

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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NO OCCUPATION, NO PROBLEM: NETANYAHU COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS MOVING TOWARD DE FACTO ANNEXATION

By *Geoffrey Aronson*

The last two years of the administration of U.S. president Barack Obama have been notable for the almost complete absence of serious diplomatic effort to resolve the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Israeli defense minister Ehud Barak recently warned that “political inaction is not an option, and if it becomes evident that it is impossible to reach an agreement, we need to think about an interim arrangement, or even unilateral action. Israel cannot allow itself to remain in a state of deadlock.”

The secret negotiations that lead to the Oslo Declaration in 1993 and the decision of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to “disengage” from the Gaza Strip in 2005 offer instructive examples of Israel’s ability to shape the international diplomatic agenda. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been singularly successful in frustrating efforts by the international community to conduct negotiations based upon the armistice line separating Israel from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In June, the top-level Commission to Examine the Status of Building in Judea and Samaria hand-picked by Netanyahu in March rejected the international consensus, and Prime Minister Netanyahu’s own statements supporting an end to occupation and the creation of a Palestinian state. The committee’s recommendations illustrate the extent to which the demands of Israel’s growing West Bank settler population are supported by criti-

cal sectors of Israel’s judicial, political, and administrative institutions. They represent the state’s effort to promote the increasingly strident demands of the settler community to legalize and protect its assets, especially land, against action, whether by Palestinians or by the state itself.

The committee, headed by former High Court justice Edmund Levy, addressed a principal instrument of settlement expansion in the last 15 years—the creation of scores of “unauthorized” new settlements, or outposts. The committee report advances the most explicit legal and official ideological assertion in decades of Israel’s rights in the West Bank, repudiating the international consensus regarding the status of the occupied territories. It also suggests wide-ranging administrative measures that would expand the already significant role played by domestic Israeli planning and development bodies at the expense of the civil administration—the military-run occupation bureaucracy, which was originally established as the preeminent authority in the occupied territories but is increasingly viewed by settlers and their patrons as a hindrance to their settlement-related demands.

The committee advanced four principal conclusions:

■ Israel has an internationally sanctioned right to sovereignty in the West Bank. (Gaza and East Jerusalem were excluded from the committee’s mandate.) This right was initially recognized by the international community in the

1917 Balfour Declaration, which excluded consideration of the political rights of the Arab population in Palestine.

■ The laws regulating belligerent occupation do not apply to Israel’s presence in the West Bank. There is, in short, no “occupation.” The committee accepted the view put forward by settlers that the internationally accepted norms governing occupation and responsibilities toward population under occupation “are not relevant to Israel’s presence in the territories of Judea and Samaria.”

■ Based on international law, “Israelis have the legal right to settle in Judea and Samaria, and the establishment of settlements cannot, in and of itself, be considered to be illegal.”

■ Article 49 of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention outlawing the transfer of populations is not applicable. “Settlement is a consequence of ideological commitment to settle the Land of Israel, not compulsion, and also because of the unsettled nature of sovereignty in the area.”

The committee’s legal and ideological arguments are not new. But this is perhaps the first time that an Israeli prime minister has enabled such views to be stated so comprehensively and authoritatively. The critical contribution made by the Levy Committee, however, is the operational recommendations that result from its claim that there is no Israeli occupation.

These conclusions, if implemented,

OCCUPATION, *continued on page 4*

TO OUR READERS

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu is working overtime to further shred the tattered remnants of a process for a two-state Israel-Palestine peace. His Levy Commission (page 1) which claimed there is no occupation and recommended legalizing retroactively unauthorized settlements would, if implemented, further Netanyahu's agenda for de facto annexation of the West Bank, and bury hopes for peace.

To make matters worse, Netanyahu continues to beat the drum for war against Iran, either by the U.S. or Israel, notwithstanding American opposition to another costly war in that region. Nor has Netanyahu heeded warnings by Israel's wisest security and intelligence experts that an Israeli attack would be a disaster. No one knows whether he is bluffing or exploiting the Iranian threat to hamstring U.S. diplomacy and make Obama look weak. But his threats of war cannot be dismissed.

