

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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SHARON'S SUCCESSOR MUST CONFRONT HIS LEGACY

Israel has been searching for a sustainable framework for managing permanent occupation since Menachem Begin's 1978 embrace of Palestinian "autonomy."

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's removal of all Israeli troops and settlements from the Gaza Strip in September 2005 signaled the emergence of a new Israeli consensus. Sharon, like Israel's first prime minister, David Ben Gurion, was determined to shape the permanent borders of the state.

"Not everything will remain in our hands," noted a speech harking back to Israel's first leader that Sharon was to give in September 2005. "We have a rightful and just dream, but there is a reality, and it is tough and demanding. It's impossible to hold a Jewish, democratic state and also rule all of Palestine."

Before he was incapacitated by a stroke, Sharon had begun to implement a "long-term interim agreement" that rejected negotiations with the PLO, opposed a final status resolution of all

outstanding issues, and cemented a new rationale for consolidating Israel's still considerable appetite for territory in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Sharon believed the "facts" that he was creating would establish a twenty-first century foundation for Israel's claim to contested territory: "hard" borders governing passage between Israel and Palestine along the separation barrier; settlement "blocs" claiming space and sovereignty over lands Palestinians consider an inseparable part of *their* patrimony, with contiguity via bridges and tunnels as a substitute for the territorial coherence lost by Palestine to Israeli settlements; and "security zones" in places like the Jordan Valley. Sharon championed a new paradigm that features Israel's imposition of an ersatz sovereignty in the West Bank (as he already did in Gaza) upon unwilling Palestinians in those territories Israel desires neither for security or settlement. There are doubts that whoever succeeds Sharon in national elections in March 2006 will have the desire or power to realize this outcome. Sharon's successors may not champion it with his vigor or effectiveness, but they will find his program difficult to replace with an alternative of their own.

The Bulldozer's Agenda

Israelis will not be alone in seeking to chart a course without Sharon. An international community that has deferred to "the Bulldozer's" diplomatic agenda may be compelled to provide

firmer leadership in this new, uncertain era. The Road Map has remained an excuse for inaction, relevant only to the extent that its ritual invocation assured that no plan of consequence challenged Sharon's vision. All major Israeli parties agree, if not for the same reasons, that the diplomatic framework championed by the Bush administration is passé.

Sharon intended that Palestinians remain, as they were during Israel's retreat from Gaza, objects of his intentions, not partners in its conception and execution. With his departure, they now have increased ability to influence the program that his undoubtedly less powerful and effective successor will unfold in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

While the principles Sharon wanted to implement are clear, the borders of the map that he wanted to create were not. No one knows exactly how much of the territory conquered in June 1967 Israel will claim for itself in the coming months and years. A range of possibilities exists, downward from 60 percent of the West Bank—Oslo's Area C—to the 9.4 percent west of the separation barrier. Areas of "United Jerusalem" have already been placed on the Israeli side of the separation barrier. Additional parts of the city could well follow. But if Palestinians and the international community are to successfully demand a maximal Israeli retreat, including areas west of the separation barrier whose annexation is ostensibly supported by an Israeli consensus, they will have to demonstrate greater capacity for diplomatic innovation and leadership. ♦

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TO OUR READERS

Ariel Sharon's historic legacy will not be defined by the exaggerated praise he receives today as a hero transformed from brutal warrior to "man of peace." It will be determined by whether Israel, the Palestinians, and the United States can now create a vision of peace that builds upon Sharon's successes and repairs his errors.

Sharon deserves credit for recognizing that Israel's territorial ambitions have limits. His unprecedented withdrawal from Gaza shattered the myth that settlements are irreversible. And he proved that the much feared settler lobby lacks popular support and is no match for a determined Israeli government.

