

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

A Bimonthly Publication of the Foundation for Middle East Peace

Volume 18 Number 3

May-June 2008

BUSH'S "BIG PICTURE" DEFINED BY ISRAEL'S SETTLEMENT MAP

Geoffrey Aronson

The goal of the Annapolis process, launched by President George W. Bush in November 2007, was to reach an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement by the end of 2008. Until now, U.S.-led diplomacy has failed to provide PLO chairman Mahmoud Abbas with any meaningful achievements on the two indivisible issues—settlements and borders—that will define the territory of the Palestinian state intended to be established by mutual agreement. The beleaguered Abbas has heard nothing from the Bush administration to buoy lingering hope for a deal by year's end.

"Frankly, so far nothing has been achieved. . . . All the files are still open.

IN MEMORIAM: LUCIUS D. BATTLE

The Foundation for Middle East Peace mourns the passing of a warm friend and distinguished colleague, Lucius Battle, former president of the Foundation, who died May 13 in Washington at 89. Among his many positions in diplomacy and public service, Luke Battle was special assistant to Secretaries of State Dean Acheson and Dean Rusk, assistant secretary of state for educational and cultural affairs, assistant secretary for Near Eastern affairs, and Ambassador to Egypt.

None of them is concluded. The situation is still as it was. . . . We demanded the Americans implement the first phase of the road map that talks about the cessation of settlement expansion," Abbas told the Associated Press (AP) after an April 2008 visit to Washington.

The AP reported, "While discussing what a peace deal would look like, [U.S. secretary of state Condoleezza] Rice did not mention the Palestinian goal of creating a state based on borders before Israel captured Gaza from Egypt and the West Bank from Jordan during the 1967 Six-Day war.

"We demanded that they talk about the '67 borders,' Abbas remarked angrily. 'None of them talks about the '67 borders.'"

Abbas is not alone in his downbeat assessment. President Bush himself no longer talks about shepherding a signed and sealed arrangement to end the occupation. His vision has been reduced to "achieving the definition of a [Palestinian] state," or as Rice explained in an April 29 speech in Washington, the goal is to "reach agreement this year on the basic contours of a peaceful Palestinian state subject to the fulfillment of road map obligations."

Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat explained that Bush did not respond directly when Abbas brought up the issue of Palestinian objections to continuing Israeli settlement expansion.

"Bush told [Abbas] that 'I'm focusing on the bigger picture,'" Erekat explained.

Rice too appears to view the Palestinians' concern about Israel's settlement policies as an unhelpful distraction. "It is my very strong view," Rice noted in Amman on March 31, 2008, "that the best thing that we can do is to focus on getting this agreement, because then we won't have these discussions about what belongs in Israel and what belongs in Palestine; we will know. That is why we need a Palestinian state."

To break the diplomatic stalemate, Washington could put its own map of a Palestinian state on the table. Or it could endorse the Palestinian demand for almost complete Israeli retreat to the June 1967 border. Otherwise, the borders of the Palestinian state at the heart of Bush's "big picture" will continue to be defined by Israel's security and settlement policies. This latter option recalls the April 14, 2004, Bush letter to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in which the U.S. president wrote that, "In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli population centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949. . . ."

In contrast to the Bush administration, Israelis and Palestinians acknowledge the obvious—settlements are the key to the "big picture." It is self-evident that Israel views settlement as the most effective instrument in reducing Palestinian territory, and guaranteeing its unrestrained security requirements and

BIG PICTURE, continued on page 4

TO OUR READERS

As President Bush's last ditch effort for a final status Israel-Palestine peace agreement by January 2008 stumbles, the vision of a two state peace is receding. Once again, deep political divisions, weak leadership on both sides, and America's deference to Israel on settlements stand in the way of peace.

In the face of this gloomy prognosis for a final status peace, there is still hope that interim measures can be taken to "build confidence," improve security, and restore the "quality of life" of Palestinians. The idea, a hardy perennial in U.S. policy most recently reiterated in the road map, is that both sides can implement such interim measures without prejudice to a final status agreement.

