

# REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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## LIVING WITHOUT A SOLUTION— FORTY YEARS OF OCCUPATION AND SETTLEMENT

The fortieth anniversary of Israel's occupation of the territories conquered in June, 1967 is an opportunity for reflection and taking stock. The Jewish state has ruled the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights for forty of the almost sixty years of its modern existence. Occupation long ago became the rule, rather than the exception, of Israel's short, tumultuous history. Israelis, Palestinians, and Syrians who have raised three generations since June 1967, and who believe that Israel's settlement policies—the key to Israel's commanding presence in these territories—are wrong and must end face a difficult and unequal battle. An accident of history may have placed Israel in control of these territories and the destiny of those residing there. But the many years since that fateful June 1967 have produced a new chapter in the confrontation between Arab and Jew. After four decades the occupation has a history of its own. Indeed the occupation is *history*—a dynamic confrontation

between Israel and Palestine; an ever-evolving contest among Palestinians between the forces of nationalism and those of Return; and the story of the debate within Israel, first and foremost over the destiny of Zionism and Jewish people, but also over the fate of Palestine and *its* people as well.

The players in this fateful drama are not fixed, and the story is not pre-determined. But an understanding of the present and a sober appreciation of the prospects for the future is best served by recognizing the interactions of often unequal, contending forces—Israel's Defense Forces (IDF), the settlement movement, its opponents, and the Palestinian political elite and public, the international community—during these last decades.

### Settlement as History— The Past as Future

The story of the settlement of Sebastia/Elon Moreh near Nablus in 1976 should be recalled when considering the recent, similar campaign by settlers to re-settle Homesh, evacuated in 2005 as part of Israel's disengagement plan from the northern West Bank. The declarations and remonstrations of Israel's leadership when settlers squatted in Hebron in 1979 also offer an instructive perspective on the effectiveness of official opposition to the wildcat appearance in March 2007 of some of the very same squatters, or their children, in an unfinished building site some few hundred meters distant from the 1979

incident. The practical significance of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's rhetorical and diplomatic commitments to evacuate new settlement "outposts" confronts an entrenched, decades-long effort to "grab and settle." The transition over the decades of some settlements such as Ma'ale Adumim and Shilo, each born in sin, one as an "illegal" outpost, the other as an "archeological dig," offers important insights into the future of contemporary settlement outposts at Migron and Amona. Israel's use of legalisms as an instrument to consolidate settlement and deprive Palestinians of land and property—the essential building blocs of sovereignty and independence—is as old as the occupation itself. In short, when looking to the future of Israel's occupation, first look to the past.

### To Grab and To Settle— Then and Now

In June 1977, there were 10,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank apart from East Jerusalem, almost one half of them residing in Kiryat Arba near Hebron. A new Likud government, the first in Israel's history, had recently assumed power. Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, the architect of Israel's intention to remain forever in the West Bank and Gaza strip, spoke at a Tel Aviv conference commemorating ten years of Israeli rule in what were then referred to as the "administered territo-

West Bank population 2006:

268,400

West Bank settlements: 121

West Bank unauthorized

outposts: 105 (population: 2,000)

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## TO OUR READERS

For sixteen years, the *Settlement Report* has published a unique record of the advance of the settlement project in the occupied territories since Israel's conquest in the 1967 war. There were brief periods when it seemed that settlement might be halted or reversed, but new "facts on the ground"—settlements, outposts, settler roads, land seizures and closures, and the separation barrier—have proceeded inexorably and are now accelerating in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The massive transformation of these areas to support settlement and the single-minded power and determination behind this project are staggering to first-time visitors to this issue.

This *Settlement Report* addresses how generations of Israeli leaders have either supported or acquiesced in and later authorized, new settlements, even those illegal under Israeli laws. (All are illegal under international law.) The clear lesson is that settlers and their right-wing supporters in Israel have always controlled the settle-

ment agenda and do so today, notwithstanding that most Israelis and the entire international community oppose settlements as incompatible with a two-state peace and Israel's founding framework as a liberal, Jewish, democratic state. The reasons for this anomaly lie in Israel's dysfunctional political system, which exaggerates the power of extremist minorities, and in the careless indulgence of the United States and the international community.

