

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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CEASEFIRE OR TIME OUT: FIGHTING IS HALTED IN GAZA

Israelis and Palestinians have agreed to a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and called a tenuous halt to the most bloody struggle since Israel's military re-occupation of the entire West Bank in 2002. The main focus of destruction is the Gaza Strip, where the promise of Israel's evacuation of settlements in 2005 degenerated into the latest round of warfare.

Former Likud minister of defense Moshe Arens, a foe of the August 2005 withdrawal from Gaza, reflected the prevailing Israeli mood when he wrote that "the withdrawal only brought the Qassam rockets closer to some of Israel's population centers, and permitted large-scale arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip, creating a major security problem for Israel. Now the settlements are gone, the Qassam rockets are here on a daily basis, and the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] engages in large-scale incursions into Gaza and fires artillery into Gaza causing many civilian casualties. It isn't easy to choose the worst aspect of this horribly mistaken move."

The Israeli public's disenchantment with settlement withdrawal, and its indifference toward continuing occupation and the unprecedented siege on Palestinian society, was conceded by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert when, at the height of the summer 2006 war in Lebanon, he publicly repudiated his intention to continue implementing evacuation policies based on the model former prime minister Ariel Sharon had championed in Gaza.

Territory, more than anything else, remains the currency of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel's policy of establishing settlements is the most concrete demonstration of its intention to deny Palestinians the ability to establish the territorial basis for a sovereign state in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem.

The choices Israel faces as it contemplates the future of the occupied territories can be reduced to two stark and mutually exclusive alternatives—it can either stay in these areas as a belligerent occupier or it can withdraw to enable the Palestinians to establish a viable and contiguous state of their own. Sharon's "disengagement" from Gaza and Olmert's idea for "convergence," raised the possibility that Israel, by removing settlements, was indeed prepared to change the status quo in a manner that could favor Palestinian independence.

The withdrawal option remains open, as Olmert himself declared in a speech on November 27, but the passage of time, as the settlers understand better than most, reduces both its probability and territorial extent. Olmert,

along with many others in Israel, believes that another round of settlement evacuation in the West Bank remains an Israeli interest, even if he cannot muster the political will to undertake it.

It would be wrong to assume that Olmert's indecision has left a vacuum in Israeli policy. Neither the expansion of settlements nor the "outposts" of more recent vintage require explicit political direction from the top. The pattern and momentum of expansion and consolidation that has defined Israeli actions for almost 40 years, almost always at the Palestinians' expense, continues. So too does the process of physical separation and development between settlers and Palestinians. Parts of West Bank territory are no longer being nominally divided as they were during the Oslo era with the creation of Areas A, B, and C. Instead the West Bank is being physically divided by the creation of fenced "special security areas" around settlements, by the construction of the 720 km separation barrier, by the construction of almost entirely separate road networks for Palestinians and settlers, and by the institutionalization of Israel's system of 'closure' that restricts all Palestinian movement and pauperizes the Palestinian economy. In the year since the Gaza evacuation, the number of obstacles to Palestinian travel in the West Bank has increased by almost 50 percent, to 533. Indeed the only context in which the West Bank remains whole is in the security realm, where the IDF

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TO OUR READERS

As this *Report* goes to press, expectations are growing that the Iraq Study Group, chaired by James Baker and Lee Hamilton, will recommend restarting Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and new contacts with Iran and Syria to help rescue the U.S. from the Iraq quagmire and repair other broken policies in the Middle East.

U.S. support for Israel's policies of repression and settlement in the occupied territories, together with our destabilizing presence in Iraq, has created deep hostility throughout the Middle East. Exploitation of anti-Israel and anti-U.S. sentiment by Iranian President Ahmadinejad and Iran's controversial nuclear plans have increased regional volatility and provoked threats of war. The bloody stalemate with the Palestinians and Israel's continuing occupation of the Golan Heights abets more trouble making in Lebanon and Israel by Syria and its Hizbollah ally. And hostile relations between the U.S. and Iran and Syria, both targets of U.S. "regime change" rhetoric and Iraq's most important neighbors, thwarts cooperation in stabilizing Iraq in ways that

might ease an American military withdrawal.