The first measure is a settlement "freeze." The second is building Palestinian security forces to fight terrorism. The third is removing hundreds of checkpoints and barriers to travel, trade and investment that have crippled the West Bank economy.

All these interim policies have failed repeatedly. Settlement in the West Bank has grown 130 percent since 1993, and an interim "freeze" has proved no easier politically than a decision to evacuate settlements. As for security, the IDF is responsible for protecting 282,000 West Bank settlers. It will not cede this task to Palestinians, nor will the latter accept it. Likewise, the matrix of control over the West Bank that has ruined the quality of Palestinian life and shattered the economy is not just punitive. It is integral to Israel's policy of preserving and protecting settlements.

The reality is that there are no interim solutions to restoring confidence, reducing violence, and regenerating decent life and prosperity for Palestinians, short of a credible prospect of a real Palestinian state and an Israeli reversal of its settlement project.

Philip C. Wilcox Jr.



FOUNDATION FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Merle Thorpe, Jr.
Founder
(1917-1994)

Philip C. Wilcox, Jr.
President

Geoffrey Aronson
Director, Research and
Publications, Editor, *Report on
Israeli Settlement in the Occupied
Territories*

Evan Colton
Nitzan Goldberger
Editorial Assistants

Megan Marsanskis
Intern

TRUSTEES

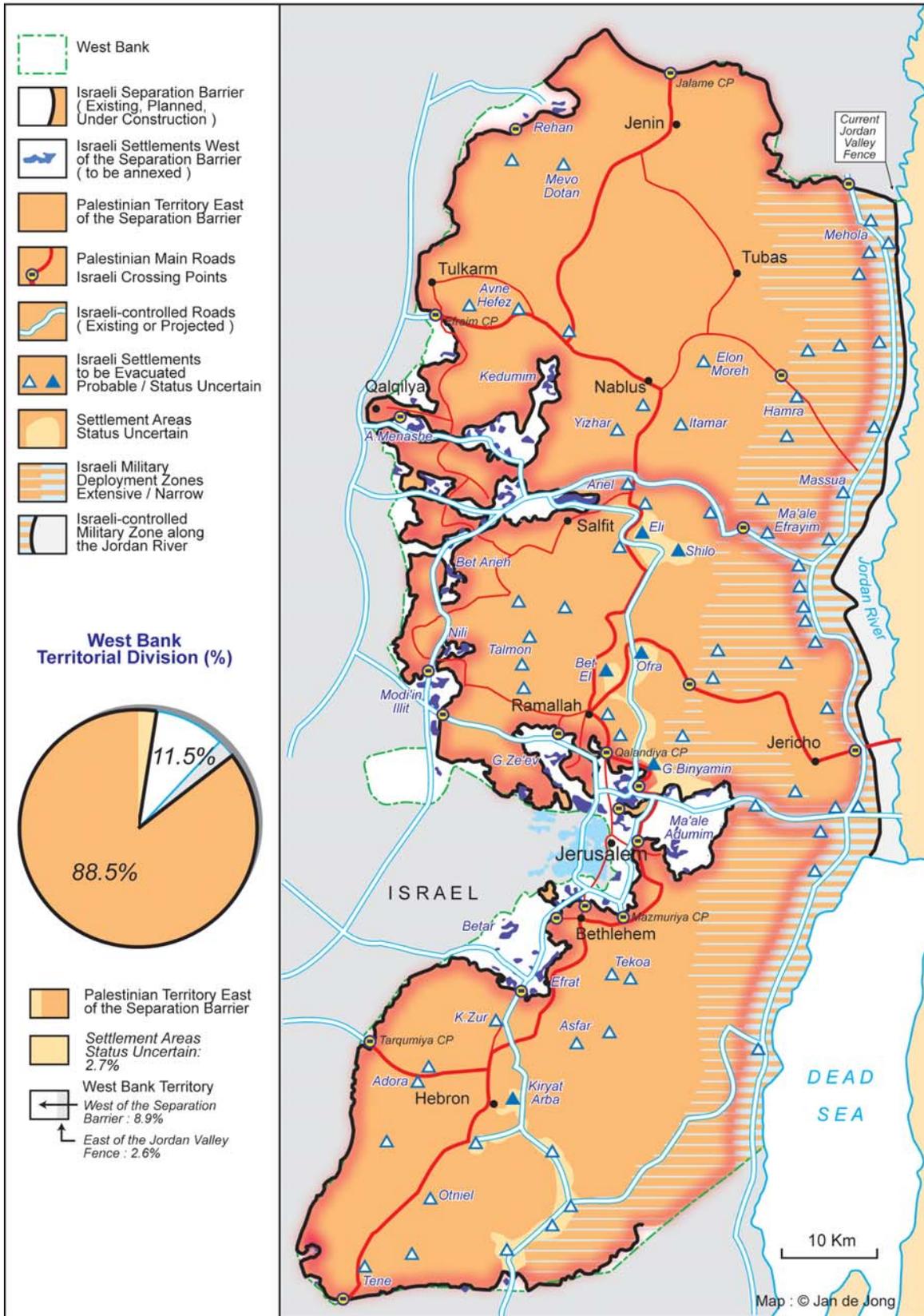
Landrum R. Bolling
Calvin H. Cobb, Jr.
James J. Cromwell
Peter Gubser
Stephen Hartwell
Richard S.T. Marsh
Richard W. Murphy
Jean C. Newsom
Gail Pressberg
William B. Quandt
Nicholas A. Veliotis

