

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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“STANDING UP STRAIGHT” AFTER LEBANON: A SECOND WIND FOR SETTLEMENTS

On June 13, a group of Israelis determined to scuttle Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert’s promise to evacuate West Bank settlements gathered in Jerusalem. In their view, neither opposition like that waged unsuccessfully against the August 2005 evacuation of the Gaza Strip nor the more confrontational tactics used in a failed attempt to prevent the destruction of permanent dwellings at the settlement outpost of Amona in January could avert future withdrawals.

According to a report in *Yediot Aharonot* on June 15, participants discussed tactics that included destroying property of the Israel Defense Force (IDF), firebombing army vehicles, hacking into IDF computers, tainting IDF food supplies, destroying Arab property, and inciting Palestinian rebellion to keep IDF forces too busy to mobilize for settlement evacuations. “The struggle against the convergence plan will be much more militant than the struggle against the [Gaza] disengagement,”

explained one participant.

This militant minority opposed to settlement evacuation stands at the fringe of a what was, even before the war in Lebanon, a growing popular uneasiness about Olmert’s intentions. This concern was even apparent within the ranks of Olmert’s Kadima Party, which only a few months before had staked its electoral victory on Olmert’s undefined plan to remove settlers from the West Bank. On July 11, MK Otniel Schindler, a former settler advising Olmert, sought to placate this growing opposition. He noted that the number of settlers east of the separation barrier who would be compelled to vacate had been reduced to 30,000. That is, only half of those settlers residing east of the separation barrier would be withdrawn. Implementation of the plan would take at least three years, he explained. And unlike the Gaza withdrawal, settlers would “evacuate of their own free will.” Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni asserted that the IDF would remain in many of the still-undefined areas from which settlements were to be evacuated.

On July 10, Olmert declared, “I am absolutely committed to continue, in order to finally separate from the Palestinians and establish secure borders that are recognized by the international community.”

Two days later, the war against Lebanon erupted. Olmert initially claimed that the battle waged against Hezbollah would facilitate the removal of settlements. The war, however, dramatically weakened Olmert’s political

standing and heightened already substantial Israeli doubts about the wisdom of another unnegotiated retreat, after which Israel would remain within range of Palestinian missiles.

On July 24, the prime minister told an audience of former Gaza settlers, “I want you to know that your evacuation won’t be the last. We will be removing more [settlement] communities.” Asked by a reporter on August 2 whether the war and attacks from Gaza would affect the implementation of his “convergence” plan, Olmert replied, “I will surprise you. I truly believe the creation of a new order [in Lebanon] that will provide more stability will produce an environment that will create a new momentum between us and the Palestinians. It will assist me to create an atmosphere for disengagement from the Palestinians.”

The surprise, however, was on Olmert. “Within two hours of his words being published,” wrote one commentator, “he had received an ultimatum: if convergence is still on the table, settler representatives told him, we’re calling our people back home. You cannot use settlers from Yitzhar, Eli, and other settlements to fight [as Israeli soldiers] for you in Lebanon and at the same time threaten to raze their homes.”

Olmert hastened to apologize to his right-wing political opponents. “The war is a consequence of Hezbollah’s attack against Israel. There is no connection whatsoever to future political moves on other fronts.” Olmert had

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OLMERT, *continued on page 7*

TO OUR READERS

Israel's continuing occupation and settlement of Palestinian land is remarkable, considering the universal condemnation this has provoked for moral and legal reasons, and the harm caused to Palestinian rights and Israeli long-term security interests. In this *Report*, Jeff Aronson observes that absent strong leadership and consensus among politicians today, the settlement movement, Israel's most dynamic element, pushes forward, virtually unopposed. This has been the reality ever since Israel's conquest of the occupied territories in 1967, with the brief exception of former Prime Minister Sharon's pullout from settlements in Gaza.