But Sharon leaves much damage to repair. He reinforced the misconception that the conflict is solely about Palestinian terrorism and rejection, not also a harsh occupation that defeats Palestinian hopes for a sovereign state and provokes violent rebellion. He avoided negotiations with the self-serving notion that Israel had no "partner" for peace. And he bought time for

unilateral actions by insisting, unrealistically, that the Palestinians must dismantle terrorist groups before talks could resume. In the meantime, he strengthened Israeli control in the West Bank through settlement growth and a separation barrier that fractures Palestinian lands and cuts off East Jerusalem in ways that would foreclose a viable Palestinian state. (Jeff Aronson describes the fundamental anomalies of Sharon's plan on page 6.)

Sharon's agenda was aided by grisly Palestinian suicide bombings, Arafat's ineptitude, lackluster leadership by Mahmoud Abbas, Palestinian infighting, and a compliant Washington. Now, elections and the emergence of the radical Hamas raise new questions. But the formidable Ariel Sharon is no longer in charge, and there is an opportunity and a responsibility for Israelis, Palestinians, and the United States to chart a new course.

Philip C. Wilcox, Jr.



Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz approves the construction of hundreds of housing units in key West Bank settlements, days before leaving the Likud party to join Sharon's Kadima party.

Yediot Aharonot, December 15, 2005

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Life Under Siege in a Divided City

In recent years, more than half of the 2,500 Palestinians who lived in Hebron's Old City have been driven out. . . . Palestinians are now barred from the main commercial road, Shuhada Street, where shops are boarded up. Elsewhere they are permitted only to walk and not drive. The UN has counted 101 military roadblocks and checkpoints controlling the movement of Palestinians in central Hebron.

The army says the measures are the result of a "complex reality" created by the Palestinian intifada and more than 30 suicide bombers from Hebron, and a climate of anger fueled by killings such as a Palestinian sniper shooting a Jewish baby and a mob of settlers murdering a 14-year-old Arab girl.

The settlers call the Palestinian exodus "a gift from heaven." But last year Jan Kristensen, who headed the European monitoring team [TIPH] in Hebron, said it had more to do with a strategy by the army and settlers to drive Palestinians out of the Old City.

"More and more people are leaving the area and it is effectively being emptied. The settlers' activities, which are aimed at causing the Palestinians to leave, and the army's activities, which impose severe restrictions, create an irreversible reality," he told *Ha'aretz*. "The settlers go out almost every night and attack those who live near them. They break windows, cause damage and effectively force the Palestinians to leave the area. In a sense, cleansing is being carried out."

Chris McGreal, *Guardian*, December 9, 2005

Divine Justice

These very days, there are those who continue to make additional plans of uprooting and destruction, and these must be countered in various ways. . . . Several decades from now, people will not believe that after 50 years of existence of the state, a government in Israel uprooted dozens of communities, threw Jews out of their homes, and gave the enemy land on which to base itself so that it could attack us. . . . Everyone who took part in the crime of the expulsion must know that he will be remembered in infamy. . . . We are certain of the Master of the Universe that we will go from these troubles to times of blessing, when all of the Land of Israel will be only ours, just as G-d has promised us.

Rabbi Zalman Baruch Melamed, member of the YESHA Rabbis Council, Arutz 7, November 10, 2005

The Final Days of the Jordan Valley

How many times has the Palestinian government visited the villages of the Jordan Valley? What budget has the government allocated for this area and what has it offered the people in terms of developmental projects?

Reality shows that the Valley's destroyed infrastructure has

not been a priority for the Palestinian Authority.

Furthermore, the farmers have not received any attention, with many of them moving to the north to avoid harassment by Israel, which has been appropriating their land for years.

The Israeli plan of taking over this important part of Palestine is taking place in a speedy manner and in a way similar to what is happening in Jerusalem. Will the Palestinian leadership wake up to the disastrous fate awaiting the Jordan Valley before it becomes too late?

Abdel-Naser-En-Najjar, *Al-Ayyam*, November 19, 2005

Ma'ale Adumim Wants to Expand

The mayor of Ma'ale Adumim, Benny Kasriel, has intensified his efforts in recent weeks to annex the East Jerusalem area of Kikar Sefra into the Ma'ale Adumim bloc in an effort to create a contiguous settlement area.

