

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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THE SETTLERS AND THE ARMY ARE ONE

By *Geoffrey Aronson*

The Palestinian Authority (PA) has not ended the occupation, but it has recorded one significant accomplishment. As one Israeli commentator explained, “Today it seems that the biggest threat to the quiet in the territories comes not from the Palestinians, but from irresponsible provocations of the zealous, insane margins of the Israeli right wing.”

Palestinians have long been at the mercy of the twin instruments of occupation—settlers and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The former have acted with impunity in what they view as a century-old battle against Palestinians for control of Palestine’s land and resources.

“We’ve been reporting for years about the settlers’ misdeeds, week after week,” wrote *Ha’aretz’s* Gideon Levy recently. “We’ve recounted how they have threatened Palestinians, hit their children on their way to school, thrown garbage at their mothers, turned dogs on elderly Palestinians, abducted shepherds, stolen livestock, embittered their lives day and night, hill and vale, invading and taking over.”

Palestinians are only too well aware that they cannot depend upon their own politicians or security forces to protect them against what many understandably view as the most dangerous and existential threat to their well-being. During the second intifada, the al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades were formed in part to address the absence of such protection, particularly in small villages abutting

settlements in the West Bank heartland. Palestinian police are not permitted to exercise authority over Israeli citizens, including those who enter areas of the West Bank under their nominal control. Palestinians, in the words of one former al-Aqsa member, “are on their own,” when they or their property are the target of settlers’ “price tag” attacks or “pogroms” (like the one in Hebron in December 2008) or the defacing of a mosque in Salfit in January 2012.

For protection against settlers, PA officials advise Palestinians to rely on their own limited and inferior resources—and the IDF. One top Palestinian security official explained that his forces are handing out the telephone number of the local IDF commander in response to requests by villagers for protection against marauding settlers.

Depending upon the IDF to protect Palestinians from the depredations of settlers is like asking the wolf to assure the safety of Little Red Riding Hood. Safeguarding Palestinians is simply not part of its operational DNA. The IDF’s formal, primary mission in the West Bank is to protect Jews from Arabs, not Arabs from Jews. Assaults upon Arabs and their property by settlers are not viewed by the IDF as its responsibility. Rather, they are the province of the Israeli police, whose capabilities, even if they chose to effectively exercise them in such matters—and as a rule they do not—are widely derided.

The settlements and the IDF, on the other hand, are locked in a symbiotic embrace. The army is duty bound to

protect settlements and their residents and to promote their welfare—missions that preclude the effective protection of Palestinians and their property despite being mandated by international law. The mission of protecting settlements and settlers allows the IDF to be seen by Israelis (if not by Palestinians and the international community) as something other than a foreign army of occupation.

The idea that the IDF, let alone Palestinians, needs protection from settlers, turns this well-honed system on its head. In mid-December, 100 young Israelis protesting the impending court-ordered evacuation of the settlement outpost of Ramat Gilad traveled from a prestigious religious academy in Jerusalem to assault a military base in the West Bank. A crowd of 50 entered the camp, threw rocks, burned tires and otherwise vandalized military vehicles before retreating. There were no arrests.

The IDF vs Settlers

“The IDF, which defends its people, found itself defending itself against [its people],” observed the IDF chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz. “This is an unimaginable absurdity. It is an unreasonable and dangerous reality.”

Confrontations of various kinds between the army and those settlers it is pledged to protect have been a trademark of the settlement drive almost from its inception. There were more than 200 incidents between settlers and

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TO OUR READERS

Israel's right-wing government, emboldened by America's retreat from peace-making, has further clarified its hard-line approach to borders in the West Bank that is designed to prevent a genuine two-state peace.

In talks in Amman in January, Israeli negotiators told the Palestinians explicitly for the first time that Israel expects to annex existing "settlement blocks" when a border is finally drawn.

This was no surprise, given the rapid growth of settlements throughout the West Bank in recent years in defiance of U.S. and international demands for a settlement freeze. But it was a step away from the ambiguity Israel had maintained by refusing to define its territorial demands in the West Bank to the Palestinians, except for its regular claims to all of East Jerusalem and a long-term presence in the Jordan Valley.

