

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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ISRAEL LEADS THE CONTEST WITH PALESTINIANS FOR “STAYING POWER”

By *Geoffrey Aronson*

When asked about his legacy as president, George W. Bush recently remarked, “Oh, I don’t know. I’ll be dead when they finally figure it out. I’ll be long gone before somebody finally figures out the true merit and meaning of the Bush administration.”

Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert has revealed a greater interest in defining by year’s end his own historical contribution, an intention no doubt fueled by his July 30 decision to resign from leadership of the Kadima party, and thus the premiership. Notwithstanding this choice, forced upon him by allegations of corruption, the complexities of Israeli politics may enable Olmert to remain prime minister until after Bush’s successor enters the White House in January 2009. Despite his abysmal standing in the polls—only 6 percent of Israelis consider him worthy to be prime minister—Olmert’s remaining months in power offer him a last opportunity to reverse the policies of occupation and settlement over which he has presided.

Olmert has spoken far more forthrightly and eloquently than his predecessors of the unbearable cost to Israel of continuing occupation and settlement—if only beyond the still-unfinished separation barrier. He has also begun what will certainly be a tortuous diplomatic and military path towards establishing a common language with Hamas, the victor in the last Palestinian

elections and the de facto government in Gaza.

Yet Olmert has acted in a manner contrary to his laudable rhetoric and his contacts with Hamas. Rather than break with the policies of his predecessors, he has promoted the consolidation of the instruments of occupation, settlement, and overlordship of Palestinians that will arguably be his most lasting legacy.

The parallel negotiating tracks established after the November 2007 Annapolis meeting—one between Olmert and Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas, the other between Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and lead negotiator Ahmad Qur’ei—have been “serious and professional” according to participants. Olmert has said that he does not “see a practical possibility of achieving understandings on the issue of Jerusalem by the end of the year,” but that on borders and refugees “the differences aren’t dramatic.” Aluf Benn, in *Ha’aretz*, reported details of a proposal conveyed by Olmert to Abbas, according to which “Israel would keep 7 percent of the West Bank, while the Palestinians would receive territory equivalent to 5.5 percent of West Bank. . . . The land to be annexed to Israel would include the large settlement blocs, and the border would be similar to the present route of the separation fence. Israel would keep Ma’ale Adumim, Gush Etzion (including Efrat), the settlements surrounding Jerusalem and some land in the northern West Bank adjacent to Israel (including the Ariel

‘finger’).” Interestingly, Israel’s annexation of agreed upon parts of the West Bank would take place immediately upon signature of the agreement—“Olmert’s proposal states that once a border is agreed upon, Israel would be able to build freely in the settlement blocs to be annexed [more than 55 settlements with a population of more than 400,000]”—while the transfer of “swapped” territory to Palestine, as well as settlement evacuation in the remainder of the West Bank [including approximately 70 settlements with a population of 70,000] would have no timetable and would have to await completion of “a series of internal [Palestinian] reforms,” including the restoration of Fateh’s rule in the Gaza Strip.

There are also reports of efforts to reach a bilateral U.S.-Israel understanding on the security principles that would govern an eventual Israeli-Palestinian agreement. If agreed to by Washington, the terms being discussed would signal American support for a permanent Israeli military presence throughout the West Bank and along its borders.

Even if the most forthcoming outcome of the Annapolis process materializes by the end of Olmert’s term, the implementation of an agreement that promises an end to occupation and settlement and the establishment of a viable and sovereign Palestinian state will remain distant and uncertain.

ISRAEL, *continued on page 4*

TO OUR READERS

This *Report* explores the glaring contradiction between Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's statements that Israel will be "finished" if it does not end its occupation of the Palestinians, and his government's policy of expanding settlements that ensure permanent conquest and settlement of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

According to a recent report from Peace Now in Israel, settlement construction has almost doubled over the past year. One thousand new buildings containing 2,600 new housing units are underway, construction tenders are up 550 percent, and plans for new housing units in east Jerusalem have jumped to 6,843 from 1,734. This burst of settlement activity is on both sides of the separation barrier, belying the notion that the barrier defines Israel's concept of its final borders and a smaller Palestinian state east of the barrier. On the contrary, continued settlement building is strategically located throughout the West Bank to preclude absolutely the emergence of any

Palestinian entity that could be called a state. This aggressive settlement expansion is occurring while Olmert is going through the motions of negotiating a two-state peace agreement with the Palestinians by the end of 2008.