More than a hundred Likud officials signed a petition submitted to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon supporting Kasriel's efforts. In the letter, the signatories demand that Sharon expedite the building of the neighborhood. "We imagine that now, after the completion of the withdrawal from Gaza Strip, which was a traumatic experience that horrified the Likud movement, the time has come to advance the political interests of the State of Israel."

Kasriel: "The Palestinians are interested in forming a contiguous Palestinian area from Ramallah to Bethlehem. If they succeed in carrying out their plan, they are likely to cut off the city's northern [East Jerusalem settlement] neighborhoods. Those neighborhoods are in grave danger."

Kol Ha'Ir, November 11, 2005

A Canton is Created

In recent months the IDF has been constructing a large barrier in the Tapuah junction south of Nablus that will allow it to cut off the northern West Bank from its center. According to sources inside the Israeli army, the construction of the barrier was approved approximately nine months ago and it will start operating in two month's time. There will be ten lanes, eight of which will face south. Of those lanes, one lane will be designated for humanitarian vehicles, and another will be used for vehicles with Israeli license plates and will not be subject to security inspections. The remaining two lanes will be used for north-bound traffic. . . .

The Israeli army claims that the decision to construct this barrier is part of the plan to restructure the transportation regime in the West Bank. The authorities believe that the barrier will be combined into a system of manned barriers and closures that will complete the IDF's plan to disconnect Nablus and Jenin from the rest of the West Bank.

Ha'aretz, October 30, 2005

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

September 22 Israel's disengagement plan is completed with the dismantling of the Dotan military post south of Jenin, 39 days after withdrawals began. (*Ha'aretz*)

September 24 The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) announce the indefinite closure of all external crossing points from the Gaza Strip. The Rafah crossing point has been closed since September 7. (OCHA)

September 25 The IDF begins leveling Palestinian agricultural land in the town of Tarqumiyya, an area abutting the Adora settlement, to create a buffer zone around the settlement. (OCHA)

September 26 The body of an Israeli man from East Jerusalem's Pizgat Ze'ev settlement is found near Ramallah. He had been kidnapped and killed by Palestinians. (OCHA)

Karen Abu-Zayd, director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), reports that 30,000 Palestinians lost their homes in the al-Aqsa intifada. The United Nations plans to build new housing, some in the areas of the recent Israeli withdrawal. (*Yediot Abaronot*)

September 28 Israel denies the requests of 406 Palestinian olive grove farmers for permission to enter their agricultural land west of the separation barrier. (OCHA)

The Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group reports that 3,508 Palestinians were killed in the five years of the al-Aqsa intifada. Among those, 35 were killed by Israeli settlers. It calculated the number of suicide attacks at 165: 3 in 2000; 44 in 2001; 73 in 2002; 25 in 2003; 16 in 2004; and 4 in 2005.

September 29 *Ma'ariv* reports that tens of Arab families have chosen to reside in new Israeli settlements such as Pizgat Ze'ev and French Hill being built north of Jerusalem.

September 30 *Yerushalaim* reports that the New Home in Jerusalem company will pay \$13.2 million for land intended for the construction of 114 housing units in the East Jerusalem settlement of Ramot.

October 2 *Yediot Abaronot* reports that the Israeli Housing Ministry is investigating the disappearance of 400 mobile homes in the West Bank. The disappearances were first made public in the Sasson Report released earlier this year.

The Israeli Housing Ministry publishes a

tender for 21 plots of land for the "Build Your Own Home" project in the Golan Heights settlement of Katzrin. (*Yediot Abaronot*)

Vandals destroy 210 fruit trees belonging to Palestinian farmers from the town of Khamlet Zakariya, an area bordering the Alon Shvut settlement. (OCHA)

October 3 Arutz 7 reports that according to the Central Bureau of Statistics, Israeli home purchases in the West Bank increased by 38% from January to June 2005, accounting for 5.3% of all new Israeli home purchases.