Many observers, viewing facts and history, have concluded that settlements are now "irreversible" and that one state now exists, *de facto*, under Israeli control in Israel and in the occupied territories. This is, indeed, today's reality, but the defeat of Israeli ideals and Palestinian freedom are not predetermined. Settlements can be evacuated, and peace advanced, but not without strong and wise diplomatic intervention, especially from Washington.



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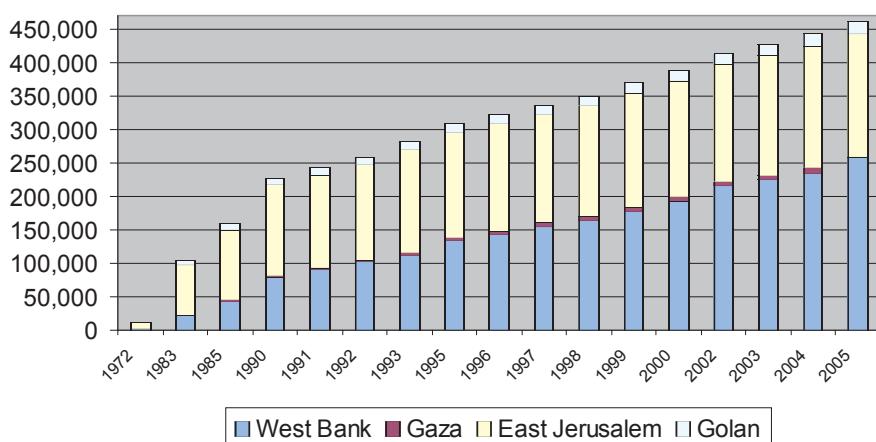
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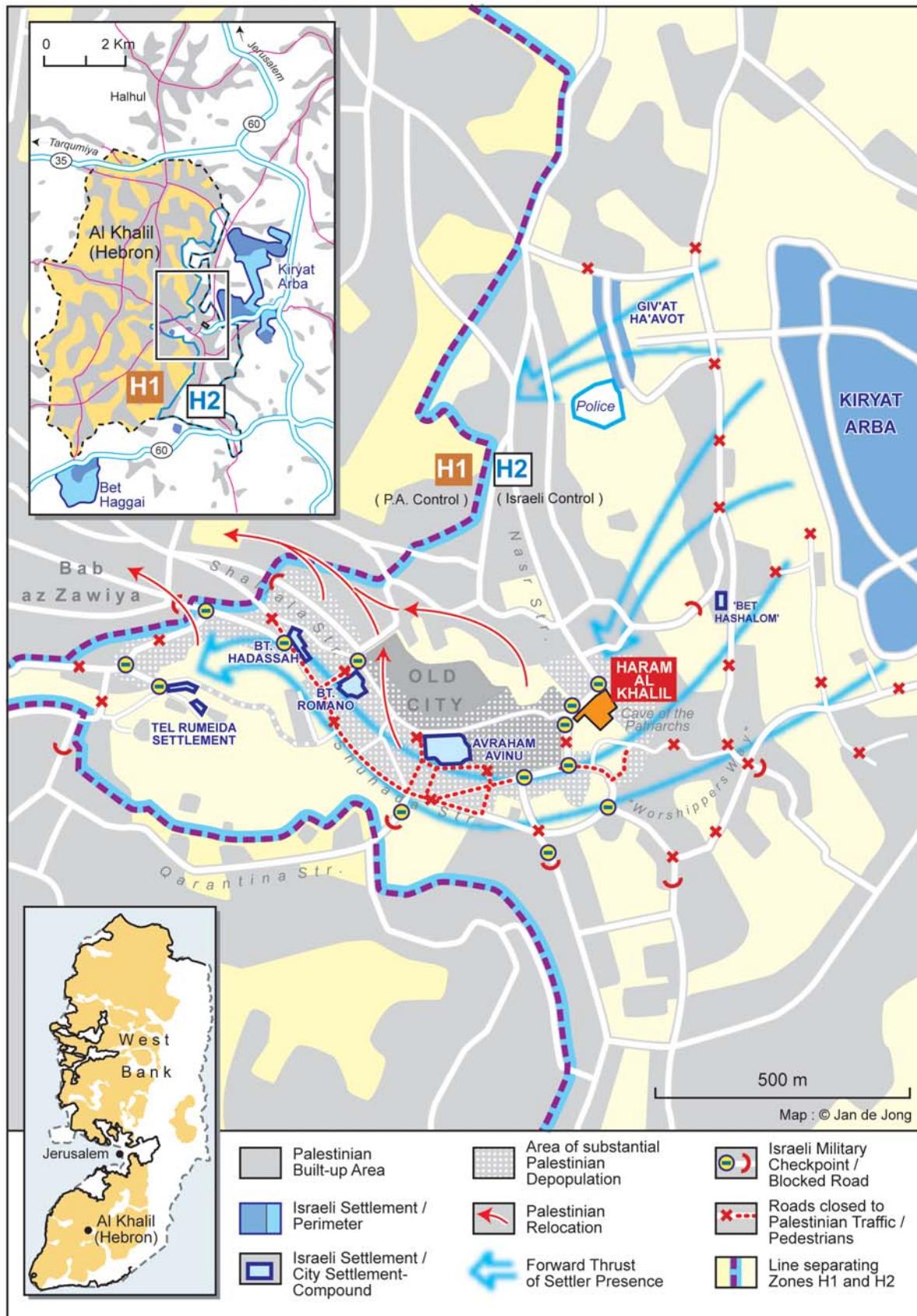
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### Settler Population, 1972-2005



