

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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PEACEMAKING EFFORTS RUNNING ON EMPTY

By Geoffrey Aronson

As political theatre, September's Israeli-Palestinian clash at the UN proved to be an anticlimax. In dueling speeches before the UN General Assembly, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Chairman Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestine Liberation Organization ran in place. Abbas gave a stirring speech making the Palestinian case for statehood before an audience at pains to acknowledge it. Netanyahu left the podium as he arrived—his hand “stretched out in peace” according to principles that guarantee failure. President Barack Obama's remarks confirmed something that has been clear for many months: The U.S. peacemaking machine is out of ideas and energy. Soon after Obama's address, one Israeli commentator quipped that Netanyahu would have to rewrite his speech because the U.S. president had just delivered it. The Quartet, yet again, demonstrated its inability to break free of the U.S. policy straightjacket. After a frenzied diplomatic effort, it issued a milquetoast call to return to the negotiating table.

The most notable element of September was the PLO's determination to confront the Obama administration, which has left no doubt of its opposition to engaging the international community instead of, or even, as Abbas prefers, alongside U.S.-led diplomacy. The PLO's adoption of a policy agenda at odds with Washington has prompted

Settlement activities embody the core of the policy of colonial military occupation of the land of the Palestinian people and all of the brutality of aggression and racial discrimination against our people that this policy entails. This policy, which constitutes a breach of international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions, is the primary cause for the failure of the peace process, the collapse of dozens of opportunities, and the burial of the great hopes that arose from the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993 between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel to achieve a just peace that would begin a new era for our region.

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) chairman Mahmoud Abbas, speech to the UN General Assembly, September 23, 2011

threats from Congress to end financial support for the Palestinian Authority, a self-defeating notion if there ever was one, and one which Netanyahu has been quietly urging Republicans in the House of Representatives to abandon. The House's other contribution to peacemaking is the tabling of a bill supporting Israel's annexation of West Bank settlements.

Congress has dealt itself out of

responsible oversight, and the White House has put aside the vital interest in a peace agreement while President Obama campaigns for reelection. Even so, Washington will prevent the formalization by the UN Security Council of the international consensus supporting Palestinian sovereignty in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem and the creation of a Palestinian state that recognizes Israel. What it cannot do, however, is stop efforts on the ground to fill the leadership vacuum created by the Obama administration's retreat.

Facts on the Ground

The on again, off again military confrontations between Israel and Hamas have long ignored conventional approaches to peacemaking. Once confined to the area in and around Gaza, they now include Egypt's lawless Sinai region. In the West Bank, settlement expansion continues to dominate Israel's West Bank agenda. The first half of 2011 witnessed a whopping 500 percent increase in settlement housing starts, to 546. This number begins to reestablish the pace of expansion briefly interrupted by the settlement moratorium during 2010. New construction has been announced for numerous settlements, including the East Jerusalem settlement of Gilo, where 1,100 new units were recently approved. Settlers are calling on Netanyahu to expedite construction of 4,500 units across the West Bank. “The

PEACEMAKING, continued on page 6

TO OUR READERS

The Obama Administration's opposition to the Palestinian bid for member status in the UN is a very serious setback for American diplomacy and U.S. claims to leadership in the search for a two-state peace.