The chopping down of olive trees by state representatives, just like the appropriation of private agricultural land and the exploitation of every inch of non-private ground for the purpose of expanding the settlements, is a routine matter in the territories. The difference between the injustice caused by the state authorities and the damage done independently by groups of settlers lies in the fact that the latter is an indication of the depth of anarchy and abandonment that characterizes the way of life of the settlers in the territories.

Editorial, *Ha'aretz*,
January 12, 2006

Israel permits 20 food trucks to enter Gaza through the Sufa crossing after a month of almost complete closures. (*Ha'aretz*)

October 10 According to a study conducted by the Jerusalem Institute for Israeli Studies on the effects of the separation barrier in Jerusalem, 52% of East Jerusalemites interviewed were unable to reach their work, 33% had difficulties reaching their schools, 39% had their health affected by lack of access to hospitals and clinics, and 37% said their social and family ties were affected by the barrier. (*Ha'aretz*)

Ma'ariv reports the founding of a new reli-

gious organization, the Jewish Voice, to lead settlers with the intention of replacing the YESHA Council. The organization will encourage settlers to separate from Israel and refuse enlistment in the army.

October 11 *Ha'aretz* reports that a half-kilometer radius around an illegal outpost has become a closed military zone because of an increase in settler attacks against Palestinian olive orchards. Palestinian farmers will thus be forced to coordinate with the IDF to enter their groves, which cover thousands of dunams of land.

October 14 *Ha'aretz* reports some U.S. Protestant churches rescinding an earlier decision to stop investing in companies benefiting from Israel's occupation of Palestinian land.

October 16 Three Israeli youths are killed by Palestinian gunmen at the Etzion bloc hitchhiking station in the West Bank. Palestinians also wound a 14-year-old Israeli boy near the West Bank settlement of Eli. (*Ha'aretz*)

Soldiers visiting the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron are attacked by settlers for the IDF's role in the disengagement plan. Settlers also assault Col. Menashe Goldblatt on a visit to see his brother in the Neveh Tzuf settlement and OC Central Command Maj. Gen Yair Naveh at the Gush Etzion junction. (Peace Now)

October 17 IDF troops block access roads to Palestinian traffic between Palestinian communities and Highway 60 connecting Jerusalem to Hebron. (*Ha'aretz*)

October 19 *Ha'aretz* reports a decision by the IDF's Central Command to cancel military escorts for Palestinian children to schools south of Hebron originally instituted to protect against settler harassment. The cancellation followed the murder of three settlers on October 16.

Peace Now calls for the dismantlement of 26 settlements in the West Bank followed by a withdrawal from an additional 17. (*Ha'aretz*)

October 20 *Yediot Abaronot* reports settlers destroying hundreds of olive trees in the Palestinian village of Salem.

October 23 During the Sukkot holiday, the Temple Mount is opened for Jewish visitors from 7:30 to 9:00a.m. (Arutz 7)

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

October 27 The IDF evacuates five illegal settlements set up the previous day near Efrat, Elon Moreh, Kedumim, and Worshippers' Way in Hebron. Settler youths near Elon Moreh vandalize and physically assault Israeli troops, and settlers clash with police in Hebron and throw stones on Palestinian homes. Settlers return to two of the five locations. (*Ha'aretz*)

Four settler youth are charged with attacking a 13-year-old Palestinian boy selling fruit at an intersection near the Kedumim settlement. (*Ha'aretz*)

October 28 *Ha'aretz* reports that Israeli defense minister Shaul Mofaz has instructed security forces to evict 15 families from Hebron's wholesale market, where they have been squatting for years in old buildings.

Arutz 7 reports that Mofaz has also ordered the demolition of nine houses built by settlers on privately owned Palestinian land in the West Bank outpost of Amonah. There are 53 caravans and 25 families in the settlement, whose construction was supported by allocations from the Housing and Construction Ministry. (*Ha'aretz*)

October 30 Arutz 7 reports that 13 families evacuated from the Morag settlement in Gush Katif, Gaza, have moved into houses in the West Bank settlement of Tene.