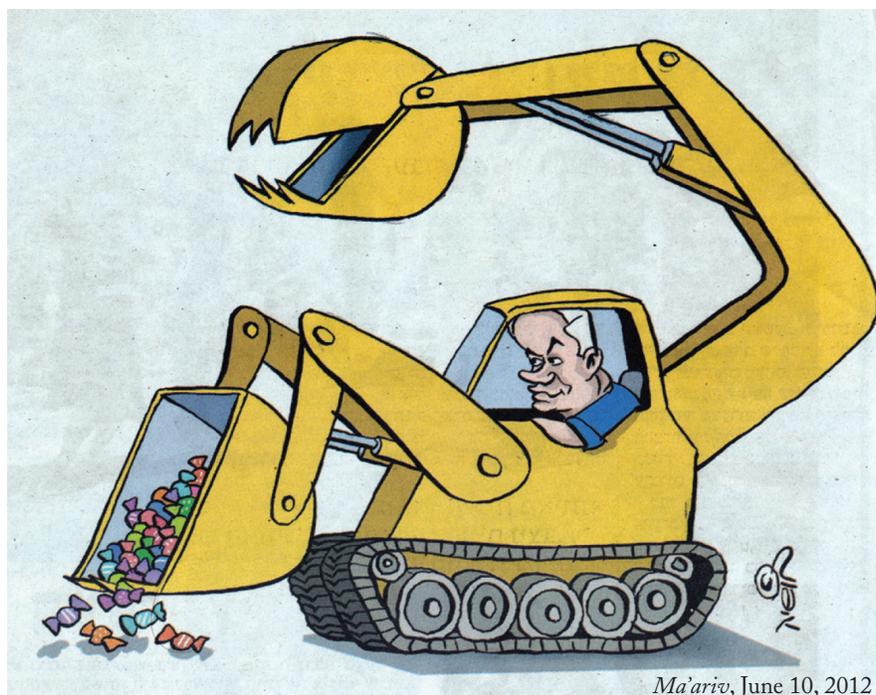
Netanyahu is also interfering in an unseemly way in the U.S. presidential election process. He and Republican candidate Mitt Romney echoed each other's hard line and implied anti-Obama views when Romney visited Jerusalem with mega-rich American

donors like Sheldon Adelson who opposes a two-state peace and loves Israeli settlements. Netanyahu assumed correctly that Romney, innocent of diplomatic decorum and eager to oblige his host and his hawkish donors, would channel Netanyahu's bellicose rhetoric on Iran. Romney went even further by gratuitously insulting Palestinian culture as the cause of their problems.

Netanyahu's brazen defiance of American interests is a product of a dysfunctional U.S.-Israel relationship. For years Washington has signaled that this relationship was made in heaven, using such slogans as "sacrosanct," "unshakeable," and "shared interests." These tired bromides have been a substitute for speaking honestly to Israel, as its best friend and principal benefactor should do, about dangerous policies. Israeli leaders have thus come to believe they can act with impunity and count on Washington to support, or at least acquiesce in, Israeli policies toward the Palestinians and in the region that undermine American interests, and in the long run, Israel's as well.

Philip C. Wilcox, Jr.

Givat Ulpana—Bibi Takes with One Hand, Gives with the Other



Ma'ariv, June 10, 2012

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The Foundation for Middle East Peace has prepared a presentation of maps illustrating the evolution of the conflict from the UN Partition Plan in 1947, and depicting the growth of Israel's occupation and settlement project from the 1967 War to the present. To download the presentation visit: <http://www.fmep.org/resources/publications-1/map-progression-1948-1967>.

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AREA C UPDATE

Basic Facts

- Israel maintains full responsibility for security and civil affairs. Palestinian Authority has no powers, except those delegated by Israel.