It is clear that Olmert and the majority of Israel's secular political leaders now understand that settlements are bad for Israel, but have become hostage politically to a settler lobby that has seized control of this issue. Yet, as Jeff Aronson points out in this issue, Olmert and his colleagues are also paralyzed by a syndrome in Israel's political culture that has not reconciled an urge, based on its embattled history and centuries of Jewish powerlessness, to prove strength and defeat their Palestinian adversaries, with an intellectual recognition that this would be a hollow victory that would lead to Israel's own defeat as a Jewish, democratic state.

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East Jerusalem Settler Population, 2000–2006

	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2000
East Talpiot	12,078	12,158	12,238	12,439	12,591	12,845
French Hill (Givat Shapira)	6,724	6,589	6,630	6,628	6,631	8,193
Gilo	27,173	27,258	27,309	27,425	27,569	27,637
Giv'at Ha-Matos, Har Homa	6,040	4,604	3,354	2,152	1,125	763
Giv'at Ha-Mivtar, Ramat Eshkol (east)	2,901	2,912	2,959	2,958	2,948	2,912
Ma'alot Dafna, Kiryat Arye	3,765	3,675	3,647	3,664	3,617	3,645
Neve Ya'akov	20,149	20,156	20,218	20,306	20,250	20,288
Jewish Quarter (Old City)	2,546	2,476	2,451	2,387	2,348	2,279
Pisgat Ze'ev	41,653	41,208	40,665	39,747	38,684	36,469
Ramot Allon	40,837	40,367	40,027	39,383	38,992	37,934
Ramat Eshkol (west)	3,299	3,252	3,180	3,123	3,046	2,917
Ramat Shlomo	14,658	14,318	13,888	13,390	12,822	11,348
Sanhedriyya Ha-Murhevet, Har Ha-Hozvim (industrial zone)	5,034	5,084	5,021	4,999	4,994	5,018
Total	186,857	184,057	181,587	178,601	175,617	172,248

Source: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, *Statistical Yearbook of Jerusalem, 2000–2007*.

WHAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN SAYING

Do Settlements Represent Facts on the Ground?

Rice: No . . . and Yes

Question: With that [in] mind, Secretary Rice, I mean Israel has defied you publicly. You [called] for a hold on settlements and they're constructing thousands of new units. What are you going to do about it? Or is the Bush administration (inaudible)?

Secretary Condoleezza Rice: The settlement issue with Israel is not unique to the Bush administration.

Question: At a time when it's the most urgent—

Secretary Rice: The settlement issue is not unique to the Bush administration at a time when negotiations are going on either. There's a pattern here. And we're going to continue to raise it. I am hopeful that the Israelis understand that we very seriously are concerned not just about the activity itself, although that's an issue, but about the effect that it has on the confidence of the parties—of the Palestinians but also of the United States. There's no effort here to create facts on the ground. And we believe and have said that the realities on the ground have to be taken into account when any agreement is done. And a lot has happened since 1966.

But that said, it isn't acceptable to keep trying to create realities on the ground, new realities on the ground. And I think there is an important message there to the Israeli leadership.

Question: What kind of pressure are you putting on the Israeli leadership so that it's not just dialogue (inaudible)?

Secretary Rice: Israel is a sovereign government. And they've always said that they have a different position about this. But again, some of this comes down to whether the United States, when asked, is going to accept that new realities have been created on the ground or whether or not we continue to believe that when we talked about population realities on the ground, we were talking about population realities on the ground at the time. I think that's an important distinction here.

Rice Interview with the CNN Editorial Board,
New York, June 19, 2008

State: Israel's Roadmap Obligations Unclear and Subject to Dispute. The US Cannot Determine the Legitimacy of Settlements Until a Final Status Agreement Is Reached

[State Department Spokesperson] *Mr. Sean McCormack:* In terms of the settlements issue, I know that that was on the agenda for us to talk to [Defense] Minister [Ehud] Barak about. Our position on that is well known. We've talked about it. The fact that there are these continuing activities with respect to settlement activity is a problem. We have talked to the Israelis about that. We've talked to them about their Roadmap obligations and we're going to continue to do

so. We're also going to continue to talk about the political track, which is ongoing. . . .