November 2 Peace Now opposes a plan by the Israeli government to change the status of the West Bank settlement Modi'in Illit from a local council to an independent municipality.

November 3 *Ha'aretz* reports the submission of a request to build six eight-story buildings containing 90 apartments, a synagogue, and a kindergarten within the Sheikh Jarrah area of East Jerusalem. The planned settlement is being orchestrated by Irwin Moskowitz, who claims ownership of the site of the Shepherd's Hotel.

November 8 *Yediot Aharonot* reports the arrest of a 19-year-old settler from Elon Moreh for destroying hundreds of olive trees belonging to Palestinian farmers from the village of Salem.

Settlers from the West Bank settlement of Beit Arye display their displeasure to Prime Minister Sharon about not being included west of the separation barrier. Some settlers express an interest in relocating to Israel in exchange for compensation. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

November 9 Ron Shechner, Defense Minister Mofaz's adviser on settlements, resigns after coming under scrutiny for assisting in the construction of illegal settlements.

November 10 *Yediot Aharonot* reports that chief of staff Dan Halutz has requested the dissolution of the Elon Moreh Yeshiva Council, led by Elyakim Levanon, on the grounds that Levanon ordered his students serving in the army to refuse orders during disengagement operations.

November 15 *Ha'aretz* reports that the Israeli Housing Ministry intends to transfer to the Ministry of the Interior the responsibility of \$9 million in funding security for the 56 Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem.

At present, Palestinians are not adequately protected by criminal, civil or administrative law, said Talia Sasson, author of a recent government report on settlement outposts. Their protections are very weak. . . . There is an entire system set up to prevent illegal construction, but if it is not enforced, it is just paper.

**Editorial, *Ha'aretz*,
January 12, 2006**

November 17 The Israel Land Authority publishes a tender for the sale of 13 plots in existing neighborhoods in the Ma'ale Adumim settlement. (*Ha'aretz*)

November 20 *Ha'aretz* reports a survey conducted by TNS Teleseker as revealing that 25% of West Bank settlers are willing to relocate in exchange for compensation to purchase a home within the Green Line. The study also notes that 64% of settlers and 70% of the Israeli public expect future settlement withdrawals. In addition, 74% of Israelis support the passage of laws granting compensation for relocation.

November 22 *Ha'aretz* reports that Housing Minister Yitzhak Herzog negotiated with Labor Party leader Amir Peretz the approval of tenders for the construction of 310 housing units in the settlement bloc of

Ma'ale Adumim.

November 23 *Ha'aretz* reports that the Israeli Justice Ministry and security officials have rejected four of eight recommendations of the Sasson Report on preventing illegal outposts. The remaining four recommendations have yet to be implemented.

November 24 *Ma'ariv* reports that in preceding weeks the YESHA Council has fired approximately 20 of its employees and tens of youths serving as field workers, leaving only six employees on its payroll. This downsizing of staff resulted from the high cost of the Orange Campaign, estimated at \$9 million.

November 28 Peace Now reports the publication of tenders for 350 housing units in Ma'ale Adumim, bringing the total tenders for the settlement bloc in 2005 to 665 units.

Israel Radio News reports on Talia Sasson's dissatisfaction with the Sharon government's inaction in fulfilling the promises it made to dismantle illegal settlement outposts following her report. "It is particularly regrettable to learn that the authorities apparently do not intend to dismantle Amona", she declares.

Arutz 7 reports that 19 families from the former Katif bloc settlement of Shirat HaYam are waiting for approval to establish a new settlement in Maskiyot in the Jordan Valley. Prime Minister Sharon has reportedly given his consent.

November 29 *Ma'ariv* reports that the number of Arab students studying at Ariel College in the West Bank has doubled in 2005. There are 300 Arab students from Israel and East Jerusalem out of 8,500 students at the college.

