

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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OSLO'S LAST GASP: THE IMPLOSION OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

A new Palestinian government headed by Palestinian Authority (PA) president Mahmoud Abbas was created in June in the aftermath of the disintegration of security forces in the Gaza Strip nominally under his command. This action has sealed the demise of the central institutions and the assumptions that have defined the Palestinian scene and international diplomacy since the Oslo Declaration of Principles between Israel and the PLO was initiated in September 1993. Nothing remains of the core foundations of this agreement and its successors, long under assault by violations committed by all parties. The main diplomatic task set by Oslo's promoters—to establish a framework for ending the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians—ran aground seven years ago at the Camp David discussions in July 2000. The other founding goal—to marginalize the power of the Islamic Resistance Movement— Hamas—has been turned on its head. Hamas has been empowered by developments over the last 14 years while

Fateh has been all-but-fatally compromised.

Since the end of negotiations at Camp David, half-hearted efforts to re-create a diplomatic option, led by an American administration distracted by Iraq and skeptical of the prospects for success, have gone nowhere.

Israel, which declared the PA an “entity that supports terror” on the eve of its formal re-occupation of the West Bank in April 2002, long ago decided that neither the PA nor its security arms, compromised by their role in the al-Aqsa intifada, were reliable partners in a process intended to win Palestinian acquiescence in maximal Israeli territorial and settlement objectives in the territories it has occupied since June 1967. As a consequence of that decision, Israel by its actions and policies has effectively destroyed the territorial basis for even the limited Palestinian administration of security and most civil Palestinian affairs in the West Bank established by the Oslo II accord of 1995. Israel's settlement and security policies pursued without interruption in the West Bank now strike at the ability of Palestinians to pursue a normal, everyday existence and to centrally administer their civil and security affairs. The unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip featured the precedent-setting evacuation of settlements and settlers and the active if undeclared assistance of Hamas. Disengagement and the accompanying decision by Hamas to enter elections reflected Israel's (and Hamas's) post-Oslo thinking, which departed in

significant ways from the Oslo diplomatic paradigm.

Despite these developments, the continuing existence of the institutions of Palestinian self-rule, represented by the PA, however compromised by changes in the diplomatic environment and the security and settlement facts on the ground, remained an anchor that all parties, each for their own reasons, professed support. The parliamentary victory by Hamas in January 2006 marked the end of this consensus and the creation of a new one championed by the Bush administration—the need to engineer the failure of any Palestinian government in which Hamas was a power.

The prevailing view in Washington is that the policy of isolating Hamas is working and that a new opportunity to “strengthen Abu Mazen”—now weaker than ever after the collapse of his Gaza security forces, his retreat to Ramallah, and his unprecedented dependence upon the good will of foreign powers—has been created yet again. The U.S. prefers to press the “restart button” and to pretend that the January 2006 election and its chaotic aftermath never took place. Israel's leaders are far more skeptical of Abu Mazen, the man Ariel Sharon disparagingly described as “a chick without feathers.” They remain to be convinced that it is in their interest to abandon policies that in their view have succeeded insofar as they have isolated Hamas, maintained Israeli security, and facilitated settlement expansion.

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

President Mahmoud Abbas' sacking of the Hamas/Fatah unity government and creation of an emergency cabinet following the brutal defeat of Fatah forces in Gaza by Hamas militants have been greeted in Washington as a new opportunity for peace. According to this scenario, Abbas, freed of the burdens of Gaza and power-sharing with Hamas, can resume peace talks with Israel.

This is wishful thinking. Hamas has considerable support in the West Bank as well as Gaza. It is unlikely to surrender its 2006 electoral mandate, forswear violence, recognize Israel's right to exist, and accept past agreements without rejoining the political process and reciprocal undertakings by Israel. Nor will economic and diplomatic boycotts force Hamas to abandon its demand to share power. Hamas is armed and potentially dangerous. It could revert to major terrorism if there is no political accommodation with Fatah and, ultimately, Israel.

Abbas, who received only rhetorical support from the U.S. for an end to the occupation and Palestinian sovereignty before the Gaza crisis, is now to be "strengthened" by isolating Gaza, freezing out Hamas and proving that he and the secular nationalist Fatah can deliver good governance and peace in the West Bank. Abbas is a decent man. But the IDF, not Abbas, controls the West Bank, and Fatah is in disarray. Thus far, Israel has refused to negotiate final status issues or ease its tight grip on the West Bank. Washington must therefore offer more than renewed aid. It should support unity, not division, among Palestinians, and work to restore hope through final status talks—not just humanitarian palliatives—that address the big issues of occupation, settlements and Jerusalem. Otherwise, the crisis will continue.



THE RETURN IS OUR RIGHT AND OUR RIGHT IS RETURN

To our people in Jerusalem, who are stationed in their sacred positions and who are facing all forms of harm and harassment to force them to leave their city and give the extremist settlers the pretext to take them, we say: Be patient because the end of your ordeal is now close.

The latest Israeli decisions to allocate millions of dollars to beef up the Jewish presence inside the town and enlarge the settlement blocks surrounding them proves to us for the thousandth time that the occupation does not care about any truces and has no intention of realizing security, peace, or stability in the region. We are certain that these plans, which they are trying to impose by the force of arms and the legislations of the occupation, will ultimately fail and be brought to naught. To our people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and our brothers in all civilian and military organizations and factions, we say: You have created history for us when you forced Sharon to leave Gaza and when you reached, through understanding and dialogue, the National Reconciliation Document as a framework that we rely on to protect our constant Palestinian principles and as a springboard for our vision and political movement. Indeed, it was the motive force behind the formation of the national unity government, which is a cause of pride for all of us. I hope we will work to protect it despite the pain of the siege and the oppression of the occupation. On the path delineated by this government we will, God willing, draw up the first features of our triumph.