Question: Apparently, based on his comments to reporters, the Israelis consider that—those [newly announced settlement] units as justified and there's no indication they're backing down on it.

Mr. McCormack: Well, you know, again, they have their point of view, we have our point of view, with respect to the Roadmap obligations. Our view is not changing, and we're going to continue talking to them about it. You know, ultimately, however, these questions about settlements where—you know, where lines are drawn, what is legitimate, what is not legitimate, with respect to Roadmap obligations, are only really ultimately going to be settled by a final negotiated settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians. You're not going to have these kinds of questions. You're not going to have these kinds of bumps in the road with respect to negotiations when these issues of settlements come up.

And so our focus is to work with both sides to get as far as we can in achieving a settlement on all final status issues by the end of the year. That remains our goal. We're going to continue to push on that goal. And ultimately, when you get to that point, whether that's in this administration or some administration down the road, these questions aren't going to become the grist for daily news stories anymore because the issues will have been settled.

State Department Daily Briefing, July 29, 2008

Rice: A Long Slog

Secretary Rice: Well, if you remember, the—Annapolis had three tracks. One was Roadmap implementation. The parties undertook, in 2003, a number of obligations to try and move the process forward, kind of on-the-ground obligations. And so, for instance, the Palestinians said that they would dismantle the infrastructure of terror. The Israelis made some representations about dismantling outposts.

It's a slog, to be quite frank.

Rice Remarks with Aspen Institute President
and CEO Walter Isaacson, August 3, 2008

Stop Settling, Please

On the settlement issue, I think I've made very clear the U.S. position that the settlement activity is not conducive to creating an environment for negotiations, yet negotiations go on. We continue to press the Israelis about their Roadmap obligations and to work with the Palestinians on their Roadmap obligations as well.

Rice remarks with Palestinian president
Mahmoud Abbas, Ramallah, August 26, 2008

Not so the other, more activist dimension of Olmert's West Bank agenda. Here Olmert's legacy is ominous and unambiguous—more settlements, more settlers and infrastructure to serve them, and the growing marginalization of Palestinian authority over the territory and people under its nominal administration.

It would be incomplete and misleading to focus on this record—the facts on the ground—without reference to Olmert's diplomatic engagement and his apparently genuine belief that it is in Israel's interest to remove some settlements; the same however, holds true for a blinkered attention to the uncertain, and so-far-unproductive diplomatic efforts begun at Annapolis.

How, then, can Olmert's continuing contribution to the sustainability and expansion of settlements be reconciled with his unprecedented critique of the settlement ethos?

The Old/New Politics of Settlement

Israelis—including its preeminent ruling institutions—the political elite, the military, and governing bodies including the Land Authority and the courts—have always viewed the occupation through the prism of what President Shimon Peres recently described as “the competition here over staying power,” whose roots hark back to the formative years of Zionist colonization in Palestine. Israelis continue to embrace this struggle as the defining aspect of relations with Palestinians. Competition for dominance and control—with settlements as the main currency—is the overriding context in which all policies are conceived and executed.

In the first decades of Israeli rule of the territories captured in June 1967, Israel enjoyed a national consensus in support of settlement. Critics of the policy were isolated and on the political margins. During this era, it would have been inconceivable for any Israeli prime minister to suggest, as Olmert has, that if the “two state solution collapses, the State of Israel is finished.” Until recently Olmert himself considered such views blasphemous. The settlers were “our boys,” continuing the time-honored Zionist tradition of marking the borders of Jewish sovereignty. By 1974, the limitations that Israel's Labor Party sought to impose on this national enterprise were crumbling. The Likud's election in May 1977 removed them entirely. Under Menachem Begin's stewardship and throughout the 1980s, with enthusiastic support from backbenchers like Olmert, settlement “throughout the Land of Israel” was lauded as an expression of the best of Zionism and an appropriate “Zionist response” to Palestinian opposition to Jewish settlement anywhere in Palestine.