- Comprises approximately 59 percent of the West Bank (approx. 3,300 sq. km), excluding East Jerusalem

- Sixty-six percent is “state land”

- More than 33 percent is closed military zone/firing zones, that include 59 Palestinian communities

- Three percent is Israeli military bases and the security zone along Jordanian border

- Palestinian population estimated at 150,000, 5.8 percent of West Bank Palestinian population, excluding East Jerusalem

- 350,000 Israeli settlers live in 124 recognized settlements and approximately 100 outposts

- Municipal area of settlements is 5.5 percent

- Forty percent of land on which settlements are built is privately owned by Palestinians

- 271 Palestinian communities have more than 50 percent of their built-up areas in Area C, including many which are entirely in Area C

- Palestinian construction allowed without Israeli permit in approximately 1 percent of Area C

- Palestinian construction prohibited in 70 percent of Area C (settlements, firing zones, nature reserves, buffer zone around barrier), heavily restricted (Israeli permit necessary) in 30 percent

- Ninety-four percent of Palestinian building permit applications rejected in recent years

EU Focuses on Area C

The EU expresses deep concern about developments on the ground which threaten to make a two-state solution impossible . . . [including] the worsening living conditions of the Palestinian population in Area C and serious limitations for the PA to promote the economic devel-

opment of Palestinian communities in Area C, as well as plans of forced transfer of the Bedouin communities, in particular from the wider E1 area. . . .

Social and economic developments in Area C are of critical importance for the viability of a future Palestinian state, as Area C is its main land reserve. The EU calls upon Israel to meet its obligations regarding the living conditions of the Palestinian population in Area C, including by accelerated approval of Palestinian master plans, halting forced transfer of population and demolition of Palestinian housing and infrastructure, simplifying administrative procedures to obtain building permits, ensuring access to water and addressing humanitarian needs. The EU calls upon Israel to work together with the PA to allow more access and control of the PA over Area C.

“Council Conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process,”
Brussels, May 14, 2012

The war of attrition against Susya’s residents and their cohorts who live in Area C is being waged with wicked sophistication. The planning authorities have held up the master plans for Palestinian villages for years. If there is no plan, there are no building permits, and if there are no building permits, people build without permits. If there is construction without permission, there are orders to tear down the buildings.

If in 1972 some 97 percent of the Palestinian requests were approved (2,134), in 2005 only 13 permits were issued—around 6 percent of 189. In recent years, Palestinians no longer bother to request building permits.

When enforcing planning and building laws, the Israeli authorities show a great deal of diligence when it comes to the Palestinians. According to civil administration figures, from 2000 to 2007, about one-third of the orders were put into effect (with about 1,100 buildings destroyed) in Palestinian villages, as opposed to less than 7 percent in the settlements. Even though the Palestinian population in Area C is less than half the population in the settlements, three out of every four files on illegal construction are opened against these Palestinians.

It’s a shame only a handful of Israelis have protested the systematic eviction of people who want nothing more than to live on their land and raise their children in their own country. It’s a shame that this reality—a true story that has been taking place over the years right next door—doesn’t get more publicity. One day, we will have to pay dearly for this evil.

Akiva Eldar, *Ha’aretz*, June 26, 2012



would all but erase the distinction between land ownership and settlement in Israel and in West Bank settlements, and transfer jurisdiction from the military occupation administration to Israel's domestic institutions as a way of consolidating Israeli control and effective sovereignty in the West Bank.

According to the committee, because international law does not proscribe settlement, "it is necessary to consider this question from the standpoint of domestic law." This assertion that Israel's settlement project is the province of domestic Israeli jurisdiction is the most noteworthy, critical, and challenging aspect of the report.

The incremental expansion of control by Israel's civilian institutions over everyday affairs regulating the lives and conduct of Israel's settlement communities has been a central feature of occupation since the late 1970s. In recent years, the focus of such efforts has been on the broad issues of land use, property rights, and settlement expansion. Settlers today have grown to almost 10 percent of Israel's Jewish population, now reaching 350,000 in the West Bank and more than 200,000 in East Jerusalem, intensifying settler demands for expansion of civil control and its prevailing Zionist norms over their affairs. Associated with these demands is the state's interest in addressing the pervasive inattention to law and proper procedure outlined most recently in the Sasson report on settlement outposts. "We are no longer in the formative stages of the creation of our state when things were done in an informal and arbitrary manner," the Levy committee noted.

The committee recommends limiting what are considered to be obstructionist practices by the IDF's civil administration, whose administrative requirements are deemed to conflict with the committee's essential presumption of "the basic right of all Jews to settle on all of Judea and Samaria, and for a while at least, in territories under Israeli rule according to agreements with the Palestinian Authority."