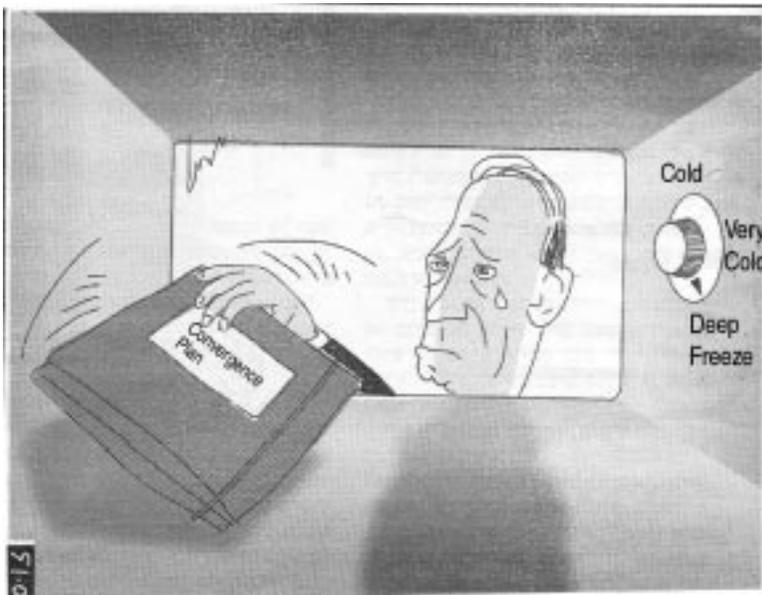
Although many Israeli politicians have patronized settlements, they are not a product of orderly policy making by Israel's parliamentary system. Israeli governments, which have always been weak coalitions due to ideological divisions and an electoral system that gives disproportionate weight to minority—and often extremist—parties, have been unable to adopt clear policies on territory and settlements. In the meantime,

settlers have quietly placed their supporters in key positions throughout the bureaucracy and the military. Today they form a powerful network that makes policies and diverts resources with little oversight to expand existing settlements and create “outposts” that are illegal under Israeli law.

Settlers themselves have also become a law unto themselves. Well armed, they seize land without authorization, destroy Palestinian property, and attack and harass Palestinians with virtual impunity. Arrests, much less convictions, are rare. The settler movement has become a kind of “government within a government.” This is doubly remarkable, given polls that show Israeli majorities oppose settlements.

Israel has become hostage to the settler movement. Because of its failure to confront the problems of occupation and settlement, Israel has been unable to achieve the goal of its founders, a Jewish, democratic state, at peace with its neighbors and the world.

Philip C. Wilcox, Jr.



Ma'ariv, July 30, 2006

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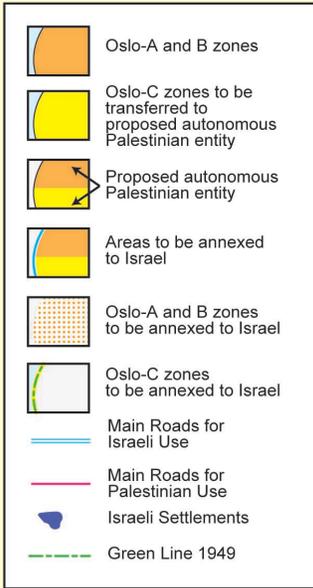
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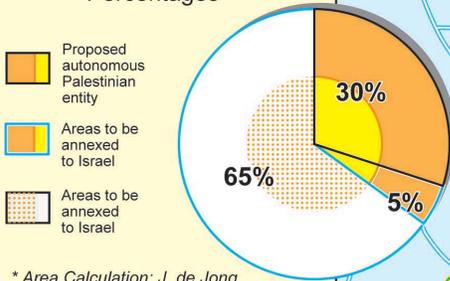
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Settlers' Plan for Palestinian Autonomy - 2006 *

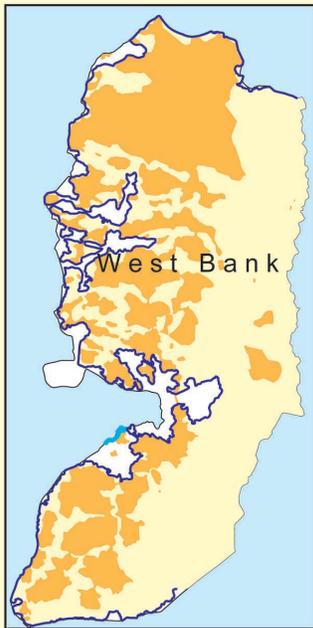
* The Contents of this plan were prepared by Hanan Porat, Uri Eilitzur and Adi Mintz in consultation with the YESHA Council