November 30 Settlers cut down some 200 olive trees belonging to Palestinian farmers from the village of Salem. The trees had been planted the previous day by kibbutz movement volunteers after settlers from Elon Moreh destroyed the farmers' trees a month prior. (*Ha'aretz*)

Ma'ariv reports the issuance of three construction orders for the separation barrier, totaling 71 kilometers. The construction will take place around Ma'ale Adumim, east of Jerusalem; Beit Arye, east of the Ben Gurion airport; and Mezadot Yehuda, in the southern West Bank.

IT'S THE OCCUPATION STUPID!

By *Geoffrey Aronson*

Israel's reoccupation of the entire West Bank in Spring 2002 (Operation Defensive Shield) ended many of the limited powers exercised by the Palestinian Authority (PA). Palestinian institutions created during the Oslo years have long ceased to exercise significant security functions anywhere. Effective Palestinian administrative and civil control has, in the West Bank at least, been circumscribed and limited, at best, to a few cities. International assistance has stepped into the breach created by the Palestinian Authority's collapse, transforming key institutions of Palestinian self-rule into wards of the international community.

Subsequent measures by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to construct a physical infrastructure are meant to control and separate Palestinians from each other, from settlers, and from contact with Israel proper. This draconian system, known as "closure", undermined the administrative control and territorial coherence extant in the Palestinian areas on the eve of the second intifada. Subsequent Israeli practices have deconstructed nominally Palestinian territories into an ever-more complex, almost indecipherable maze of administrative, territorial, legal, and security spaces lacking territorial coherence and administrative transparency. The points at which these spaces meet—checkpoints, crossing points, and the separation barrier winding its way through the West Bank and East Jerusalem—highlight the conflicts, inefficiencies, and suffering produced by Israeli policy. These hardships are not the unintended by-product of policies carelessly planned or implemented. Rather, they are the inevitable consequence of an arbitrary and lawless regime of occupation.

Even under optimal conditions, the cardinal feature of Israeli rule—the maintenance and expansion of civilian Israeli settlements and associated infrastructure—could not but fatally undermine Palestinian efforts to establish and run national security and administrative institutions. Settlements aim to "claim space" in a zero-sum contest with Palestinians over political and territorial control of the West Bank. Since the mid-1970s, settlements and the lands they control have been established for all practical intents and purposes as extra-territorial extensions of the State of Israel and thus placed beyond the administrative and practical reach of Palestinians. These areas now comprise roughly 60 percent of the West Bank (Area C) and represent a fundamental obstacle to the effective, efficient, and sovereign management of Palestinian affairs over territories they claim as their own. This rump of isolated, disjointed Palestinian territories is principally designed to preserve Israel's settlement infrastructure and the transportation network constructed to support it. This setup poses a much more severe administrative and security challenge to both Israelis and Palestinians than did the Oslo division of the area into Areas A, B, and C—and it represents a radical change from the open system that prevailed in the 1967–1987 period.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon intended to solidify the physical separation of Palestinians from settler communities within the West Bank and also between the Palestinian areas of the West Bank and Israel in security, territorial, and economic dimensions. The creation of the physical infrastructure to support this policy is well advanced. Should he chose, Sharon's successor will not easily be able to reverse it.

The physical separation of settlers from their Palestinian environment relies on the creation of territorially contiguous settlement blocs linked territorially to Israel. The settlers' territorial continuity is contrasted by a patchwork of Palestinian areas whose territorial and administrative coherence has been sacrificed to Israeli settlement requirements, and whose linkages to other Palestinian areas, when available, are often limited to narrow corridors of "transportation contiguity." Palestinian access from the West Bank to Israel is soon to be subject to strict, "hard" border-like controls on the Gaza Strip's Erez model at a limited number of crossing points, some of which are located within the West Bank itself. Access from the Gaza Strip to Israel, for labor and goods, will continue to decline, and the creation of a regular and efficient transit route between Gaza and the West Bank, despite Israeli promises to the contrary, will not be realized.