The civil administration role in settlement affairs is described as "onerous and superfluous"; expansion of settlement is afflicted by "needless delay." The committee used the language of reform, improvement, order, and conscientious administration to couch its interest in facilitating land grabs for further settlement, calling for the "removal of administrative obstacles placed before planning institutions, and enabling them to fulfill their objectives" and "to advance stability and prevent lack of clarity."

The operational intent of the committee is to completely remove planning decisions concerning settlements from the context of occupation, making them no more remarkable than the consideration of building new dwellings in Israeli towns like Rosh Pina or Ma'alot. Such practical application of domestic Israeli law and jurisdiction was the principal means by which Israel effected the annexation of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights and before that the Galilee and Negev conquests of 1948.

A key issue of the committee's mandate included address-

ing an issue at the heart of Israel's domestic debate—that scores of new settlements materialized in the last fifteen years without government support and in contravention of its intentions. The committee's first order of business was to annul the recommendations of the 2005 report on settlement "outposts" by Talia Sasson. The Levy committee marshaled evidence presented in the Sasson report only to turn Sasson's argument on its head.

Sasson and the Sharon government, which adopted the report and its recommendations, concluded that notwithstanding *de facto* government support, the outposts in question should nonetheless be dismantled in light of Israel's own laws and international commitments. The Levy committee embraced this fact as a principal rationale for implementation of its broader agenda—legalizing and facilitating the expansion of settlement all but regardless of land ownership, and placing it under even more benevolent civilian oversight and regulation.

The committee held that there is no such thing as unauthorized, wildcat settlement efforts in the West Bank. "From the information before us," the report states, ". . . there is no doubt that settlement was undertaken with knowledge by everyone—beginning with government ministers and those who lead them, and to the last operational agency—and there was one reason for lying about this—to ward off criticism from different quarters, principally international."

The committee concluded that establishing new settlements and settlement expansion beyond existing planning boundaries should remain the province of the political echelon. It also proposed, however, a number of significant changes in the settlement process:

- Expansion of existing or future settlements should be removed from formal political oversight (i.e., cabinet votes) and handled instead by Israel's domestic planning bureaucracy.

- Unauthorized and illegal settlement outposts should be authorized because they were established "with the knowledge, encouragement, and tacit agreement of the most senior political level."

- Expedited planning at the professional level and without overt political direction should continue for currently unauthorized, illegal, and other settlements to provide jurisdiction for territory to accommodate their "natural growth."

- There should be a moratorium on demolition orders in all settlements for unauthorized construction or construction on private Palestinian land.

- New courts for the adjudication of land disputes should be established to expedite the process of resolving land claims, to "facilitate access by local residents," and to restrict the authority of the civil administration appointed by the IDF.

- The prerogatives of the civil administration on issues pertaining to land and land registration should be restricted in favor of civilian Israeli institutions not subordinate to the IDF.

- To give greater security of tenure to settlers, none of

whom holds recognized title to West Bank land, the land registration process frozen since 1967 should be revived for “Palestinians and Israelis alike.” Those who fail to register land within a period of four to five years should “lose all their rights” over the land. (*Ha’aretz* reported on July 3, 2012, that a parallel land registry is planned in order to facilitate recognition of the land ownership claims of settlers “and appears designed to prevent Palestinians from appealing the validity of the ownership listings.”)

- End civil administration oversight of expansion in settlements built on land requisitioned for military purposes.

- Rescind all restrictions on the purchase of West Bank land by Israelis. In cases where settlements and settlers “acting in good faith” stole private Palestinian land, “the option of evacuation is not realistic, and there is another solution, for example, payment of compensation or provision of alternative land.” Settlers report that more than 9,000 such units exist in the West Bank.

Although Netanyahu created the Levy committee, he has not been anxious to publicize its findings for fear of international opposition. He sees no need to attract critical attention while Israel enjoys the most permissive international environment for settlement since the administration of Ronald Reagan.

The Levy report recommendations offer an administrative road map to annexation of more than half of the West Bank and increase the threat to Palestinian land owners throughout the territory. With or without the Levy committee, however, Israel is engaged in a relentless effort to consolidate control over the West Bank, heedless of ineffectual international opinion, indifferent to Palestinian rights, and happy to let credulous foreign donors bear the cost of managing Palestinians while it consolidates its territorial conquests. ♦

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Source: *Yediot Yerushalayim*, June 29, 2012.