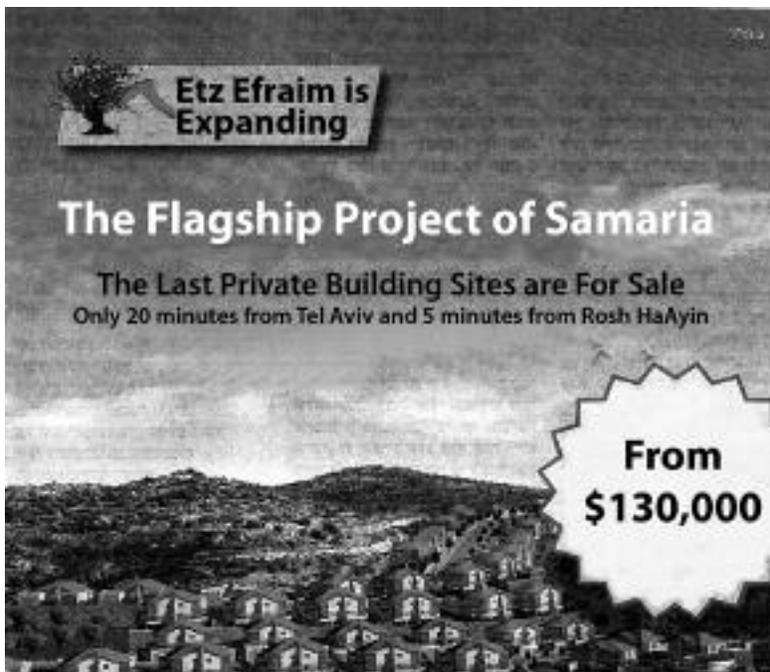
The White House may view this policy, which seeks to avoid the risk of losing Jewish votes and funds in the elections next year, as a tactical shift, and hope that the U.S. will resume strong peace efforts after 2012. But peace making cannot be turned off and on so easily, and every day in a four year election cycle is a race for votes and money. Leadership requires putting American national security interests first, notwithstanding domestic risks. American credibility abroad, once undermined, cannot be easily regained.

Whatever the merits of the President's domestic calculus, the rest of the world, especially Arabs and Muslims, will view U.S. opposition to the international consensus in favor of Palestinian statehood as an abdication of U.S. leadership. They see as hypocrisy Washington's support for the demands of other Arab societies for democracy and dignity, while dismissing those presented by Palestinians. The Pale-

stinians, themselves, view Washington's rejection at the UN of their right to self-determination as a betrayal of Obama's earlier commitments. And the Netanyahu government's plans for new settlement in East Jerusalem and elsewhere in the West Bank confirm their view that American interests can be ignored and that U.S.-Israeli relations are a one way street.

Some analysts welcomed the Palestinian UN initiative as a bold effort to escape from twenty years of failed U.S. peacemaking that has almost always deferred to Israel. It has been suggested that exposure of the illusion of even-handed, effective U.S. leadership will prompt others like the European Union to break the impasse. But Washington clings to its "lead" role, and it is doubtful that there is a real alternative, at present, given the strength of the U.S.-Israel relationship. Unless Washington finds a way to use this relationship more wisely in support of the common interests of the U.S., Israel, and Palestine, the conflict will continue.

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The Settlement That Was Not Established Costs \$1.35 Million in Compensation to Claimants

The state will spend \$1.35 million and give alternative land in the West Bank as a result of a chain of government misdeeds after land that was to be used to establish the settlement of Ramat Kidron was transferred to the Palestinian Authority. . . .

The plan was first mooted by Ariel Sharon during the premiership of Menachem Begin (1977–1983). Sharon's grandiose plan for isolating Jerusalem from the West Bank included the construction of a chain of settlements around it, from Ma'ale Adumim to the Etzion bloc, in order to isolate Abu Dis from areas under control of the Palestinian Authority. In this fashion, the settlement of Kedar was established. Ramat Kidron, to be built on private land owned by Jews, was meant to be part of the second stage of this plan, and it was approved in 1981. . . .

Failure to build a road link caused postponements and in 1994 the Rabin government canceled the plan to build the settlement. In 1998, the entire area was transferred to control of the Palestinian Authority as part of the Wye Plantation Agreement, a decision that put an end to plans for Ramat Kidron. Subsequently the [Jewish] landowners sued the state for compensation. Last week, a Jerusalem district court judge ruled that the government did not uphold its commitment to build the settlement, and awarded petitioners \$1.2 million in compensation and \$150,000 for court costs. He also ordered the government to find 44.2 dunams (10 acres) of alternative land.

Ha'aretz, August 8, 2011

Interview with Chairman of the Jerusalem Contractors Organization, Shmulik Levi

If we are talking about neighborhoods like Gilo, Har Homa, Pisgat Ze'ev, Ramat Shlomo, and Ramot, this is Greater Jerusalem and we need to join it to the historic city with American understanding. Who can stop us here? We must build there. No one will remove these neighborhoods.

But to go and build inside Sheikh Jarrah and inside what belongs to [Palestinians], I think that this will increase difficulties and our problems. To keep 300,000 Arabs within the municipal area of the city is a mistake. What are we doing to ourselves? They receive social services, education, and national insurance for free and they are not citizens of the country. We need to move the [separation] fence another two kilometers and then we will have 200,000 fewer Arabs [in Jerusalem].