A serious American initiative to restart Israeli-Palestinian peace talks aimed at removing settlements, ending Israel's occupation, and establishing a Palestinian state, would go far to restore U.S. credibility. If coupled with a renewed dialogue with Iran to identify common interests, including Iraq, Afghanistan, energy, security, and other incentives to forswear nuclear weapons, the payoff could be high. A parallel opening to Syria, including support for new peace talks with Israel over the Golan Heights and a new relationship with the U.S. in return for cooperation in Iraq and Lebanon could also help improve American fortunes in the region.

Bold new American initiatives like these would require skill and stamina, and success is hardly assured. But the status quo is very dangerous, and a change of course is needed.

Philip C. Wilcox, Jr.



Ha'aretz October 15, 2006

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GOLAN SHORT TAKES

Golan Local Council's Absorption Campaign Wraps Up

[Note: The cost of the campaign has been reported at \$250,000.]

The absorption campaign, which was published in *Yediot Aharonot* online, Army Radio, and the big newspaper publications, ends as planned ten days after it began. The campaign is viewed as a big success in light of the high number of people who approached the Office of Absorption for [settlements] in the Golan. "We are getting close to 1,000 requests for information" says David Spalman, the head of the absorption department in the local council. "This is a respectable amount relative to the short span of the [campaign]."

"The efficacy of the campaign is visible in the number of views on the Absorption Office's website," adds Spalman. "We broke our previous record on Friday, with 5,000 web users a day, and a total of 30,000 in two weeks. The numbers speak for themselves."

Golan Local Council Website, November 1, 2006

Israel Conquers the Golan Once Again — with Olives

Minister of Agriculture Shalom Simchon has ordered that thousands of dunams in the Golan Heights be planted with olive trees. The decision is part of a plan to preserve open spaces in the Golan and the Galilee areas. Minister Israel Katz pursued a similar policy in Judea and Samaria. The Katz plan, terminated by Simchon immediately after his departure, was to plant 72,000 trees on 2,500 dunams in the West Bank. The intent of the program was to preserve Jewish ownership of the areas and to prevent the future transfer of the areas to Palestinians. Simchon denies such an intention. "Olive trees can live under any government."

Yediot Aharonot, October 30, 2006

Golan Heights Land, Lifestyle Lure Settlers

On the edge of this growing Jewish settlement [Katzrin], which bills itself as "the city of water and wine," Moti Bar is building a stylish microbrewery and restaurant in a glass and stone shopping mall that opened a few months ago. His venture, all the way down to the imported copper brew tanks, is a bet that Israel will remain in the Golan Heights for years to come. The high-end beer and view of the Sea of Galilee are designed to appeal to Israeli yuppies, who are being encouraged more aggressively than ever to move to this rugged plateau seized from Syria in the 1967 Middle East war. Dozens of newly graded home sites stretch westward, and a large industrial park called Golantech is emerging a few miles from Bar's pub. "We're living our life as if we'll be here forever," said Bar, 42, who commutes from the nearby

community of Kanaf. "And I don't think there is any reason why we should leave." . . . The pace has picked up in recent years. Now, for the first time, the number of Jewish settlers in Golan may soon exceed the nearly 20,000 Arab residents whose families remained here after the war. The milestone may have already been passed, Arab leaders concede, with 400 Jewish families moving into Golan each year.

Scott Wilson, *Washington Post*, October 30, 2006

Golan Settlement Population, 1983–2004

Settlement	2004	2000	1995	1983
1 Afiq	235	219	237	182
2 Allone Habashan	251	192	146	49
3 Ani'Am	379	290	191	88
4 Avne Eitan	337	293	216	123
5 Bene Yehuda	971	917	716	433
6 El Rom	267	288	254	189
7 Eli Al (Eli Ad)	247	242	211	135
8 En Ziwan	214	233	205	199
9 Geshur	192	139	157	102
10 Giv'at Yo'av	398	366	329	299
11 Had Nes	439	365	255	N/A
12 Haspin	1,262	1,170	980	360
13 Kanaf	285	219	128	N/A
14 Katzrin	6,357	6,160	4,757	1,860
15 Kefar Haruv	239	241	253	153
16 Ma'ale Gamla	306	253	268	155
17 Merom Golan	411	384	356	429
18 Mevo Hamma	325	363	366	291
19 Mezar	44	55	67	22
20 Ne'ot Golan	291	219	207	144
21 Neve Ativ	167	156	148	102
22 Nov	484	413	353	269
23 Odem	93	93	99	52
24 Ortal	258	248	203	126
25 Qela	58	62	60	N/A
26 Qeshet	501	441	404	206
27 Qidmat Zevi	341	276	203	N/A
28 Ramat Magshimim	483	436	417	317
29 Ramot	472	476	396	331
30 Senir	384	280	260	178
31 Sha'al	230	216	168	71
32 Yonatan	344	250	170	104
Total	17,265	15,955	13,180	6,969