The first intifada, which began in December 1987, marked the beginning of Israel's popular and political disenchantment with the settlement enterprise. Yet during the Oslo years, settlement expansion and the “peace process” proceeded in tandem, settlements having been explicitly excluded from the diplomatic agenda. Neither Labor's Yitzhak Rabin or Likud's

Benjamin Netanyahu uttered a word in support of Palestinian statehood, and discussion of settlement evacuation was absent from mainstream Israeli debate.

As prime minister at the turn of the century, Ehud Barak preceded Olmert in his alienation from the settlement movement as represented by the national-religious right. So too did public opinion. Israelis no longer view settlers, especially those claiming land east of the separation barrier, as “our boys” returning to the homeland, but as anachronistic artifacts from a bygone era, claiming lands that very few Israelis venture to visit. (A recent poll by Peace Now reports that 73 percent of Israelis have not traveled to a West Bank settlement in the last five years, and among those who have, 20 percent did so as part of their military service.) Overwhelming public support for Ariel Sharon's evacuation of settlers and the IDF from the Gaza Strip in 2005 demonstrated the failure of settlers to “settle in the hearts” of the Israeli public.

Yet even as the settlement movement lost its pride of place among Israelis, and politicians became more critical of settlers still wedded to the brutal confrontation with Palestinians over control of the West Bank heartland and East Jerusalem, the competition for staying power and domination, rather than partnership in a shared destiny, continues to drive Israeli policy. Olmert represents not only the growing recognition among Israelis of Israel's interest in retreating from the West Bank and supporting the establishment of a Palestinian state, but also the prevailing view supporting the zero-sum contest for control of the land. This duality is the key to the conundrum that characterizes Olmert's record, and helps to explain the contradiction between Olmert's impassioned but unrealized rhetoric acknowledging the costs of occupation and settlement and his real achievements in their favor.

At a time when Israel's political elite no longer views settlers as sainted emissaries of Greater Israel, four dynamic decades of settlement expansion have created new centers of power in support of settlement on both sides of the separation barrier that Israeli politicians, including Olmert, no matter what their personal views, find easier to accommodate than confront.

“Does anyone really believe that Olmert, Tzipi Livni, Shaul Mofaz et al are capable of relocating (or expelling, depending on one's point of view) 250,000 people?,” asked Eitan Haber, formerly a close aide to Yitzhak Rabin. “Is there anyone in Israel today capable of giving that order and surviving politically? Israel will continue to spin out of control, until something major, something dramatic, something huge and something unprecedented happens. Something that will bring the tailspin to a sudden end in the tempestuous waters.”

Settlement towns such as Ariel, Alfe Menashe, and Ma'ale Adumim today boast tens of thousands of secular, middle-class residents, who see themselves as Israelis in pursuit of the good life, not settlers. They, like politicians and government ministries, view their communities as part of Israel, and see nothing unusual in claiming (more than) their proportionate share of the national budget.

Settlements of exploding ultra-orthodox communities beyond the Green Line—Mod'in Ilit and Beitar Ilit are the fastest growing settlements—have created a newly powerful political lobby for settlement expansion at least as important as the “religious Zionist” settlers who spearhead efforts east of the separation barrier and secular Israelis seeking to improve their “quality of life.” These non-Zionist ultra-Orthodox have been won over to settlement in the West Bank not because of any love for Greater Israel but as a politically palatable solution to the housing needs of their poor but rapidly growing community.

“In early April,” reported *Ma'ariv* columnist Shalom Yerushalmi, “Communication Minister Ariel Atias from Shas came in to see the prime minister. ‘Listen to me now,’ he threatened. ‘Unless you approve 286 new housing units in Beitar Ilit, all of our Knesset members will just get up and leave the plenum when the next no-confidence vote comes up. I’m telling you this just between the two of us, no media and no brouhaha.’ Two days later he phoned Shas leader, Rabbi Ovadia Yossef, to say that the Prime Minister’s Office okayed the added construction in the West Bank settlement. . . . Finally, after the expansion in Beitar Ilit was once again postponed to facilitate a smoother visit by Rice, some of the land for the 286 new units was allocated and re-zoned for construction.”