By rejecting the 1967 border with minor land swaps as the basis for two states, and by calling for annexation of existing settlement blocks, Netanyahu's negotiators have laid bare the pretense of his 2009 acceptance of a "Palestinian state." The Israelis offered no map in Amman, and "blocks" is

an elastic concept. But annexation of major settlement constellations would absolutely prevent a viable, contiguous Palestinian state.

Israel's plan would confirm today's political geography in the West Bank, which is already an archipelago of Palestinian population centers, virtually surrounded by settlements and settler roads. Continuing settlement growth, not just in the "blocks" but in areas between them, is leaving only truncated fragments for a Palestinian state.

As this *Report* describes, the IDF is committed to defending Israel's forty year-old settlement project, and the IDF as well as Israeli politics and institutions are now hostage to the violent, lawless, religious-nationalist settler movement the state has created.

Washington's calls during this U.S. election season for continued bilateral negotiations as the sole route to peace lack conviction and credibility. They are excuses for avoiding strong, sustained diplomacy that this crisis demands.

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*

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Philip C. Wilcox, Jr.

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SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

September 30 Three people are injured when settlers from Anatot, in the West Bank, clash with activists escorting a Palestinian farmer to his agricultural land located within the settlement's boundaries. (*Ha'aretz*)

October 1 Yitzhar settlers torch farmland in the Palestinian villages of Einabus and Huwwara, south of Nablus. (Ma'an News)

October 2 Settlers uproot trees and set fire to farmland in the Palestinian villages of Deir Nidham and Nabi Saleh, north of Ramallah. (Ma'an News)

October 3 Vandals torch a mosque in the Bedouin village of Tuba-Zangaria, in northeastern Israel. They inscribe "price tag" on the walls, as in similar attacks by settlers in the West Bank. (Israel Radio)

YNet reports that the Shvut Rachel outpost is slated to receive permits legitimizing its status as a settlement.

The Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee announces a campaign to protect Palestinian farmers from attacks by Israeli settlers during the olive harvest. (Ma'an News)

October 4 *Ha'aretz* reports on predictions by Israel's Shin Bet of rising incidents of settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank.

October 5 Settlers from Shilo uproot 200 olive and fig trees in the Palestinian village of Qusra. The Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem reports that an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) post overlooks the area, charging, "this is a particularly severe case where the security forces violated their obligations to protect the Palestinian residents and their property." (*Ha'aretz*)

Dozens of settlers surround an IDF jeep on a routine patrol near the Shilo settlement and beat the soldiers. (*Ha'aretz*)

October 6 The IDF reports a sharp increase in the number of rock-throwing attacks by Palestinians against Israelis. There were 492 incidents in September 2011 compared to 219 in September 2010. (Arutz 7)

Dozens of settlers from the Gal Yosef outpost attack IDF soldiers, following rumors of orders for the evacuation of their outpost. A senior IDF commander states, "The army sees this incident as crossing a red line." Another senior officer asserts, "The security forces spend more time dealing with incidents involving Israeli citizens than con-

fronting Palestinian terrorism." (*Ha'aretz*)

October 7 Israeli police arrest two Palestinians from Halhul in connection with the car crash that caused the death of Asher Hillel Palmer and his infant son on September 23, 2011. (*Ma'ariv*)

Ma'ariv reports plans by settler volunteer paramedics to stop working following a decision by Israel's Magen David Adom to remove the Star of David from ambulances in the West Bank following a request by the International Red Cross.

October 9 Dozens of settlers attack Palestinian farmers as they attempt to pick olives from lands owned by the Awwad family in the village of Awarta. Two members of the family were convicted for the murders of the Fogel family in the Itamar settlement in March 2011. (Ma'an News)

The *Jerusalem Post* reports on the approval of 300 new housing units in the East Jerusalem settlement of Pisgat Ze'ev.

October 11 Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu announces the establishment of a task force to explore methods to legalize settlements, according to Israeli law, built on private Palestinian land. (*Ha'aretz*)

Police release a suspect accused in the October 3 arson attack on a mosque in Tuba-Zangaria, citing a lack of evidence. (*Ha'aretz*)

October 14 Palestinian farmers from Qaryut and Azmut are restricted by the IDF from harvesting their olives on the ground that the period of security coordination had expired. The farmers charge they "were only given four days permission to do two weeks' work." (Ma'an News)

October 16 *Yediot Aharonot* reports that settlers from Hebron will pay the state of Israel \$10,500 in compensation for having to forcefully evacuate them from Beit HaShalom under court order.