Source: Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics: "List of Localities: Their Population and Codes," 12.31.1999; "List of Localities: Their Population and Codes," 12.31.2004; "List of Localities: Geographic Characteristics, and Population, 1948–1995," 1995.

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

May 23 Israel's High Court of Justice decides in favor of the route of the separation barrier that passes between the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim and the Palestinian village of al-Azariya. The judges ruled that the route was determined by security considerations and imposes "proportionate" burdens on the village. (*Ma'ariv*)

May 24 *Ha'aretz* reports settlers moving into two apartments in the Matityahu East settlement despite an order by Israel's High Court of Justice against doing so.

May 26 *Kol Ha'Zeman* reports an Israeli government decision to authorize the expansion of the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Ramat Shlomo by approximately 2,000 units, adding to the 2,200 units housing 16,000 residents.

May 27 Palestinians stab and injure a settler from the Binyamin settlement. (OCHA)

May 30 Israel posts demolition orders for 18 buildings in the Ma'on Farm settlement outpost in the Hebron area. The outpost has been cited by Defense Minister Amir Peretz as a prime candidate for demolition because of settler violence against Palestinians in the area. (*Ha'aretz*)

The IDF demolishes two houses under construction in Bruqin, Salfit, for being built without permits. (OCHA)

May 31 Dozens of stone-throwing Israeli teens attack police officers and damage a police car in the settlement of Yitzhar as the officers inspect the area. (*Yediot Abaronot*)

A survey by the Geocartographia Institute of 240,000 settlers reveals that 41 percent of West Bank settlers would leave their homes peacefully if the government ordered them to evacuate, a 25 percent increase from last June. Sixty-four percent of secular settlers and 24 percent of religious Orthodox settlers would evacuate in exchange for compensation. (Reuters and *The Marker*)

May 31–June 5 Citing the lack of building permits, the IDF demolishes house extensions in the West Bank village of Umm Lasafa (Hebron), four barracks in al-Zubaydat village (Tubas), three barracks in the village of Frush Beit Dajan, one house and one barrack in al-Auja (Jericho), three houses and three barracks in al-Jiftlik, and two houses in Khirbet Atuf (Tubas). (OCHA)

June 1 *Yediot Abaronot* reports Israel's High Court of Justice ordering settlers who had moved into Beit Shapira in Hebron to evacuate the building. The group's purchasing documents were allegedly fraudulent. The court requested that no Palestinians or Israelis reside in the building and forwarded the claim to a civilian court.

Kol Ha'zeman reports that Yeshivat Beit Horot has placed a few caravans without proper permits in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of al-Tur, near the settlement of Ma'ale Zeitim.

Al-Quds al-Arabi reports on an ongoing attempt by settlers to spread herds of wild pigs in Palestinian agricultural fields across the West Bank in order to destroy them.

June 2 Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers fire tear gas and rubber bullets at demonstrators against the separation barrier in the West Bank village of Bil'in, injuring nine Palestinians. Ten protesters are beaten. (OCHA)

June 3 Sewage is dumped into Palestinian land from the Beitar Illit settlement. (OCHA)

June 5 The IDF amends a military order to requisition 864.5 dunums of land belonging to the Qalqilya area villages of Azzun, Habla, and Kafr Thulth to change the separation barrier route around the West Bank settlement of Alfe Menashe. (OCHA)

June 6 Israeli border police deny transport of a portable water tank to Palestinian families living close to the settlement of Negohot, leaving the families without an alternative water supply. (OCHA)