West Bank Plan Area Percentages*



* Area Calculation: J. de Jong West Bank Area includes all territory not in Israel, beyond Green Line 1949



The May 2006 edition of the settler monthly Nekuda featured an article by former YESHA chairman Adi Mintz. The article and an accompanying map on page 3 offer the most detailed political-territorial plan ever put forward by the settlement movement. Extended excerpts from the plan are translated below.

THE ZIONIST PLAN OF STAGES

The “Peace in the Land” plan, created by leading figures in YESHA and in consultation with the YESHA Council, is the only possible realistic solution. It addresses the three central problems: security, demography, and control of another nation. The plan proposes a solution in the form of three stages: fighting Arab terror, a long-term provisional plan, and a final status regional solution. . . .

There Is a Political Alternative

The different political plans aim to answer three basic problems:

- The security problem, including concerns of a general war with the Arab states and the problem of terror.
- The problem of ruling a foreign people, a question that until a few years ago only occupied discussions of the leftists, and has lately broken into the center of public discussion as well, particularly because of statements made by [former prime minister Ariel] Sharon.
- The demographic problem, which is discussed principally by Arab haters, such as Dr. Dan Shifan and Dr. Arnon Sofaer, and received impetus by rightists, such as [Israel Our Home party leader Avigdor] Lieberman and [Benjamin] Netanyahu, who speak of the danger of Arabs in Israel. Kadima’s solution to the problem—unilateral separation and disengagement—appeals to large sectors of the public, who do not want to see Arabs here.

The plan “Peace in the Land” which is presented in the following article, courageously tackles and answers these questions. . . .

Implementing the Plan

The plan presents a road map that will be carried out in three stages:

Stage A: a definitive decision to confront the current threat, both militarily and through raising awareness.

Stage B: a long-term, unilateral, provisional plan that is based on three elements: application of Israeli sovereignty over part of Judea and Samaria, including the issuance of Israeli citizenship to Arabs that reside in this area; an independent [Palestinian] authority based on a fully contiguous transport system for the remaining West Bank residents; an independent authority for the residents of Gaza.

Stage C: a permanent regional final status solution, in which Israel, Egypt, and Jordan together carry the burden of permanently resolving the Palestinian problem. . . .

A Palestinian State Is Not Viable

The area designated for a Palestinian state does not allow under any conditions for a sustainable national and economic

existence. A state like this, if created, will be tenuous, part of it in Judea and Samaria and part in Gaza, and will be compromised by Israeli Jerusalem and the Ma’ale Adumim bloc. Israel will be compelled to exert limitations on its sovereignty, control over its arms, aviation, and use of water resources, as well as its foreign relations and military. Such a country has no chance of existing, and it will certainly not be able to resolve the old tensions and hatred and create a dynamic of peace. . . .

The Principles of the Plan

A realistic political plan like the one presented here must be based on the following principles:

Historical right

The Land of Israel belongs to the Jewish people in light of biblical and historical rights, as well as that declared by international law. This is the only moral answer to the objection against establishing a Jewish nation “at the price of” the Arab people, a claim that has recently returned through the speeches of the Iranian president [Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad and key intellectual leaders in the world. . . .

Land and Historic Rights

It is impossible to demand that the [land]-poor Jewish people . . . be the only one to supply land required for the Palestinians in order to exist, when Israel does not have enough for itself. The only possible solution is a regional one, whereby Israel is only one of those carrying the burden.

It Is Necessary to Annex Part of the Arab Population

. . . [D]emographic fears need to be handled rationally without hysteria and [weighed] against other considerations in a rational manner of profit and loss. In Israel there are already six million Jews, and it can allow itself to annex a few hundred thousand Palestinians. There is actually no other alternative. . . .