October 19 Israeli security forces detain a Palestinian woman from Hebron after she attempted to stab an Israeli settler near Gush Etzion. (Ma'an News)

October 21 Settlers attack Palestinians as they try to harvest their olive trees near Nablus. Four activists accompanying the Palestinians were injured during the scuffle. (*Ha'aretz*)

October 27 The Israeli High Court of Justice grants approval for the Israel Nature and Parks Authority to continue to give special standing to the right wing, settler-aligned Elad association in the City of David National Park in Silwan, East Jerusalem. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

November 1 Settlers find the tomb of Elazar the Priest, in Awarta village, vandalized with Arabic graffiti. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

Ha'aretz reports that Israeli defense minister Ehud Barak has decided to demolish the Amona outpost. Settlers in Amona have indicated their intention to purchase the land on which the outpost is built in an effort to avoid its demolition.

November 2 The Israeli state attorney general and director general of the Education Ministry shut down the Dorshei Yihudech Yeshiva and cut state funding for the Od Yosef Hai Yeshiva. Authorities believe that teachers and students at both yeshivas, in the settlement of Yitzhar, have been involved in "price tag" operations and other incidents of settler violence during the year. (Israel Radio)

After news that the Palestinian Authority had been accepted as a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Prime Minister Netanyahu's office announces accelerated plans for 2,000 new housing units in the Etzion bloc and Ma'ale Adumim. (*Yediot Aharonot*)

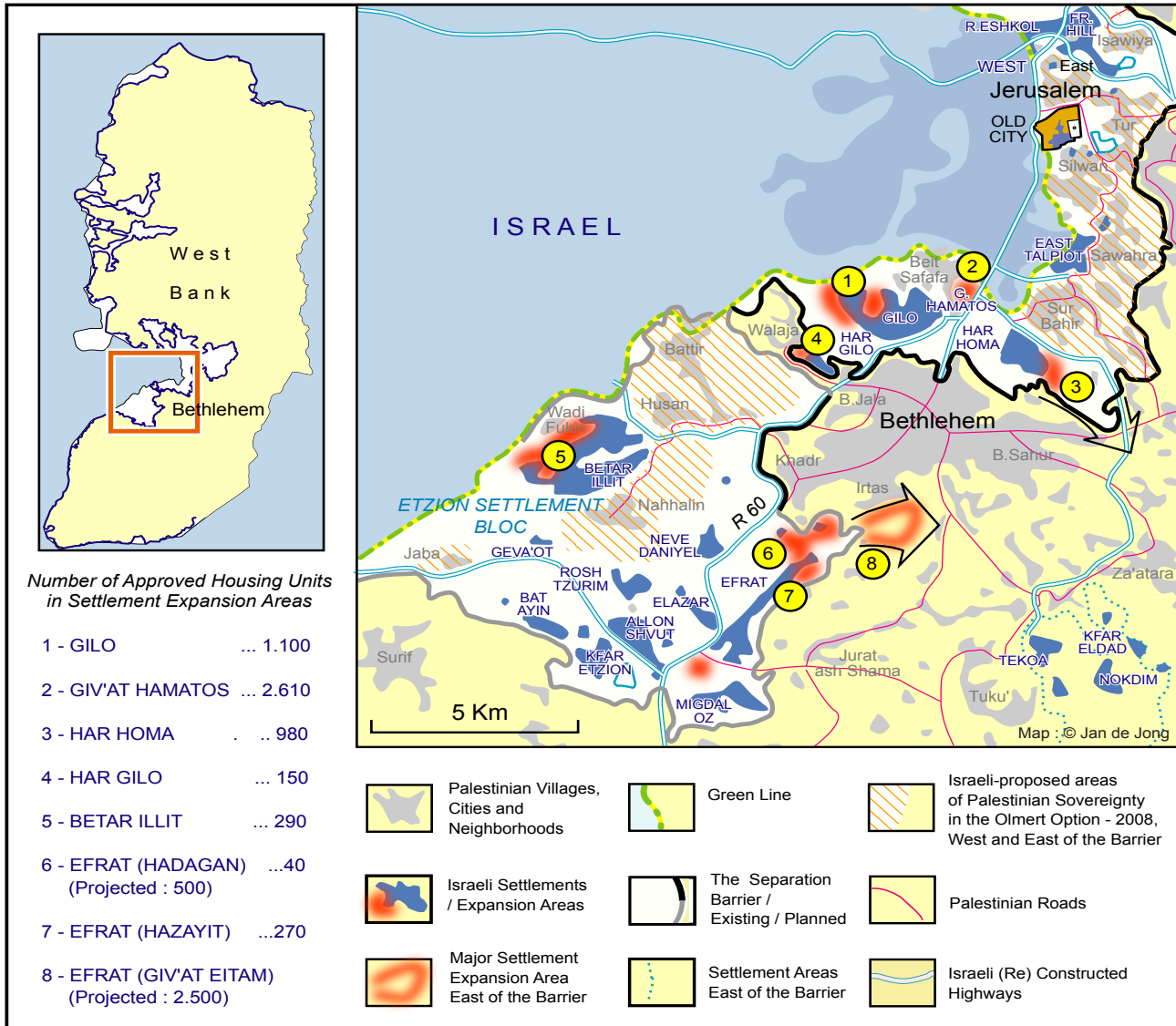
Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reports on final approval for construction of 40 housing units in Ma'ale Adumim, 277 in Efrat, and 2,000 in Har Homa and Ramot.