Thirty olive trees are destroyed by fire when IDF soldiers throw sound grenades toward olive farms in the area of Wadi al-Hussein, in the H2 area of Hebron. The Hebron municipality fire department was prevented from entering the area. (OCHA)

June 7 Palestinians throw stones at one settler and stab another near the West Bank settlement of Alon Shvut. (*Ha'aretz*)

A group of settlers from Bat Ayin assault an elderly Palestinian man while he works his land. Settlers assault a Palestinian woman from the H2 section of Hebron. (OCHA)

Palestinians stab a teenage settler near the settlement of Bat Ayin at the intersection on Gush Etzion road. (OCHA)

Arutz 7 reports that the Israeli National Union and National Religious Party parties have agreed not to vote against the government's budget in return for \$28 million in funding for religious and settlement causes.

Mideast Mirror reports the arrest of two men in the Ramallah area suspected of taking part in the 1996 murder of a woman and her son in the Beit El settlement.

June 7–13 Road 70, between Anata and al-Azariya, is under construction and when complete will allow north-south movement around Jerusalem for Palestinians. Another road for Palestinians only is planned to link Abu Dis to Road 1 by encircling Ma'ale Adumim. (OCHA)

The IDF places cement blocks on three agricultural roads north of Road 60 between the settlement of Elazar and Neve Daniel, denying access to Palestinian landowners. (OCHA)

June 8 *Ha'aretz* reports that Sweden has begun to label wine produced in the Golan Heights as originating in "Israel, Syrian occupied land."

The IDF begins installing a fence on the northern side of the settlement of Shavei Shomron. (OCHA)

June 9 The IDF fires tear gas and rubber bullets at Israeli, Palestinian, and international demonstrators protesting against the construction of the separation barrier in Bil'in. Seven Palestinians, one American journalist, and one Israeli police officer are injured. (OCHA)

June 10 The IDF begins leveling 115 dunams of land belonging to Palestinians from Sanniniya, near the Oranit settlement. To date, 15 dunams have been leveled and 55 olive trees uprooted. (OCHA)

June 11 The Israeli Land Administration publishes tenders for 54 housing units in the settlement of Elkana. (*Ha'aretz*)

June 12 Settlers from Elon Moreh cut down 45 olive trees belonging to Palestinians from Salem village. (OCHA)

June 13 Twenty settler girls between the ages of 12 and 18 are arrested in Hebron for throwing stones, bricks, and bottles at policemen and soldiers constructing a wall around a Palestinian house to protect the inhabitants from settler violence. (*Ha'aretz*)

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

June 14 A Palestinian man and his son are injured by stones and empty bottles thrown by a group of settlers from Tel Rumeida, Hebron. (OCHA)

June 15 Palestinians from Jenin attempt to kidnap two settler youths hitchhiking at the Rehalm junction. (*Yediot Abaronot*)

Ma'ariv reports a plan by the organization Settle and Develop the Jewish Quarter and the Jerusalem municipality to construct high-rise buildings atop a four-storey parking garage in the southeast section of the quarter.

Ma'ariv reports a plan to publish tenders for 2,500 dunams in the Golan Heights for building wineries and boutiques. Bidders on the tenders will have to prove that they have a million dollars to use towards the project.

June 16 *Ma'ariv* reports the spokesperson for the Jerusalem municipality as stating that in accordance with regulations, the buildings in the Jewish Quarter will be no higher than the walls of the Old City. His statement was in response to anger caused by the publication of plans for constructing high rises in the area.

Settlers set fire to 10 olive trees in the Tel Rumeida neighborhood of Hebron, and the IDF denies the Palestinian fire department entry. (OCHA)

June 17 A group of settlers enter the village of Burin, Nablus, and burn a vehicle. (OCHA)

June 19 Settlers assault a Palestinian man from the H2 section of Hebron. Three settlers are injured when their vehicle, traveling along Road 60, is fired upon near Sinjil, Ramallah. (OCHA)

June 20 The Israeli Ministry of Housing and Construction publishes 12 tenders for private construction in Ma'ale Adumim. (*Yediot Abaronot*)

June 21 The IDF demolishes a house in Shuafat, East Jerusalem, for being built without a permit. (OCHA)