The Foundation, a non-profit I.R.C. 501(c)(3) organization, supports peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians through mutual recognition and a negotiated division of historic Palestine. It publishes the bi-monthly *Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories*.

Copyright © 2008

Sign up to receive the *Report* by e-mail, to be notified of events in Washington, D.C., and more. Visit us at www.fmep.org.

Projection of Israel's West Bank Partition Plan - 2008



claim to sovereignty over a considerable percentage of the West Bank. Abbas, during his Washington visit, described Israeli settlement as “the biggest blight that stands as a big rock in the path of negotiations.”

In recent weeks, Israel presented maps outlining its permanent territorial demands in the West Bank. The maps are based upon the IDF Security Interests Map prepared during the mid-1990s. They reflect the “Continuous Movement” plan for Palestinian territorial contiguity via roads and tunnels outlined by Israel in late 2004 (see *Settlement Report*, vol. 16 no. 2) as well as Olmert’s “convergence” ideas abandoned after the summer 2006 war with Lebanon. These maps (See page 3) confirm wide-ranging Israeli security and settlement intentions throughout the West Bank and East Jerusalem that imperil the creation of a sovereign and independent Palestinian state.

Palestinian and Israeli press reports note that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has excluded from Palestine “Greater Jerusalem,” extending from the outskirts of Ramallah to the outskirts of Bethlehem. In East Jerusalem itself, Israel will maintain sovereignty in the Old City and the nearby village of Silwan, while arranging for worshipers access to their holy sites under international supervision. Olmert also excludes from Palestine the Latroun region, which along with the settlement blocs, will be annexed to Israel with “horizontal expansion” linking them. The Jordan Valley, according to Olmert’s map, is viewed as a vital security interest and remains under Israeli control, with a West Bank corridor linking Israel to the King Hussein (Allenby) Bridge. To create continuity between the disjointed territories that will comprise the Palestinian state, Olmert supports the road, tunnel, and bridges plan devised under his predecessor Ariel Sharon.

Settlements Matter

There can be no contesting the fact that continuation of Israel’s settlement enterprise, as a means of creating Greater Israel and as an instrument to assure Israel’s expansive security requirements, poses an existential challenge not only to

Palestinian national life but to the viability of the Palestinian civic community as well.