**Sources:** Statistical Abstract of Israel, table 2.7, Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, 1992–2006. "The City in Numbers 2007," Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies. Statistical Yearbook of Jerusalem, table C13, Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 1991–2004. *Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories*, Foundation for Middle East Peace, [www.fmep.org](http://www.fmep.org). "List of Locals: Selected years 1948–1995," CBS, 1995. "List of Localities, Population and Symbols," CBS, 1999–2005.

## Hebron - Depopulation and Separation , May 2007



ries." Dayan warned that there was no territorial solution for the occupied rump of Palestine—the West Bank.

"We are living in peace. There is less violence in the territories than in Tel Aviv. Ten years of negotiations with Jordan, including direct negotiations, went nowhere. Why? Because there wasn't a territorial line dividing the West Bank acceptable to the parties. The Allon Plan makes no sense to the Arabs! The question is not, 'What is the solution?' but 'How do we live without a solution.'"

Living without a solution, then as now, was understood by Israel as the key to maximizing the benefits of conquest while minimizing the burdens and dangers of retreat or formal annexation. This commitment to the status quo, however, disguised a program of expansion that generations of Israeli leaders supported as enabling, through Israeli settlement, the dynamic transformation of the territories and the expansion of effective Israeli sovereignty to the Jordan River.

Anwar Nusseibeh, a Jerusalemite and former Jordanian defense minister, criticized Dayan's support for the status quo. "Mutual recognition" by a process of "compromise and consensus" was "the first step in the process of conciliation." Israel's policy of "creating facts," he charged, "implied a policy of dictating terms." He saw Israeli policy as "an attempt to empty the West Bank of its political content before emptying it of Arabs. How can Israel preserve its demographic majority and its security?" he asked. "How can it maintain the occupation and accomplish all this within a democracy?"

The newly elected prime minister, Menachem Begin, was not alone among Israel's leaders in remaining deaf to such concerns, especially when they were expressed by Palestinians. Begin proclaimed the centrality of settlement—anywhere and everywhere the IDF ruled. Foremost among Begin's settlement priorities was the "illegal" settlement of Sebastia/Elon Moreh (today renamed Kedumim) near Nablus. Settlers belonging to the newly formed Bloc of the Faithful—Gush Emunim—had been rebuffed by the IDF in numerous attempts to settle the site permanently before they managed to win agreement to remain. Their effort enjoyed the support of then Defense Minister Shimon Peres. Despite the opposition of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, settlers continued to squat at the encampment. They were there when Rabin was defeated in May 1977, inaugurating a decade of intensive settlement and land confiscation.

Within days of his startling election, Begin journeyed to Elon Moreh to give his blessing to the settlement. "Since May of this year," he thundered, "the name of these areas has been changed from occupied to liberated territories. This is liberated Israeli land, and we call on young volunteers in the country and the diaspora to come and settle here." One day after his



return from Washington, Begin's cabinet sanctioned the renegade outposts of Elon Moreh, Ofra, and Ma'ale Adumim.