The physical divisions throughout the West Bank are caused by settlements, their infrastructure, and transportation links. Palestinians and the international community have not effectively challenged Israeli demands to assure the security of settlements and their inhabitants, expansively defined by Israel, even though these demands make the effective exercise and expansion of Palestinian authority all but impossible.

"Win-Win" solutions of the kind promoted by the international community have been all but impossible to implement. No one today is claiming, as Israel did in the early decades of occupation, that the system Israel is now imposing will revitalize the Palestinian economy, enhance the quality of Palestinian life, or enable Israelis and Palestinians "to live together forever" under benevolent Israeli rule. Israel long ago abandoned its claim that settlers and settlements do not harm their Palestinian "neighbors." Indeed well-intentioned efforts are being made by Palestinians, Israelis, and the international community to reduce the catastrophic economic and social dislocations that the system is producing in a quixotic effort to approximate the re-creation of a benign economic and territorial space comprising Israel and the West Bank and Gaza Strip, divided into separate and territorially coherent Israeli and Palestinian political entities. No Palestinian administration could administer the evolving scheme effectively and transparently in a way that enhances its capability to operate in a sovereign manner and that assures administrative coherence, economic well-being, and effective security.

Internationally led efforts to encourage a regime of law—

OCCUPATION, *continued on page 7*

are a misconceived and ultimately unrealizable substitute for a principled demand to dismantle settlements and to end occupation. The conceptual framework adopted by the international community—whether in its policy towards settlements, security, or border management—reflects the misplaced notion that a hostile occupation dedicated to the large-scale theft of land for civilian settlement and thus lawless by nature, can be run according to standards that are above all fair. For example, a recent World Bank report, “The Palestinian Economy and the Prospects for its Recovery,” is guardedly hopeful that the November 15, 2005 agreement on the operation of crossing points from Gaza “has the potential to transform border management—from a unilateral, security-based model to one which is cooperatively managed and seeks a sustainable balance between security and economics.” Such a system, if it could be created, would not be an occupation of the kind that Israel operates in the occupied territories. But occupation—brutal, arbitrary, and opaque—with settlement at its heart, continues to define relations between Israel and Palestinians today.

Contrary to the claims of Israeli officials, completion of the separation barrier later this year will not materially affect the draconian closure regime that now defines life for Palestinians in the West Bank, as long as the requirement to protect settlers and the maintenance of their “normal lives” remains paramount, and as long as Palestinians resist this state of affairs. As the World Bank report gingerly acknowledges, “as the separation barrier is completed, it can be assumed that threats to Israel will no longer constitute the core rationale for internal closure (any more than it does in fenced-off Gaza), leaving the protection of Israeli movement in the West Bank [i.e., the protection of settlers] as the key factor. Given this, and the continued expansion of settlements in the West Bank, an early return to the September 28, 2000 *status quo* in the West Bank would seem unlikely.”

The international community hopes that the efficient, transparent operation of crossing points will take the harsh edge off continuing occupation. But settlements, as the World Bank report notes, are at the core of the closure regime and the associated restrictions on Palestinian movement that have impoverished the country. “Current GOI [Government of Israel] policy,” the report notes, “protects settlements and settler access by restricting Palestinian traffic on key highways, and this conflicts with the need to restore movement between towns, villages and the borders. . . . The system of closures detailed in the Bank’s December 2004 report is still largely in place, and remains the key risk to rapid, sustained Palestinian economic recovery.”

The World Bank report also acknowledges that the Palestinian Authority is justifiably concerned that to the extent that international efforts are aimed at tinkering with this system, “a dialogue of this kind between donors and GOI could be construed as acceptance of the legality of settle-

For years, the state has allowed Jewish thugs to mistreat their Palestinian neighbors undisturbed, while investing much effort in undermining and preventing Palestinian attacks on Jews. In most instances in which a settler is caught vandalizing Palestinian property or physically harming a Palestinian, he is released from custody almost immediately, his personal weapon is returned to him, and he goes back to being a threat to his neighbors and proof that filing a police complaint does not pay. And it is not just a matter of the chopping down of trees, but also the vandalizing of property, disturbing farmers who are trying to work their land, and setting fire to agricultural plots, as well as physical attacks.