Control of Another Nation

Following the implementation of the stages of this plan, the Arabs of Judea and Samaria will be divided into three categories: part will become citizens of Israel in every aspect, like the Arabs of the Galilee and Jerusalem; others will be citizens of the independent autonomous Palestinian authority [in the territories] that will be linked to Jordan; and some [Palestinians] will be citizens of the independent authority of Gaza and northern Sinai that will consist of an area from Gaza to al-Arish, and will be linked politically to Egypt.

The Eastern Front

Eighty percent of Jordanians are Palestinians. The process of Islamization and the rise of Hamas to power is creating change among the population in Jordan just as it does among the Arabs of Judea and Samaria. Israel must take into account the possibility that a hostile Muslim majority will take over Jordan and [add] it to the ranks of enemy countries. Israel will not be able to withstand an onslaught from the east without retaining control over the Jordan Valley as a security zone.

The Terrorism Front

Israel must retain strategic depth within Judea and Samaria. What are described as settlement blocs, for example, the cities of Ma'ale Adumim, Beitar Illit, Modiin Illit, and Ariel, are not sufficient alternatives to the required strategic depth. Israel will not be able to battle terror without retaining the security areas in western Samaria, western Binyamin, Etzion bloc, and south Mount Hebron.

The Plan's Principles

B. A Long-Term Provisional Plan

1. The state of Israel will extend its sovereignty over approximately 60% of the territory of Judea and Samaria, including all the areas of Jewish settlement and all the areas necessary to establish defensible borders: the Jordan Valley, the commanding hills and the village areas in western Samaria, western Binyamin, Etzion bloc, and south Mount Hebron.

2. Israel will annex around 300,000 Palestinian Arabs, residents of the small villages that are scattered in sparsely populated areas in Judea and Samaria (Jordan Valley, Judean desert, west Samaria, south Mount Hebron, east Etzion bloc, west Binyamin, and elsewhere). The annexation can be done in stages over many years, although in the end of the process these residents, like the residents of East Jerusalem, will be citizens of Israel in all aspects. This addition will increase Israel's Arab population (today 1.4 million including East Jerusalem) from 19.7% to 23.5%. The state of Israel can digest an addition of 4% (out of 7.3 million) without a drastic harm to its Jewish character.

3. An independent administration for the Palestinian Arab population will be established that will include the residents of the contiguous Palestinian region. This contiguous region will feature transportation contiguity [connecting Palestinian territories via tunnels and bridges]. This area will include the large and medium cities, and the villages between them, from Jenin in the north to Hebron and Yatta in the south, in which approximately 900,000 Palestinians reside. The independent authority will be responsible for management and control over the Arab population in the areas of municipal services—education, health, community and economy. The plan for self-rule will allow them to develop and expand according to professional and fair plans. Area will be made available for devel-

opment, construction, commerce and industry, according to the natural growth needs of the population. All of this in accordance with the security needs of Israel and without harming the environment. Israel will keep for itself the right to intervene, if it concludes that the authority is being used for terrorist purposes. Security responsibility will rest completely in Israeli hands, and freedom of movement will be granted to the IDF in all areas of Judea and Samaria. Israel will keep responsibility over natural resources and infrastructure, such as water, roads, and state land. The independent authority will open, in stages, a [road] network linked to the Jordanian kingdom [that] will be built and developed through negotiations between the Palestinians and Jordanians. Israel, in its part, will work to create international pressure on Jordan to grant them Jordanian citizenship.

4. Jewish settlement in Judea and Samaria will be developed and expanded according to a plan that will be created for the purpose. . . .

The Palestinian Hashemite State

Today there is a Palestinian state headed by the Hashemites. Its territory is comprised of approximately 75% of the area of "Palestine," the mandatory Land of Israel that was recognized as the national home of the Jews. Around 80% of its residents are Palestinian.

The Arabs of Judea and Samaria (residents of the independent administration) will find their national expression as citizens of the Jordanian Palestinian state east of [the River] Jordan. In the permanent arrangement they will be citizens of Jordan, residents of Israel, living under their own independent administration.