Palestinian prime minister Ismail Haniyeh on the fifty-ninth anniversary of the Nakba, *Ma'an News*, May 15, 2007

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40 Years of Settling Jerusalem

In the four decades since 1967, the Palestinian Arab population in Jerusalem has grown at a faster rate than the Israeli Jewish population. Between 1967 and 2005, the Arab population, residing exclusively in (annexed) East Jerusalem, grew by 257 percent, from 68,600 to 244,800, compared to the Jewish population in both the western (Israeli) and eastern sectors, which grew by 140 percent, from 197,700 to 475,100. Forty percent of the Israeli population increase occurred in settlement communities constructed in East Jerusalem.

The annual Palestinian population growth rate was 4.1 percent in the 1970s, 2.6 percent in the 1980s, 3.5 percent in the 1990s, falling thereafter to 3.3 percent after 2000. The annual Jewish population growth rate in the city during those periods decreased progressively from 3.2 percent, to 2.3 percent, fell again to 2.1 percent, and to 1.1 percent today. During the last decade, between 6,000 and 8,000 Jewish residents of Jerusalem have left the city annually.

Palestinians now comprise 34 percent of the city, a proportion that is expected to increase to 40 percent by 2020.

“East of Here,” *Kol Ha’Ir*, Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, April 2007; “There is Price for Sovereignty,” Israel Harel, *Ha’aretz*, May 15, 2007

West Bank Settlement Housing Market 2006

In 2006, there was a marked decrease of 14.7 percent in construction starts for dwellings in West Bank settlements compared to 2005, while housing starts nationally were unchanged. Of the total housing starts in Israel in 2006 (29,679), 5.4 percent were in the West Bank, compared to 6.3 percent in 2005.

Year	Area	Housing Starts / %	Housing Completions	Dwellings Sold
2006	Israel	29,679 / 100	29,900	13,282
	West Bank	1,594 / 5.4	1,180	483
2005	Israel	29,635 / 100	31,725	12,372
	West Bank	1,869 / 6.3	1,729	592
2004	Israel	29,009 / 100	32,890	12,344
	West Bank	1,921 / 6.6	1,723	567
2003	Israel	31,521 / 100	34,491	11,846
	West Bank	2,057 / 6.5	2,376	411

Sources: “Rise of 9.3% in New Housing Sales During October-January,” *Yediot Abaronot*, March 1, 2007; “Expected Deficit of New Apartments: Housing Starts Declined by 4.7% in 2006,” *Ma’ariv*, March 7, 2007; “Sharp Decline in the Number of Home Purchases in the Periphery Since 2001,” *Yediot Abaronot*, March 12, 2007.

Israel demolished 1,968 unauthorized Palestinian structures and 660 unauthorized Israeli structures in the West

Bank from 1997 to 2006. One quarter of the structures built without a permit in the West Bank by settlers during this period were located on what Israel itself recognizes as private Palestinian land. These included permanent dwellings at the outpost settlement of Amona that were demolished in early 2006. (Caravans continue to be inhabited at the site east of Ramallah) There are currently 1,800 unauthorized buildings in 88 West Bank outpost settlements founded since 1996.

A Partner to the Violation of Equality

Israel’s High Court approves a situation in which most of the detrimental effect of providing security falls on the Palestinians.

To understand to logic behind the occupation regime, which hurts Palestinian human rights and violates international law, one can look at last week’s High Court’s decision on the separation barrier route between Dir Kaddis and the Modi’in Illit settlement for guidance.

The [Palestinian] residents of Dir Kaddis petitioned, with the help of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, against harm inflicted to their livelihood by the construction of the separation barrier. The barrier annexes their agricultural land, their olive trees have been uprooted, and a permit system prevents them from accessing their land. The barrier in this area was constructed primarily to protect the settlers of Modi’in Illit. The State [of Israel] told the court that the expansion plans for the settlement also have to be considered [when determining the route of the barrier]. Construction companies that have already invested in the area requested that their interests be considered as well.

The High Court’s decision addresses directly the question of the separation barrier’s legality when it is planned to account for settlement expansion. According to the court, expansion plans can be a part of the consideration of the barrier’s route, but are not a deciding factor in and of themselves.

The High Court repeated previous rulings, in which the security of the settlements (as compared to the security of Israel) is a legitimate consideration when planning the separation barrier’s route. The military establishment has the authority to create a barrier in occupied territory for the sake of settlers. For that reason, the military establishment has to take into consideration three factors: security-military considerations to protect the state of Israel and the military; the good of the Palestinian population and their human rights; and the protection of human rights [and security] of settlers. The High Court ruled that the security establishment weighed these considerations evenly in its decision to place the separation barrier where it was constructed.

Eyal Gross, *Ha’aretz*, May 2, 2007

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

February 28 Settlers from Shima stone and injure a 70-year-old Palestinian man from Samo'a, Hebron, as he grazed his flock. (OCHA)

Israeli security forces demolish two uninhabited Palestinian apartment buildings in al-Tur, Jerusalem, for being built without permits. (OCHA)

A settler is lightly wounded by gunfire while driving his car near Qalqilya. (Arutz 7)

Arutz 7 reports that in 2006 military courts indicted a record 3,523 Palestinians for crimes ranging from rock-throwing to the murder of settlers.