According to a May 2008 World Bank report, continuing occupation is “undeveloping” the economies of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. “Beyond the impacts of the protracted economic downturn since restrictions were imposed after the Second Intifada, the Palestinian economy faces a more hazardous prospect—a fundamental change in its composition, with GDP increasingly driven by government spending and donor aid, leaving little resources for investment, thus further

reducing the productive base for a self-sustaining economy.”

The Annapolis process, like those of the Madrid and Oslo eras that preceded it, has failed to constrain Israel’s policy of settlement expansion, the core indicator of Israel’s continuing appetite for territory. Indeed the opposite is the case. An objective analysis of the period since 1990 would conclude that the diplomatic process has accommodated Israel’s most expansive settlement and security objectives, enfeebling and marginalizing the Fatah leadership of secular Palestinian nationalists willing to reach a peaceful settlement with Israel while empowering Hamas and other Islamist and rejectionist opponents.

Stopping the Settlement Machine

From the outset of Israel’s settlement project after the June 1967 war, neither diplomacy nor armed insurrection has stopped the machine of settlement expansion in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Severe international criticism of Israel’s settlement policies did not affect the creation during the 1967–77 period of the infrastructure for settlements vital to the subsequent expansion that Men-

achem Begin and Ariel Sharon inaugurated during the first era of U.S.-led diplomacy. During the 1983–1993 decade, the settler population of the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) increased fivefold, from 22,800 to 111,600. During the next 10 years, the Oslo years, notwithstanding episodic settlement restraint, “peace” and settlements co-existed as settlers, enjoying unprecedented government support, increased by 110,000, doubling to 224,669.

[T]here is one more thing we should bear in mind—that Israel has never removed even a single settlement as part of negotiations with the Palestinians. Any settlement that has been removed, including all those in the Gaza Strip, were removed solely because of the pressure of Palestinian terror. In other words, from a purely Palestinian perspective, there is nothing to discuss with Israel, since dialogue gets them nothing. Israel, they think, only understands the language of terror.

Apart from that, let’s leave the Palestinians to one side for the moment and ask ourselves what we really want. Are we ready, for the sake of real peace in the Middle East, to withdraw fully to the 1967 borders, without any tricks, without any settlement blocs and without expanding Jerusalem? On that issue, we are one united front, one front of rejectionism, declaring for the whole world to hear: “No!”

Kobi Niv, *Ma’ariv*, April 7, 2008

The second intifada that began in late 2000 initiated an era of unprecedented physical insecurity for West Bank settlers. The separation barrier built as a consequence has marginalized some but by no means all of the settlements on the “Palestinian” side, some of which were failing as new communities in any case. The Palestinian rebellion also produced a marked decline in housing starts in settlements, from 6.6 per cent of all starts nationally in 2000 to only 2.5 per cent in 2001, with only marginal increases since.

Notwithstanding this “achievement,” armed Palestinian insurrection and terror have failed to undermine the West Bank settlement enterprise, which continues to grow and expand with catastrophic consequences for Palestinian political, economic, and civic life. For example, despite the reduction in new housing, the West Bank settler population grew to 282,000 at the end of 2007, an increase of 5.2% over the year before and a rate of growth three times higher than the rate of population increase in Israel. The population in East Jerusalem is almost 200,000.

Israel has gone to extraordinary lengths to restore to settlers a sense of security. The separation barrier is part of a draconian “closure” system that accompanied the direct reoccupation of the West Bank in April 2002. This system is designed not only to free Israel from Palestinian terror attacks but also to reaffirm the IDF’s foremost commitment to preserve settlers’ “normal, everyday life,” at great and continuing cost to Palestinians.

