

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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NEWS

The State Department's latest report to Congress on Israeli settlement activity (story opposite) clarifies the limited nature of changes in settlement policy that the Rabin government has implemented. Israeli expenditures on settlements may feature prominently in the upcoming debate on the second installment of loan guarantees.

The government has no intention of making war on settlers and the settlers have no reason to make war on the government, according to Deputy Minister of Defense Mordechai Gur. Nevertheless, SHABAK, Israel's internal security agency, has increased surveillance of settler leaders and extremists in order to be ready if, in the wake of an autonomy accord with the Palestinians, settler threats to challenge the agreement occur. (Story opposite.)

The map on page 3, based on work done by Palestinians at the Palestine Geographical Research and Information Center, presents an overview of the extensive area of the West Bank now under Israeli control.

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ADMINISTRATION REPORT PLAYS DOWN CURRENT SETTLEMENT IN TERRITORIES

by Geoffrey Aronson

The latest State Department annual report on Israeli settlement in the occupied territories attempts to present the settlement policies of the Rabin government in their most advantageous light, stressing efforts to curb settlements. In so doing, however, it highlights the limited nature of the so-called reforms and plays down more telling indices of the continuing settlement program.

Responding to a request from Rep. David Obey, chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, the State Department, in March 1991, began issuing annual

reports on Israel's settlement activities.

Reports have been prepared in a changing political environment regarding U.S. policy toward settlements. The 1992 analysis, prepared at a time of unprecedented U.S. criticism of settlement policy, offered an extensive outline of settlement-related expenditures and settler population increases as well as Soviet immigration into occupied areas. (See *Report*, July 1992, p. 8)

The current report has been prepared in an era in which the settlement issue is no longer a source of official friction between Washington and Jerusalem.

U.S. REPORT, *continued on page 4*

MILITANT SETTLERS TEST RABIN'S AUTHORITY

by Geoffrey Aronson

Today, a small minority among the 120,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank are attempting to create a second military force in the occupied territories with an agenda far more radical than Israel's army of occupation and not subject to any authority but settlers and their rabbis.

"The moment of truth is approaching fast," Israeli defense analyst Ze'ev Schiff recently warned. "A further deterioration of the existing situation will lead to the Lebanonization of the territories. We will then belatedly realize that Jews are capable of creating their own Hizballah movement under rabbin-

ical leadership. Anarchy will then be unavoidable."

A right-wing challenge to constituted authority is not new in Israel's short history.

In June 1948, one month after the State of Israel was proclaimed, the *Altalena* set anchor in the waters off Tel Aviv. The ship was carrying a cargo of arms for the Irgun, an underground organization headed by Menachem Begin.

Prime Minister David Ben Gurion was determined to assert the supremacy of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and prevent the strengthening of independent militia challenging its authority.

CHALLENGE, *continued on page 7*

TO OUR READERS

If there is to be an interim or transition period before final status negotiations to determine the future of the West Bank and Gaza—a perfectly sensible approach—Israel should suspend land-taking and settlement during such an interim period. Otherwise, the Palestinians understandably view the concept of a transition lasting several years simply as a stratagem to further their dispossession. Mr. Shamir has now acknowledged that if he had remained in power he would have stretched negotiations over ten years—all the while settling Israelis in the occupied territories—until there would have been nothing to negotiate.

The United States officially shares in the unanimous world opinion that Israeli settlement of occupied territory is an

obstacle to peace, if not illegal under international law. But political considerations have historically inhibited the United States from giving any meaningful expression to its stated opposition. Settlement activity goes merrily on; Washington continues to provide Israel generous financial support; and the United States, as “full partner” in the negotiating process, does not even note the fundamental contradiction in Israel’s negotiating position.

If peace is really the objective, Israel should either negotiate a final settlement now or suspend settlements pending final status negotiations.