The Gaza Pressure Cooker

In the West, the Gaza Strip is looking more like a fenced prison that is suffering from a population explosion, extraordinary levels of unemployment, neglect, and personal suffering. It is clear that this pressure cooker will explode sooner or later. A nonfunctioning Palestinian state, with its headquarters in Ramallah, will not bring a solution to the problem of this detached strip. Also the road to Hebron [safe passage] will not solve the problem. The Gaza Strip has to spread out and expand outside of its present boundaries. . . .

Egypt will be required to allocate areas in eastern Sinai, an area that is a natural extension of the Gaza Strip and that today is almost empty of residents, to the Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip. . . . The final status of the independent administration in the expanded Gaza Strip will be determined in negotiations between the Palestinians and Egypt.

Resettling Refugees

The areas of northern Sinai will be used as part of an international plan to rehabilitate Palestinian refugees interested in rehabilitation. The plan will encourage their voluntary transfer to this piece of land, to Jordan, or neighboring Arab states, with international assistance. ♦

AN UPDATE ON PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT, ACCESS AND TRADE IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA

The World Bank issued a report on August 15, 2006 that addressed issues related to Palestinian movement, trade, and access in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Excerpts from the Report follow:

Internal Movement within the West Bank

After a considerable reduction in numbers in 2004–5, there are now more than 540 checkpoints and fixed impediments compared to 376 in August 2005. The combined impact of these impediments, coupled with complex permit restrictions, has been a fragmentation of the socio-economic space in the West Bank into a northern, a central and a southern economic zone, bounded on three sides by the separation barrier and to the west by a Jordan Valley that is increasingly difficult for Palestinians to access. As a result of this fracturing process, transportation costs have increased by 6–7 times along some routes. Internal fragmentation also interferes with governance and the maintenance of public order, and disrupts access to education and health care. The Bank estimates that internal closures accounted for approximately half of the decline in real GDP (perhaps some 15 percent) observed between 2000 and 2002. The separation barrier adds a particular set of movement and access difficulties, and has been estimated by the Bank to cost the Palestinian economy some 2–3 percentage points of GDP per annum. . . .

Physical Impediments: Fixed Impediments, Flying Checkpoints, Restricted Roads

Many of the fixed obstacles block access to roads that are partially or wholly restricted to use by Israelis (in particular Israeli military and settlers); OCHA [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs] estimates that some 1,200 kilometers of West Bank roads are partially or wholly restricted in this manner. GOI clarified to the Bank in 2004 that the rationale for internal closure relates not only to the interdiction of terrorists intent on attacking Israel, but also to the protection of settlers and settler access; it follows, therefore, that a return to the pre-*intifada* status quo is unlikely without an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank settlements, or a sea-change in today's confrontational environment. GOI's proposed solution to restricted Palestinian mobility is to construct an alternative transportation system for Palestinians, and in 2004 donors were asked to finance 52 roads (totaling 500 kilometers) and 16 under/overpasses as a "continuous movement" package. Donors declined to do so, maintaining that Palestinians should be given access to the existing road system. The donor reaction was influenced by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory opinion of July 2004, which warned against providing assistance that would help maintain the settlements (which the ICJ deemed to be illegal under international law).

Roughly 55% of the West Bank is designated as Area C,

constraining Palestinian access and exploitation of the land. In December 2004 the Bank recommended that the four evacuated West Bank settlements be redesignated Area A, giving the PA [Palestinian Authority] full security and civilian control. As things stand, they remain as Area C, meaning that Palestinians are only able to enter them with permits/permission from COGAT [Office for the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories]. The PA has no more civil jurisdiction there than before, and Palestinians are unable to register land or acquire permits to build or initiate businesses there. While the evacuation of Ganim and Kaddim helped free up movement within the Jenin area, travel to Tulkarm in the north and to the central West Bank has become more difficult after the closure of Shave Shomron and Road 585. . . .