The Arab areas I would take out. I don't want to have an Arab mayor. They are enemies of the state. We need to divide Jerusalem not because of them but for our own sake. Take Shoufat. Come, let's go now to Shoufat and Sheikh Jarrah.

We'll die of fear. Jerusalem is not a place where we should be afraid of traveling.

Yediot Yerushalim, July 15, 2011

The construction of 625 units in north Pisgat Ze'ev will expand the community in the direction of Neve Ya'acov and create an almost complete construction linkage between the two [East Jerusalem] settlements. In order to expedite construction the plan will be discussed by the special committee established recently by the prime minister in response to the wave of public protests that rocked Israel during the summer.

Ha'aretz, August 15, 2011

Residents of Jerusalem: Hamas at Your Service

Residents of Kfar Aqab are beyond the separation barrier but still reside in the municipal area of Jerusalem. Despite pleas from the residents, the municipality does not collect the community's trash. After repeatedly failing to win cooperation from the Jerusalem municipality, the local committee turned to nearby El Bireh in the West Bank. The city is run by officials elected on Hamas' Change and Reform ticket in 2006. In short order, El Bireh sent trucks to collect the garbage.

Yediot Yerushalaim, July 15, 2011

Residents of Neve Ya'acov Prevent Establishment of a New School in Beit Hanina

For seven years the Arab residents of Beit Hanina have asked to build a high school in the village on land that belongs to them. Their Jewish neighbors in Neve Ya'acov have prevented this time after time. A month ago the residents received a promise from the city that it will approve the budget for next year. Two weeks ago, the residents learned that the issue has instead been taken off the agenda. According to the residents of Neve Ya'acov, the school will be too close to them. It will bring Arab students onto their streets that will disturb their daughters. Their main fear is that they will suffer from stone throwing and Molotov cocktails. Some years ago the residents of Beit Hanina agreed as part of a compromise that the school would be for girls only. However, at the end of the day the opponents from Neve Ya'acov won out. A recent report noted that 4,000 Palestinian students in East Jerusalem are not enrolled in any school. One of the reasons for this is the severe shortage of classrooms.

The residents of Neve Ya'acov recently received support from nearby Pisgat Ze'ev residents, who have been waging a struggle for the past year against fraternization.

Ha'aretz, August 29, 2011,

Ma'ariv, August 17, 2011

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

June 1 Israeli security forces demolish four buildings at the El Ha'ayin outpost near the settlement of Shilo after which clashes ensue between border police officers and settlers resulting in light injuries and three arrests. (Israel Radio)

June 2 Border police and civil administration officials demolish structures in the outpost of Ga'on Yarden. (Arutz 7)

Security forces dismantle a house and three other structures at the Alei Ayin outpost. Settlers from the outpost set fire to the police car of the commander of the Binyamin region police precinct, which carried out the demolition. Five settlers and seven police officers are injured in ensuing clashes. (Army Radio, *Ma'ariv*)

June 5 About five thousand people in Israel attend a rally in support of recognizing a Palestinian state. (*Ha'aretz*)

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) suspend all visits to Joseph's Tomb in Nablus until it completes its investigations into recent unauthorized infiltrations of the site. Orthodox Jewish groups protest the decision and state their intention to continue visiting the site with or without authorization from the IDF. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

June 7 Settler youths deface a mosque in the village of el-Maghayir, near Ramallah, with the message, "price tag—Alei Ayin." The vandals also burn several prayer rugs in the mosque. (Army Radio, Nana10)

June 10 Israeli forces injure two Palestinians and detain two activists in the course of pacifying a demonstration against the occupation in Hebron. (Ma'an News)

IDF troops employ tear gas and rubber bullets to disband a protest against occupation in Nabi Saleh village. (Ma'an News)

June 12 The trial of Bassem Tamimi, Nabi Saleh's popular committee coordinator, begins in military court in Ramallah. Tamimi is accused of participating in unauthorized processions, soliciting youths to throw stones and failing to respond to legal summons. (Ma'an News)

