldy, and ineffective. Yet Sharon embraced the public demand to be rid of Palestinians even as he transformed it to his own purpose.

Following a series of decisions (some of which have been implemented and others of which are imminent) bolstered by effective lobbying from the settlement movement, the trajectory of the security barriers has ballooned to almost 600 kms along routes on either side of the 45–50 percent of the West Bank heartland, which together with 70–80 percent of the Gaza Strip, Israel has reserved for Palestine.

Pragmatic elements in the settlement movement have understood, like Sharon, that having lost the battle over the fence, their best option was to influence its route. Pinchas Wallerstein, a leader of the YESHA council, explained their views as follows: "Maximum Jewish population, with minimum Arab population, over maximum area, and all as part of an effort to correct losses that the fence along the Green Line will bring about."

The changing route of the separation zone exemplifies the success of the settlers' campaign and its transformation under Sharon's guidance from a security measure to a far-reaching

political fait accompli. Among the important way stations are Sharon's decision soon after construction commenced in August 2002 to extend the fence to the east of the settlement of Alfe Menashe, followed by an IDF recommendation in early 2003, initiated by settlers and supported publicly by Sharon in mid-May, to include the Ariel "finger," 20 km from the Green Line, adding 32,000 settlers and 7,000 Palestinians to the 20,000 Israelis and 11,500 Palestinians already included west of the zone.

On March 23 Sharon announced his intention to construct a security zone along the mountain ridge west of the Jordan Valley, at once almost doubling the physical distance and cost of the project, now estimated at 580 km and more than \$1 billion. Two months later Sharon declared that the Beit El and Shilo settlements, west of the Alon Road and commanding Route 60, a vital transportation artery for Palestinians between Nablus and Ramallah, would not be evacuated, suggesting that the path of the eastern separation zone would also include "fingers" reaching west of the Alon Road to the settlements of Elon Moreh, Itamar, Shilo, Eli, and Ofra and south of Jerusalem to Tekoa, Nokdim, and Kiryat Arba/Hebron.

Still undecided is the route in the region west of Ramallah, where settlers are lobbying for the inclusion of the Talmon bloc of settlements. The route preferred by settlers is not inconsistent with the principle established by the inclusion of Ariel and Alfe Menashe. It would add 6 settlements with a population of 4,500 to the 10 settlements with a population of 30,000 included in a less expansive option. Adoption of the more expansive option would add thirteen Palestinian villages with a population of 24,000 to 41,000 Palestinians residing west of the principal separation barrier in this region.