The Separation Barrier

Another estimated 61,000 Palestinians who are residents of East Jerusalem will be separated by the barrier from family and community networks, employment opportunities and municipal services. Furthermore, approximately 500,000 Palestinians live within 1 km of the barrier, and many of these people have been affected by a structure that cuts through properties, economic networks, service access routes and neighborhoods. The disruption to their lives is increased by imperfect access through the barrier. Only 27 of 65 gates are regularly accessible to Palestinians, and only to those who have obtained the requisite permits; a further 11 are accessible during certain seasons, and 27 are closed to Palestinians and are used by settlers and other Israelis. Such restrictions mean that Palestinians must routinely travel many kilometers out of their way to conduct the normal business of their lives. The case of Salfit, a commercial hub in the northern West Bank, is illustrative of these difficulties and the negative impact they have on Palestinian economic life. In the past, residents of the villages of Haris, Qira, Jam'in and Deir Istiya could reach Salfit by road in 5–10 minutes. In order to provide safe access for Israelis in and out of the Ariel settlement, the IDF has blocked the road and forbidden Palestinians from using it. To reach Salfit today, the villagers must head east on Route 505 (forbidden to Palestinians unless they have a permit, lack of which exposes them to being sent back or arrested or having their vehicles confiscated.) In general, permits for both persons and vehicles are difficult to obtain. They must then travel south to the entrance of Yasuf village. Here a roadblock obliges them to leave their vehicles, cross on foot, and pick up transport to Salfit. A five minute journey now takes up to an hour under the best of circumstances and requires at least two changes of vehicle and considerably higher costs. ♦

made an “own goal” against convergence.

Days later, more bad news, this time from his own foreign ministry. A top level inquiry reported that a unilateral withdrawal that left some settlements and continuing military control in the West Bank would not result in international recognition of the “end of occupation.” Not only did the idea lack an international political payoff, the report noted that IDF had no answer to the security threat posed by the short-range missiles of the variety now being fired at Israel from Gaza and Lebanon that could be expected to be deployed in areas of the West Bank evacuated by Israel.

Olmert had embraced a unilateral Israel evacuation of some settlements as a half-baked solution to myriad problems confronting Israel as a consequence of its determination to remain in control of the West Bank. Today a West Bank disengagement in the Gaza model has been ‘frozen’—a victim of its own shortcomings, instability in Gaza after disengagement and Hamas’ electoral victory, and the explosion of war on Israel’s northern frontier and the ensuing recriminations in Israel. Embroiled in a fight for his political life, Olmert has chosen to surrender the idea at the heart of his political program and Kadima’s *raison d’être*, leaving Israel without a declared strategy for preserving its settlement and security interests in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

“Evacuating settlements in the Gaza Strip was not a mistake,” observed Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres on September 8.

“They had no business being there. It is best that they have been removed, not least for the settlers themselves. But the unilateralism of the disengagement was a mistake. The concept of a unilateral withdrawal [on the West Bank] or realignment is dead politically, psychologically and practically. There will be no large-scale version of the disengagement in the West Bank; no massive evacuation of settlements.

“The concept of realignment is dead for three reasons. First, we are being fired upon from the Gaza Strip after withdrawing from there. Second, because of the schisms in the Palestinian political landscape, there is no one willing to take responsibility. The third reason is that Israel is a democracy and public opinion today rules out the idea of a unilateral withdrawal. That is why it will not happen; at least, not in the next five or ten years. Kadima has to create a new agenda; otherwise it will not survive.”

The Gaza disengagement marked the high point of an era that witnessed an absence of productive formal negotiations, but resulted in tangible territorial withdrawals by Israel and the *de facto* creation of a tenuous *modus vivendi* between Israel and its Islamist antagonists in Palestine and Lebanon. A broad application of this option to the West Bank is no longer in the cards. Prominently absent in the current, half-hearted Israeli effort to engage diplomatically is an intention to implement significant evacuations of West Bank territory regardless of who speaks for the Palestinians. Diplomacy that

lacks a territorial dimension and thus also a political horizon for ending occupation is a prescription for continuing conflict and instability.

“There are no talks with Hamas,” explained Peres, “nor are there expected to be any. . . . We will talk to the leader of the PLO, who is also the president of the Palestinian Authority, Abu Mazen. . . . We will talk about everything—from a permanent agreement to a new economic agenda.”

They will talk about everything, but agree about nothing.