Stonethrowing settlers from Kiryat Arba injure a Palestinian man from the H2 section of Hebron. Palestinian youths throw stones at a car near Hizma village, Jerusalem, injuring a female settler. (OCHA)

June 22 Settlers from Yitzhar enter the vil-

lage of Einabus, Nablus, burning and destroying three Palestinian vehicles. (OCHA)

Settlers from the Avigail outpost prevent Palestinian shepherds from um Faqara from accessing a water cistern close to the outpost. IDF troops assault a Palestinian man from Surif, Hebron, as he worked his land next to the separation barrier. (OCHA)

June 25 A teenage settler from Itamar is kidnapped and killed by the Popular Resistance Committees. His body is later found in Ramallah. (*Ha'aretz*)

Settlers from Yitzhar burn a grove of olive trees near Asira al-Qibliya. (OCHA)

June 26 The IDF attempts to prevent hundreds of Jewish worshipers from attending a celebration at Joseph's Tomb in Nablus. (*Ha'aretz*)

In response to a petition by five Palestinian villages, Israel's High Court of Justice rules that the Israeli government must ensure the safety of Palestinian farmers working their fields and prevent settlers from harming their land, property, or persons. The ruling stated, "A policy that prevents Palestinian residents from reaching lands belonging to them, in the name of their own defense, is like a policy forbidding someone from entering his home in order to protect him from a thief." (*Ha'aretz*)

Settlers from Outpost 851 attack soldiers protecting them and demand the removal of the Israeli flag from the site. The soldiers were ordered to defend the flag but the settlers succeeded in tearing it down. (*Yediot Abaronot*)

Settlers from Yitzhar burn a grove of olive trees near Burin village. Settlers set fire to 10 tons of straw belonging to Palestinian farmers from Qawawis. The IDF denies access to the site by the Palestinian fire department to the site. (OCHA)

Meni Mazuz, an Israeli government legal advisor, asks the High Court to cancel an agreement to transfer a Catholic church to a yeshiva, stating that it is unreasonable to hand over ownership of such a place to a body whose premise is advancing Jewish interests. (*Ma'ariv*)

June 27 Contractors constructing the separation barrier cut down 100 olive trees belonging to Palestinian farmers from the

town of Beit Jala to prepare for building the barrier. (OCHA)

June 28 Sheikh Taysir al-Tamimi, chief justice of Islamic courts, denounces anti-Islamic slogans placed on cars and shops by settlers from Jerusalem. (Palestine Information Center)

June 30 *Ha'aretz* reports the IDF issuing orders closing the main crossing between Jerusalem and Bethlehem to Palestinians who hold Israeli identity cards. Requests to enter Area A are handled on a case-by-case basis.

The YESHA Council announces that it has obtained funding to finance free transportation for settlers on buses in the West Bank because of security concerns. It also announces that the duties of private security officers in settlements are being expanded, in coordination with the IDF, to cover hitchhiking posts at settlement entrances. (*Ha'aretz*)

July 1 OCHA reports that the number of physical obstacles to Palestinian movement throughout the West Bank has grown to 526, an increase of 124 since December 2005.

July 5 The IDF issues a military order requisitioning 25 dunams of land at the entrance of the al-Tuwani village, south of the town of Yatta, Hebron. (OCHA)

July 6 The IDF demolishes a structure housing thirteen people in Qatanna, Jerusalem, for being built without a permit. (OCHA)

July 10 The IDF extends the closure of 650 Palestinian shops in the H2 section of Hebron, and renews the closure of 21 streets to Palestinian traffic, affecting an additional 350 shops. (OCHA)

July 12 The IDF issues a military order declaring Hebron's Tel Rumeida neighborhood a closed area, restricting entry to Israeli civilians, IDF soldiers and Israeli police, and persons with an IDF-issued permit. Palestinians living beyond the checkpoint for Ramat Yashai and Tel Rumeida settlements are allowed entry without permit. (OCHA)

July 13 Settlers from Yitzhar stone Palestinian vehicles passing on Road 60 near Nablus. (OCHA)

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SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

TIME LINE, continued from page 5

The YESHA Rabbis Council issues a statement calling for the formation of an emergency unity government that will “fight the real enemy, nullify demolition and expulsion orders for settlers, and release imprisoned Land of Israel activists.” (Arutz 7)

July 15 OCHA reports that the IDF had begun leveling 15 dunams of land belonging to the Palestinian village of Sanniriya, near the Oranit settlement, on June 10. Since June 15, the IDF had been leveling land north of the Shavei Shomron settlement to install a fence and a wall around the settlement.