The End of Settlements in Sinai and Gaza

There are two noteworthy exceptions to the rule of permanent and unchangeable Israeli security and settlement policies. In Egyptian Sinai, where Israel had once famously declared its preference for Sharm el Sheikh over peace, the “settlements equals security” equation was shattered by the October 1973 war. As part of a peace treaty with its most powerful Arab enemy, Israel retreated to the international border, abandoning an extensive settlement infrastructure that required the removal of more than 5,000 settlers.

In the Gaza Strip, almost two decades of insurrection and terror forced Israel to make a similar reappraisal of the settlement equals security equation. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s dramatic decision in 2004 to “disengage” from the Gaza Strip repudiated the conventional diplomatic approach to solving

the Israel-Palestinian problem. Sharon ignored appeals for a settlement freeze of the kind at the center of U.S.-led diplomacy for almost three decades. Nor did he condition the destruction of Gaza settlements and the evacuation of their inhabitants upon a negotiated agreement with the PLO, or Gaza’s demilitarization.

Sharon’s pathbreaking decision to remove settlements owed nothing to diplomacy of the Oslo-Annapolis era, which had created a conducive environment for settlement expansion. Sharon rejected these failed recipes for resolving

the conflict, reluctantly concluding that Israeli security could be enhanced by the evacuation of all settlements in the Gaza Strip and the defense of Israel from *within its own borders*. Where Gaza’s settlements had once provided an instrument and a rationale for continuing occupation, there was no place for them in the new security doctrine defined by Sharon.

This dramatic change in Israel’s security concept was the product of a sustained Palestinian rebellion against Israeli rule in Gaza that began in December 1987 and has yet to cease. Sharon abandoned Gaza and its settlements when the costs of occupation and settlement became too high. The successful Palestinian effort to force Israel to remove

settlements, like Sharon’s policy, owed nothing to the stalled diplomatic framework long championed by Washington. Force and terror rather than diplomacy led Israel out of Gaza.

The West Bank, however, is not the Gaza Strip. On this front, as the map on page 3 illustrates, Israel is not prepared to defend itself from within its own borders. West Bank settlements were originally created as an instrument of this policy, helping to transform the IDF in the eyes of most Israelis from an occupying army to a force defending the homeland. Settlement long ago became an end unto itself, complicating and undermining Israeli security. Yet neither diplomacy sponsored by successive U.S. administrations, terror nor armed or popular rebellion against Israeli rule has prompted a change in Israel’s West Bank settlement map.

President Bush recently “assured” Abu Mazen “that a Palestinian state’s a high priority for me and my administration: a viable state that doesn’t look like Swiss cheese, a state that provides hope.” There is little prospect, however, that in his remaining months, Bush will challenge Israeli policies meant to prevent the kind of Palestinian state-in-the-making he claims to support. The next president will confront the challenge of reversing this legacy of failure. ♦

[T]he issue of colonization and its expansion has been—since 1967—the main obstacle in front of a peace settlement. If some extremist rightist sectors [in Israel] consider colonization as being a national and religious duty, all the subsequent Israeli governments are fully responsible for giving a free reign and a green light for these sectors to take over Palestinian territories by the power of Israeli authorities and then build settlements in the West Bank, although achieving just peace requires primarily returning the lands to the Palestinians.

al-Quds, March 12, 2008

TESTIMONIES OF SOLDIERS ON THE FRONT LINE

Breaking the Silence: Soldier Testimonies on Settler Violence

On April 18, 2008, the organization Breaking the Silence published testimonies of soldiers who served in Hebron from 2005–2007.

“This Passover,” noted the booklet’s introduction, “when we are commemorating 40 years of Israeli settlement in Hebron, we ask to show the public the moral price inherent in the IDF’s control over the occupied territories.”

The booklet contains testimonies from almost all of the units who served in Hebron during the past two years. It notes that “incidents of looting, infiltrating houses for no reason, harsh physical abuse towards Palestinians, and firing at Palestinians contrary to any official IDF rules of engagement” described by the soldiers, “are normative, and cannot be described as ‘exceptional’ . . . Soldiers have to cope not only with the Palestinian population, who are directly under their control, but also with [extremist] settlers.