The Israeli High Court accepts a compromise plan, formulated by the State Attorney's office, to halt construction in the settlement of Ofra in exchange for the withdrawal of a petition to the court by residents of Silwad and Ein Yabrud villages, near

Ofra. Following the injunction, settler leaders petition that the stop on construction be made conditional on authorization of a master plan for Ofra, but the Court rejected the request. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

The commander of the IDF's West Bank division, Brigadier General Nitzan Alon, distributes a letter to commanding officers in his division requesting that they investigate soldiers who are residents of settlements. Alon's intention is to help prevent leaks of information regarding future IDF evacuations of outposts. There have been several instances over the past year in which IDF soldiers have failed to report to units engaged in evacuation, decided to ignore construction in outposts or otherwise released sensitive information about IDF operations in the West Bank to settlers. (Arutz 7)

Ha'aretz reports on the arrest of a Jerusalem youth who is accused of shooting a Palestinian near Nablus who was throwing rocks at him during an argument.

June 18 The Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem releases video of an IDF lieutenant aiming his rifle at the head of an unarmed Palestinian man in Beit Omar. The soldier yells at the man, threatening that he will shoot to kill. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

June 22 IDF troops begin taking down the fence around the West Bank village of Bil'in in conformity with a 2007 Supreme Court ruling that it significantly impinged on the property rights of Palestinian landowners and therefore should be rerouted. The village was the site of weekly protest against the barrier, which prevented Bil'in residents from accessing 60% of their farmland. (*Ma'ariv*)

The Israeli authorities shut down 32 Palestinian coal kilns following complaints of air pollution from West Bank settlers. There are approximately 400 kilns operating in Palestinian villages across the West Bank. (*Ha'aretz*)

June 23 *Ha'aretz* reports that 40 Palestinian laborers working at Salit quarry in the industrial zone of the Ma'ale Adumim settlement set up a workers committee and are demanding improved working standards.

June 26 The UNESCO World Heritage committee calls upon Israel to immediately cease all archaeological excavations in the

Old City of Jerusalem and to halt its plan to demolish the temporary bridge to the Mughrabi Gate entrance to the Haram as-Sharif/Temple Mount. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

The Israeli government approves a proposal by Minister of Housing and Construction Ariel Atias to grant \$26,900 to young couples who seek to buy apartments in "outlying areas." The list of qualifying areas includes the Nablus region. (*TheMarker*)

June 27 The arrest of Rabbi Dov Lior sparks violent protests and demonstrations in Jerusalem. The police arrest 25 protestors including two who attempted to storm the home of the Deputy State Attorney. Lior along with Rabbi Yaakov Yosef had been wanted for questioning in connection to their endorsement of a book which stated that Jewish law permits the killing of non-Jews, including women and children. Both men had refused to submit to repeated police inquiries. (Israel Radio)

June 30 Israeli security forces evacuate the outpost of Ramat Migron twice, once in the morning and again in the evening. During the first evacuation, wooden structures are dismantled and five settlers are arrested. Settlers return to the site and begin to rebuild after officials leave the area, only to be evacuated again. (YNet, *Makor Rishon Hatzofe*)

The IDF pardons five soldiers wearing t-shirts that read: "IDF soldiers don't evict settlers." (Army Radio)

July 1 The Israeli Civil Administration issues a confiscation order for 189 dunams (approx. 50 acres) of land in the Palestinian village of Qaryut, southeast of Nablus. The village is surrounded by the settlements of Eli and Shilo and the Givat Hayovel outpost. (Ma'an News)

July 3 Approximately 1,000 worshippers enter Joseph's Tomb for the Joseph the Righteous celebrations. The IDF allow 20 buses to enter the site and erect roadblocks that block unauthorized entry. Several worshippers are arrested after attempting to enter Joseph's Tomb without prior authorization. (Israel Radio)

July 8 *Ha'aretz* reports that the Israeli government used Ottoman-era law to legitimize its July 1 confiscation of Palestinian territory in Qaryut. An 1858 land law allows uncultivated land to be declared for state owner-

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ship. In this case Givat Hayovel, an outpost established in 1998 with financial assistance from the Israeli Ministry of Construction, could become legal as it would be considered to be located on Israeli state land.

Kol Ha'ir reports the announcement of a new construction project in the East Jerusalem settlement of Pisgat Ze'ev, which will include 12 housing units and cost approximately \$6.2 million.