THE DOOR IS OPENED TO SETTLEMENT ON THE GOLAN

The headline in the newspaper *Hadasbot* trumpeted, “Operation Populate the Golan: \$3000 in Cash, The Rest in Local Loans and Mortgages.” A monthly payment of \$112 buys a semi-detached cottage in the Golan Heights settlement of Katzrin, where 350 houses were recently sold by lottery, administered by the World Zionist Organization’s Settlement Department and the Golan settlement council.

The homes were the first of 2,800 units begun by former Minister of Housing Ariel Sharon after the surge in Soviet immigration in 1990. Still under construction are 400 units in Katzrin, the largest Golan settlement with a population of 4,200. By the end of the year, 1,500 units will be completed in all 31 Golan settlements.

In response to pressure from Golan Heights settlers, the current minister of housing, Benjamin Ben Eliezer, in March ordered that the pace of Golan construction be accelerated.

“Katzrin, and the Golan Heights as a whole,” he declared, “are considered a preferred security area, and there are no restrictions on apartment construction or sales there . . . Our intent is first of all to sell the 12,000 apartments [in Israel and

the occupied territories] that came into our inventory after the budget freeze” [on new government-supported housing].

Ben Eliezer estimated that the government is losing 10 to 15 percent of the \$40,000 to \$47,000 sale price of each apartment for sale in the Golan. In addition to a below-market rate “local loan” of \$18,600, first-time buyers receive a grant of \$22,600 while homeowners can obtain a grant of \$9,400.

More than 500 new immigrants, vacation home seekers, veteran residents of the Golan, and speculators lined up to purchase the houses in what was described as the biggest sale since the establishment of Katzrin 16 years ago. No one seemed dissuaded by Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin, who stated (on April 7) that, “there will be those who will have to adjust to living under Syrian sovereignty [on the Golan].”

“We believe that the Golan will not be returned,” said one purchaser. “And even if it is returned we won’t suffer. What we paid will be returned to us by the government. But we aren’t coming here in order to get rich at the government’s expense. We want to better our quality of life.” ♦

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SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY

After Confiscation Comes Discrimination

Lands belonging to the Khatib family were confiscated for a "build your own house" neighborhood in the East Jerusalem settlement of Pisgat Ze'ev. The family wanted to participate in the program, but were rejected because they are Arab.

In March, Israel's High Court issued a temporary order forbidding the Israel Lands Authority from evicting the Khatib family from land planned for expansion of the East Jerusalem settlement of Pisgat Ze'ev.

The land in question was confiscated in 1980 for "public purposes." Unlike other landowners whose lands were taken, the Khatib family lives in two buildings on the property, which were built in 1976.

The patriarch of the family agreed to accept the confiscation as well as the removal of the buildings if his family would be permitted to participate in the "build your own house" program planned for the area.

A representative of the Lands Authority explained that permission was impossible, because the program was limited to army veterans—one of the means used to restrict such programs to Israeli Jews. In recent months plots have gone on sale at prices ranging from \$70,000 to \$80,000.

"We sit here and see them dividing our land," explained the matriarch of the Khatib family, "and selling every piece for tens of thousands of dollars. As for us, they want to expel us from our two houses, where my entire family lives."

Settlements Remain Attractive

The following statement was published in January 1993 by YESHA—the Council of Jewish Communities in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza—as part of a reply to the January 1993 study of Peace Now's Settlement Watch team. (See Report, January 1993.)

Even without the mortgage and tax benefits formerly accorded to YESHA communities, YESHA retains many economic attractions over other parts of Israel. The status of Dimona [an Israeli town in the Negev region] as a development town will not make it more attractive than Ariel [the West Bank settlement], which lies near Kfar Sava [Tel Aviv]. Other communities are close to Jerusalem or Beersheva and allow residents to enjoy private homes with lawns, rather than crowded urban apartments. Finally the massive scale of building now under way in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza will soon flood the market with a great supply of housing, driving down housing prices in YESHA communities and adding to the economic attraction.