November 6 Palestinians hurl Molotov cocktails at cars with Israeli license plates near the village of Azzun. (Arutz 7)

November 9 Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Barak instruct the State Attorney's Office to delay the evacuation of outposts slated for demolition by the end of 2011. They also ask the High Court of Justice for a six-month extension for the demolition of some 40 housing units in the Givat Assaf outpost. (Army Radio)

Three cars belonging to Palestinians in Beit Omar are found torched with the message "Greetings from [the settlement of] Bat Ayin." (Army Radio) ♦

Settlement Expansion Encircling Bethlehem - 2012



On December 12, 2011, Defense Minister Ehud Barak approved construction of 40 dwellings and a farm in two areas long-targeted for the expansion of the settlement of Efrat. In November, 277 units had been approved in Efrat's Givat HaZayit neighborhood. The expansion of Efrat to the northeast tightens the "concrete embrace" of Bethlehem.

The tender for 40 dwellings on Givat HaDagan, where a small number of settlers have been squatting for more than a decade, was issued by the Israel Lands Administration. The site is close to the Deheishe refugee camp and the village of al-Khader.

Givat Eitam (Jebel Abu Zeid)—where the farm was approved and 2,500 units are planned—lies (unlike Givat HaDagan) on the eastern, "Palestinian" side of the separation barrier. This area has long been coveted for settlement and was within the original perimeter of the separation barrier devised by the government of Ariel Sharon. In 2007, for example, in one of

many attempts to establish an "outpost" at the site to assure its settlement before construction of the barrier excluded it, settlers declared, "The establishment of a settlement in Givat Eitam will be the first step in renewing a wave of settlements in Judea and Samaria. This is our response to the ongoing policy of surrendering to the enemy."

During the Annapolis discussions in 2008, Israeli negotiators suggested that settlement would proceed in this area if no agreement was reached. The government of Benjamin Netanyahu has now determined that the separation barrier is no barrier to settlement expansion, even in those settlements, like Efrat, where the barrier creates a defined perimeter. According to a report in *Ha'aretz*, "It can be expected that the establishment of the farm will be followed by the construction of an access road and the deployment of IDF soldiers and other security arrangements, to guarantee the area's future role as part of Efrat." ♦

DÉJÀ VU: SETTLEMENT OUTPOSTS AT GIVAT HAZAYIT IN EFRAT

“We had passed the ‘first’ intifada, and were now in the midst of the Rabin Oslo years. The government wasn’t too interested in expanding settlements, including (so-called consensus) Efrat. . . . So we decided to move a “caravan” onto the hill. . . . All that stood in our way was an army command car, totally blocking the road. . . .