“We demand from Israeli society to hear the voices of its soldiers serving on the front lines. Israel must claim responsibility for the actions being done in the occupied territories.”

A New Illegal Outpost

Rank: First Sergeant

In Hebron, the settlers built an illegal outpost and they decided that the local population could not use the route that the settlers used on their way to prayers, despite the fact that they had no authority to do so. Whenever an Arab walked by, they would throw stones and shout at him and sometimes even beat them. The settlers’ children heaped abuse on the Arabs and pregnant Arab women. They denigrated the religious soldiers in our platoon and said that they did not deserve to be religious.

Arab Festivities

Rank: First Sergeant; *Unit:* Battalion 50, Nahal Infantry

During a patrol in Hebron which took place during an Arab holy day, there were festivities of food and fun. The Jewish residents of Hebron started to run about and overturn Arab stalls, and I personally saw Magav (border) policemen helping them and beating Arabs, telling them to shut up and be quiet.

The Dream

Rank: Officer; *Unit:* Nahal Brigade

As a woman, I slept with one of the units in Hebron, and because there was no room for girls, I would sleep in the guys’ room. I remember one night, at 4:00 in the morning, one of the commanders came. He was a sergeant, and he wakes me up; he is wearing a helmet. I jump out of bed, and he is still in full gear. I ask him if something happened. He tells me, “I had a dream,” so I say, “What did you dream?”

He says, “I dreamed that Jews were hitting me and that

Arabs are hitting me, and I have nothing I can do.” So I say, “That wasn’t just a dream, something happened on guard duty?” And he says “Yes.” I really had to pull it out of him; he was in complete shock. They had just pulled out settlers from a Palestinian shop in Hebron, and the Palestinians came to protect their shop. . . and the soldiers were getting hit from both sides. The soldier was in complete shock, and I had to physically help him take off his helmet, and fall asleep. . . . [T]hose kinds of things really stuck in my head.

Schindler’s List

Rank: First Sergeant; *Unit:* Givati Brigade

When there was that infiltration into [the Gaza Strip settlement of] Netzarim, when two (male) soldiers and one girl soldier, remember? When a terrorist infiltrated an army post in Netzarim. So [the IDF] blew up two huge buildings and a police station. Because they blew up two buildings of 15–20 stories with a ton of explosives . . . the whole neighborhood had to be evacuated. The whole neighborhood, it was an upscale neighborhood, and in the rich Palestinian neighborhoods there is one rule: they don’t shoot. Because if they shoot, then their home will be destroyed. Palestinians, Arabs are like Arabs. [They]worry about their own ass. It was a neighborhood of all the corrupt Palestinian Authority people. It was a neighborhood . . . if you’ve ever been in north Tel Aviv, it’s the same. Villas and new cars. It wasn’t Gaza at all; I should only have such things. Huge houses, villas; of course they didn’t shoot at us even one bullet from there.

They blew up that area?

Yes, it was exploded. The story is that we had to evacuate 4,000 people. Did you see Schindler’s List? When they evacuated the ghetto? Although you have to make a thousand distinctions, it was an amazing picture. Really amazing; you see thousands of people. They pass in armored vehicles and big loudspeakers shouting at them in Arabic, passing out leaflets, a special unit passes almost house to house and evacuates everybody, without shooting, nothing. But 4,000 people, you can imagine. Those were very big buildings, simply, the first thing that comes into your head is Schindler’s List. You see thousands of people with small children.

How were they evacuated?