ACTIVITY, continued on page 6



The removal of settlements from the U.S.-Israeli agenda dates from the Rabin-Bush summit in August 1992, when President Bush acknowledged Rabin's intention to continue what Rabin has since described as the largest settlement construction drive in the history of the occupation. "I do not remember a time," Rabin said, "even after canceling the construction of 6,000 to 7,000 units, when such a drive ever took place." (See *Report*, September 1992, p. 4)

For the first time since the Clinton administration took office, the State Department report reiterates the official U.S. view of settlements as an "obstacle to peace." Even as it declares continuing U.S. opposition to the "expansion of existing settlement activities," it fails to restate the conflicting message sent recently by Assistant Secretary for Near East Affairs Edward Djerejian, who noted in congressional testimony that U.S. policy permits "some allowance for . . . construction activities in existing settlements." (See *Report*, May 1993, p. 2)

State's report takes note of the important change in public discourse on settlements initiated by the Rabin government. But it also acknowledges that the Rabin government has made a conscious decision not to confront the settlers. It offers little substantive evidence that Israeli settlement-related allocations of funds have been significantly reduced since the change in government one year ago. Another report detailing settlement expenditures is expected before the second U.S. allocation of \$2 billion in loan guarantees is made in the fall.

The Department's analysis points to the following examples of Israel's "new policy" on settlements:

■ **A commitment "not to construct any new settlements."**

No ideological or practical imperative drives Israel today to establish additional settlements anywhere in the occupied territories. Nevertheless, new settlements have been established since Rabin has been in office. The expansion is reminiscent of the previous Shamir government's efforts to "thicken" existing settlements—establishing new neighborhoods at some distance from existing outposts.

The Israeli newspaper *Al Hamishmar* wrote on March 2 that "a settlement, disguised as 'an independent neighborhood' 1.5 kilometers west of Kfar Adumim"—a West Bank settlement on the outskirts of Jerusalem—had been reported by a Peace Now settlement monitoring team. Seventy housing units will be constructed at the site, units that are in excess of the limits announced last year by Rabin. Israeli officials maintain that the settlement in question is not a new, independent settlement. Nevertheless, the area of greater Jerusalem where this new settlement activity is occurring is under no settlement expansion restrictions whatsoever.

The newspaper also notes:

"A similar attempt was exposed near Hinanit, in the northern part of the West Bank, where new settlement creation is supposed to be frozen. Eighteen trailers were placed on a hill 500 meters away from the settlement, under the name Ginanit.

The procedure was identical in both cases: After settling on land approved in the blueprint for 'the mother settlement,' (Hinanit), the latter recognized the independence of 'the daughter settlement' (Ginanit). In this case too, the [new] settlement receives a budget allocation despite the fact that it is not recognized by the [[Jewish Agency] Settlement Department."

■ **A decision to "cancel contracts to construct about 5,000 additional housing units."**

Although Rabin's government has largely complied with its decision to cancel construction planned by the Shamir government, this action was part of a national slowdown in the building projects undertaken by Shamir because of falling housing demand in Israel and in the territories. Nevertheless, construction of units beyond the 11,000 in various West Bank settlements approved by Rabin has begun in the last year.

■ **A decision to "ban settlers' use of mobile homes in the territories."**

According to the *Jerusalem Post*, more than 2,000 mobile homes stand empty in West Bank and Gaza settlements. The end in the surge of immigration has caused a glut in this type of housing in Israel as well, prompting a decision to close all such sites within four years. The government is now suggesting that all empty mobile homes, for which the settlements are currently paying rent, be returned for sale to private bidders. The *Post* reports that "it is assumed that a large number of them will be returned and put on sale."

To point to a "ban" on the use of mobile homes—in the midst of a glut and at a time when settlements cannot afford their upkeep—as an important reform of Israeli settlement policy is faint praise indeed.

■ **A decision to "halt new declarations of state land."**

Acquisition of state land was the key tool in Likud government land policies in the West Bank during the last decade. About 30 percent of the West Bank's 2,270 square miles came under Israeli control after having been declared "state land."