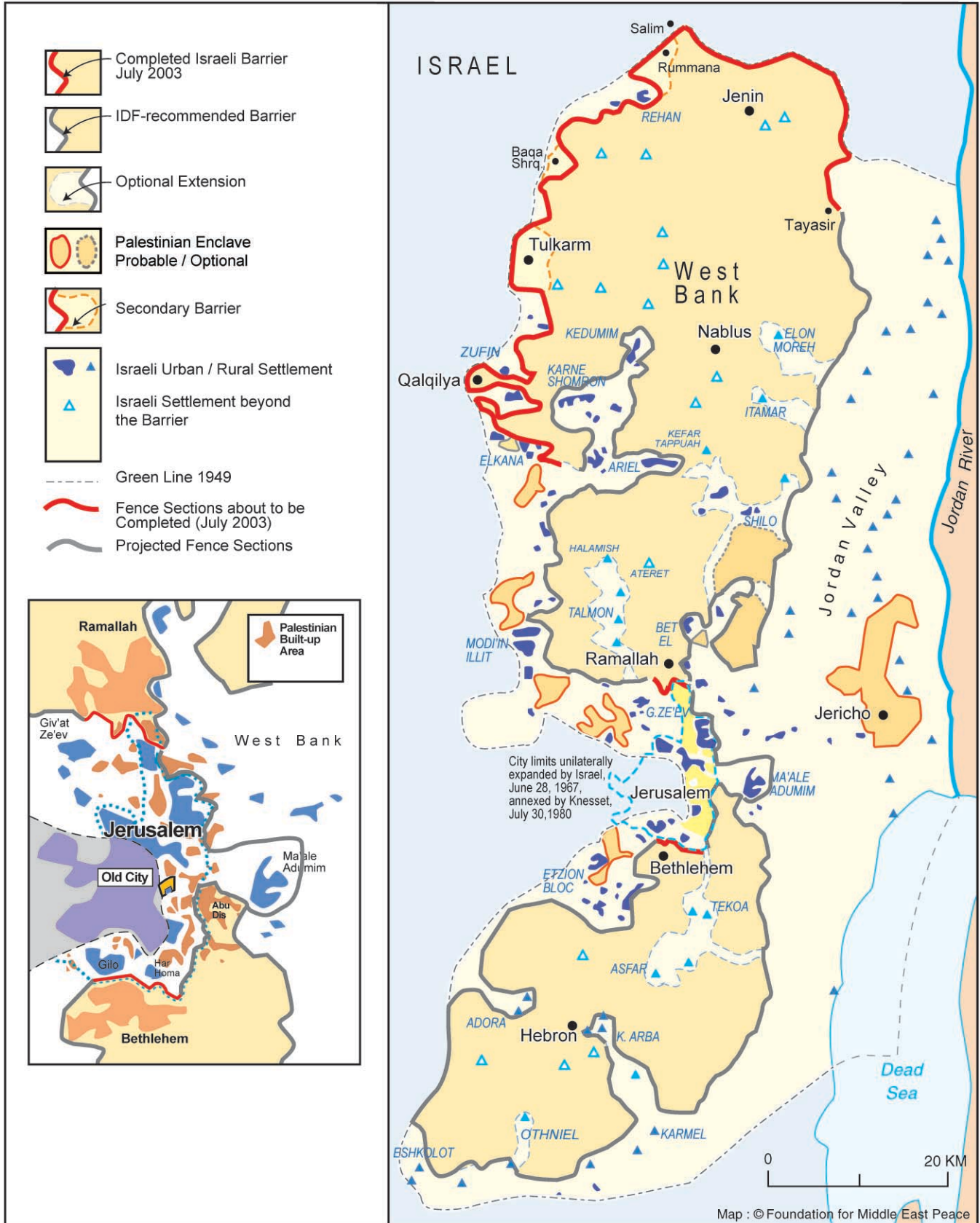
The route south to Jerusalem and along the eastern and western perimeters of the Bethlehem-Hebron region is only tentatively outlined, with the exception of 22 km in the north and south of Jerusalem, only 10km of which is completed. The southern sector will include Bethlehem's Rachel's Tomb and surrounding Palestinian residential areas, as well as the main road into Bethlehem from Jerusalem, which now ends abruptly just north of town.

When finished in late 2004, the separation zones could leave on the "Israeli" side more than 50 percent of the West Bank and as many as 366,000 Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Palestinians, in protests echoed by the international community, argue that the Sharon government is arbitrarily determining the borders of the Palestinian state called for in the road map. In response to such concerns, Sharon may concede the creation of a contiguous barrier in regions like Ariel, relying instead on a series of security perimeters encircling each settlement.

Notwithstanding such tactical modifications, Sharon is not prepared to abandon his long-held grand design nor contemplate an international demand that would oblige him to do so. ♦

Israeli Separation Options for the West Bank—July 2003



SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

February 1 In Kafr Thult, near Qalqilya, Israel uproots 800 olive trees to make way for the separation zone. (United Nations Relief and Works Agency)

February 2 Israel demolishes eighteen buildings near the Hebron intersection where three Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers were killed in a Hamas shooting the preceding week. Four other buildings belonging to Palestinians are demolished in Lot 26, near Givat Harsina, where one settler was killed in a Hamas attack three weeks prior. (*Ha'aretz*)

Hear Palestine reports the IDF demolishing 15 homes in Jawhar Mount, south of Hebron, and 7 homes in Qaizun Beit Anun.

February 3 The Israeli Electric Company bulldozes land in the village of Yanun, south of Nablus, in order to connect electricity to settler caravans. (*Hear Palestine*)

February 5 Spain begins assessing taxes on Israeli imports because Israeli authorities refuse to identify clearly whether the exported items are produced in Israel, and are thus covered by free trade agreements, or in the occupied territories, which are excluded from free trade treatment. (*Yediot Abaronot*)

February 11 The IDF kills three Palestinians attempting to carry out an attack with knives and grenades near the Gaza Strip settlement of Dugit. (*Ha'aretz*)

February 13 It is reported that in the preceding 6 months Israeli troops have destroyed the homes of more than 150 Palestinians accused of having taken part in attacks against Israelis. (*Los Angeles Times*)