July 10 Palestinians from At-Tuwani, south of Hebron, marched in protest of the Havat Maon outpost. IDF troops dispersed the crowd, causing light injuries. (Ma'an News)

July 11 The Knesset approves, on a second and third reading, the bill that will allow legal action against any individual or organization that calls for a boycott of Israel or settlements in the occupied territories. The Kadima party calls the new bill a "stain" on the Netanyahu government. The Israeli organization, Peace Now, launches an online campaign titled, "Sue me, I'm boycotting settlement products," in protest of the bill. (Israel Radio)

July 13 The Israeli electrical equipment company Erco cancels its contract with the Palestinian city of Rawabi in protest of the clause that forbids partners to do business with settlements in the occupied territories. Erco is one of twenty Israeli companies that had signed contracts to work on the new Palestinian city. (Army Radio)

July 15 Arutz 7 reveals that, under Prime

Minister Netanyahu's direction, plans for an additional 260 housing units in the settlement of Itamar will be moved ahead in the approval process.

Kol Ha'ir reports on the sale of 13 units in the 70-unit "View" expansion project in the Har Gilo settlement for approximately \$5.9 million.

Ha'aretz reports on the decision by the company Bagel Bagel to relocate its factory from a West Bank settlement to an industrial zone near the Israeli city of Safed because of pressure from European countries who threatened to boycott the product.

July 18 IDF soldiers raid the village of Qaryut as residents protest the July 1 confiscation of their agricultural lands. The soldiers use tear gas, stun grenades and fire their rifles into the air. (Ma'an News)

July 19 Settler leaders meet with the prime minister's office to discuss a plan to avert destruction of structures at the Migron outpost. The compromise would involve the settlers themselves evacuating and sealing three currently inhabited structures at the outpost. (Nana10)

Ha'aretz reports on efforts by the IDF to increase state ownership of lands in the West Bank. The paper cites an internal military document that reveals plans to secure not only territory surrounding existing large settlement blocs like Ariel, Ma'aleh Adumim and Gush Etzion but also in the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea.

Settlers from the Havat Maon outpost attack a group of international peace activists south of Hebron. The activists, who are from Operation Dove and the Christian Peacemaker Teams, were attempting to alert Palestinian shepherds of approaching hooded settlers, armed with clubs and stones. (Ma'an News)

The Jerusalem District Court acquits two Palestinian residents of Silwan of causing grievous bodily harm. The two were arrested after admitting to throwing stones during a September 2009 confrontation where a soldier on leave shot and wounded two Palestinians. (*Ha'aretz*)

July 28 The Israeli High Court rules that a sewage treatment plant in the settlement of Ofra cannot be operated because it was built on Palestinian land belonging to the village of Ein Yabrud. The Israeli government had spent \$2 million for construction of the plant yet it has not been in operation due to an injunction issued by the High Court last year following a petition from the Israeli human rights organization Yesh Din. (Israel Radio)

July 29 The Knesset approves the first reading of a bill that allows both non-profits and corporations to take over the management of national parks from the government. The bill was intended to give legal backing to the settler organization Elad's management of the City of David in Silwan. (*Ha'aretz*)

Residential Construction Update in Israel and the West Bank*

| | Starts | | | Under Construction | | | Completions | | |
|------|-----------|--------|----|--------------------|--------|----|-------------|--------|----|
| | West Bank | Israel | % | West Bank | Israel | % | West Bank | Israel | % |
| 2008 | 2,107 | 32,381 | 7% | 3,192 | 60,908 | 5% | 1,601 | 30,454 | 5% |
| 2009 | 1,958 | 35,063 | 6% | 3,295 | 64,052 | 5% | 2,063 | 32,732 | 6% |
| 2010 | 630 | 39,675 | 2% | 2,215 | 70,559 | 3% | 1,666 | 33,128 | 5% |

* Includes Israel and all occupied territories.

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Monthly Construction Bulletin.

only obstacle preventing this construction,” declares a political advertisement addressed to Netanyahu during the summer wave of protests about housing costs in Israel, “is your signature and that of the defense minister. If you will only sign, we can solve the housing problems of 4,500 families.”