March 1 Palestinian security services in Ramallah hand over to Israeli authorities two female settlers who had mistakenly entered the city. Israel renews orders prohibiting Israeli citizens from entering Palestinian areas in the West Bank classified as Areas A for security reasons. (*Ma'an News*)

Palestinians open fire at a settler vehicle near Qalandiya, injuring the occupant. (OCHA)

March 2 The IDF fires tear gas and rubber bullets at Palestinian, Israeli, and international protesters in Bil'in. (OCHA)

The IDF prevents Palestinian farmers from Qalqilya from reaching their land west of the separation barrier during the Jewish holiday of Purim. (OCHA)

March 4 *Ha'aretz* reports Housing Minister Meir Shitreet as saying that his ministry will not support the construction of a new ultra-Orthodox neighborhood near the Qalandiya checkpoint.

Settlers assault a Palestinian from Tell, Nablus, on Road 60. (OCHA)

The Betar Illit settlement spills sewage onto land in the village of Wadi Fukin, Bethlehem. (OCHA)

March 8 Arutz 7 reports comments by Maj. Gen. Yoav Galant that more than 2,000 Qassam rockets have been launched at Israel since the 2005 withdrawal from Gaza.

March 14 Settlers evacuated from the northern West Bank settlements of Homesh and Sa-Nur send a letter to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Defense Minister Amir Peretz requesting a meeting to discuss returning to the settlements. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

Peace Now releases official Israeli government data, initially leaked to the organization in 2004, confirming a November 2006 Peace Now report that 32.4 percent of settlements in the West Bank are built on privately owned Palestinian land.

Ha'aretz reports that a team of experts connected with the United Nations has concluded that Israel's construction at the Mughrabi Gate in February followed international protocols for recognized sites, but should in any case be halted until international observers can supervise the work.

Palestinian farmers from Faqu'a, Jenin, receive notification from the IDF of a requisition order confiscating 150 dunums of their land for military purposes. (OCHA)

March 16 *Yerushalim* reports that Israeli interior minister Rony Bar-On promised the mayor of Ma'ale Adumim that settling the E-1 area of East Jerusalem remains a top priority of the Olmert government.

March 18 The Israel Land Administration publishes tenders to construct 44 housing units in the East Jerusalem settlement of Har Homa. (*Ha'aretz*)

March 19 Dozens of settlers move into an unoccupied Palestinian building in Hebron. They claim to have legally purchased it from its Palestinian owner for \$700,000. One year prior, settlers occupied a different house in Hebron's Beit Shapira neighborhood, also claiming to have bought it. Police and the IDF removed them from the house after doubts surfaced regarding the legality of their ownership claim. (*Ha'aretz*)

The IDF begins leveling land in the evacuated settlement of Sa-Nur. (OCHA)

March 20 The IDF demolishes a two-story dwelling in Halhul, Hebron, because of its proximity to the Road 60 bypass. Four Palestinians are injured in clashes that erupt between the residents and the IDF. Israeli authorities demolish a Palestinian dwelling in Sheikh Jarrah close to the "White Monument" for being built without a permit. (OCHA)

March 22 The IDF closes the dirt roads connecting Roads 57 and 60 near the Shavei Shomron settlement that Palestinians use to travel between Nablus and Jenin because they are not allowed to pass through the Shavei Shomron checkpoint. (OCHA)

In a letter to Defense Minister Peretz, the Association for Civil rights in Israel calls for an examination of the legality of preventing Palestinians from accessing Route 60. (*Ha'aretz*)

Ha'aretz reports IDF claims that settler housing in the Hebron military base serves a military purpose.

Israel's High Court of Justice orders a halt to construction of the separation barrier around the Etzion bloc settlement of Efrat after weighing the harm inflicted on the area's Palestinian residents. The court asked the military to propose an alternative route within ten days. (Arutz 7)

March 23 IDF soldiers prevent some 250 Palestinians from riding bicycles between al-Bireh and Jericho because they lack proper permits.

Ir Amim reports the approval of plans to expand the West Bank settlement of Adam (Geva Binyamin) as part of a larger expansion plan for the Jerusalem settlement of Neve Ya'acov and the connection of Neve Ya'acov with Adam. The plan includes the construction of a 1,200-unit neighborhood for ultra-Orthodox Jews.

Yerushalim reports the rejection of a request by Palestinians living in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan for a permit to construct 70 new apartments. Israel rejected the request on the basis that the land is a natural and historic area. The government of Ariel Sharon had designated the Holy Basin a green area two years prior.

March 24 *Ha'aretz* reports that settlers from the West Bank Harasha outpost have asked the High Court of Justice to order the state to compensate them if the outpost is dismantled. The settlers presented evidence that the state aided their outpost from 1995 until 2004: the Housing Ministry transferred \$147,000 in 1999 for infrastructure construction, \$123,000 in 2001 for a community center and a day-care center, and \$159,400 in 2002; in 2004 the Housing Ministry prepared a zoning plan for the community. Letters from the Binyamin Regional Council dated May 2002 authorized the settlers to begin construction of some 25 housing units.