February 14 The Israeli High Court calls on the IDF to reconsider an order that allows the demolition of Palestinian-owned properties between Kiryat Arba and the Jewish settlement in Hebron. The demolitions are part of the plan to widen "Worshippers Way," the road that leads to the Tomb of the Patriarchs. (*Ha'aretz*)

February 16 Palestinian residents near Rachel's Tomb, in Bethlehem, are notified that the IDF will seize land for the construction of a security fence surrounding the tomb and the adjacent neighborhood, thus separating the area from the rest of Bethlehem. Bethlehem's mayor Hanna Nasser says 750 acres would end up on the Israeli side of the fence. (*Chicago Tribune*)

February 18 According to UNRWA's *Occupied Palestinian Territory Humanitarian Update*, an average of 445,777 Palestinians in 57 localities were under curfew for between 1 and 22 days from January 22 to February 15. Local curfew regimes continued in a number of areas near settlements and bypass roads. During this period, the IDF carried out 42 housing demolitions in the West Bank, including 22 in Beit Enan, Hebron, due to illegal construction; 1 in Ras al-Amud, Jerusalem, for lack of a permit; and 7 as collective punishment. In Gaza, the IDF demolished 46 houses and partially demolished 23 others between January 22 and February 6, leaving 400 Palestinians homeless. In addition, 459 dunums of agricultural land and water wells were destroyed in the town of Tal al-Sultan. The wells provided approximately 50 percent of the town's water.

A Palestinian is apprehended while attempting to infiltrate the northern West Bank settlement of Homesh. (Arutz 7)

February 19 Israeli bulldozers and IDF tanks demolish the home of Abu Samra, due to its closeness to the Kfar Darom settlement, leaving his family of 15 without refuge. Abu Samra is accused of helping Palestinian fighters. He denies the accusation, insisting that the Israeli aim is to evacuate the area in order to expand the settlement to Palestinian agricultural lands. The targeted area is inhabited by 14 families. (*Hear Palestine*)

February 20 The Israeli Housing Ministry publishes a tender for the construction of 51 units in the Olive Hill section of Efrat. In preceding months tenders were published for the construction of 232 units in Immanuel, 28 units in Betar Ilit, 76 units in Ariel, and 102 units in Olive Hill. (*Ha'aretz*)

Israeli occupation authorities continue bulldozing the agricultural land of Aba al-Sharqitya village in Jenin for the construction of a new road to link the settlement of Ganim to the bypass road east of Jenin. The Israeli High Court rejected the objection submitted by the village residents concerning the road, which will further isolate the village. (*Hear Palestine*)

February 23 Tens of settlers attempt to break into the Hebron police station to free settlers arrested during the evacuation of an outpost near the settlement of Pnei

Hever. (*Yediot Abaronot*)

A Palestinian is killed near the Gaza settlement of Netzarim while trying to infiltrate it. (Arutz 7)

February 27 Israeli authorities demolish Palestinian residential construction built without permits in Beit Safafa. (*Kol Ha'Ir*)

February 28 *Yerushalim* reports that the Ramat construction company will construct an additional 108 units in Har Homa after successfully selling most of the units in its current inventory.

March 2 *Ha'aretz* reports the southern Jerusalem settlement of Gilo coming under Palestinian gunfire for the first time in more than five months. No injuries or damages are reported.

March 3 Israeli defense minister Shaul Mofaz, on a visit to Ma'ale Adumim, voices support for a plan known as E-1, which will create a contiguous swathe of settlements between Jerusalem and Ma'ale Adumim. The plan envisions approximately 3,000 housing units in addition to hotels, vacation homes, and resorts. "The decision to do so has already been taken, the question is how to implement it," said Mofaz. (*Ha'aretz*)

March 4 A 14-year-old Palestinian boy is wounded when settlers from Eli, near Nablus, attack villagers and their homes in Asaway. (*Mideast Mirror*)

March 5 Settlers from the Gush Etzion bloc announce plans to offer tourism packages that include staged terror attacks, firearms training, anti-terrorist instruction, and helicopter flights over Hebron and the Gaza Strip. The five-day program will cost participants \$5,500 each. (*Ha'aretz*)

March 7 Palestinians kill two Israelis and wound eight others in the West Bank settlement of Kiryat Arba. (*Ha'aretz*)

March 9 *Hear Palestine* reports settlers spraying 30 dunums of cultivated fields with chemicals, in the village of Ithna, ruining the harvest. More than 17 Palestinian families depend on the land for their livelihood.