Rimonim is a settlement of 630 located west of the Jordan Valley.

Settler Population in East Jerusalem, 2000–2010

	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2000
East Talpote	13,984	13,727	12,186	12,241	12,078	12,158	12,238	12,439	12,591	12,845
French Hill (Givat Shapira)	8,660	8,998	7,099	6,897	6,724	6,589	6,630	6,628	6,631	8,193
Gilo	29,559	28,980	26,929	27,087	27,173	27,258	27,309	27,425	27,569	27,637
Giv'at Ha-Matos, Har Homa	9,811	11,877	9,615	7,545	6,040	4,604	3,354	2,152	1,125	763
Giv'at Ha-Mivtar, Ramat Eshkol (east)	2,944	2,897	2,831	2,860	2,901	2,912	2,959	2,958	2,948	2,912
Ma'alot Dafna, Kiryat Arye	2,720	2,610	3,732	3,735	3,765	3,675	3,647	3,664	3,617	3,645
Neve Ya'akov	19,703	18,605	20,383	20,230	20,149	20,156	20,218	20,306	20,250	20,288
Jewish Quarter (Old City)	3,105	2,481	2,485	2,555	2,546	2,476	2,451	2,387	2,348	2,279
Pisgat Ze'ev	44,512	39,748	42,115	41,882	41,653	41,208	40,665	39,747	38,684	36,469
Ramot Allon	41,410	40,395	42,246	41,448	40,837	40,367	40,027	39,383	38,992	37,934
Ramat Eshkol (west)	3,573	3,404	3,388	3,316	3,299	3,252	3,180	3,123	3,046	2,917
Ramat Shlomo	14,554	14,245	15,123	14,911	14,658	14,318	13,888	13,390	12,822	11,348
	4,094	3,993	4,959	5,001	5,034	5,084	5,021	4,999	4,994	5,018
Sanhedriyya Ha-Murhevet, Har Ha-Hozvim (industrial zone)										
Total	198,629	191,960	193,091	189,708	186,857	184,057	181,587	178,601	175,617	172,248
Percentage change	3.47	-0.59	1.78	1.53	1.52	1.36	1.67	1.70	1.96	-

Source: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, *Statistical Yearbook of Jerusalem, 2000–2012*.

* Numbers do not include settlers in Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan, Old City Muslim Quarter, etc.

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

February 1 *Ma'ariv* reports that demand in 2011 for new housing dropped by 33 percent across Israel, although demand increased by 6 percent in Tel Aviv and 16 percent in the West Bank.

Education Minister Gideon Sa'ar plans to expand a pilot curriculum of student tours called "heritage tours" in the West Bank city of Hebron to all students across the country instead of just Jerusalem students. (*Ha'aretz*)

February 2 Settlers throw stones at vehicles near the Huwwara checkpoint, near Nablus, seriously injuring a 61-year-old Palestinian woman. (Negotiations Affairs Department–Palestinian Monitoring Group, NAD-PMG)

February 3 More than 100 Kfar Etzion settlers tour Beit Ummar, north of Hebron, under the protection of Israeli forces. The settlers make provocative remarks, sparking rock throwing by residents and use of live ammunition and stun grenades by Israeli forces. An official from the Karmeit Zzur settlement reportedly announced that the settlement will expand and 200 dunams will be confiscated from Beit Ummar. (Ma'an News)

Two hundred settlers using Israeli army jeeps raid Baraka village, east of Yatta, and set up six temporary houses in an attempt to create a new outpost near the Ma'on settlement. (Ma'an News)

February 4 Settlers from Ofra stone vehicles and injure a Palestinian resident of Huwwara. (NAD-PMG)

Residents of Nabi Saleh prevent settlers from entering a mosque in their village. (NAD-PMG)

February 5 A group of settlers opens fire on several Palestinians grazing their sheep in Burqa. (NAD-PMG)

Settlers steal 200 sheep from a Palestinian resident of Khirbet Zenutat. (NAD-PMG)

Palestinians and international peace activists hold a march near the Karmeit Zzur settlement to protest settler violence and efforts to prevent Palestinian farmers from reaching their lands. Israeli security forces at the settlement injure two activists and detain two Palestinians. (NAD-PMG)