In this environment, the PLO’s claim to sovereignty contrasts starkly with the facts on the ground in the West Bank, where settlers and Palestinian villagers remain in the front ranks of the conflict. For them, the days after September are indistinguishable from the days before. Abbas and the PA lack the means to assert Palestinian sovereignty on the ground without provoking Israel. Israel remains in total control of Area C, comprising almost 60 per cent of the West Bank; settlements; and borders. It restricts moves by Palestinian security forces into Area B. Abbas calls for a “Palestinian Spring” to accompany his UN diplomacy, but the distinguishing feature of the Arab Spring has been the spontaneous uprising by civil society *against* the regime—rather than the mobilization of the public *by* the regime. Abbas too is wary of a civil uprising that would provoke Israeli reprisals. West Bank Palestinians did not take to the streets in protest or to confront settlements, but rather in celebration of Abbas and Fateh, the besieged pillars of the Palestinian political establishment.

Scattered confrontations in the West Bank during the UN session were not so much a function of the PLO’s diplomatic campaign for statehood as of the escalating conflict between settlers, the Israel Defense Forces, and Palestinian villagers. The territorial appetite of the settlers cannot be sated, and their ability to outpace the Israeli security forces in vigilante attacks against Palestinians and their property grows. The one Palestinian fatality during September was a 33-year-old from the village of Qusra, who was killed by live IDF fire hours before Abbas’s speech. A mosque in the

village, south of Nablus, was set on fire hours after Israel obeyed an order of the High Court to demolish three structures in the settlement outpost of Migron on September 4. Settlers arrived at the mosque on September 5, threw burning tires toward it, and broke several of its windows.

Not only are settlers targeting Palestinians and their property, notably in the area near settlement outposts between Ramallah and Nablus, in September they also infiltrated an IDF base, destroying equipment and painting slogans “as if it were an enemy army base,” reported the right-wing *Makor Rishon*. Lt. Gen Benny Gantz, IDF chief of staff, described the perpetrators as a “group of fanatic criminals.” Others suggested that the use of the settlers’ self-selected term “price tag” be replaced by the word “terror” to describe actions against Palestinians by “Jewish jihadis.” *Ha’aretz* reported that Israel’s security service is “urging the Education Ministry to immediately halt funding to the Od Yosef Hai Yeshiva in the settlement of Yitzhar, near Nablus, saying it has received intelligence information that senior rabbis in the yeshiva are encouraging their students to attack Arabs. The army’s GOC Central Command, Maj. Gen. Avi Mizrahi, recently issued restraining orders that forbid several students affiliated with the yeshiva to enter the West Bank. This decision was based on what security sources termed ‘well-founded suspicions’ that these students had been involved in attacks on Arabs, including ‘price tag’ attacks on Arab property and the torching of mosques in nearby villages.”

The Palestinians who confronted settlers and the IDF in Qusra were part of a new network of “Local Defense Committees” organized by villagers to defend against settler provocations. Palestinian security services are prevented from protecting the Palestinian public against settlers. According to the well-informed *Roadmap* report, Jibril al-Bakri, the governor of Nablus declared that “the Israelis have left us with no alternative. We will not look on forever without intervening.” ♦

Now, I know that many are frustrated by the lack of progress. I assure you, so am I. But the question isn’t the goal that we seek—the question is how do we reach that goal. And I am convinced that there is no short cut to the end of a conflict that has endured for decades. Peace is hard work. Peace will not come through statements and resolutions at the United Nations—if it were that easy, it would have been accomplished by now. Ultimately, it is the Israelis and the Palestinians who must live side by side. Ultimately, it is the Israelis and the Palestinians—not us—who must reach agreement on the issues that divide them: on borders and on security, on refugees and Jerusalem.

U.S. president Barack Obama, speech to the UN General Assembly, September 21, 2011

[A]s Israel’s prime minister, I didn’t come here to win applause. I came here to speak the truth. The truth is—the truth is that Israel wants peace. The truth is that I want peace. The truth is that in the Middle East at all times, but especially during these turbulent days, peace must be anchored in security. The truth is that we cannot achieve peace through UN resolutions, but only through direct negotiations between the parties. The truth is that so far the Palestinians have refused to negotiate. The truth is that Israel wants peace with a Palestinian state, but the Palestinians want a state without peace. And the truth is you shouldn’t let that happen.