"The mission of Gush Emunim now," declared one of its leaders, "is to grab and settle." In 1996 Ariel Sharon, using these exact words, urged the children of Gush Emunim to emulate their parents. Since then, the heirs of Gush Emunim, as always with official connivance, have established more than one hundred of these "unauthorized outposts."

The continuing diplomatic vacuum, the weakness of the government of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, and the end of its sponsorship of the ambiguous convergence idea, and the perceived failure of disengagement have removed from Israel's agenda evacuation of even those outposts that the Sharon and Olmert governments recognize as illegal and which they promised (the United States) to evacuate. Olmert has linked Israeli action on today's outposts—the modern day Shilos, Sebastias, Ofras, and Ma'ale Adumims—to "part of a process in which the Palestinians fulfill their commitments." As *Ha'aretz's* Aluf Benn and Yossi Verter noted, "Olmert has changed the policy of his predecessor, who demanded that the outpost issue be addressed separately from the dialogue with the Palestinians, and who represented the evacuation of outposts as a personal promise by him to the president of the United States. Olmert prefers to link the evacuation of outposts to the Palestinians' fight against terror. From this it is possible to understand that the settlers will remain on the ground for a long time to come."

### Homesh First

Pro-settlement forces waged a defensive, internally divisive, and unsuccessful campaign against Israel's evacuation of the Gaza Strip in 2005. In February 2006, they failed to prevent the destruction of a few permanent dwellings in the Amona settlement next to Ofra. Now they are on the offensive, aiming to take command of the settlement agenda and to bury the idea of withdrawal from the West Bank.

The re-settlement of Homesh, which in September 2005 was evacuated along with three other small settlements in the northern West Bank, is in the forefront of this effort to recapture "the spirit of Sebastia."

"The settlers who moved into the house in Hebron and those who plan to march on Homesh today," wrote Elyakim Ha'etzni, a veteran of the settlement movement, "are seeking to correct the mistaken belief that the Israeli regime can survive the expulsion of 300,000 people as easily as it survived the expulsion of 8,000. . . . We must go back to the first grade of pioneering Zionism, on which all of this was built."

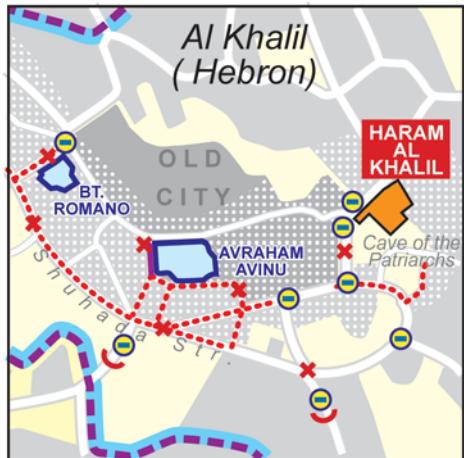
Organizers from the five extra-parliamentary groups leading the serial campaign to return settlers to Homesh have

made no effort to conceal their intent “to repair the mistake of disengagement in the spirit of Sebastia.” Their effort, like the one decades ago at Sebastia and at countless other locations since, has been nothing if not methodical. On December 18, 2006, a dozen settlers who had been evacuated from the Homesh settlement in September 2005 returned to the site for Hanukkah. In March 2007, the IDF and police, after initially noting their opposition and invoking the law prohibiting Israeli civilian access to their area, took no action to prevent settlers from reaching the area. When settlers announced that they planned to re-occupy the site permanently, Minister of Defense Amir Peretz himself declared that, “there will be no taking over any part of the Homesh area. This must be clear.” Olmert, however, benignly described the event as a “visit,” notwithstanding the fact that organizers made no secret of the existence of “a nucleus of 30 families who intend to live there.” A “security understanding” between Peretz, the IDF, and the settlers established “rules of the game” that enabled 3,000 to march to the settlement with enough generators, tents, water, and food to enable hundreds to stay for the next two nights before the more than 1,000 police and soldiers ordered to protect them put those resisting passively on buses. On April 20, the IDF approved another march to the site, this time on the day of Israel’s independence. “The Israeli public knows who is harming the state and who is trying to save it,” declared Boaz Ha’etzni, son of Elyakim Haetzni and a principal organizer of the Homesh campaign.