July 16 Palestinians stone settler vehicles passing on Road 55 near Azzun, Qalqilya. (OCHA)

July 18 Palestinians hurl two Molotov cocktails toward a Jewish school in Ramat Shlomo, East Jerusalem. (Palestinian Information Center)

July 27 *Yediot Abaronot* reports the police raising the alert level on Road 443, between Jerusalem and Modi’in. Security forces had recently warned of possible kidnapping attempts.

July 31–August 8 The IDF imposes a total closure on the West Bank, prohibiting Palestinians with valid Israeli permits from entering Israel with few exceptions. (OCHA)

OCHA reports Israeli border police preventing all West Bank Palestinian ID card holders from entering the Old City for Friday prayers for the fourth consecutive week.

Six hundred olive trees are burned on the western side of the separation barrier in Farun, Tulkarem. (OCHA)

August 4 The IDF, together with settlers, close Road 55 between Nablus and Qalqilya for three hours. (OCHA)

A settler is injured by Palestinians throwing stones on Road 60 near Huwwara, Nablus. (OCHA)

August 5 A group of settlers from Beit Hadassa throw stones and injure three internationals accompanying two elderly Palestinian men in the H2 area of Hebron. (OCHA)

August 6 Settlers kill a Palestinian man and wound his son in a drive-by shooting in Qalqilya. (*Ha’aretz*)

August 16 Costa Rica moves its embassy from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. (*Yediot Abaronot*)

August 19 A Palestinian kills an Israeli soldier at the Beq’aot checkpoint in the Jordan Valley. (OCHA)

August 22 Khaled Abu Arafa, Muhammad Abu Tir, Muhammad Totah and Ahmed Atton, Hamas members of the Palestinian Legislative Council from Jerusalem, appeal Israeli deportation orders against them. (Palestinian Information Center)

August 25 El Salvador moves its embassy from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, ending the presence of all foreign embassies in the city. (*Yediot Abaronot*)

August 28 Two buildings are demolished in the West Bank settlement of Matityahu East. (Bil’in Web site)

August 31 Radio 2 reports apartment sales decreased by 45 percent in Jerusalem and 38 percent in the West Bank in the first half of 2006 compared with the same period in 2005.

September 1 Six hundred olive trees on 400 dunams of land belonging to the village of al-Nabi Elias, Qalqilya, are destroyed by fire on the western side of the barrier. Two hundred fifty olive trees covering 120 dunams of land belonging to the village of Hajja, Qalqilya, are also burned. (OCHA)

September 3 A settler bus is pelted with stones near Hebron. (*Ha’aretz*)

September 4 The Israeli Housing Ministry publishes a tender for 342 housing units in the settlement of Betar Illit and 348 units in Ma’ale Adumim. The new tenders bring the number of new settlement dwelling units tendered this year to 952. (*Ha’aretz*)

A settler is injured on Road 60 near Huwwara village, Nablus, when his vehicle is stoned. (OCHA)

The barrier around Rachel’s Tomb is completed and a new gate is installed. (OCHA)

September 5 A Palestinian stabs an Israeli worker in the Atarot industrial park near Jerusalem. (*Ha’aretz*)

September 11 Deputy prime minister Shimon Peres proposes to British prime minister Tony Blair that two settlements in the northern West Bank be evacuated. Although he did not specify the names of the two, Peres did mention that the settlers of Dotan and Hermesh want to leave. (*Ha’aretz*)

MK Effi Eitam of the National Religious Party proposes the expulsion of a majority of Palestinians from the West Bank and the exclusion of Arabs from Israeli politics. “It’s impossible with all those Arabs, and it’s impossible to give up the territory.” (*Ha’aretz*)

Ha’aretz reports that 90 percent of complaints filed by Palestinians in the West Bank against Israeli citizens for violent attacks have been closed without charges being filed.