“ . . . [W]e politely asked the driver to move out of the way. When he refused, we approached the command car and said, “If you don’t move it, we will have to overturn it.” And we proceeded to do so. . . . Those things are really heavy! And then, miraculously, the driver moved his vehicle. . . .

“We drove up the hill and dropped the caravan into place. . . . All of a sudden I see [settlement leader] Hanan Porat in the doorway of “our” caravan, arms stretched out in victory, telling the press how we were here to stay. . . .

“ . . . [T]he government, clearly defeated, needed a way to climb down from their high perch. They agreed to allow a number of caravans onto [Givat Ha]Zayit. . . . It was still some time until real, stone house[s] would occupy the hill, but the wall was breached. Today there are hundreds of families living there and also on the two hills farther north (for the moment in caravans) [Givat HaDagan and Givat Eitam].”

Menachem Kuchar lives in Efrat and blogs at <http://menachem.info/Blogs/021.htm>. ♦

HISTORY

Beginning in late December 1993, popular Palestinian opposition to the expansion of the Efrat settlement, southwest of Bethlehem, was followed by Palestinian protests throughout the West Bank.

The protests led to an Israeli cabinet decision on January 3, 1994, to stop construction at the contested site (Givat HaDagan) in Efrat and to approve the construction of 200 dwelling units at another site (Givat HaZayit), which was closer to existing residential development in the settlement (and where 277 new units were approved in November 2011). The government understood this action to be a precedent-setting decision, in which an authorized settlement project was canceled by government fiat.

The same day at a meeting of the Israel-Palestinian Higher Liaison Committee in Cairo, settlements were the main topic. Minister of the Environment Yossi Sarid said that they had become the central problem in the negotiations. During these discussions, Palestinians demanded an explicit Israeli commitment to stop settlement construction and land confiscation.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres explained that Israel would not negotiate on settlements during Oslo’s five-year interim period. He reiterated Israel’s commitment not to establish new settlements or confiscate more land for settlement expansion or construction. Peres said that additional land would be confiscated for two purposes only: for infrastructure, such as

water and sewers, and to enable the construction of “bypass” roads between settlements and around centers of Palestinian population. Peres noted that Palestinian negotiators had approved of this construction as essential to Israel’s redeployment in the West Bank.

Palestinian negotiator Nabil Sha’ath was not impressed with the Efrat decision, which he described as merely moving the construction “from one hill to another.”

“You are the government that was chosen because of a platform which described settlement as an obstacle to peace,” he stated, “but we are not convinced that you still maintain that position. You thicken, add, and create [settlement] facts during the interim period, which will create precedents for the final status, in opposition to clauses and to the spirit of the Declaration of Principles.” ♦

GIV’AT EITAM AND THE ANNAPOLIS TALKS

On March 31, 2008, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators discussed settlements in the Etzion bloc. The expansion of settlement to Givat Eitam was on the agenda.

Attendees

Palestinian: Dr. Samih Al-Abed (SA), Khaled Elgindy (KE), Nizar Farsakh (NF), and Fouad Hallak (FH)

Israeli: Udi Dekel (UD), Dani Tirza (DT), and Leah Arad (LA)

SA: What is this purple area outside [points to land designated as a municipal area of Efrat but is not included inside the line for the Etzion bloc]?

DT: This is Giv’at Eitam. It has an approved plan so they can build on it, but it is not being implemented. We know it is big. We are trying to minimize the impact on people there, so we left it out.

UD: Let’s say this: If we agree on a line, then this will not be part of the settlement area. But if we don’t, we will continue to build in these areas. But we won’t include it for now. It only signifies that there is permission to build.

SA: [laughing] So you are blackmailing us now.

KE: How do you reconcile this with [Prime Minister Ehud] Olmert’s commitment, which he made before the entire international community, to freeze settlement activity?

UD: This is not a new settlement. We said we will not [be] building any new settlements. But we are not going to wait. We are moving all the time. If we reach an agreement then if it is on our side we will build. But if we don’t reach agreement then we will not stop building; we will continue and proceed. This is why we built a security fence. We did not want to build it at first because we said we need to agree [on] the border with you, but then we decided we cannot wait anymore and so we built it. But now that we have a process, we are not going to do anything in this area.