Settlers from Negohot attack a Palestinian boy and woman in Khirbat Salamah, Hebron. (OCHA)

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

March 25 Israeli authorities order confiscation of 80 dunams of Palestinian land from the West Bank towns of Jayyus and Azzun, north of Qalqilya, to be used for construction of the separation barrier. (*Ma'an News*)

The IDF cancels a previous order banning Palestinians from traveling in Israeli-plated cars within the West Bank. (*Ma'ariv*)

March 26 Approximately 3,500 settlers arrive at the site of the evacuated settlement of Homesh after the IDF allows them access. Settlement leaders state their intention to resettle there the 30 families evacuated from Homesh in 2005. (*Ha'aretz*, Arutz 7)

March 27 Islamic Jihad's al-Quds Brigades detonate explosives next to an Israeli military patrol passing on a road between Rachel's Tomb and the West Bank settlement of Har Homa. (*Ma'an News*)

March 28 The two-day Homesh First campaign ends with the orderly evacuation of 480 settlers. (*Ha'aretz*)

Ma'ariv reports on a plan by Jerusalem mayor Uri Lupolianski to grant \$10,000 to young Israeli couples interested in buying a house in East Jerusalem.

March 28–April 3 The IDF closes the gate in the separation barrier around Bil'in village despite a High Court ruling allowing access for Bil'in residents to enter their land behind the barrier on a 24 hour basis. (OCHA)

March 29 Dozens of Palestinians from the West Bank village of Bil'in establish an outpost on land they say was expropriated by Israel to expand the Modi'in Ilit settlement. The Defense Ministry continues construction at the Modi'in Ilit settlement on land that Israel's High Court ruled belonged to Palestinians. The ministry's civil administration argues that the land had been expropriated to meet the settlement's demographic needs. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

Ha'aretz reports on a poll in which 80 percent of the Jewish public supports passing legislation compensating settlers wishing to return to Israel.

April 1 IDF soldiers arrive at the homes of approximately 70 Palestinian families living in a housing complex in Dahiyet al-Salam, near Shuafat refugee camp in East Jerusalem, with eviction orders claiming that the land belongs to a Jewish woman. (OCHA)

April 4 Settlers from Tel Rumeida, Hebron city, set fire to a Palestinian resident's car near the settlement for the third time. No police investigation has taken place. (OCHA)

April 8 Settler teens in Hebron beat a Palestinian man with Downs syndrome. (OCHA)

April 9 A settler is injured near Azzun, Qalqilya, when Palestinians stoned his vehicle while on Road 55. (OCHA)

Israeli policemen physically assault and injure a Palestinian guard who tried to prevent settlers from entering the al-Aqsa Mosque's compound. (OCHA)

April 10 A settler from Emanuel is shot at and injured by a Palestinian in a passing vehicle. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

Defense Minister Amir Peretz issues official instructions ordering the IDF to evacuate a disputed building in Hebron currently housing settlers. (*Ha'aretz*)

April 13 Palestinians uproot grape vines and fruit trees belonging to settlers from the Etzion bloc settlement of Sde Boaz. (Arutz 7)

Five thousand settlers visit the tombs of Joshua and Caleb, in the Palestinian village of Kifel Heres near the settlement of Ariel. (Arutz 7)

Settlers from Eli open fire at Palestinian shepherds from Talfit, Nablus, and prevent them from grazing animals. (OCHA)

April 14 Ten settlers from Ma'on beat and injure a 20-year-old Palestinian grazing his sheep near al-Kharouba area. Settlers have set up tents near the area in order to enlarge the Havot Ma'on outpost. (OCHA)

April 11–17 Construction of the separation barrier around the Ateret settlement is completed. A fence now encircles the settlement on land requisitioned by the IDF and belonging to Palestinians from Atara and Umm Safa. Work on a new road between Rantis and Shuqba, running parallel to bypass road 465 is continuing rapidly. The new road is to serve as an alternative Palestinians-only road now that road 465 is to serve the settlers of Beit Arye and Ofarim. Another such road is being built on confiscated Palestinian land between Beit Liqya and Beit Anan. (OCHA)

April 17 Palestinian gunmen injure three settlers from Dolev at the entrance to the Na'aleh settlement. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

April 18 *Ha'aretz* reports that electricity cables laid by settlers from Karnei Shomron on private Palestinian land but which had been removed following a High Court of Justice decision, are now on different Palestinian land.

Ha'aretz reports on GOC Commander Yair Naveh's orders for a special investigation into the six-year IDF closure of Hebron's Shehata Street to Palestinian traffic and pedestrians. The IDF acknowledged that the closure was made in error.

While working on their land, two Palestinian women from Jit, near Qalqilya, are assaulted by settlers from Jilad outpost. (OCHA)

April 19 The IDF demolishes six Palestinian dwellings in Ja'awis village. The IDF imposes a curfew on Huwwara village, Nablus, for six hours after the stoning of settler vehicles on Road 60. (OCHA)

The IDF hands out 22 demolition orders against houses, fences and water wells belonging to Palestinians from the areas of Umm al-Dalia and Jabal al-Sindas near the settlement of Haggai, Hebron. (OCHA)

April 22 After initially approving a settler march to the evacuated West Bank settlement of Homesh on April 19, the IDF spokesperson announces that approval has been revoked. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