Israel’s High Court of Justice dismisses seven petitions opposing the route of the separation barrier in northwest Jerusalem and rules that the IDF is allowed to erect the barrier there. The seven areas include 1,200 dunams of Palestinian land. (*Ha’aretz*)

September 16 A group of settlers from Susiya erect tents south of the settlement on Palestinian land. Similar tents previously had been erected in the area by settlers but later removed by the IDF. (OCHA)

September 17 Approximately 100 olive trees are burned north of Huwwara village, Nablus. Palestinian and Yitzhar settlement fire brigades work together to extinguish the fire.

Barrier construction resumes between the village of Dayr Qaddis and the Modi’in Ilit settlement. Construction had been on hold for a year and a half due to problems with contractors. (OCHA)

September 18 Palestinians set fire to scores of dunams of olive trees and grape vines belonging to the settlement of Yitzhar. (*Yediot Abaronot*)

September 19 The Defense Ministry issues demolition orders for 47 structures in West Bank settlement outposts and 39 structures erected by Palestinians without permits. (*Yediot Abaronot*)

SHORT TAKES

Minister of Housing and Construction Meir Shitreet: “If Kadima wants to stay the ruling party and not to turn into a small party, it must strive for peace. That is the main objective upon which it was founded. If you ask me if this is our agenda, the answer is no. The convergence is not a part of the Kadima platform. It is not written anywhere. It was the prime minister’s idea that he advocated during the election, and even back then I was opposed. In the meantime he changed his mind. What is this unilateral convergence after all? From where will we evacuate? The [Jordan] Valley? Show me one person that supports the convergence plan and that recommends we withdraw from the [Jordan] Valley. Did you see the convergence plan? Not I nor anyone else in Kadima saw it. If there is a plan, it should be laid out on the table. I am telling you that there never was a convergence plan. A political process is not done secretly.

“If the Palestinians had developed Gaza and kept it quiet, it would have been possible to do another round of disengagement. But in light of their unruly behavior, what is the logic behind giving them more areas and creating a threat to all Gush Dan [metropolitan Tel Aviv]? I don’t understand why this proposal was even raised in the first place. They said we would evacuate the settlers but keep the army [in the West Bank]. Does anyone really believe that you can uproot 60,000 to 80,000 people without a peace agreement? Only in their dreams. In contrast, if we finalize a peace accord, it will be easier. Even they understand that at the end of the road, Israel will not stay in every part of Judea and Samaria.

“I am certain that we can have peace with all the Arab states. If [Syrian president Bashar] Assad would change his stance and stop sponsoring terror, I am willing to negotiate with him on the Golan, like [former prime ministers] Rabin, Peres, Barak and Netanyahu did in the past. I am not sure that we cannot reach a peace agreement with Syria in Assad’s time.”

Akiva Eldar, *Ha’aretz*, October 19, 2006

Ron Shechner, Former Adviser to the Defense Minister, on Settlements and Outposts: Mofaz Did Not Move Without Permission from Sharon

“[Defense Minister Shaul] Mofaz never initiated anything,” Shechner said, in his first interview since resigning. “When we wanted to get anything done in the settlements and outposts, we went to [Prime Minister Ariel] Sharon’s aides. The ongoing decision not to evacuate outposts was made by Sharon, not Mofaz. The only evacuations that took place resulted from the intervention of the High Court of Justice.”

Shechner said that when he first entered office, the Defense Ministry prepared a detailed plan to complete the planning and authorization of 63 outposts. “But the political

leadership opted to do nothing. It was official policy just to leave matters undefined,” he said.

“That’s how communities in the Negev and Galilee, and also the West Bank settlements of Har Bracha, Dolev, Kfar Adumim, and Otniel were built. It was customary to build a settlement and start planning procedures at the same time.”

Shechner said that the government put people in an impossible situation, forcing them to build illegally. “They brought people to the settlements 20 and 25 years ago, and now they’re not allowing them to develop. What could people do? So they built illegally.”

“Everyone knows that most outposts could be authorized, as settlements were authorized after the fact, apart from a few outposts built on private Palestinian land. It’s a political issue,” he said.

“Sasson’s worldview is legitimate, but what she did was illegitimate. She used her position to advance her political agenda. The political leadership must say what it wants. But those who refuse to do anything should not expect people to strangle themselves and give in to an unclear policy,” he added.