“Meeting Minutes: 4th Plenary Meeting on Territory, March 31, 2008.” The Palestine Papers, Al Jazeera Network

soldiers during 2011, including an attack on a military base at Beit El in midyear. Attempts three decades ago to establish Jewish settlements in areas outside the zones outlined in the Allon Plan were often accompanied by mass rallies, demonstrations, and the physical seizure of settlement locations, including confrontations with the IDF. The group settling in Elon Moreh, near Sebastia, in 1975 for example, was forcefully removed seven times before the government of Yitzhak Rabin agreed to establish a permanent settlement nearby.

Fast forward to the last days of 2011. “No one wants to destroy Migron,” explained a top aide to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during a visit to the unauthorized “outpost” settlement established in 1996. Migron awaits implementation of a long-ignored court order demanding its evacuation, which the government and settlers alike are working to short-circuit. Elsewhere, an agreement, negotiated by cabinet minister Benny Begin and YESHA council chairman Danny Dayan and modeled on the “patent” long ago formulated for Elon Moreh, provides for the legalization of the outpost of Ramat Gilad, the removal of structures from private Palestinian land and their relocation to “state land,” and the approval of 180 housing units in the newly branded “neighborhood” of the settlement of Karnei Shomron. *Ha’aretz* columnist Zvi Barel described this agreement as “a game of musical chairs in which everyone wins and no one is left without a chair,” except for Palestinians. “What is going on,” observed Ramadan Shallah, secretary general of the Islamic Jihad movement in a December 24, 2011, interview with *al-Hayat*, “is the liquidation of the [Palestinian] cause as rights are evaporating and the Israelis are imposing the status quo through facts on the ground.”

Settlers have always wanted to expand the margins of the settlement drive beyond the limits set by national institutions, including the military. This has been true since the first settlement was established in the Golan Heights soon after the June 1967 War. Rabin spoke derisively about “political” as opposed to “security” settlements. More than a decade ago, the IDF

produced differing “security” and “settlement” interest maps of West Bank settlements. Advocates of Greater Israel have always found patrons in the political establishment—from Yigal Allon (Hebron in 1968) to Shimon Peres (Sebastia in 1975) to Ariel Sharon (1996) and Likud coalition chair MK Ze’ev Elkin today, (who reportedly informed settlers of IDF settlement evacuation plans)—to assist them.

Confrontations with the IDF are an integral part of today’s campaign to force a political consensus in favor of continued

settlement everywhere. The IDF command is complicit, by virtue of its central role in the occupation, even if it is also frustrated by this strategy, as it has been since the settlement program began. Top military and security officials have even described settler actions as “Jewish terror.” Young conscripts, who have been trained to protect Jews, are confused when settlers spit at them and call them “traitors” and “Nazis.” The generals complain about the failure of Israel’s legal system to restrain or punish settler excesses. They marvel at the “hatred in the eyes” of rampaging young people and warn of the use by settlers of live fire against IDF soldiers. “This is a test for the state and for us,” said one major general. “If it does not end with heavy penalties, it will be a failure not just for us in the security establishment, but as a state.”

The IDF command prefers an orderly occupation, where the PA attends to the needs of a quiescent Palestinian population, and settlement continues inexorably, but without disruption to the military’s core mission. Settlers and their political patrons have never been satisfied with their place in this fanciful picture, and Israel’s legal and judicial institutions have always treated them benevolently.

Recently, for example, it was reported in *Ha’aretz* that “five suspects were indicted for collecting information and monitoring IDF soldiers, as well as rioting in the Ephraim Regional Brigade. Among other things, the five received information from IDF soldiers regarding troop movements and planned activities. The goal of the five who set up the ‘intelligence department’ was to collect information and operate [as] Trojan horses within the army. In response to an appeal to the Supreme Court, the judge criticized the severity of the actions,

Ariel Sharon built a political career as an inveterate promoter of settlement. On June 4, 1974, IDF soldiers were ordered to remove a group of would-be settlers from the area that was slated to become Elon Moreh. Although the event took place almost four decades ago, the scene—on a “rocky plot of land near Shechem [Nabulus]—might just as well have occurred yesterday.

A reporter at the scene described a “tussle between about 100 settlers and several dozen soldiers who tried to remove them. MK [Ariel] Sharon took active part in these scuffles, trying to prevent the soldiers from forcibly removing the group members.”