According to recent Palestinian studies, the Rabin government's preferred method of land acquisition is to reclassify land to be included in "closed military areas"—a method that the State Department report does not describe.

■ **A decision to "suspend construction of some so-called 'settler' roads in the territories."**

Rabin postponed construction of a number of planned West Bank roads, while continuing to build others, notably a \$42 million highway project connecting Jerusalem through a series of tunnels and bridges with West Bank settlements south of the city. (See *Report*, November 1992, p. 5.)

"Who says that this tunnel is an obstacle to peace," declared Foreign Minister Shimon Peres recently. "The tunnel between

ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

This text of Israel's settlement policies was released by the State Department to Congress in April. The Settlement Report has added the map to illustrate the still undefined "100-square-mile" area referred to as "Greater Jerusalem" in the text below.

Settlements Policy

Since 1967, the United States has consistently opposed any unilateral steps to alter the status quo in the occupied territories, including the establishment of Israeli settlements and the expansion of existing settlement activities. The Clinton Administration, like previous U.S. Administrations, views Israeli settlements and settlement activities in the territories occupied by Israel in the June 1967 war as an obstacle to peace.

The current Government of Israel was elected last June on a platform which specified its intention to change the previous government's policy that "settlement in all parts of the land of Israel is a right and an inseparable part of national security." The Israeli Government has moved to redirect resources away from the occupied territories while at the same time avoiding a direct confrontation with the settlers and their supporters.

In keeping with its new policy, the Israeli Government moved quickly to:

- not construct any new settlements;
- Cancel contracts to construct about 5,000 additional housing units;
- ban settlers' use of mobile homes in the territories;
- halt new declarations of state land; and
- suspend construction of some so-called "settler roads" in the territories.

The Government has since followed up by:

- approving on January 24 a new development plan (the Sheves Report) that removes a range of benefits and incentives—including GOI loan guarantees (not part of the U.S. loan guarantees) for industry, reduced income taxes, and

free pre-school education—to so-called "political" settlements in most of the West Bank, while retaining these benefits for so-called "security" settlements in the Jordan Valley, Golan Heights, and Gaza; and

- issuing in February a military order barring further private construction by settlements that do not have an approved master plan. This order for the first time gives the Government the power to restrict some privately financed settlement construction.

Despite this new approach, there has *not* been a complete freeze on settlement activity. The Government has:

- announced that construction of approximately 11,000 housing units already underway will continue (these represent units for which the Government had already signed contracts and which could not be abrogated without many significant costs);

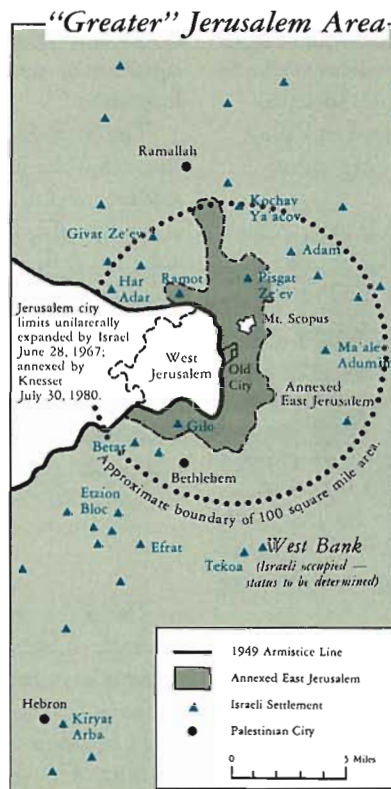
- allocated \$36 million in the 1993 budget for the Settlement Department of the World Zionist Organization (a reduction of 40% from the 1992 budget);

- made no commitment to halt or reduce construction in East Jerusalem; the new neighborhood of Pisgat Zeev in East Jerusalem, scheduled for completion by the end of this year, will include more than 6,000 units. The

Government also has affirmed its intention to continue settlement construction in a 100 square mile surrounding area termed "Greater Jerusalem" as well.