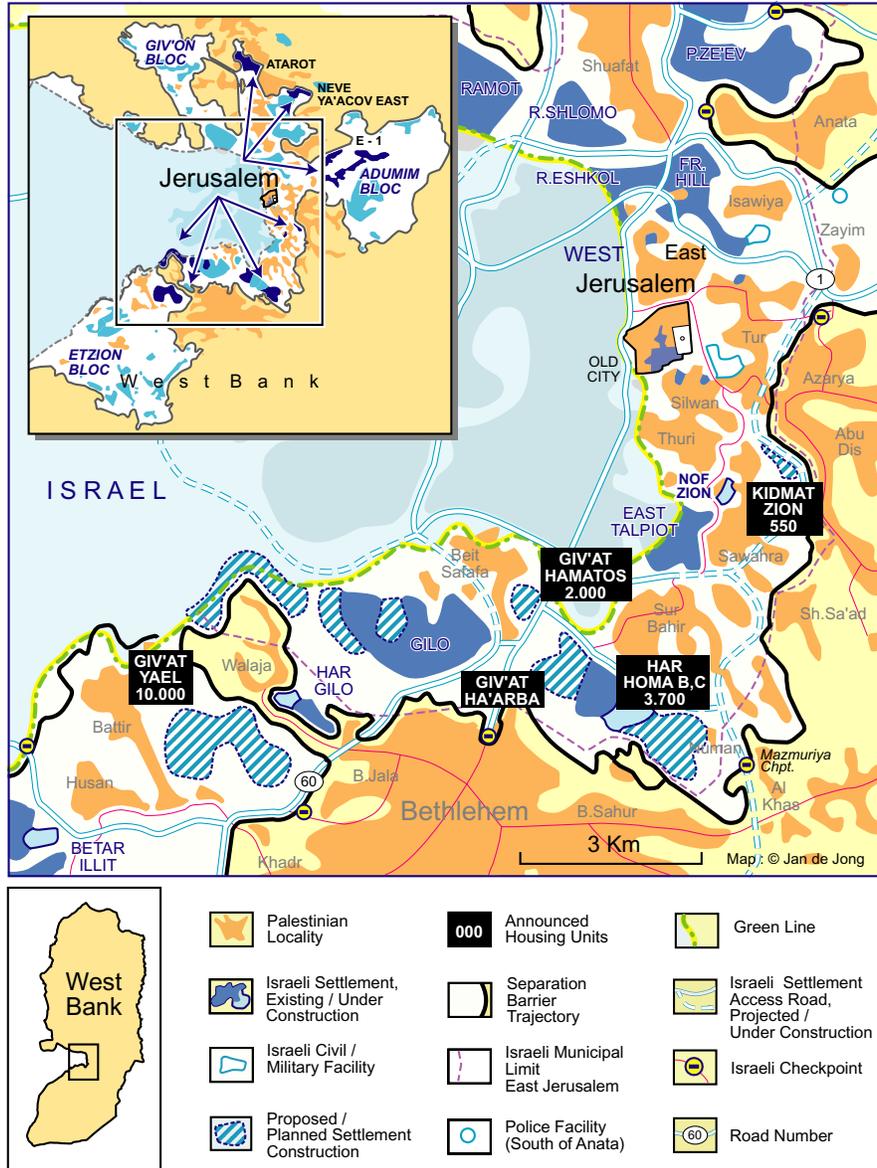
April 24 Thousands of settlers and right-wing activists march to the ruins of the evacuated Homesh settlement, despite a ban by the defense minister and the IDF chief of staff. Two soldiers are lightly injured after confronting settlers. (*Ha'aretz*)

The IDF closes all the entrances to Palestinian villages near the evacuated settlement of Homesh and prevents movement of Palestinians in the area for the settlers' march. (OCHA)

Settlers from the Etzion bloc squat on a hilltop near the Efrat settlement that is slated to go on the Bethlehem (Palestinian) side of the separation barrier. (Arutz 7)

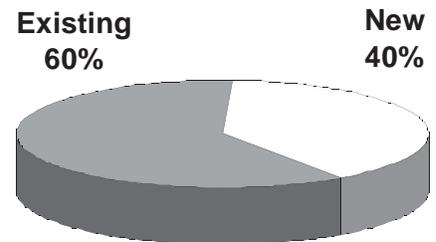
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Settlement Expansion in South Jerusalem - June 2007



Dwellings in East Jerusalem Settlements

Existing		Announced New	
Neve Ya'acov/Pisgat Ze'ev	15,986	Atarot	10,000
Ramot Allon	8,924	Neve Ya'acov East	1,200
Ramat Shlomo	2,081	E-1	3,500
Giv'at Hamivtar/French Hill*	5,551	Giv'at Hamatos	2,000
Old City Jewish Quarter	572	Kidmat Zion	550
Har Homa	1,484	Har Homa B,C	3,700
Gilo	8,956	Giv'at Ya'el	10,000
East Talpiot	4,322	Nof Zion**	400
Total	47,876	Total	31,350



* Includes R. Eshkol and M. Dafna.

** Dwellings under construction.

Although the government of Ehud Olmert may be prepared to reconsider administrative and security measures it remains adamantly opposed to defining a political horizon that includes an end to occupation and settlement removal.

The January 2006 elections set in motion a chain of events that has led to the fast-paced creation in Ramallah of a new Palestinian regime that in the short time since its creation has limited its responsibility for the Gaza Strip and its 1.5 million residents and looked to foreign patrons for its strongest signs of support.