#### **Hebron is Ours—Arabs Out!”**

If the campaign to re-settle Homesh is meant to evoke the “golden era” of pioneering settlement, the battle over property in Hebron betrays a grimmer reality. Only 500 Israelis live in Hebron. Most of them are young children and teenagers, many the offspring of what even Prime Minister Begin described at the time as the “invaders” (see page 7) of 1979. Yet this small vanguard has, during the last 40 years, transformed the look and life of the city. Their intent has always been to make life in the city unbearable for its Arab residents, and to transform Hebron, revered as site of the tomb of Abraham and until a massacre by Palestinians in 1929, home to a small Jewish community, into a Jewish city. Hebron is the ugly, fanatical, and hateful face of Israel’s settlement enterprise, and those settlers who rule it make no apologies for their dominion.

Recent video recordings have captured the complicity of the IDF in this ongoing campaign. One video, according to a March 3 report on YNET, “reportedly shows girls from Hebron pelting eggs at Palestinians in the presence of an IDF soldier and Border Police officers who make no move to stop



them.” Another dramatic video, now posted on YouTube, shows a young woman, Ifat Elkobi, taunting a young member of the Abu Aisha family (“You are a whore,” she says repeatedly) who lives in what can only be called a cage built around her house to protect the family from settlers.

On March 19, 2007, settlers, fearing that Palestinians would soon preempt them, moved into an unfinished multi-story building strategically located on a road linking Kiryat Arba to the settlement in the city center. Although it lacked windows, plumbing, interior walls, and electricity, 30

families and 14 individuals moved into the 3500 sq.km structure that settlers christened Bet HaShalom, originally constructed as a commercial mall.

The IDF, which is tasked with insuring the “normal life” of settlers, refused to oppose the operation on security grounds. The attorney general announced that no action should be taken until an examination of the settlers’ ownership claims.

Expressions of political support for the operation were not long in coming. “If the building in Hebron was acquired legally,” Olmert is reported to have said, “I won’t let [Defense Minister] Peretz evacuate it.” Others were more emphatic. The *Jerusalem Post* reported suggestions that “the prime minister would prefer to stall on the issue until after the May 28 Labor primary when he is expected to have an easier defense minister with whom to work.” Olmert’s liaison to the settlers, Otniel Schneller, himself a settler, visited the building within hours of the settlers’ arrival to lend his support. “In my understanding, this is part of Kadima’s worldview.”

Settlers, not for the first time in their efforts to seize real estate in the city, claim to have purchased the property for \$700,000. A Palestinian owner disputes this, but settlers do not contest the fact that their entry was not sanctioned as required by Israel. On April 5, Peretz ordered the IDF to evacuate the settlers from the building, but no date was specified. Deputy Defense Minister Efraim Sneh said that the order would be carried out within days. The settlers have now resided in the building for more than a month, complicating the complex legal and bureaucratic effort to remove them.

Yehuda Litani, a veteran Israeli journalist who was one of the pioneers in reporting about Israeli policy in the territories wrote that “only the defense minister has the right to approve the purchase—while he has not yet approved it, he hasn’t taken any measures against the settlers, who broke into the building in a military-style operation. Amir Peretz is scared to upset the settlers, as were his predecessors from Moshe Dayan to Shaul Mofaz. Security forces are announcing that the settlers will not be removed until examination of the ownership documents. There’s time in Hebron; the wheels of justice turn very slowly, if at all.” ♦

## SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

**January 29** *Ha'aretz* reports on recent construction at four of six outposts that had received evacuation orders but whose evacuation was delayed by the state.

**January 30** A Palestinian dwelling in al-Tur, Jerusalem, another in Beit Hanina, and four others in Azariyya, are demolished for being built without a permit. (OCHA)

**January 31** *Ha'aretz* reports the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) commander Yair Naveh for the West Bank signing orders meant to clamp down on unauthorized settlements, including an amendment of Jordanian law forbidding construction without permit in the West Bank, an amendment providing a procedure for judicial demolition orders, and an amendment forbidding the occupation of a structure in the West Bank without obtaining permits from all of the authorities concerned, including the electricity company and fire department.