“Arik,” said one of the IDF commanders at the scene, “when you gave us the order to cross the Suez Canal during the Yom Kippur War [eight months prior], I knew it was suicide—but I went anyway, because that was your order. Now you demand of us to violate an order of our commander [to remove settlers from the site]? Is that what you would have wanted from your soldiers?”

Sharon responded that the order to remove the Jews from the land, where they had fenced off a half-acre and set up 16 tents, was immoral “and to orders of this type, one must refuse. I would not fulfill such an order.”

Based on an account by Yossi Valter, *Ma’ariv*, June 5, 1974

but released the suspects to house arrest.”

Settlers, particularly religious zealots who view settlement in Judea and Samaria as a divine expression of God’s will, have long exploited and been exploited by a political system in Israel whose overarching objective remains the settlement of the land by Jews and the enfeeblement of Arab control on the ground. This was the case during the era of the Bloc of the Faithful, or Gush Emmunim, whose activists during the 1970s were instruments in a drive to settle the West Bank heartland in places like Ofra, Shilo, and Itamar, among and between Palestinian villages. It remains true today, as the “hilltop youth”—including not a few of the children of these very same Gush Emmunim activists—constitute the vanguard of what then-Foreign Minister Sharon in 1996 called a campaign to “claim the hilltops.”

Benny Katsover, a veteran Gush Emmunim activist in the 1970s, was head of the Samaria Action Committee in October 2008 when he spoke with a U.S. diplomatic official, whose cable of their conversation was made available by Wikileaks:

Katsover’s committee drafted and published a strategy to create sometimes violent diversions during IDF actions against West Bank settlement outposts. The strategy has regularly been employed in the past few months, resulting in higher levels of violence. According to Katsover, the committee’s “new policy” is designed to “increase the price tag” of IDF action by calling for settlers in groups of ten to block roads, set fires, protest at IDF bases, and march near Palestinian villages. The strategy has led to early-warning cell phone alerts of IDF activity, mobilizing settler groups to respond with diversionary tactics. As

Katsover hosted Pol[itical]off[icer] on October 2, Israeli security forces carried out the evacuation of Shevut Ami B outpost near Kedumim settlement (west of Nabulus), sparking the deployment of settlers across the northern West Bank. . . . Some 25 olive trees were [reportedly] burned at Kadum village adjacent to Kedumim settlement during the rampage, resulting in the arrest of two settler youth. Simultaneously, . . . a settler was arrested for firing a weapon at Asira al-Qabaliyah village and was released on October 3 after a court hearing. Meanwhile, Katsover’s fellow settler pioneer, former Kedumim mayor Daniella Weiss, was arrested for assaulting an officer but was released to house arrest on October . . . Asked if he was using his committee to encourage settler violence, Katsover told Poloff, “I recommend that kids do not enter Arab villages or use physical violence.” With regard to Israeli security forces, Katsover told Poloff, “I don’t advocate violence against the army, but the police are different.”

Whoever believes that this time the rioters will be held accountable to the full extent of the law, is welcome to read the updates on the investigation regarding the arson attacks on West Bank mosques, or whether an indictment has been served in response to the torching of the mosque in the Bedouin village of Tuba-Zangaria in the north, which was the last time state leaders woke from their slumber in order to express their shock. The sad truth is that the system of enforcement in the territories is helpless in the face of attacks, while investigators are struggling to gather evidence that will stand the test of the courts. Moreover, judges act forgivingly toward Jewish suspects that acted out of ideological motives, even more so when right-wingers are suspected.

Amos Harel, *Ha’aretz*,
December 13, 2011

Confrontations between settlers and the IDF, whether at Elon Moreh in 1974 or Ramat Gilad in 2011, remain tactical disputes between the principal Israeli agents of settlement and dispossession over the pace and direction of settlement. In contrast, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s unprecedented mobilization of Israel’s security and political establishment in favor of evacuation of all of Gaza’s settlements in 2005 humbled even the settlers and enabled the speedy and largely peaceful evacuation of the settlements there, despite settler opposition.