The concept of “settlement blocs” as applied to areas west of the separation barrier is meant to sanitize and remove from the negotiating agenda numerous settlements, all of which are illegal according to international law. By acknowledging the “reality” of these blocs in April 2004, President Bush established a diplomatic foundation for Olmert to justify their eventual annexation by Israel.

The YESHA Council, the representative institution for the 280,000 Israelis living in the West Bank, carries political and economic as well as ideological weight that politicians of all parties would rather cooperate with than confront. The route of the separation barrier is a reflection of their power. So too are Olmert’s recent decisions to approve new construction in Beitar Ilit and elsewhere, and to refrain from forced evacuation of settlement outposts championed by YESHA leaders.

There are, however, tensions within the settlement movement itself—for example between the “outpost lobby” and the YESHA Council—over the most effective means to expand

settlements and to extend “Jewish” control over the land. The YESHA leadership came of age in an era where respect for the IDF and collaboration with state institutions like the army were usually the rule. In contrast, many of the young people manning new settlement outposts disdain the army and do not recognize the authority of the state. Moreover to them, “every caravan is Masada”—an attitude that precludes compromise. Zeev Hever, for example, is a veteran member of the Jewish terror cells of the 1980s who worked closely with Ariel Sharon to settle the West Bank. According to *Ha'aretz*, Hever “is being persecuted by the right wing, which is more extreme than he is. The man who invented the diversionary tactics that enabled the construction of the supposedly legal state-funded settlements is now regarded as too moderate and

is being harassed for his willingness to give up two outposts in order to hang on to a hundred others.” Hever is reportedly considering leaving the settlement of Kiryat Arba (for the settlement of Ofra) because of threats made against him by even more radical settlers. Yet despite their internal conflicts, settlers remain united in their determination not to permit Israel’s political or judicial establishment, or its security forces to restrict their settlement agenda. They have largely succeeded.

Relations between the IDF—charged with defending the broadest prerogatives of settlers—and the “hilltop youth” manning the 100 or so new settlement outposts established in the last 12 years, are at times confrontational. The removal of a bus being used by settlers as a mobile home in an unauthorized settlement outpost led to confrontations in late July that an IDF official described as having

“crossed all the red lines.” It was reported that in one instance a settler held a knife to the throat of a soldier and stole his helmet before fleeing. *Ma'ariv* quoted an IDF officer acknowledging that “the settlers intend to show that they have power on the ground with the goal of blocking any legal mission, such as the evacuation of outposts. We will have to rethink the matter and respond accordingly.”

Israel’s High Court of Justice has also been mobilized in support of the contest for staying power. The court actively supports the advancement of settlement and occupation, as it did when it defied the views of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the separation barrier and asserted

[T]he golem has risen up against its creator: When the public finally realized that if the Jewish national movement does not absorb universal foundations of human rights, democracy and the rule of law it will doom itself to destruction, a force had already arisen over the Green Line that now threatens to drown all of Israel.

Thus a minority took control of the fate of the entire society and held it hostage, due both to the left’s ideological impotence and a lack of character, determination and leadership. If society does not find the emotional strength to remove the noose of the settlements, nothing but a sad memory will remain of the Jewish state as it still exists.”

Zeev Sternhal, *Ha'aretz*, August 8, 2008

ISRAEL, continued on page 6

the rights of settlers. While the Court has occasionally ordered the IDF to make marginal, if locally significant changes in the barrier's route to mitigate harm to Palestinians, these instructions have been all but ignored by Olmert. Justices grant any settler who fancies a house or piece of land preferred standing to refute the claims of Palestinian owners. Earlier this year, the court validated the exclusion of Palestinians from a road built "for public purposes" on land expropriated from them. Even when its rulings appear to constrain settlement—the Elon Moreh case, which was meant to forbid the taking of private Palestinian land for civilian settlement, is the most prominent example—the settlement machine has conjured administrative and legal fictions that have nullified its impact when it has not simply ignored the court's views, often with the latter's passive complicity. So, in the wake of the court's Elon Moreh decision in 1979, the "state lands" rationale became the "legal" method of choice for land theft for settlement . . . and private land continued to be taken in any case. Most recently, in August the court-ordered date for the evacuation of the outpost settlement of Migron, built on private Palestinian land, passed without action by the Defense Ministry headed by Ehud Barak to enforce the judgment. Instead, settlers were offered the chance to remain—and expand—until new housing in a new settlement is constructed—an offer they refused.