The initial U.S. response has linked Abu Mazen, Fateh, and the Palestine Liberation Organization more closely to Washington and Israel than has ever been the case. The U.S.-led effort to support Abu Mazen appears likely to continue along a path pursued with little success for many years, focusing on two principal operational arenas—financial aid and continuing efforts to moderate Israeli occupation policy. To the extent that these two elements are informed by a grander design, it will be a process-heavy series of “gatherings” in which Arab-Israeli, not Palestinian-Israeli, rapprochement, is the focus—long on expressions of interest in creating a political horizon, but short on the critical diplomacy needed to define it and make it operational—will be highlighted.

Periodic efforts to re-energize lapsed Israeli or Palestinian commitments have been a principal hallmark of U.S. diplomacy. It is probable that the U.S. interest in narrow operational issues, the so-called “benchmarking process,” will continue to be the principal feature of U.S. diplomatic activity, rather than efforts to forge a final status peace agreement.

The much-heralded but often-violated November 2006 Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA) and the still-born effort of General Keith Dayton to oversee its implementation grew out of the failed “performance-based” initiatives detailed in the Roadmap. These initiatives were part of a U.S. strategy that disdained discussion of final status issues. Rather, incremental progress on the “little” operational areas defined in the AMA would build a track record for successful diplomacy on borders, Jerusalem, refugees, and settlements—the “big picture” issues of final status.

In early 2007, it appeared that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and the Department of State had reconsidered this strategy, which had failed to realize even the tactical goals highlighted in the AMA. The new idea was to turn the framework on its head, to look at the big picture—a “political horizon”—that would create a conducive atmosphere for progress on the entire spectrum of outstanding issues, including those that the former strategy had failed to resolve.

The appearance of the Acceleration Benchmarks for Agreement on Movement and Access as well as on the Gaza Security Situation (Benchmarks) in April of this year, alongside the “horizon” discussions suggested by Secretary Rice, signals that the Bush administration is putting *everything* on the table at the same time. It is not clear which of these two

Jerusalem's War of Concrete Against a Growing Palestinian Minority

After a recent governmental meeting on Jerusalem, Mayor Uri Lupolianski summarized its conclusions. “East Jerusalem, may, God forbid, no longer be under Jewish sovereignty . . . Hamas will conquer Jerusalem within twelve years. In order not to lose the city to Hamas . . . there is a need for a strategic plan.”

Within days, news of the latest plan to construct thousands of dwelling units in existing and new settlement communities in East Jerusalem appeared. *Ha'aretz* noted that the purpose of the construction, according to Deputy Mayor Yehoshua Pollak, is to “produce a linking corridor between Jerusalem and the Etzion bloc in the south of the city and between Jerusalem and the settlements in the Bet El region north of the city (see the *Report* March–April 2007)

Wallaja, an area that straddles the Green Line, is viewed as a critical link in the effort to fortify a wall of Israeli settlement south of the city. A territorial swath of Israeli settlement is meant to link the West Jerusalem neighborhood of Malha with the settlements of Gilo, Beitar Illit, and the Etzion bloc. A suburb of 10,000 units is envisioned to be filled by the exploding population of poor, ultra-Orthodox “Haredim,” ultimately supporting a population of more than 50,000.

“If you can control Wallaja,” noted Pollak, “you establish a connection via the Tunnels Road with the Etzion bloc.”

A far smaller plan—involving 500 units—is being promoted for Kidmat Zion on land in the Abu Dis-Jerusalem border owned by Irwin Moskowitz, an American patron of settlement in the environs of the Old City.

“Because of the political considerations restricting expansion of the city east towards Ma'ale Adumim [the reference is to U.S. opposition to the E-1 plan],” concluded Pollak, “it is necessary to construct a barrier” along the length of the almost-completed separation barrier.

elements Washington considers to be most important or whether they are seen as complementary or competing initiatives. Indeed, there is unsettling evidence of strategic incoherence and an absence of broad agreement within the Bush administration in this multifaceted—some would say scatter-shot—approach that will not be lost on the players, all of whom can be expected to exploit the shortcomings of U.S. policy to their advantage.

Israel has little reason—at a moment when Abu Mazen is weaker than ever, without a working presence in Gaza, with no security forces to speak of, no real command and control, and whose cabinet reflects an effort to please foreign patrons first and foremost—to implement either a radical modifica-

THE SPIRIT OF THE COMMANDER PREVAILS

By Meron Rapoport, *Ha'aretz*, May 18, 2007

“There is a military policy that is causing the Arab population to leave the center of Hebron. It’s a clear plan, it’s a fact. Everything would be all right if they would say so openly, if our policy were to create Jewish contiguity in Hebron, and the government were to tell the army to do so: We would go to elections over that. But that is not the policy of the State of Israel. The problem is that under military rule the spirit of the commander is stronger than anything else.”

Haggai Alon says these words in the context of his job. In his position as adviser to the defense minister on “fabric of life” issues, Alon visits Hebron with the army, with the Civil Administration, with whomever he has to. As part of his job he sits in on discussions with senior Israel Defense Forces officers, walks around in the area, meets with officers and is supposed to tell them what to do on behalf of his boss, the defense minister.

Here and there he succeeds, he says. The Jordan Valley Highway stopped being a highway for “Israelis only,” the work hours at the Karni crossing were doubled, increasing the amount of goods that pass through—but the overall situation is depressing. The experience Alon has accumulated after a year in the job has taught him that the official policy of the Israeli government is one thing, and the actions of the army on the ground are another, sometimes the opposite. . . .