Continuing Review

The Government of Israel has stated that it is committed to decreasing the level of non-security activity in the occupied territories. Questions concerning government expenditures on settlements will be discussed in regular meetings of the Joint Economic Development Group (JEDG); we hope to have the first JEDG meeting in the late Spring / early Summer period of 1993.



France and Britain does not indicate that France is going to be settled by the British.”

Construction of the Jerusalem-Efrat road is proceeding precisely because of Israel's stated intention to settle this area of the West Bank.

The slower pace of road construction, like so many other actions undertaken by Rabin, are less indicators of a new era of “drying out” settlements than a rationalization of overly ambitious Likud settlement plans.

■ Adoption of the Sheves plan reducing settlement incentives.

The plan, named after Rabin's chief of staff, Shimon Sheves, outlines a series of reductions in state subsidies for settlements favored by Rabin. Until now, reductions have only been made in the local loan program and in incentives available to industrial sites in some West Bank settlements. In settlements such as Ma'ale Efrim, overlooking the Jordan Valley, subsidies for industrial development are proceeding unhindered.

The State Department report inexplicably fails to note that, together with settlements in the Jordan Valley, Golan Heights, and Gaza, those in the greater Jerusalem area of the West Bank have also been declared eligible for the government's most generous benefits and incentives.

■ Adoption of a military order restricting settlement.

Military Order 1325, a decree issued on January 27, freezes all planning or consideration of new master plans for settlements and bans all construction in areas not now covered by an existing, approved planning document. The effect of this order is limited because most settlements have the required planning documents.

Citing the order as indicative of the Rabin government's commitment to redirect resources away from settlement activities, the State Department acknowledges that “there has *not* been a complete freeze on settlement activity.”

It notes the continuing construction of 11,000 housing units approved by Rabin in July 1992, taking pains to suggest that Rabin had understandable reasons for this action, notably the “significant costs” attending abrogation of signed construction contracts. The unstated rationale is that Rabin judged the “significant costs” resulting from cancellation of these contracts to be greater than the financial or political penalties—from the U.S., Palestinians, or Israelis—that he could expect by honoring them.

In contrast to previous studies, the State Department report fails to address the once contentious issue of settlement expenditures. It merely takes note of a reduction to \$36 million in the budget of the Settlement Department of the World Zionist organization. Why the Settlement Department, an insignificant player in Israel's settlement-budget allocations with authority limited to small communal settlements, was singled

out for attention is unclear. Judging from what has appeared in the Israeli press, it is the only settlement-budget issue that has received public attention and is therefore accessible to U.S. analysts, who have apparently not been given information promised by the Israeli government.

The State Department accurately notes that the Rabin government has “made no commitment to halt or reduce construction in East Jerusalem.” In fact, it has done the very opposite, declaring its intention to continue expanding in the area.

For the first time, the State Department report assigns a specific estimate to the still undefined area of settlement known as greater Jerusalem, a zone of de facto annexation of great importance to the Rabin government. The area includes West Bank territories outside the boundaries of annexed East Jerusalem, reaching beyond Bethlehem in the south and to Ramallah in the north. The State Department explains that settlement construction will continue in “a one-hundred-square-mile surrounding [Jerusalem] area termed ‘Greater Jerusalem’.”

The State Department report, perhaps unintentionally, confirms that the Rabin government's most significant change in settlement policy has been in the rhetoric used to frame the issue. Specific reforms have, for the most part, been cosmetic, aimed at defusing international opposition and responding to economic and demographic changes within Israel. One year after the election of Labor's Yitzhak Rabin, this prime indicator of Israeli intentions remains unreformed. ♦

Local Loans Revised

The Rabin government has placed further restrictions on the state-subsidized “local loan” program instituted by the Shamir government in January 1992 to encourage settlement in the occupied territories.

In addition to settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, a number of locales within Israel are no longer eligible for the \$18,600 subsidy.

Housing purchases in settlements in Greater Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley will, however, continue to be eligible for the package of grants and loans, which supplements traditional mortgage financing programs. Golan Heights settlements also remain eligible. (See Golan story, page 2.)