February 6 Palestinians throw rocks at Israeli soldiers when they arrive in Kafr Qadum, near Qalqilya, and uproot olive trees

to prepare ground for tree planting on the Jewish festival of Tu Bshvat. The residents fear the measure is a precursor to expansion of nearby Kedumim settlement. Israeli forces beat and detain 60-year-old Yaqoub Ishtawi for obstructing settlers from digging up the land. Ishtawi allegedly "cursed, spat and bit a soldier." (Ma'an News)

Ha'aretz reports on the reversal of plans to move the Bedouin community living east of Jerusalem next to the Abu Dis garbage dump. Instead the Civil Administration will provide another permanent site for their relocation.

February 7 Stone-throwing settlers damage Palestinian vehicles near Silwad and Ein Yabrud, near Ramallah. (NAD-PMG)

Settlers uproot newly planted olive trees near the Palestinian town of Aqraba. (NAD-PMG)

Settlers from Yitzhar throw stones at homes in Burin, near Nablus. (Ma'an News)

Settlers, under the protection of Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers, set up two caravans on Palestinian-owned land in Beit Ummar. Settlers also uproot more than 25 olive trees planted there by solidarity campaigners a week prior. (Ma'an News)

February 8 Nablus governor Jibreel al-Bakri announces plans to allocate 300 tractors to be used for plowing Palestinian agricultural lands near Israeli settlements in the area. The lands have been declared military zones by Israel. (Ma'an News)

Settlers lay barbed wire around olive trees owned by residents of Wadi Fukin. (NAD-PMG)

February 9 Settlers, accompanied by IDF soldiers, plant trees on private Palestinian land in Qaryut, north of Ramallah. (Ma'an News)

Israeli forces distribute confiscation orders for 68 dunams in Jabaa, southwest of Bethlehem, to expand the Betar Illit and Geva'ot settlements. Resident Khaled Mashala claims he owns the land and has the documents to prove it. (Ma'an News)

February 10 Dozens of settlers from Yitzhar throw stones and clash with Palestinian residents in Burin, damaging homes and vehicles. (Ma'an News)

Israeli defense minister Ehud Barak approves the construction of additional homes and

educational buildings at the Geva'ot settlement. (Arutz 7)

Settlers from Ma'on bulldoze 100 dunams of land belonging to Kharubah, south of Hebron, in an attempt to expand their settlement. (Ma'an News)

Zeman Yerushalaim reports on the arrest of 4 leftist activists during protests against the construction of a national park in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Isawiyya.

February 11 Stone-throwing settlers damage cars traveling along the main route to Huwwara. (NAD-PMG)

February 13 Palestinian security forces accompany fifteen rabbis from Bnei Brak, near Tel Aviv, on a visit to Joseph's Tomb in Nablus. It is the first such effort at security coordination between the Palestinian Authority and Israeli forces for visits to the holy site. (Ma'an News)

Settlers plant olive trees on Palestinian private property between Hebron and Bani Na'im. (NAD-PMG)

Stone-throwing settlers damage Palestinian vehicles in Hebron's Old City. (NAD-PMG)

The Israeli Ministerial Committee for Legislation expresses the government's support for a Knesset bill that will allow tax deductions for donations to non-profit organizations that encourage settlement building. (*Ma'ariv*)

A group of settlers opens fire at Palestinian farmers near al-Auja, near Jericho. (NAD-PMG)

Arutz 7 reports a compromise between the Israeli government and residents of the Migron outpost. Permanent structures will be built near the current Migron site, and the IDF will consider leaving the existing structures intact. In return, the settlers agree to leave the site peacefully and avoid confrontation with security forces.