Shechner said that the defense minister had to approve every construction plan in the West Bank no less than eight times before it was authorized. “Small things Mofaz authorized himself, but significant plans he always submitted to Sharon. He never signed without Sharon’s approval. Sharon’s support for the outposts was reflected, during the time I worked there, in doing nothing. This prevented evacuation, but did not advance construction or development.”

Shechner believes that the government is discriminating against the illegal outposts. “A stone’s throw away, illegal construction is rampant in Arab villages. They are building tens of thousands of buildings and rooms and nobody’s touching them,” he said.

Nadav Shargai, *Ha’aretz*, October 20, 2006

CEASEFIRE, *continued from page 1*

retains the freedom to operate anywhere and everywhere it chooses.

There is no room for complacency, or despair, in such an environment. Settlers may be the only party profiting from current circumstances, and they have more than doubled their ranks during the last decade by their insistent demand that their interests be considered paramount. For them, offense has always been the best defense. For everyone else—Israelis, Palestinians, and the international community alike—running in place is not an option, but rather a prescription for increasing settlement and the associated impoverishment of the entire Palestinian community, and yet more death and destruction. ◆

FM LIVNI FAVORS WEST BANK SETTLEMENT RETREAT

“In Israel’s political system there is no real difference today in general parameters of overall solution to the conflict with the Palestinians. Everyone more or less believes in the same solution. The argument is between the population of the faithful and the rest of the country. The former believe that time works in its favor, that every day that passes without a withdrawal is a victory. Its ideas are based on holding onto the territories and complicating our withdrawal from them. The [rest of the] Israeli public understands that time is working against us. There is an erosion of Israel’s image in the world and its standing as a nation-state.

“The future of the settlements is not a matter only for those who live there; it is the problem of all Israelis. It is the job of the elected government, and not the residents, to decide which settlements are evacuated.

“It is necessary to evacuate outposts yesterday, today and tomorrow. This is not a gift that I give to the Palestinians. It is true that the failure to evacuate outposts causes damages to Israel’s international standing, but this is not the principal problem. The main issue is that [their removal] is an Israeli interest. First, because the outposts were established in opposition to government policy and some were even established

in opposition to the policy of the Yesha Council. Second, these places will not remain in Israeli hands in the long term, and there is no point in continuing to preserve them.

“People tell me that there was a war and that now the public needs to rest. I do not belittle the public’s right to rest, but rest cannot become policy. Quiet that is not based genuine social understanding will explode in the end.

“The word ‘convergence’ does not appear in Kadima’s political platform, which I wrote and with which we went to elections. The word ‘convergence’ is an empty vessel, a headline without content. It’s not my baby. I didn’t celebrate when it was born and I am not a party to the celebrations of its death.

“Today it is impossible to reach an end of the conflict—not with the current Palestinian leadership. In the short term I want to reduce Israel’s responsibility for what is called the occupation. I want to open Gaza to the world, subject to security considerations. I want to withdraw maximum military forces from the territories [West Bank].”

Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, in *Ma’ariv*,
“Her Agenda,” September 29, 2006

Israel does not want peace nor does it want stability to prevail in this region. President Arafat offered much for peace. He responded to and dealt with the projects of a settlement in the region but the result was siege, poisoning, and murder. This is the proof that the problem does not lie with the Palestinian people, nor with the Palestinian government, or the Palestinian peoples’ factions. The problem is that there is an abhorrent Israeli settler project aimed at occupying the land and evicting the Palestinian people from their land. The problem is not whether or not the Palestinian side accepts the Arab initiative. It is not between the Palestinian government and the Arab brothers. The problem is that of the occupation that does not want to deal with any of the projects that might restore any form of Palestinian rights. Therefore we reiterate the need to be wary of dealing with settler projects or with the Israeli wishes of imposing its vision on the nature of a solution of the Palestinian issue. . . . We must be cohesive and united in our choice, the choice of adherence to rights and constant demands, and to our resistance to the Israeli occupation until this occupation ends and our sacred rights are restored.

Palestinian Prime Minister Isma’il Haniyah on the anniversary of Yasser Arafat’s death, Al Jazeera, November 11, 2006

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