**February 4** Israeli and Palestinian farmers plant approximately 1,200 olive trees near the Palestinian village of Salim, Nablus, to replace trees uprooted by settlers. (*Ha'aretz*)

Citing poor timing, Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert rejects a proposal by Defense Minister Amir Peretz to evacuate 3 to 6 unauthorized West Bank outposts. (*Ha'aretz*)

**February 5** *Ha'aretz* reports the unlicensed construction by Israeli archeologists of a tunnel under Jerusalem's City of David. No plan exists for developing the site by the Israel Nature and National Parks Protection Authority, which administers the area.

**February 6** The Israeli government begins the re-construction of an entrance to the Haram al-Sharif at the al-Mughrabi Gate road. (*Ha'aretz*)

**February 9** *Yediot Aharonot* reports that the Amana settlement movement has begun a campaign to market settlement housing to American Jews for rental to Israeli settlers. Houses will be sold for as little as \$93,000 and will be rented out at a minimum of \$250 a month.

**February 12** Jerusalem mayor Uri Lupolianski postpones construction of the walkway at the Mugrabi Gate following an outcry from the Muslim community in Israel and elsewhere in the Middle East. (*Ha'aretz*)

Prime Minister Olmert tells the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that

peace with Syria would mean giving up the Golan Heights. (*Ha'aretz*)

**February 13** With the support of soldiers, a group of settlers from Halamish destroy crops and steal 20 olive trees from the village of Deir Nidham, Ramallah. (Ma'an News)

**February 14** *Ha'aretz* reports that as of February 1, 2007, Israelis entering the Gaza Strip must present a passport at the Erez crossing.

*Ha'aretz* reports on a letter signed by 35 Knesset members, including 3 from Kadima, to IDF commander Naveh, in which they call on him to renew organized visits for Israeli citizens to Joseph's Tomb in Nablus.

**February 18** *Ha'aretz* reports a Jerusalem Court of Municipal Affairs ruling against eight Jewish families living in a seven-story building in Silwan, East Jerusalem, built by the Ateret Cohanim association. The court held that all the residents must evacuate within two months and the building sealed with concrete blocks. Each defendant was ordered to pay a fine of \$900. No construction permit was ever issued for the building. The Jewish families moved in, under police guard, in April 2004, after the Palestinian family that had been living there was evicted. Each family paid \$250 per month in rent to the Committee for the Renewal of Jewish Settlement in Silwan.

**February 21** Peace Now reports that approximately 2,000 settlers live at 102 outposts in the West Bank. No new outposts were established in 2006, and 9 buildings were demolished in one outpost (Amona). Building in the existing outposts continued at a pace similar to that of 2005. There were 251 changes of various kinds, including the addition of 90 caravans, construction, and road paving in 2006. In sum, 127 caravans were added and 37 removed. Permanent construction was carried out in 30 outposts and road paving in 7. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies announces that by 2020, Jerusalem will be 40 percent Palestinian and 60 percent Jewish, compared to 34 percent Palestinian and 66 percent Jewish today. (*Ma'ariv*)

The IDF continues to close the gate at the northern entrance of Kafr al-Dik, forcing Palestinians to make a detour of 30 minutes to reach the village and disconnecting the villages of al-Zawai, Rafat, and Deir Ballout

from Salfit city. The IDF reportedly closed the agricultural gates of the separation barrier near Masha and al-Zawiya, preventing farmers from accessing their lands. (OCHA)

**February 23** The IDF begins operation of the Tunnel terminal. The only access point for Palestinian traffic in and out of Bethlehem is al-Nashash at the southern end of the city. Traveling from Beit Jala to Road 60 south is no longer possible. (OCHA)

**February 24** An Israel's High Court of Justice ruling approves IDF security fences planned near the West Bank settlements of Avnei Hefetz and Enav, although they annex private Palestinian agricultural land. In the settlement of Avnei Hefetz, the fence was placed 1.5 kilometers away from the settlement's dwellings, absorbing an outpost to the east. (*Ha'aretz*)

**February 25** Settlers from the Avigail outpost, south of Yatta, Hebron, uproot 30 trees belonging to Palestinian farmers from Muntiqat Shi'b al-Butum. Settlers from Bracha outpost prevent Palestinian farmers from the village of Burin from reaching their land near the settlement. (OCHA)

**February 26** Palestinians stab to death a 43-year-old settler from Bat Ayin. Shaul Goldstein, head of the Etzion bloc regional council, attacks the government policy of removing checkpoints in the West Bank after the murder. (OCHA, Arutz 7)