How were they evacuated? They simply told them to go east. Just take everything and go east. 4,000 people. In the middle of the night. You just see children, old people, women, all crammed into cars . . . on foot. Nothing, nothing an amazing sight. . . . [I]t just gives you the chills . . . as if, I just couldn’t . . . I just . . . I just . . . you can’t compare, but it was just like in the movie . . . of course, you know it isn’t the same thing because you’re not a Nazi and you’re not killing them out of hatred or something. You’re even doing it for their own good, so that they don’t get hurt from the explosives, you understand. But I can’t help but not compare and not think about it. ♦

Barak and Settlers Agree to Evacuate 26 Outposts

Under an agreement reached between Defense Minister Ehud Barak and settler leaders, 26 West Bank outposts built on private Palestinian land after March 2001 will be evacuated. The plan is to relocate the outposts into large settlement blocs and into settlements near Jerusalem, under the assumption that these will remain in Israel in a final-status agreement. Israel had promised the United States that it would evacuate these outposts. The first three or four outposts will be evacuated voluntarily and relocated.

Yesha council head Danny Dayan, who is conducting the negotiations with his colleagues Pinhas Wallerstein and Ze'ev Hever, said they were drafting an agreement "to evacuate a number of structures in two or three outposts. We want the government to authorize outposts that were built on state lands." He refused to say which outposts would be relocated. "Their names are not clear yet. In any case you wouldn't know any of the names. They're not outposts that families live on," he said.

Akiva Eldar, in *Ha'aretz*, explained that this agreement recalls an earlier one between Barak and the settlers. "In October 1999, when he was prime minister, he struck a deal with settler leaders under which 10 outposts would be evacuated voluntarily, and in exchange 32 others would receive legal status. 'The sites that will be evacuated will continue to remain under settlement control, and agricultural and other activities can be conducted there,' the Yesha Council of settlements informed its members in a letter. 'We have sanctified the building of the land, and not the government's victory.' The agricultural and "other" activity became, as always, building projects. On the eve of the agreement, the settlers pulled a fast one on Barak, and hauled in four empty mobile homes that they subsequently removed with great to-do. The rest of the outposts gradually returned to where they had been. And what reason does Barak have to believe that this successful trick won't be repeated. . . ."

"Settlers Agree to Evacuate Some
Illegal West Bank Outposts in Deal Struck
with Barak," *Ha'aretz*, March 7, 2008;
"Security Forces Cut Off Water to Hilltop Community,"
Arutz 7, March 5, 2008, *Ha'aretz*, January 15, 2008

The New Settlers

". . . in the wake of separate meetings between United Torah Judaism and Shas leaders with the heads of the Beitar Ilit settlement, the prime minister's decision to allow the establishment of 600 new housing units at Pisgat Ze'ev, and 800 at Beitar Ilit, was made public. There is no doubt about it: The ultra-Orthodox factions have become the spearhead of the settlement enterprise over the Green Line, and they are

busy competing with one another over which of them will lead it.

An instructive process is developing: The original settlers, with their knitted skullcaps, are becoming more ultra-Orthodox, while the ultra-Orthodox public is becoming more nationalistic. The proximity of beliefs between the two camps is creating an effective pressure group having a real effect on the government's moves. . . . Olmert tries to pretend that his response to their demands is mere small change, but in fact they are dictating the agenda with regard to settlement over the Green Line and, in this way, they have an influence over the entire Israeli-Palestinian arena. . . .

Uzi Benjamin, *Ha'aretz*, April 2, 2008

**Expanding Settlements Means Removing
Palestinian People from their Land: The Story of Baqa'a**

Palestinian villagers from a small overcrowded village in the southern West Bank, northeast of Hebron, were recently threatened by the Israeli authorities with 32 house demolitions, which were to include a health clinic still under construction. The residents of this village are rapidly becoming poorer and risk losing their homes, all to create space for Israeli settlement expansion and the building of bypass Road 60.

In addition to land confiscated specifically for the building of Road 60, the Israeli authorities have designated an additional "buffer zone" of 180 meters on either side of the road, upon which Palestinians have been forbidden to build on their own land.