March 10 Palestinians kill one Israeli and wound three others near Hebron, close to the settlement of Kiryat Arba. The attack occurred in the same spot as a shooting in December 2002 in which two military police officers were killed. (*Ha'aretz*)

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

Two Palestinian youths are killed while attempting to penetrate the settlement of Kfar Darom. (*Hear Palestine*)

March 13 *Hear Palestine* reports the wounding of a middle aged Palestinian man in an attack by settlers west of Salfit.

Two Israelis are killed by an IDF unit at an outpost near the settlement of Pnei Hever. They were mistaken for armed Palestinians.

Unofficial IDF data details the death toll from the al-Aqsa intifada: 441 Hamas and Jihad activists; 324 Fatah and Tanzim activists; 329 Palestinian Authority (PA) security forces members; 69 activists from the PFLP and DFLP; 417 unaffiliated Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity; 365 (18%) civilians with no connection to terror, of which 130 were under the age of 16. (*UNSCO Daily Press Brief*)

Israeli authorities uncover an arms cache in a settlement said to be intended for use against Arab targets. (*Ma'ariv*)

March 14 *Ha'aretz* reports settlers in a West Bank hilltop outpost refusing to accept the posting of Druze IDF soldiers at the site.

Two settlers are arrested for beating a Palestinian shepherd near the northern West Bank village of Mesha. (*Ma'ariv*)

At a press conference, U.S. president George W. Bush reiterates that "as progress is made toward peace, settlement activity in the occupied territories must end."

March 16 Arutz 7 reports that a group of settlers guarding the area around the Gidonim outpost, or Hill 851, encounter four Palestinians attempting to infiltrate the outpost. The Palestinians flee to the village of Furik, east of Itamar.

March 17 Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon announces plans to build a second security fence, cutting off the Jordan Valley from the rest of the West Bank and sandwiching Palestinian autonomous areas of the West Bank between the planned eastern fence and one in the west. (*Agence France Presse*)

The Israeli Housing Ministry publishes a tender in *Ha'aretz* for the construction of 24 units in Ariel.

The South Hebron regional settlement council is granted authority to farm thou-

sands of dunams in Israel, including the Yatir forest, which was once proposed by Prime Minister Ehud Barak as part of a final status land swap. (*Ha'aretz*)

March 18 The IDF bulldozes 10 dunums of agricultural land east of Deir al-Balah. An Israeli armored bulldozer supported by 3 tanks and soldiers on foot entered the area from the settlement of Kfar Darom, southwest of the city. (*Hear Palestine*)

March 19 An Israeli settler from Mevo Dotan, near the village of Ya'bid, west of Jenin, is killed when his car is ambushed by Palestinians. He is the third resident of Mevo Dotan to be killed since the al-Aqsa intifada began. (*Ha'aretz*)

The human rights organization LAW reports that the Israeli army has demolished 844 homes and bulldozed 1,248 dunums of agricultural land since the beginning of 2003. (*Hear Palestine*)

March 20 Arutz 7 reports stone-throwing Palestinians targeting vehicles traveling near the settlement of Ofra and on the Hussan bypass road near the settlement of Beitar.

Israeli soldiers fire on two Palestinians infiltrating the southern Katif bloc settlement of Morag. One of the Palestinians is killed. (Arutz 7)

March 21 *Hear Palestine* reports that Hebron's Old City and the city commercial center have been under almost continuous curfew for 125 days.

IDF tanks and bulldozers from the settlement of Morag destroy agricultural land in the Qaizan al-Najar area, south of Khan Yunis. (*Hear Palestine*)

March 23 The Israeli High Court issues a contempt of court decree against the army for not dismantling the outpost known as Hill 26 outside Kiryat Arba, where a settler was killed in an attack. The army immediately removes the outpost, noting that the evacuation of the sole family residing there was carried out "to enforce a Supreme Court ruling" denying building rights in the area.

March 24 A tender is published in *Yediot Aharonot* for the sale of 28 housing plots in the West Bank settlement of Elkana.