"Barak has not made a single decision that was geared to tighten law enforcement in the West Bank," observed *Yediot Abaronot* columnist Nahum Barnea. "Forget about a decision—no one has heard him speak. Barak's support for the rule of law is very enthusiastic, very convincing, but it never crosses the Green Line. No less interesting than Barak's attitude towards the High Court is the Court's attitude towards Barak. Time and time again the defense minister has asked to put off honoring his commitment to evacuate unauthorized settlement outposts, and every time that extension has been given. He promises to evacuate the settlements consensually despite the fact that in the case of Migron, at least, a settlement that has become firmly established, all the talk about a consensual evacuation is nothing more than a ruse—and the judges swallow their own spit and accede."

In East Jerusalem, the high court ordered settlers to be removed from a seven-storey building constructed without a permit that they are illegally occupying in the East Jerusalem village of Silwan. In response, city administrators are working "to kosher" the structure. In the settlement of Ofra, settlers took the unusual step of working on the Sabbath (actually they hired non-Jews to do the work) to rush completion and population of houses built on private Palestinian land that the Court had ruled the settlers could not occupy. As the settler-newswire Arutz 7 observed, "The houses are now occupied by Jews, causing a legal anomaly—as the High Court ordered the occupancy to be 'halted'."

Olmert declares that "only dreamers still believe in the

Whole Land of Israel," and worries, according to *Ha'aretz*, that support among the American elite for the idea of a state of all its citizens "poses a very dangerous process that endangers our existence as a Jewish state." Meanwhile, Olmert supports policies that will bring such a day closer. The settler population of the West Bank rose by 15,000 during 2007, an annual increase of 5.5 per cent, a rate three times the national rate of growth. Olmert claims that Israel is "closer than ever to firm understandings that can serve as a basis for agreements" with the Palestinians (and Syrians). . . . If he is right, then in the short time left to him, it would be better to leave a legacy that ends occupation and settlement rather than one that perpetuates it. ♦

In the land of the settlers, disengagement is a bleeding wound. It changed not only their relationship with the state, but also the relationship amongst themselves. The central leadership has crumbled, and the settlement movement today is led by wild groups of young people who are openly fed up with Israel and its institutions.

And this anger makes them lose it. Almost not a day goes by without an incident vis-à-vis the security forces. A settler wrests away a soldier's rifle; a group of children yells "Nazis" at the reservists guarding them; IDF Central Command jeeps are blocked; a police cruiser's tires are slashed.

On occasion, when a settler is arrested, they impose a siege on the police station and try to get their friend out by force, as if we were some kind of foreign colonialist regime in Zimbabwe or Congo. They are mad at the IDF, show contempt to the law, and refuse to accept the state's authority. This is the case in the outpost of Migron, as well as the daily infiltrations to the evacuated settlement Homesh and to Joseph's Tomb; this is the case in settlements such as Yitzhar and Tapuach.

And as always, they do the job for their rivals—because more than any spineless Yossi Beilin speech, they define the place they live in as "not Israel."

This is a lawless land, lacking respect, where people who are different than us live and conduct themselves in line with codes we don't understand. It is a land that has rejected all the basic values that hold us together: The respect to IDF soldiers, the sense of solidarity, the realization that the police do an exhausting job under impossible conditions.

These people create a situation whereby, when the day comes, and the agreements are signed on the lawn in Washington, it will be easier to give up this land, which isn't really ours; this land where not only the laws and landscape are different, but also the people.