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, speech to the United Nations General Assembly, September 23, 2011

“WE DON’T DO GANDHI VERY WELL”

Palestinians are often urged to oppose the occupation through non-violent action and protest. Nonviolent opposition has, in fact, characterized the vast majority of actions taken by Palestinians under occupation for almost half a century. Recent revelations by Wikileaks, together with a report by B’Tselem, an Israeli human rights organization, offer insights into Israel’s response to such efforts.

In general, Israel views Palestinian protests of any kind as unacceptable challenges to its military rule. As Maj.-Gen. (res.) Amos Gilad, director of Policy and Political-Military Affairs at the Ministry of Defense, explained to James B. Cunningham, then-U.S. ambassador to Israel, “We don’t do Gandhi very well.” His comment was reported in a February 16, 2010 cable authored by Cunningham and recently released by Wikileaks. Cunningham reported further that the head of Israeli Central Command of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), Maj.-Gen. Avi Mizrachi,

warned that he will start sending his trucks with ‘dirty water’ to break up [Palestinian] protests, even if they are not violent, because they serve no purpose other than creating friction. . . .

On orders from Mizrachi, West Bank commander[s] ... reportedly met with the Palestinian security force commanders recently to deliver a strong message that they must stop these demonstrations or the IDF will. Mizrachi asserted that he would prefer not to break up these demonstrations, but will if he must. Many of the demonstrations are organized by “suspicious people,” Mizrachi said, and he plans on arresting organizers of demonstrations that “serve no purpose” beyond exciting the population.

B’Tselem recently published a report, “Show of Force: Israeli Military Conduct in Weekly Demonstrations in a-Nabi Saleh,” detailing Israel’s response to protests in the small Palestinian village of Nabi Saleh. (See the articles in the *Settlement Report* vol. 21 nos. 3 and 4).

Background to Conflict

The al-Qaws Spring has long been utilized by the residents of Nabi Saleh and the nearby village of Deir Nidham for both farming and recreational activity. The lands of al-Qaws Spring are privately owned by a resident of Deir Nidham. In February 2009, settlers laid claim to the spring, “putting up shelters, making roads, building steps to enable access, pouring concrete, planting trees, [and] installing irrigation systems.” Palestinian complaints to Israeli authorities between 2008 and 2011 have either gone unanswered due to a “lack of evidence” or dismissed on the ground of “offender unknown.”

In early January 2010, Israel informed the residents that the spring was an archeological site. Consequently, the area was declared a closed military area, and Palestinians were denied access to it. While such a declaration requires the cessation of all construction by Israeli settlers and the demoli-

tion of structures built after February 2010, settler construction continues. On July 28, 2011, the landowner and representatives of the two villages petitioned Israel’s High Court of Justice to demolish the settler structures and facilities built on the land. The High Court ordered the state and the Binyamin Regional Council to file their response by September 15, 2011. At present, the army prohibits access of Palestinians in groups and on Fridays, but allows individual Palestinians to go to the spring. Settlers are allowed unrestricted access.