Government officials claim that demand for the loans has dried up since the grant portion of the loan was eliminated for many West Bank settlements in September 1992.

Settlers maintain that housing demand in the settlements is on a par with demand within Israel. They note that commercial bank rates now equal the rates offered in the local loan program and maintain that its cancellation will therefore have no practical effect.



Even as the battle for Palestine still raged, he ordered the IDF to shell the *Altalena* and forces that came to its assistance. Survivors were treated as prisoners of war, and the Irgun's militants were arrested and kept in detention until Begin capitulated.

After the assassination of United Nations mediator Count Folke Bernadotte, a similar fate befell another militant group, Lehi, known as the Stern Gang, headed by Yitzhak Shamir.

Now it is Ben Gurion's heir, Yitzhak Rabin, who is facing a parallel choice. Settlers of the West Bank and Gaza, particularly the religious zealots among them, are threatening violent opposition to any diminution of Israeli control in the occupied areas.

Rabin, however, has been careful not to confront the settlers, either by curtailing growth of West Bank settlements or by challenging settler incitement to violence against the state. Today, it is the government that fears the settlers.

"Among government members," Uzi Benjamin, a leading Israeli commentator, wrote recently, "there are some who do not believe that current Israeli positions can avoid resulting in a fratricidal shedding of Jewish blood. In private conversations, those ministers intimate that for the first time since the formation of the state of Israel, political struggle will involve the use of firearms and attempts to assassinate politicians."

Settlers are acting upon their threat to impede Rabin's support for Palestinian autonomy, demonstratively announcing the formation of a settler police force and parading weapons before television cameras.

As his ministers freely admit, Rabin has refrained from challenging settlement zealots. Indeed, he recently approved an expansion of the "policing" powers of all settlers, who have been granted unprecedented power to arrest Palestinians.

From their first settlement in Hebron in April 1968, settlers have had an armed presence in the territories. They worked in cooperation with the IDF, undertaking "policing actions" in their settlements and in Palestinian villages and towns. These paramilitary responsibilities were institutionalized by Raphael Eitan, then chief of staff, who, in the early 1980s, integrated settlers into a "Regional Defense Network."

Many settlers have been raised on a steady diet of declarations by their religious leaders that a state of war against Palestinians already exists in the territories. The IDF has permitted settlers to wage an unofficial campaign, and, over the years, their "policing" powers and their capabilities have grown along with their numbers.

For the religious zealots, any diminution of God-given Jewish authority in "Judea and Samaria" is an act of treason.

Not only Palestinians—the settlers' traditional targets—would be foes in a struggle to prevent such a calumny; the IDF itself would be a target, too.

During the election campaign in 1980, then Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Yadin warned that, "if the [Labor] Alignment returns to power, civil war is probable. The Greater Israel fanatics will prefer civil war to obeying orders of a legally elected government for concessions on the West Bank and Gaza Strip."

How real is this challenge today? Israeli security agencies have taken note that supporters of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane have begun accumulating weapons and training settlers in preparation for the "Day of Reckoning." One settler describes Rabin's election as "an existential threat to the settlers of Judea and Samaria. We will do everything in every manner possible in order to prevent the dangers" presented by his government.

For the time being, however, the right-wing mainstream has declared nothing more than its intention "not to make life easy" for the government. Most settlers realize that Rabin's policies leave little to criticize.

"In truth," noted a recent article in the newspaper *Hadashot*, "what do the settlers have to complain about? In the framework of a freeze in construction, 10,000 [housing] units are being built. That is enough to add 50,000 people to the Jewish population of Judea and Samaria, not including private construction. Rabin is boldly fighting terror all the settlers agree, and not a one of them could have imagined that a left-wing government would have carried out a mass expulsion."

But it is the prospect of autonomy and a loss of control to a Palestinian

authority, no matter how circumscribed, that has some settlers and religious leaders in a panic and that poses the greatest instigation to armed settler opposition.