Yair Lapid, Ynetnews.com, August 19, 2008

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

May 28 Israel's military court approves orders to remove settlers squatting in two shops in Hebron that belong to Palestinians who had fled the area. (*Ha'aretz*)

May 30 Settlers from Efrata, Har Homa, Kiryat Arba, and Teqoa march to the old military base east of Beit Sahour that was vacated in 2006. (OCHA)

May 31 Settlers escorted by the IDF enter Nablus to visit Joseph's Tomb, near the Balata refugee camp. (OCHA)

June 1 For the second time in two years, religious-Zionist rabbis enter the Haram al-Sharif [Temple Mount]. (*Ha'aretz*)

Construction and Housing Minister Ze'ev Boim announces the issuance of tenders to build 763 units in the East Jerusalem settlement of Pisgat Ze'ev and 121 units in Har Homa. (*Jerusalem Post*)

June 2 The Israel Land Administration publishes tenders for 47 housing units in the East Jerusalem settlement of Pisgat Ze'ev. (*Ha'aretz*)

June 4 The human rights groups Yesh Din and B'tselem submit a petition to Israel's High Court of Justice opposing the construction of nine housing units in the settlement of Ofra on private Palestinian land. (*Ha'aretz*)

Construction of the separation barrier near the Palestinian village of Ni'lin restarts following the High Court of Justice's rejection on May 20 of an appeal by village residents. (OCHA)

Israel conducts extensive land leveling in the vicinity of the Har Homa settlement in East Jerusalem. (OCHA)

June 6 Settlers from the Ha'shmonaim settlement fire bullets at Israeli, Palestinian, and international activists demonstrating in Ni'lin against the construction of the separation barrier. IDF soldiers firing rubber-coated bullets injure three Palestinian males. (OCHA)

June 8 Using iron pipes, settlers attack and injure a Palestinian family from Yatta as they graze their sheep. (OCHA)

Settlers cut down four trees in the Ibrahimi Mosque garden in preparation for a wedding. (OCHA)

In response to a petition by Yesh Din and B'tselem, leaders of the Ofra settlement confirm to the High Court of Justice that resi-

dents occupy the nine buildings whose construction is opposed by the two groups. (*Ha'aretz*)

June 10 *Ha'aretz* reports the removal of ten West Bank roadblocks by the IDF to ease Palestinian traffic.

Settlers from Kiryat Arba take control of land in the Wadi al-Hussein neighborhood in Hebron. (OCHA)

June 11 Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli settler's bus travelling on Road 443 near At Tira village. No injuries reported. The bus sustained some damage. (OCHA)

Settlers from Itamar settlement stopped leveling land for a road to the settlement near Beit Furik following IDF intervention. (OCHA)

June 13 A group of Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli settler's vehicle travelling near Abud village. No injuries were reported. (OCHA)

The IDF evacuated and then arrested nine settlers after they entered Joseph's Tomb near Balata refugee camp without prior coordination. (OCHA)

Plowing work continued in Sinsana settlement to allow for further settlement expansion. The area being plowed is known by the name Tur Al Nasrani and is located in the village of Al Ramadin. (OCHA)

June 15 The Jerusalem Planning Committee approves the construction of 40,000 housing units across the city, including in East Jerusalem settlements, and for the first time, in Palestinian neighborhoods, among them al-Sawiya, Shu'afat, and al-Tur. (*Ha'aretz*)

June 16 Settlers from Yitzhar settlement physically attacked three Palestinian shepherds in Burin village. After the three Palestinians managed to escape, the settlers stabbed and killed three donkeys. The incident is under investigation by the Israeli Police. (OCHA)

June 17 Forty Knesset members sign a proposal by MK Aryeh Eldad to allow settlers to reestablish settlements evacuated in 2005 in the northern West Bank as part of the "disengagement" from the Gaza Strip. (Arutz 7)

June 19 Nine Israeli police and 11 settlers are injured in clashes during an attempted evacuation of unauthorized buildings in

Yitzhar. (*Yediot Abaronot*)

Israel's High Court of Justice issues a ruling banning further construction on nine houses in the settlement of Ofra and orders the police and civil administration to enforce its ruling. (Arutz 7)

Settlers from Yitzhar settlement set fire to agricultural land belonging to Palestinian farmers from Burin, 'Asira al Qibliya and 'Urif villages. More than 800 dunums of olive groves were burnt. (OCHA)

Settlers from Yitzhar settlement throw stones at Palestinian vehicles and houses in Burin causing damage to windows of two houses. The IDF closed a segment of Road 60 between Yitzhar and Jit partial checkpoints for seven hours. (OCHA)

Settlers from Tappuah settlement set fire to agricultural land belonging to farmers from Yasuf village. About 48 dunums were burnt. (OCHA)

Settlers escorted by the IDF entered Nablus City and Joseph's Tomb near Balata refugee camp. (OCHA)

June 20 Palestinians shoot and injure three settlers hiking near Ramallah. (Arutz 7)

Ma'ariv reports on students from the Od Yosef Hai Yeshiva, in the Yitzhar settlement, firing a homemade rocket in the direction of a Palestinian village.