The IDF demolishes six houses under construction without permits in Farun village, Tulkarem, near the separation barrier. (OCHA)

**February 27** IDF soldiers break the arm of an 18-year-old Palestinian man from the village of Umm Salamona, Bethlehem, as he protests against construction of the separation barrier on the village's lands. (OCHA)

The IDF issues a requisition order to confiscate 198.4 dunums belonging to residents of Ya'bad, Zabda, and Bartaa to expand Road 585. (OCHA)

**February 28** *Ha'aretz* reports on a plan to build an ultra-Orthodox neighborhood of 11,000 units at the site of the closed East Jerusalem airport at Atarot. The construction of a tunnel connecting the new settlement to Road 60 has also been proposed.

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## THE OCCUPATION AS HISTORY—LESSONS FROM THE CONQUEST OF HEBRON

### The Early Years

The most popular of Labor's settlements was established in April 1968, without government authorization. On 10 April about eight religious Jews rented a hotel in Hebron to celebrate Passover. After the holiday ended, some of them remained and declared their intention to settle permanently in the Palestinian city of 40,000. The group, led by Rabbi Moshe Levinger, had an unambiguous agenda: the creation of a Jewish majority in Hebron and the restoration of Jewish rights at the Cave of the Machpela, the site of the Tomb of the Patriarchs, long used by Muslims as a mosque. They received support from an extra-parliamentary group calling itself the Whole Land of Israel Movement, composed of noted right-wing ideologues (such as Israel Eldad) and Labor figures (such as Nathan Alderman, Avraham Yoffee, and Moshe Shamir) who supported incorporating into the state the areas comprising the historic Land of Israel, and the settlement of 40,000 Jews in Hebron. [Deputy Prime Minister] Yigal Allon supplied the squatters with three Uzi machine guns. In response to protests from the Hebron Municipal Council, which warned that Jewish settlement in the city might exacerbate relations between the local population and the military government, Defense Minister [Moshe] Dayan declared that the settlers had violated no laws. On 19 May 1968 the settlers moved from the hotel to the compound of the military government. By late July, separate housing was being built for them within the compound. In August, the government approved applications of additional settlers to move to Hebron, and by September, plans were being readied for the construction of Kiryat Arba, an urban settlement on 1,200 confiscated dunams that had been owned and cultivated by Hebron residents.

By 1975, Kiryat Arba had grown from its original population of fifteen, to over 1,200 Jewish residents, who represented 44 percent of Israel's West Bank settlement population (excluding annexed areas of Jerusalem). . . .

### The Conquest of Hebron

The signing of the Israeli-Egyptian treaty on 25 March 1979 . . . trigger[ed] several months of strikes and disruptions throughout the West Bank and Gaza. . . .

The "unauthorized" occupation of a building in the center of Hebron was announced in late April 1979 by settlers from Kiryat Arba. Some fifty Jewish women and young children under the leadership of Rabbi Moshe Levinger's wife broke into a building on the perimeter of the Arab souk. It is known to the Jews as Beit Hadassah (Hadassah House) because of its use as a communal medical center until Jews fled Hebron after the massacre of 1929. The building, which is set back from the street by a large iron fence and built into one of the hills traversing the city, is called Beit Deboya (Deboya House) by the Palestinians.

For one month after the building's occupation, the government [of Likud prime minister Menachem Begin] did not discuss the issue, perhaps in the hope that if ignored, the new Hebron squatters would simply disappear. As in the case of Elon Moreh, the balance of power in the cabinet favored the zealots. Orders were quietly passed to the military governor of Hebron to assist the defiant women, who claimed Hebron as Jewish, and who made no secret of their desire to be rid of the city's Arabs. Army guards were posted at the building's entrance, and supplies of food and water were permitted inside. Six hundred residents of nearby Kiryat Arba, from whose ranks the women came, were allowed on 19 May to rally outside the building in support of the squatters. One week later, 500 women, led by MK Geula Cohen made a similar demonstration of solidarity. By late May, the IDF was permitting women, some of them pregnant, to leave the building for medical treatment—and then to return.

While the IDF was being instructed to intensify its cooperation with the squatters, the prime minister attacked the takeover in the sharpest of words:

In Israel houses are not seized, not in Hebron and not in Tel Aviv. When a house is seized, an order to vacate is issued. I do not want to use force, and an order to this effect was given to the security forces. . . . I demanded that the people vacate the building. No one will dictate to the government how, where and when to settle.