The report notes,

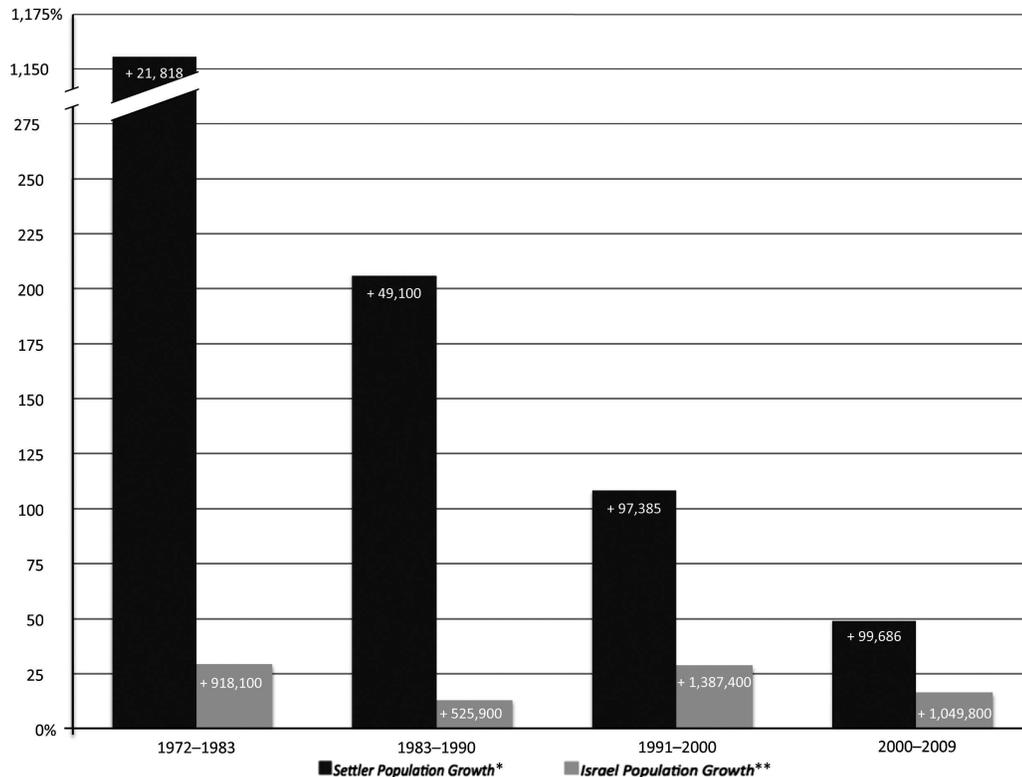
In recent years, Palestinians have organized unarmed demonstrations throughout the West Bank in protest against the seizure of their land by settlers, the construction of the Separation Barrier deep inside the West Bank, and their displacement from land that provides their livelihood, among other issues. Such demonstrations have been a weekly occurrence for more than eighteen months in the village of a-Nabi Saleh, Ramallah District, turning it into a focal point of protest in the West Bank. The Israeli security forces have made a concerted effort to stop the demonstrations in the village.

Between January-August 2011, the Red Crescent transported 35 Palestinians to the hospital for injuries suffered during the suppression of demonstrations. Four were hospitalized. Five demonstrators were struck by rubber bullets, four by shrapnel, ten sickened by tear gas inhalation, two suffered from shock, and another four treated for “other” injuries.

Since the beginning of 2010, 78–81 Palestinians have been arrested or detained for questioning. Among them were 17 minors. Thirty arrests were made during the Friday demonstrations. Thirty-five were arrested on other days of the week. Twelve were arrested in the middle of the night. Those prosecuted were charged with stone throwing, membership in an unlawful organization, interfering with the duty of a soldier, and violation of Order 101 (1967), which “prohibits almost completely the holding of demonstrations in the West Bank.”

The arrested include two persons considered to be leaders of the struggle in the village. Naji Tamimi was arrested on 6 March 2011 and convicted in a plea bargain of incitement and support of a hostile organization, given that he “organized, incited and executed disturbances of the public order and violent demonstrations,” including instructing youths from the village to throw stones. He was sentenced to a year’s imprisonment, two years of conditional imprisonment, and a 10,000 shekel fine. Bassem Tamimi was arrested on 24 March 2011; a week later, an indictment was filed against him, alleging, inter alia, “incitement and support of a hostile organization,” “taking part in a procession without a permit,” and “conspiracy to throw objects at a person or property.” He is being held in custody pending the completion of the criminal proceedings against him. ♦

Comparative Population Growth Rates, 1972–2009



* West Bank and Gaza Strip (pre-2005) only.

** Israel and the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem, West Bank, and Gaza Strip (pre-2005) settlements.

Source: Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, "Sources of Population Growth," *Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2011* [http://www1.cbs.gov.il/reader/shnaton/templ_shnaton_e.html?num_tab=st02_03&CYear=2011].

“The time of the Palestinian Spring has come. Raise your heads, for you are Palestinians. The people demand a Palestinian state, without a doubt, the justification of our path is stronger, we are stronger in spirit, more determined and more reasoned. Our path through international diplomacy towards political independence has begun. We have proven to the world that we want to obtain our rights by the path of negotiations, but not by any negotiations. We will not sit down to negotiate unless there is a complete stop of construction in the settlements.”

PLO chairman Mahmoud Abbas, Ramallah, September 25, 2011

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