Settlers have chopped down thousands of olive trees—more than 2,000 according to the defense minister’s count—since April, and all the Yesha Council had to say about it was that it could be provocation. A response such as this from an institutionalized settler body is an indication that these are not the actions of a group of renegades or loose cannons, but ideological vandalism backed by the settlers and the authorities.

The government next week is supposed to order the evacuation of the illegal outpost Amona, as well as the Jewish settlement in the heart of Hebron’s wholesale market, in keeping with a High Court of Justice directive. Once again, the state has been dragged into an evacuation operation that could have been avoided had law enforcement authorities prevented the invasion from the outset. When it comes to both the tree-choppers and evacuation, the transition government must flex its muscles so that the message of determination reaches its destination.

Ha’aretz, January 12, 2006

ments.” That indeed is Israel’s objective, to compel Palestinians and the international community to recognize the legitimacy of its settlement enterprise. ♦

Sources of Population Growth in West Bank and Gaza Strip Settlements, 1993 to 2004

Year	Sources of Population Growth			Population		
	Israelis	New immigrants	Natural increase	(beginning of year)	(end of year)	Increase/%
1993	7,000	1,000	3,300	105,400	116,300	10,900 / 10.4
1994	7,000	1,000	3,700	116,300	127,800	11,400 / 9.8
1995	6,100	1,000	4,000	127,800	138,600	10,800 / 8.5
1996	6,600	1,000	4,400	138,600	150,200	11,600 / 8.4
1997	7,400	1,100	5,100	146,900	160,200	13,300 / 9.0
1998	5,500	1,400	5,500	160,200	172,200	12,000 / 7.5
1999	4,700	1,600	5,700	172,200	183,900	11,700 / 6.8
2000	7,100	1,300	6,300	183,900	198,300	14,400 / 7.9
2001	2,600	1,000	6,600	198,300	208,300	10,000 / 5.0
2002	4,000	1,100	7,100	208,300	220,200	11,900 / 5.7
2003	3,400	900	7,700	220,200	231,800	11,600 / 5.3
2004	3,600	900	8,000	231,800	243,900	12,100 / 5.2

There has been a fundamental shift in the source of the increase in the settler population since 1993. From that time, the growth due to “natural increase,” i.e., births, has climbed from 29 percent to 64 percent, while the share due to new Israeli settlers has declined from 62 percent to 29 percent. Note particularly the decrease between 2000 and 2001, the first year of the intifada.

Note: figures exclude East Jerusalem.

Sources: “Sources of Population Growth, by District, Area and Population Group,” Statistical Abstract of Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1994 to 2005.

The bang of the uprooting fundamentally changed Israel’s conceptual and political map—its identity, if you will—and not just its geography. The State of Israel that uproots Jews from their land—with the Israel Defense Forces as the executor—is no longer the Jewish state in the Land of Israel of which the early Zionists dreamed, and for which those who fought for its existence sacrificed themselves. The big bang is, therefore, the major change—the revolutionary one—in the nature of the state and its identity. The rebels did not expel Sharon from the Likud, as the indefatigable opportunist Tzachi Hanegbi lamented; Sharon’s defection, in the wake of the rift that he initiated, was unavoidable. . . .

The settlers are having a hard time, even more than Likud members, recovering from the blow they sustained from Sharon. And because they understand what will happen if Sharon returns to power when he is not restricted by the Likud, they say, “If there is a right wing, it should stand up and be counted.” And to them one must say: Patience. The recovery from such a big bang is a matter of years, not months. And these are likely to be very tough years. But one must hope that the settler camp can, along with the Likud, once again lead the nation, returning to the best days of the Likud and the settlement movement.

— Israel Harel, *Ha’aretz*, December 8, 2005

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