In this new era, Israel is rejecting a significant settlement evacuation, even as an ambiguously declared intention, undermining the domestic political rationale for questioning the systemic bias in favor of settlement and the increasingly draconian restrictions placed upon Palestinians. The visible evidence of this retreat is all too apparent in the continuing expansion and consolidation of scores of settlements, including those Israel’s legal system has slated for destruction. In the map on page 3, the settlers’ propose that no less than 70 percent of the West Bank be annexed to Israel, an extraordinary testament to a settlement movement revitalized by the political and security failures of the Oslo decade.

In the security realm, the advocates of settlement have been emboldened by Olmert’s weakness and the prominence of short-range rockets in the Palestinian arsenal. “What happened to the idea that ‘in the missile era territory has no meaning’,” wrote settlement advocate Elyakim Haetzni sarcastically. “The north and the south are boiling. And if the center of the country has not yet descended into violence, this is thanks only to the Jewish presence in Samaria. ‘Settlements instead of Katyushas is a fact that cannot be denied. Olmert has promised to do in Samaria what he did in the Katif bloc, that is, to remove from their graves in Eli [soldiers] who fell in Lebanon. If this is the case, why do we need Shia suicide bombers?”

In an environment in which no political program dominates, the debate about settlements recedes and the expansionist dynamic created by the settlement enterprise itself grows even more significant. “In the occupied territories,” wrote Akiva Eldar in *Ha’aretz* on September 20, “it’s business as usual. A non-law abiding group in the settlements continues to cut down olive trees and confront Palestinian farmers. A report prepared by the organization Yesh Din . . . lists three serious incidents of felled olive trees in Salam (45 trees) and Sinjil (140 trees). As in all previous instances, no arrests were made. Another report by the organization’s volunteers tells of an illegal outpost whose residents mock the law and those in charge of enforcing it.” The Bush administration announced the extension of a program of loan guarantees to Israel without even a debate about conditioning the program on Israel’s performance on settlements. Tenders for the construction of almost 1,000 new housing units in settlements have also been announced. When Ma’ale Adumim mayor Benny Kashriel was asked whether such construction violates Israel’s pledges to the international community, he responded that “all Israel has to do is stand up straight and not bow to foreigners.” ♦

Population in Israel and West Bank Settlements*, 1995–2005

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population: Israel</i>	<i>Settler Population: West Bank</i>	<i>Population Growth: Israel (%)</i>	<i>Population Growth: Settlements (%)</i>
2005	6,987,000	246,100	1.80	5.10
2004	6,869,500	235,100	1.79	4.86
2003	6,748,400	224,200	1.77	4.41
2002	6,631,100	214,722	1.88	8.15
2001	6,508,800	198,535	2.19	2.88
2000	6,369,300	192,976	2.58	8.77
1999	6,209,100	177,411	2.78	8.64
1998	6,041,400	163,300	2.40	5.76
1997	5,900,000	154,400	2.47	8.20
1996	5,757,900	142,700	2.59	10.45
1995	5,612,300	129,200	N/A	N/A

*Excluding East Jerusalem

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel; "Localities and Populations, by District, Sub-district, Religion and Population Growth;" Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2005, table 2.7; "The Population of Israel, by Selected Years, Religion and Population Group."

“Frankly and clearly speaking, if the people of the region had found another means other than resistance to liberate their land, restore their rights and dignity, and get rid of occupation, they would have used it and would have been satisfied with it. Our resistance is a means and not an end in itself. However, all options and promises were given to our people, especially the Palestinian people, but these did not achieve anything for them. Therefore, they resorted to resistance. When our people resorted to resistance, they regained some of their land and began to march along the path of liberation and victory. It is a painful path, but pain, killing and destruction exist in both cases. This means if we abandon the resist-

ance and become satisfied with talk about the peace process, reconciliation and promises, death and destruction will not stop and settlement activity will increase.

“During the Oslo period, settlement activity redoubled. . . .

“When we forced Sharon to leave Gaza and dismantle the settlements, including Netzarim, which he used to consider like Tel Aviv, this was a bright spot on the road. Since 2000, Israel has been engaged in an open battle, for six years, with the Palestinian people. So far, it has not managed to inflict defeat.

Khaled Mish'al, head of Hamas political bureau,
on Al Jazeera, August 1, 2006

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