The Baqa'a valley, where this village lies, is a beautiful and fertile area situated to the east of Hebron, about a half-hour walk from the center of the city. The village houses approximately 60 Palestinian families, including several refugees from 1948. The inhabitants are mostly farmers, growing crops with grape vineyards, fruit and ancient olive trees. Where the soil is too rocky and steep for planting, sheep and donkeys graze freely around the homes. . . .

Since 1980, when the [nearby] settlement of Kiryat Arba began to expand, the residents of Baqa'a experienced many difficulties arising from their proximity to these settlements: land confiscation, harassment and house demolitions. In the last 12 years, around 30 buildings have been demolished by the Israeli authorities. The Israeli Committee Against House Demolition (ICAHN) has rebuilt six houses, of which three have been demolished again and three are presently under demolition orders. . . .

Ahmad Jaradat,
Alternative Information Center,
April 10, 2008

WE HEARD YOU, MR. BOIM

Housing Minister Ze'ev Boim explained away the construction of 750 new housing units in the settlement of Givat Ze'ev by saying that the permits had been issued in 1999, but that construction had stopped due to, as he put it, the "outbreak of violence." That is, the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising. . . .

I understood from his statements that Boim is inviting us—the Palestinians—to start another intifada. Boim's statements reminded me how, at the end of the last decade, at the height of the peace talks, when we were closer to the finish line than ever before, the Israelis continued unremittingly to build settlements. That is the case today: After Annapolis, the Paris conference, and the renewal of talks on the highest level, Israel is once more expanding its settlement construction.

The conclusion: Only when we launch an uprising does construction in the settlements cease; under the umbrella of negotiations, the settlement enterprise is revived. This, despite the fact that every Palestinian and every Israeli knows that the settlements are the main obstacle to a peace treaty.

Fortunately, the present Palestinian leadership consists of people like me who continue to believe, despite all the difficulties, in a peaceful solution to the conflict, through dialogue and negotiation. We are on the verge of despair, but we still hope that the Palestinian people will get what they deserve through diplomatic means.

We have a bitter dispute with those who believe that only violence will bring independence and freedom. Do the mem-

bers of the Israeli government hear our voices as well, or do they listen only to those calling for armed struggle? I know that such a struggle will not lead to surrender on either side, but rather only to suffering, mourning and loss. Does the Israeli government also understand this?

I listened closely to the Israeli housing minister's statements. They have one clear meaning: Do you want to stop construction in the settlements? Violence is the only way. Dialogue with the Israeli government will not help. Explanations about the damage settlement construction causes to the peace process will not help. Neither will stressing the despair this construction sows among the Palestinians—who see how Israel determines facts on the ground although the reality should be determined in negotiation.

Attempts at reminders that the Palestinians have a right to their land and that settlement construction is a breach of international law are of no avail. All of this will not stop the construction, which is a disaster for Palestinians and a disaster for Israelis, since all of our lives depend on attaining an Israeli-Palestinian agreement.

What will help? A violent uprising. That is the only thing, according to the Israeli housing minister, that will bring about the cessation of construction in the settlements and protect the Palestinian interest.

Mr. Boim, we got the message. Will anyone in Israel yet accuse you of incitement to rebellion and resistance?

Kadura Fares, *Ha'aretz*, March 26, 2008

I think that the end of the occupation is inevitable and closer than what many imagine. I think that there is no future for this occupation. The legendary intifada and steadfastness of our people have turned the occupation from a profitable project for its supporters to a big and heavy burden they cannot shoulder. I am optimistic about an end to this occupation

and about a new dawn for our Palestinian people—the dawn of freedom, return and independence. The last day of the occupation will be the first day of peace in this region.

**Jailed Palestinian MP Marwan al-Barghuthi,
al-Quds, April 28, 2008**

Foundation for Middle East Peace
1761 N Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: 202-835-3650
Fax: 202-835-3651
E-mail: info@fmep.org
Internet: <http://www.fmep.org>

FIRST CLASS
US POSTAGE
PAID
MERRIFIELD, VA
PERMIT #2333



RECYCLED PAPER