Israeli forces demolish 22 buildings in the Palestinian village of Khirbet al-Rahwa, south of Hebron, displacing 120 villagers. They also raze 16 domestic tents and six animal shelters. (Ma'an News)

The Israeli High Court rules that Burin must remove speakers and lights from the minaret of the Sulciman al-Farsi mosque to placate nearby settlers. (Ma'an News)

The Jerusalem District Planning and Con-

SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

struction committee approves the construction of a new visitors' center at the City of David National Park in Silwan, in East Jerusalem. (*Ha'aretz*)

Israeli authorities demolish a newly constructed Wadi Hilweh cultural center in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan. (*Ha'aretz*)

February 14 Palestinians carjack a settler from Karnei Shomron along Route 55. (*Arutz 7*)

February 15 At least 500 settlers accompanied by IDF soldiers hold prayers overnight at Joseph's Tomb in Nablus. Also with the group is Diaspora Affairs Minister Yuli Edelstein, who calls on the Israeli government to reclaim "total control of the site." (*Arutz 7*, *Ma'an News*)

Settlers destroy several olive trees in Burin before being evacuated by Israeli forces. (*NAD-PMG*)

Settlers are arrested while trying to set fire to a vineyard owned by Palestinians as part of the settlers' "price tag" campaign. (*Ma'ariv*)

February 16 Settlers set a Palestinian car on fire in Nabi Elias, east of Qalqilya, and write "price tag" on a nearby home. (*Ma'an News*)

February 17 *Yediot Yerushalaim* reports that tenders published for 41 plots of land in the West Bank settlement of Efrat have all been purchased.

February 19 *Ha'aretz* reports that settlers have claimed 93 dunams from the Palestinian village of Yanun, near Nablus, and 100 dunams of agricultural land near Salfit. The Israeli Civil Administration claims it does not have enough resources to track these violations; however, in the past year it has carried out demolitions of Palestinian homes in Area C which displaced 1,100 people. (*Ma'an News*)

February 20 Settlers from Kiryat Arba announce plans to form convoys to drive around and catch Palestinians throwing stones at cars and buses on the Etzion bloc-Hebron road. (*Israel Radio*)

Fifty Likud branch chairpersons, who oversee Central Committee members, arrive at Migron to show their support for the outpost. (*Ma'ariv*)

February 21 Some 250 Kiryat Arba

residents breach a fence around the Mitzpe Avihai outpost, now a closed military zone, to rebuild structures demolished by security forces a month earlier. (*Israel HaYom*)

February 22 The civil administration approves the construction of 480 new housing units in Shvut Rahel and 67 in Shilo and retroactively legalizes 120 existing units in Shvut Rahel and 28 in Shilo. The existing units were built without permits. (*Israel HaYom*)

Israeli finance minister Yuval Steinitz authorizes that settlement be recognized as a "public goal" for tax purposes. Donors receive a tax credit of 35 percent of the amount of their contributions to rural settlement. (*Israel HaYom*)

In the village of Surif, near Hebron, Israeli forces bulldoze olive trees and dig up land belonging to Isaac al-Qadi and Muhammad Ghneimat in order to confiscate it. (*Ma'an News*)

The Jerusalem municipality announces plans to spend \$150 million on the paving of 30 streets in East Jerusalem, eight of which will be in Beit Hanina, two in Wadi Joz, eight in Ras al-Amud, at-Tur and Silwan, and seven in Beit Tzafafa, Jebel Mukabbar and Issawiya. (*Ma'ariv*)

February 24 Palestinian worshippers clash with Israeli police following Friday prayers at al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount, in Jerusalem. The violence leaves one Palestinian dead and dozens of others wounded. (*Ma'ariv*)

The Civil Administration's Higher Planning committee rejects a government proposal to legalize the outpost of Sansana, marking the first time it has taken such a position. In addition, the committee indicates that the practice of annexing outposts to existing settlements is illegitimate, in this case to the settlement of Eshkolot. Committee chairman Shlomo Moskowitz says there is no need to expand Eshkolot as its master plan includes space for 347 housing units with only 70 units built thus far. (*Ha'aretz*)

February 26 A Palestinian demonstrator reportedly brandishing a flare gun during a protest is shot and killed by IDF troops at the Qalandia checkpoint. (*Ma'ariv*)

Israel issues a military order for the confiscation of 21.3 dunams from Qarawat Bani Hassan, near Salfit. (*Ma'an News*)

February 28 The IDF detains three Palestinians for allegedly setting fire to a structure at the Havat Gilad outpost. (*Ha'aretz*)

The number of settlers in the West Bank has increased to just more than 350,000, according to data released by the Ministry of Interior's Population Registry. has crossed the 350,000 mark for the first time and now comes to 350,143.