Alon, 33, has become a thorn in the side of the defense establishment. When, of his own accord, the outgoing CEO of Central Command issued an order forbidding Israelis to give Palestinians rides in their cars, Alon set up a hue and cry and the order was finally rescinded. When he discovered that the IDF was trying to evade honoring a ruling of the High Court of Justice, he sent letters and caused a great deal of embarrassment in the system. When he reveals how army officers are trying to move the fence so it will accord with the map of settlements, he quarrels openly with very senior officers. . . .

The Benchmarks document recently formulated by the Americans, which presented Israel with a timetable for dismantling roadblocks in the West Bank and for the opening of a safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza, aroused a great deal of anger in Israel. Some IDF officials claimed that the Americans were able to write the document only based on inside information from “factors in the defense establishment.” . . .

A defense source says the origins of this document lie in the fact that the Americans have stopped believing Israel because “they are presented with maps that are an outright lie.” Alon says that even though he works in the Defense Ministry and the data are supposed to be accessible to him, he has difficulty knowing the exact number of checkpoints. “The only thing that’s clear is that they have doubled since the disengagement.” . . .

He says the IDF is setting a route for the fence that will not enable the establishment of a Palestinian state and is allowing itself to evade High Court orders to change the route. He claims that the army “is carrying out an apartheid policy” that is emptying Hebron of Arabs, setting up roadblocks without anyone knowing where and how many, Judaizing the Jordan Valley and cooperating openly and blatantly with the settlers.

Take for example Highway 317, which links several settlements in the south Hebron Hills. About a year ago, the IDF constructed a concrete barrier along the road, whose location is no coincidence. The barrier prevents Palestinian from reaching their lands on the side of the road. According to the plan approved by Ariel Sharon about three years ago, the separation fence was supposed to run along Highway 317 and in effect to annex the local settlements to Israel, together with hundreds of square kilometers of the southern West Bank between the highway and the Green Line. After it turned out that it would be impossible to defend this route in the courts, it was decided to change the route to coincide with the Green Line.

And now, miraculously, the concrete barrier that was constructed last year is exactly congruent with Sharon’s original route. About half a year ago the High Court ordered it dismantled, but the IDF was not impressed. For months it ignored the specific order, until the legal adviser of the Judea and Samaria division announced about a month and a half ago that the IDF has no intention of dismantling the barrier. This was a strange announcement, not only because it ostensibly contradicts a High Court order, but also because, according to Alon, no senior officials in the Defense Ministry were informed of the intention not to move the fence: not the defense minister and not even the ministry’s director general, who is the official responsible for the fence. The Central Command decided to build the fence in the spirit of Sharon, and that’s that. Exactly, says Alon, the way it enthusiastically maintains what he calls the “malicious plan” to link Gush Etzion to Jerusalem, or to annex dozens of kilometers of desert in the area of Ma’aleh Adumim—plans that if carried out will eliminate the possibility of establishing two states for two nations, as written in the government platform.

After discovering a few weeks ago that the IDF does not intend to dismantle the barrier, Alon sent a furious letter to the defense minister, in which he claimed that the army “is doing everything in its power to avoid obeying the High Court ruling.” He says that “what is amazing is that army officers say that the route of the fence should have passed there [along Highway 317, M.R.], because that is what Sharon wanted. They’re not embarrassed. They say: ‘The High Court told us to move the fence, so we moved it, and now we’re building a mini-fence [the barrier, M.R.]’ As they see it, there was a hitch, the High Court screwed them. . . .

Alon has several current examples of the close relations

between the army and the settlers: for example, the ascent to Homesh on Independence Day. The defense minister did not approve plan. Yet thousands of demonstrators celebrated the holiday on the hill near Nablus. "In Homesh there was open, blatant cooperation with the settlers," says Alon. "At first the army gave them permission to ascend. After the permission was revealed, they canceled it, and then, ostensibly by surprise, the settlers 'confused' the army and went up to Homesh with dozens of buses."

Something similar happened in Hebron. Alon has trouble believing that the army did not know of the intention of hundreds of settlers to enter the "beit hameriva" ("house of contention"). He says "when a system is calibrated in advance to allow such things to happen, they happen."

As an example he cites from a letter sent by the legal adviser of the Judea and Samaria division in reply to a request by the Council for Peace and Security to open the center of Hebron to Palestinian movement. "Does anyone think it is possible to protect the residents of the Jewish settlement in the neighborhoods of Jewish settlement when these neighborhoods are isolated from one another, and when they are divided by an area in which a Palestinian lifestyle is being conducted as a matter of routine? How is it possible to prevent an attack caused by friction in the aforesaid neighborhoods when regular Palestinian commercial life is being conducted right on their threshold?"

It may be an excellent reply, but neither Alon nor Minister Peretz nor any of his assistants have informed the Judea and Samaria Division that there is a policy of separation in the center of Hebron. "There is no written order to empty Hebron of Arabs," says Alon, "but that's the greatness of military rule. It can simply refrain from doing: it can refrain from enforcing the law on the settlers and it can refrain from allowing the Palestinians to move around. In the entire story of violations of the law in the territories, the spirit of the commander is the determining factor. It is stronger than any law or procedure."

According to Alon, the spirit of the CEO of Central Command, Yair Naveh, who is about to retire, was clear. He was "a settler in the service of the settlers," he says. . . .