“No One Wants to Destroy Migron”

The actions at Sebastia and the outposts of today were conceptualized by the author of the first settlement master plan produced by the World Zionist Organization (WZO) in 1977.

Matityahu Drobles, then head of the WZO settlement department, wrote, “State land and lands that lie fallow in Judea and Samaria must be taken immediately, in order to settle the areas that are between centers of minority [i.e., Palestinian] population and around them as well, in an effort to minimize as far as possible the danger of the development of another Arab state in these areas. If divided by Jewish communities, it will be difficult for the minority population to create territorial and political unity and continuity.”

These principles continue to inspire Israeli settlement policy, no more so than on the West Bank’s “hilltops.”

“[T]here is no need to be overly impressed by the orchestrated shouting about the Frankenstein that has gotten out of hand,” wrote Yossi Sarid, a former Labor Party Knesset member and onetime lead-

er of Meretz, after the December 2011 settler attack on the IDF, “because the denouncers are the ones who created him. They were warned a thousand times about creating a state within a state, an army within an army, but they didn’t want to listen. They were too scared of the settlers and their rabbis. We see them in their disgrace, dancing in front of Zionism’s coffin, and despise them.

“He who sowed the wind should not feign horror when the Jewish terror storm comes. He who poured oil on the flames should not pose as a firefighter trying to put it out. He who demands silencing the muezzin should not fake surprise when a mosque is burned. ♦

E4 STATEMENT ON MIDDLE EAST

The following joint statement was issued on December 20, 2011, by Ambassadors Miguel Berger of Germany, Gérard Araud of France, Mark Lyall Grant of the United Kingdom, and José Filipe Moraes Cabral of Portugal following a UN Security Council meeting on the Middle East.

We have just heard a briefing from Mr. [Oscar] Fernandez-Taranco about the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian territories. One of the themes that emerged was the severely damaging effect that increased settlement construction and settler violence is having on the ground and on the prospects of a return to negotiations. The United Kingdom, France, Germany and Portugal are dismayed by these wholly negative developments.

Israel's continuing announcements to accelerate the construction of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, send a devastating message. We call on the Israeli government to reverse these steps. The viability of the Palestinian state that we want to see and the two-state solution that is essential for Israel's long-term security are threatened by the systematic and deliberate expansion of settlements. Settlements are illegal under international law and represent a serious blow to the Quartet's efforts to restart peace negotiations. All settlement activity, including in East Jerusalem, must cease immediately.

We condemn the disturbing escalation of violence by set-

tlers including the burning of the Nebi Akasha mosque in West Jerusalem and the Burqa mosque in the West Bank. It is clear that these deliberately provocative attacks on places of worship were designed to aggravate tensions. We welcome the condemnation of these attacks by Israeli leaders, and call on the Israeli government to fulfill its commitment to bring the perpetrators to justice and to put an end to impunity. The package of measures announced by Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu in response to settler violence goes in the right direction. We look forward to seeing the results of these measures, and to seeing those behind the violence punished to the full extent of the law.

A bold demonstration of political will and leadership is needed from both sides to break the current impasse. We call the parties to present as soon as possible to the Quartet comprehensive proposals on territory and security, following its statement of September 23rd. We look to both parties to return to negotiations as soon as possible. . . .

We continue to be seriously concerned about the current stalemate in the Middle East Peace Process. Our primary goal remains a just and lasting resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We are committed to working to turn this ambition into reality: the creation of a sovereign, independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State living in peace and security side by side with Israel.

Throughout this year, we have repeatedly warned about the increase in settler violence. It is deeply troubling that attacks by settlers on Palestinians and their property have become a systematic occurrence—often but not exclusively in the context of anticipated Government action against illegal settlement construction. Six Palestinians, including two children, were injured by settlers during the reporting period. On 14, 18 and 19 December, cars and other Palestinian property were set on fire. . . . On 7 December, an arson attack was carried out against a mosque in the West Bank village of Burqin. On 15 December, a mosque in the Barka village

close to Ramallah was set on fire and on 19 December, a mosque was desecrated near Hebron. We welcome Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu's strong condemnation of such violent acts and stated intent to prevent such incidents from reoccurring. It is critical that these statements translate into swift and decisive action, including for the protection of Palestinians and their property.

Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs
Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Security Council briefing on the
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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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