During the last 12 months, the settler population (excluding East Jerusalem) increased by 4.5 per cent, or 15,579, to 350,143. Settlements east of the separation barrier continue to grow, "The old settlement blocs," reported Israel HaYom on July 26, 2012, "remain stable, and the Ariel bloc, for example, has a population numbering almost 50,000 people, the Ma'ale Adumim bloc comes to just over 45,000 and the Etzion Bloc comes to 22,000. All together, the old settlement blocs have 116,824 residents, and the settlements outside these blocs have more than 233,000 residents."

The data also show that over the course of 12 years, the West Bank settler population almost doubled—it numbered 190,206 in the year 2000.

National Union Chairman MK Ya'akov Katz was pleased by the figures. "Despite the freeze, settlement in Judea and Samaria increased this past year," he said. "With the current rate of growth, we will be about 400,000 Jews before the next election campaign, and within four years—we will be about half a million Jews in Judea and Samaria. If you include East Jerusalem, we will number more than a million Jews, at which point the revolution will have been completed."

FORMER ISRAELI OFFICIAL OPPOSES SETTLEMENTS' USE OF "MADE IN ISRAEL" LABEL

. . . Israelis have now come to the conclusion that they don't need peace. The Israeli government is not planning on withdrawing. Behind the wall, and with the army's might, Israel is more or less kept safe without peace. The economy is growing and Tel Aviv is booming. The occupation is not a source of great moral discomfort to Israelis. Except for the minority who do combat military service, the oppression of Palestinians is out of sight and out of mind. Many Israelis tend to believe that the conflict can be managed and, as such, Israel does not have a "Palestinian problem" any more.

I can understand the desire, by people of conscience, to reassert an agenda of justice, to remind Israelis that Palestinians exist. I can understand small but symbolic acts of protest that hold a mirror up to Israeli society. As such, I cannot condemn the move to prevent goods made in the occupied Palestinian territory from being falsely classified as "Made in Israel." I support the South African government's insistence on this distinction between Israel and its occupation. . . .

Those interested in advancing Palestinian rights must begin by stopping the Israeli settlement enterprise. Every day, Palestine is being gobbled up by settlement expansion. Vagueness

over borders strengthens the opposition to the two-state solution. And this is the strength of the act of marking a product as either "Made in Israel" or "Made in Occupied Palestinian Territory." Although this doesn't create the reality of independence, it defines the principle in clear terms.

Through your choice as a consumer, the border along the internationally recognized pre-1967 line—the realistic basis for peace—is redrawn. This simple act reminds us that settlements are a violation of international law and a tool in a project of de-facto annexation. By defining the task along this line, we confirm that the goal is Palestinian independence, not an Israeli apartheid state. . . .

I buy Israeli products every day and do my best not to buy Israeli products from the occupied territories. I don't see why you, living outside Israel, shouldn't have the same choice.

Alon Liel, "Don't Buy 'Israeli' Goods Made in Palestine,"
Business Day (South Africa), June 25, 2012

*Liel is a former director-general of Israel's Foreign Ministry and was the Israeli ambassador to South Africa from 1992 to 1994.

We are not strangers in Beit El. We are not strangers in Judea and Samaria. This is the Land of our Patriarchs. This is where our identity was formed. I say this here in Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, and I say this everywhere in the world. Israel is a democratic state in which upholding the law is at the foundation of our free lives. The State of Israel is a law-abiding democracy and as the Prime Minister of Israel I am committed to upholding the law and am I committed to uphold the settlement enterprise, and I tell you that there is no contradiction between the two. The draft law [to legalize settlement on privately owned Palestinian land] that was rejected today in the Knesset would have hurt settlement whereas the outline that I have

decided upon—the expansion of the community, moving the homes and legal defense against any precedent—strengthens settlement. . . .

[T]he community of Beit El will be expanded. The 30 families [whose houses were built on stolen land] will remain in Beit El and will be joined by 300 new families. I tell those who think they can use the judicial system to hurt settlement, that they are mistaken, because in practice, the exact opposite will occur. Instead of shrinking Beit El—Beit El has expanded. Instead of hurting settlement, settlement has been strengthened.

PM Netanyahu's Remarks on the Issue of the
Ulpana Neighborhood in Beit El, June 6, 2012

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