Despite their relatively small numbers, an armed settler movement could do spectacular damage to any Rabin initiative. One need only remember the impact of the assassination attempts on the mayors of Hebron, Nablus, and el Bireh a decade ago and the plan to blow up the Al Aqsa Mosque—the plan was scuttled only because a prominent rabbi refused to approve it—to realize the power of such groups if the militants are activated. In such a situation, the IDF, which trained them, will effectively be fighting against its own creation.

Rabin has few kind words for the zealots, who during his first premiership in the mid-1970s did much to undermine his government. He may act to preempt their power, ordering his own version of the attack on the *Altalena*. Rabin's decision to smash the settlers' growing military power and to end the prospect of a Jewish military challenge to the Israeli government will signal the seriousness of his intention to promote an agreement with the Palestinians. ♦

“. . . what do the settlers have to complain about? In the framework of a freeze in construction, 10,000 units are being built. That is enough to add 50,000 people to the Jewish population of Judea and Samaria. . . .”

ISRAEL TAKES PALESTINIAN LAND AMID PEACE PROCESS

On a stony hillside by a Jewish settlement, a Palestinian farmer pointed at fencing that looked newer than the rest of its chainlink perimeter.*

"In December the settlers took away the old fence and put up a new one, taking 28 dunams (seven acres) of my land," said Abdel Aziz Sabatin, 65, from the nearby Palestinian village of Hussan.

The gnarled farmer pointed at gashes in the hill, where he said his olive trees and grapevines were uprooted by the settlers of Betar Illit. He produced old deeds to back his claim to the land.

Palestinians call Sabatin's case part of a quiet, relentless Israeli campaign both to take Arab land and to prevent their crowded towns and villages from spreading over more of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Moshe Leibowitz, mayor of Betar Illit, would not discuss the new fence or Sabatin's land. He simply called him "a liar."

"To work out his problem he should get a lawyer and go to court. Why hasn't he," Leibowitz said.

The answer came from Sabatin's lawyer, Ali Ghuzlan, who represented Hussan villagers in an unsuccessful 1985 bid to reverse Israel's confiscation of 375 acres of land.

"There is no way to stop them . . . We have old deeds to the land, but nothing stands before the settlers' desire. There is nothing I can do for this man," Ghuzlan said. . . .

Palestinians say Rabin has simply put a better face on the previous right-wing Likud government's outspoken support for expanding Jewish settlement. . . .

Despite assurances by Rabin that settlement would be curbed, Arab land continues to disappear.

Israelis took or served confiscation notices on more than 741 acres of Arab land since Rabin took office last July, says the Jerusalem Media and Communication Center (JMCC), which does research for the Palestinian peace team.

Rabin's spokesman Oded Ben-Ami declined to check the JMCC list, saying cases like Sabatin's were impossible because the government had halted expansion of settlements.

The Civil Administration, Israel's occupation authority, confirmed 496 acres of the land listed by the JMCC were now under Israeli control.

Two and one-half acres were taken for security reasons, 128 acres for public works and 22 acres were in dispute between a settlement and Palestinians who said they owned the land, the authority said.

It did not have data on how the remaining 343 acres it acknowledged came to be under Israeli control. It had no record at all about Sabatin's plot.

A spokeswoman for the Civil Administration declined to say how much land Israel had taken during the 26-year occupation. "No one will give you those numbers," she said.

But [Palestinian attorney Raja] Shehadeh suspects methods such as claiming open areas are state land are about exhausted. Now, he says, Israel is turning to zoning to strangle development of heavily populated Arab areas.

Shehadeh fears that Rabin, to prevent a Palestinian state, will continue settlement. He believes that is why Israel keeps almost all information about the territories secret.

"They don't want any real negotiations about what's on the ground," he said. "They are taking active and speedy measures to prejudice facts in the direction they want."

*This article by Colleen Siegel appeared on the Reuters news-wire on April 14.

Once there are concrete proposals, the Golan settlers can spin around in their demonstrations like propellers. It won't do them any good.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, June 8

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