Arutz 7 reports damage to dozens of Israeli cars in rock-throwing attacks in the West Bank, particularly on the Jerusalem-Hebron

highway. Stoning attacks have increased in the area as IDF forces have been thinned out.

A group of settlers returns to Hill 26, after being evacuated by the IDF. (Arutz 7)

March 25 Israeli police establish the "Shock Horse" special unit to evacuate settlers from outposts. The unit is composed of 170 officers trained by psychologists to deal with settlers. (*Ma'ariv*)

March 26 Arutz 7 reports the killing of a Palestinian attempting to infiltrate the settlement of Morag in Gaza, the second such attempt in five days. Shots are fired at an IDF outpost near Gadid.

March 27 *Ha'aretz* reports the dismantling of settler tents on Hill 26, which had been evacuated earlier.

Ha'aretz reports that a YESHA council austerity plan will cost each settler family about \$1,000. The plan has no budget for bypass roads and settlement fortification.

March 28 *Kol Ha'ir* reports that "the Ministry of Labor and Welfare supports the establishment of a new, Jews only institute to teach students construction skills." The institute, which will be located in the Harsina Hill section of Kiryat Arba, will focus on providing skills for residents and supporters of the newly established outposts.

Hebron settlers reestablish a presence on Hill 26. (*Ha'aretz*)

Protests are held in the Ganim and Kadim settlements against difficult conditions on area roads. Settlers complain that the army tanks that travel the roads regularly are hazardous to other vehicles. (Arutz 7)

March 29 Arutz 7 reports gunfire at an IDF position in Gadid, a settlement near Neve Dekalim, and shots fired at a house in Neve Dekalim.

Palestinians in Bidya, Saniriya, and Mas'ha demonstrate against the confiscation of more than 480 dunums of agricultural land by the IDF. (*Hear Palestine*)

March 31 *Ma'ariv* reports on a \$25 million project for the construction of 200 dwellings in Elkana. Houses there will sell for \$220,000.

The Route to Settlement Expansion — 11,000 New Units Planned

Israel's national market for housing is in an unprecedented recession. Housing sales throughout Israel in 2002 reached only 100,000 units, a reduction of almost 20 percent from the height of the market in the mid-1990s. This decline is also apparent in most settlements, where security concerns related to the continuing intifada are an additional factor depressing demand.

The location of Givat Ze'ev on Route 443, which has been the scene of occasional Palestinian gunfire on Israeli vehicles, has all but stopped new housing development there.

"In Givat Ze'ev," notes an article in *Ha'aretz*, "contractors have simply stopped marketing in the last two years, and today are conducting discussions with the Ministry of Housing in an effort to have their investments returned to them."

Nevertheless, one day after Prime Minister Ariel Sharon described Israel's rule over the West Bank and Gaza Strip as an "occupation that cannot continue indefinitely," the Ministry of Housing revealed plans for the construction of 11,806 dwelling units in settlements, including 1,054 in Givat Ze'ev; 3,271 in Ariel; 3,200 in Betar Ilit; 1,512 in Giva Benjamim; and 4,281 in Ma'ale Adumim. The necessary administrative approvals for this continuing expansion are expected to be finalized by year's end. In the meantime, construction is expected to commence in coming months on 2,000 new units.

The settler population (excluding East Jerusalem) has increased by 5,000 since the beginning of 2003, to 231,000.

Sales of New Dwellings in Selected Settlements, 2002

Har Homa	358
Ma'ale Adumim	317
Beitar Ilit	192
Giva Benjamin	67
Ariel	49
Efrat	9
Gilo	5
Nisanit (Gaza)	3
Alfe Menashe	0
Givat Ze'ev	0

Mr. Ahmad said: "The Israelis made a fence around the settlement, then they put in a small gate so we could get to our olive trees. They gave us the key and let us come and go for the first year. Then they changed the lock and put a guard on. But he doesn't come on the Sabbath and holidays and when he is sick. Then one day he doesn't come at all and you can't get to your land. Then they declare you are not working your land and seize it."

"At first they take the land and just leave the buildings. But the next generation will not have enough room to build and it will have to find somewhere else to live." He doubted there was much the Palestinians could do.

"The land grab is like a cancer," he said. "It starts in small parts of the body and you hardly notice it, but it grows until you are too weak to fight it."

Abdul Karim Ahmad, a villager of Azzun Atma, The Guardian (UK), May 14, 2003