But although Begin called the "invaders" (*polshim* in Hebrew) "arrogant and neurotic," he nevertheless presided over the legitimization of their actions. [Defense Minister Ezer Weizman, too, declared in the Knesset on 5 May that the settlers would be removed, but no such action was undertaken. In late June, [Minister of Agriculture Ariel] Sharon visited Hebron to command the squatters. "Because of their stubbornness and perseverance," he declared, "the Jewish community will be renewed in Hebron."

A *Ha'aretz* editorial, noting the contradictory messages of Begin and Sharon, lamented:

Those who were denounced a short while ago by the prime minister now are being praised publicly for their stubbornness—that is, for breaking the law and for provocation against the government—by a senior government minister who is justly thought of as the real ruler of the territories.

In the wake of Sharon's visit, all restrictions were lifted on those seeking to enter or leave Beit Hadassah, "an important step forward in establishing a renewed Jewish community in the heart of Hebron."

Excerpted from Geoffrey Aronson, *Israel, Palestinians and the Intifada—Creating Facts in the West Bank*, London, Kegan Paul International, 1990.

## MAYOR OF AL-BIRAH MOBILIZES AGAINST LAND CONFISCATIONS

"The al-Birah municipality in the West Bank today launched a campaign to confront the Israeli occupation forces' confiscation of the city's lands, the colonialist expansion in the city, and the issuance of new orders to confiscate hundreds of agricultural dunums of land east of the city. Umar Hamayil, acting mayor of al-Birah, . . . noted that most of the lands are adjacent to the settlements of Bet El and Pesagot, which are built on the al-Jabal al-Tawil and are owned by Palestinians, most of whom are from al-Birah and some of whom hold U.S. citizenship. . . .

"Hamayil spoke about the confiscation operations the occupation authorities carry out continuously on the periphery of the city of al-Birah on false pretexts, such as using the land for security purposes, using it for general purposes, considering it as a green zone, or sometime they say that these lands are the property of absentees. Hamayil added: The al-Birah Municipality Council has decided to issue free construction licenses for buildings and installations close to the settlements, as well as free plot plans for land located near them. . . . Hamayil said that the municipality will hold a consultation meeting with a number of lawyers and judges to

discuss the idea of filing a lawsuit with Israel's [High] Court against the settlements. He urged all the international institutions and the human rights organizations to assume their responsibilities and to intervene to prevent the occupation government from continuing the colonialist expansion on the lands of al-Birah.

"At the news conference, Adil Samarah, on behalf of the sons of al-Birah who live in the United States and whose lands the occupation authorities threaten to confiscate on the pretext that they are absentees' property, called on the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem and the U.S. government to defend the property of their citizens. Samarah stressed that the ultimatums that were sent to the citizens during the strike period were sent to the post office and not to the municipalities as usual in order to prevent the citizens from receiving them due to the closure of the post offices. Thus, he added, the legal period of objecting to them will expire, and consequently, the occupation authorities will claim that the fact that they have not objected to them means that they agree."

WAFA, as translated in *Mideastwire*,  
March 12, 2007

[T]he growing settlements and movement restrictions imposed by Israeli authorities for security reasons overshadow all other elements of the investment climate. The restrictions close off markets, raise transaction costs and prevent producers from guaranteeing delivery dates. The closures also serve to keep firms small and prevent them from attaining minimum efficient scale. The percentage of West Bank and Gaza enterprises selling into the other territory has fallen by half since 2000. More importantly, markets in the West Bank appear to be shrinking because of movement restrictions imposed to protect Israeli settlements. . . .

West Bank producers . . . face significant difficulties

in reaching customers in Gaza, (where procedures at Karni discriminate against cargoes arriving from the West Bank although these cargoes are carried in Israeli trucks and can move without restriction in Israel) and in moving goods within the West Bank en route to the border. There are two principle reasons for this—the confiscation of West Bank land for settlements and their related infrastructure, and the comprehensive system of internal movement restrictions, which are also closely related to preserving the security and access of settlers.

The World Bank, "West Bank and Gaza Investment Climate Assessment: Unlocking Potential of the Private Sector," March 20, 2007

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