"The actual policy of the IDF, especially in recent years, is creating profound changes that threaten to make it impossible to leave the West Bank. We cannot allow the executive ranks to get us stuck in an irreversible binational situation."

The IDF Spokesman said in response regarding Homesh that "3,000 Israeli citizens came to Homesh, although it was forbidden to remain in the area without a permit. IDF forces operated according to IDF values in order to ensure the security of the civilians."

Regarding Highway 317 he said that "the Central Command did not try to prevent the implementation of the High Court decision, but examined it and decided on a model for implementation. Due to the reservations of Palestinian residents, the route proposed by the defense establishment is currently being examined." ♦

OSLO, *continued from page 7*

tion of its security and settlement policies in the West Bank and East Jerusalem that are considered to be working successfully or to revise its broader opposition to negotiations on final status issues. Only a political horizon that features an end to occupation and the removal of settlements will create the conditions necessary to strengthen Abu Mazen by fashioning a Palestinian majority prepared to support a peace agreement with Israel in return for genuine sovereignty and independence. There is no evidence that events of the past weeks have made this option any more compelling to Israeli or, indeed, to U.S. or international policymakers. The disintegration of the PA and the fact that Abu Mazen's writ barely extends past the Muqata have fortified the swelling ranks of Israel's rejectionists.

In this environment, Israel will be unwilling to do much more than tinker at the margins of its security and closure policies, and Washington is not prepared to ask for more than this. One area that may see progress is international approval for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) road plan of October 2004. The Continuous Movement Plan aims at securing the existing road network for settlements by creating an inferior network for exclusive Palestinian use (see the November-December 2004 *Report*). The World Bank and others have opposed the plan, which is nonetheless being partially implemented. The U.S. has funded some links that would be useful in any case. Today, given the interest in strengthening Abu Mazen without impacting Israel's occupation, settlement, and security requirements, the road scheme—whose strategic intent is to consolidate Israel's rule—may receive a more positive second look by the international community. A similar process, girded by a similar logic, occurred in the early Oslo years, when the original bypass roads for settlements were created.

There is as yet no evidence that the momentous changes in the Palestinian scene will compel U.S. policymakers to review longstanding assumptions and the policies that result. But as Aluf Benn of *Ha'aretz* reported, "in conversations within the U.S. and Israel this week, we heard doubts that go beyond questions of timing to those of substance: Is the idea of an independent Palestinian state still valid? . . . [F]or the professionals, the analysts and the assessors, the events in Gaza afford a new window of opportunity to deal with scenarios that in ordinary times cannot even be mentioned."

The reappearance of such ideas as the Jordanian, autonomy and one democratic state options in public discussion of the current crisis attests not only to the failure of American-led diplomacy. These shop worn ideas, long past their sell by date, also reflect the absence of the kind of creative strategic thinking required to establish a stable basis for Palestinian independence, two genuine states, and an end to Israel's forty year occupation. ♦

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

TIME LINE, continued from page 5

April 24 Settlers release wild boars on Palestinian workers from the Salfit municipality. The boars also destroyed plants and crops. (*Ma'an News*)

April 25 Israeli border guards demolish a Palestinian dwelling under construction in Sheikh Jarrah and one in al-Tur, Jerusalem, for being built without a permit. (OCHA)

April 26 Under the protection of the IDF, settlers pray at the tomb of Yusef, near Balata refugee camp in Nablus. (*Ma'an News*)

Settlers assault and injure a 17-year-old Palestinian boy grazing sheep near the settlement of Tapuah. (OCHA)

Palestinians stone and injure a settler driving near the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim. (OCHA)

April 27 A security guard from the Hebron area settlement of Givat Havot beats a 16-year-old Palestinian shepherd on his land near the settlement. In another incident, three Palestinians, one Israeli rabbi, and two internationals are injured when a group of settlers from Pene Hever beat them as they accompany Palestinian shepherds. (OCHA)

Yerushalaim reports that the state has ordered the Jerusalem municipality to stop using a trash dumping site in East Jerusalem since it violates international law prohibiting the dumping of waste on occupied land.

April 28 Palestinian access to the Jordan Valley is improved as the requirement for a permit to enter the area is lifted. West Bank private vehicles continue to be prohibited from entering, and public transportation is the only way to enter. (OCHA)

Settlers stone Palestinian vehicles near the evacuated settlement of Homesh and clash with Palestinians near Burqa village, Nablus. (OCHA)

It is worth being aware that the combination of PA institutional decline and Israeli settlement expansion is creating a growing conviction among Palestinians and Israeli Arabs, as well as some Jews on the far left in Israel, that the two State solution's best days are behind it. Given that a Palestinian State requires both a territory and a government, and the basis for both is being systematically undermined, they believe the only long term way to end the conflict will be to abandon the idea of dividing the land and, instead, simply insist on respect for the civil, political and national rights of the two peoples, Jews and Arabs, who populate the land, in one State. The so-called "one State solution" is gaining ground. The biggest loser, of course, is Israel, since it is Israel that is so determined to have a Jewish democratic state. It is this realization that led Sharon and Olmert towards "convergence", but this is now off the table and the demographic clock continues to tick. Should the PA pass into irrelevance or nonexistence, and the settlements keep expanding, the one State solution will come out of the shadows and begin to enter the mainstream. . . .

End of Mission Report, Alvaro de Soto, Under-Secretary-General,
United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and
Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and
the Palestinian Authority Envoy to the Quartet, May 2007, pp. 46-47, para. 128

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