The IDF distributed a military order to requisition 1,500 dunums belonging to Palestinians from Beit Hanina al Balad to construct the Barrier between the village and Ramot settlement. Palestinians from Beit Hanina al Balad demonstrate against the requisition. (OCHA)

June 21 The IDF announces the removal of ten roadblocks in Ramallah. The action brings to 100 the number of roadblocks removed in June in the West Bank as part of a plan authorized by Defense Minister Ehud Barak.

Israeli settlers from Nehli'el settlement burned one olive tree and destroyed two greenhouses belonging to a farmer from Beitillu. This took place following a shooting incident that resulted in the injury of three settlers on 20 June. (OCHA)

June 30 Arutz 7 reports the creation of a new settlement, authorized by the Israeli government, near the settlement of Kiryat Arba, in Hebron. It houses 10 families.

West Bank Population Growth, East and West of the Barrier, Select Years, 1994–2006

Year	West of Barrier (excluding East Jerusalem)		West of Barrier (including East Jerusalem)		East of Barrier	
	Population	Annual increase (%)	Population	Annual increase (%)	Population	Annual increase (%)
2007 (September)	209,716	4.4	N/A	N/A	65,440	3.4
2006	200,823	5.6	373,947	3.6	63,271	6.1
2005	190,245	4.1	361,126	2.8	59,609	5.8
2004	182,816	5.8	351,167	3.9	56,359	4.7
2003	172,754	5.1	338,102	3.5	53,823	6.0
2002	164,379	7.3	326,800	N/A	50,777	5.6
2001	153,144	4.0	N/A	N/A	48,088	4.6
2000	147,213	41.3	304,711	N/A	45,978	52.9
1994	104,221	N/A	N/A	N/A	30,065	N/A

Sources: Central Bureau of Statistics, "List of Localities, 2000–2006";
Nadav Shragai, *Ha'aretz*, August 16, 2007;
Foundation for Middle East Peace, Settlement Database, 1994.

Hebron? The whole occupied territories are one big game, but the difference in Hebron is that the Jewish settlements are inside the town, and these are the worst zealots living there. There are all kinds of settlers, and they can be grouped. The guys from Gush Etzion are nicer. The people who live in Ariel actually think they're living in Tel Aviv. Twenty minutes drive on Highway no. 5. They don't notice; they don't know a thing. . . . The Efrat settlers, too, are these city jerks, [and] that's fine. . . . And there's Hebron, and there's pure evil pouring out of the settlers there. Evil. I can tell you there was one guy there who was okay. When the kids made trouble he'd come along, take his daughter and send her home. All the other parents would . . . actually send their kids to do it. I remember they broke into a "welded shop" (a shop whose doors the army had welded shut). There were these aluminum trays, all kinds of plastic containers and stuff. The kids pick them up

and take them home to their mommies. I forcibly took that out of her hands, put it back in its place and closed up, just so that an hour later they took it again, and although I didn't have to do it, for it doesn't help, I told her, "How could you do this?" "They kill us and this and that. . . ." What can I say? The mother sends her children to do this. . . . And every time we were at the Shaharabati House, the parents would distract the soldiers, and the children would sabotage the place. In Hebron it's an upside down world. Simply upside down. You protect the Palestinians there. I swear to you. Because [of] the Jews there. . . . You're used to Arabs throwing stones, but in Hebron it's different. The Arabs don't do anything, really nothing, and the settlers are the ones throwing stones all day. It was amazing, what went on in Hebron. . . .

Breaking the Silence, *Soldiers' Testimonies from Hebron, 2005–2007* (Jerusalem, 2008), Testimony 66, pp. 88–89

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>

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