

# REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

A Bimonthly Publication of the Foundation for Middle East Peace

Volume 6 Number 1

January 1996

## NEWS

The Peres government has adopted a conciliatory policy toward settlers in the wake of the Rabin assassination. Peres has won critical acknowledgment of Oslo II from some of its most determined opponents as Israel implements its military redeployment in the West Bank. (Stories this page.)

Despite settler concern over security in this environment, settlements continue to expand. (Stories page 3 and page 8.)

Palestinians are preoccupied with their assumption of powers in the West Bank and elections. Imminent construction of 6,500 units at Har Homa in Jerusalem may once again raise the profile of the settlement issue. (Story page 6.)

### Also in this issue:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| From the Israeli Press Housing Minister's Views on Settlements | 3 |
| Settler Population Grows                                       | 5 |
|  | 8 |

Look for our new homepage at this Internet address:

<http://www.clark.net/pub/jeff>

To subscribe to the *Report* mailing list:

e-mail [majordomo@gdn.org](mailto:majordomo@gdn.org);  
leave "Subject" blank;  
Write subscribe settlements-L.

Our Internet address is [jeff@clark.net](mailto:jeff@clark.net).

## PERES CREATES NATIONAL CONSENSUS IN SUPPORT OF OSLO II AGREEMENT

In the short time since the Rabin assassination, the government of Shimon Peres has begun to establish policies toward settlers and settlements that distinguish it from its predecessor. These policies have served to illuminate the extent to which the central ideas concerning settlers embodied in the Oslo II agreement with the Palestinians reflect a broad Israeli national consensus. They also reflect a more concrete political aim—to split the right-wing coalition opposed to Labor's reelection in October 1996.

Peres has changed the public atmosphere of the relationship between the prime minister and the settlers. He has

used the post-assassination period not to isolate and denigrate the settlement movement, but to encourage its mainstream to understand the commitment to the maintenance of settlements that the Oslo process signifies.

In the presentation of his government before Israel's Knesset on November 22, Peres explained, "Even though we have reached an agreement with the Palestinian Authority, we have no intention of ignoring the distress of the settlers in the territories. . . . We will not lessen our responsibility for their security, and we will not turn a blind eye to

CONSENSUS, continued on page 6

## ISRAELI GOVERNMENT ADOPTS POLICY OF ACCOMMODATING SETTLERS

By *Geoffrey Aronson*

Yitzhak Rabin was not assassinated because of inflammatory words shouted by his right-wing opponents, or by cruel effigies. Rabin was murdered for following a policy of reconciliation with the Palestinians, which threatens to redivide the "Land of Israel" by ceding a measure of Israeli control in the West Bank to Palestinians. His policy was seen as derailing what is for many Jews a divinely ordained program for the redemption of the Jewish people.

Until the day he died, Rabin chose not to invoke governmental authority or to mobilize the Israeli public to under-

mine the power of those for whom his policy was synonymous with treason. He viewed settlers, even the most extreme among them, as a problem limited to the context of relations with Palestinians, where the settlers' depredations, however repugnant, were tolerable. By failing to understand the threat that devotees of greater Israel pose to Israel itself, he made what proved for him to be a fatal error.

The government of Shimon Peres has now pledged a crackdown on the most extreme of the settlers and their rabbinical patrons. In the weeks since

ACCOMMODATION, continued on page 7

## TO OUR READERS

Israel's redeployment from the towns and cities of the West Bank has proceeded on or ahead of schedule. Of the principal West Bank cities, only Hebron remains under the immediate control of the IDF, a situation that is scheduled to be modified by spring.

It needs to be remembered that the implementation of these welcome elements of the Oslo II agreement is taking place in the context of the continuing growth and expansion of Israeli settlements, particularly in the Jerusalem region and along Israel's border with the West Bank.

In this context, it is not surprising that some have concluded that settlements are no longer an obstacle to peace, and that the Palestinians have become reconciled to their existence, not only during the interim period, but forever.

To have both peace with the Palestinians and settlements has been the policy of Israel rejectionists all along. Today, such an outcome is evolving into what passes for conventional wisdom in Washington and

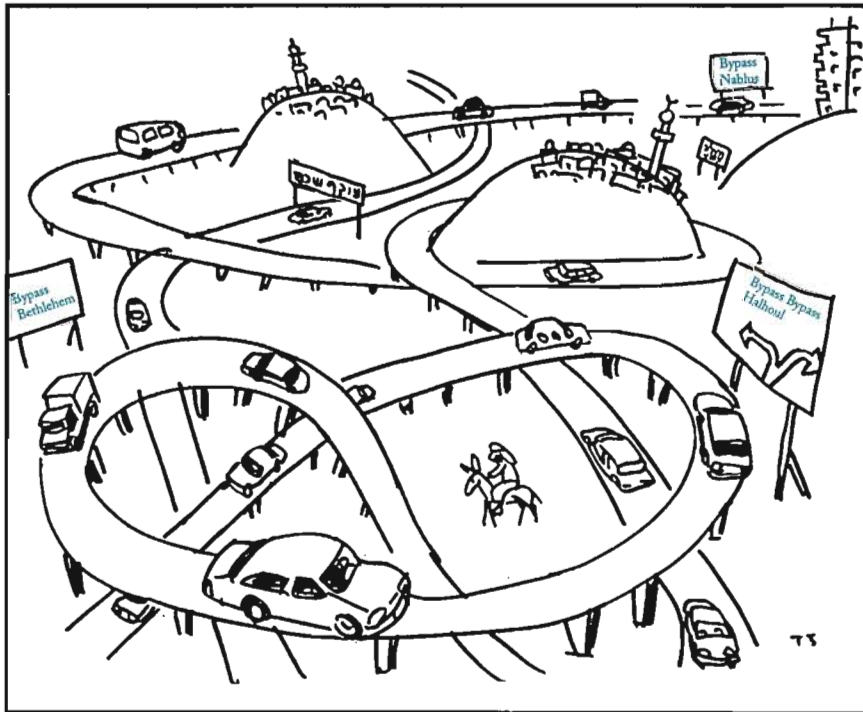
Jerusalem, if not among Palestinians themselves.

Palestinian submission to the existence of settlements during the interim period, and the important precedent that this sets for the permanent status negotiations, does not overshadow the fact, well documented in the Israeli press, but absent from U.S. coverage, that the historical conflict between Israel and Palestine continues to revolve over control of the land. Settlements and Palestinian sovereignty simply cannot be reconciled.

Where does this leave the situation? At best, there will be a continuing, even a long-term cease fire, but not peace with amicable, profitable relations between two peoples living as equals in recognized, sovereign states. At worst, the world will witness a resumption of armed and bloody conflict.

*Lucius D. Battle*

### Bypass Muddle



*Ha'aretz*, December 12, 1995

### FOUNDATION FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

*Merle Thorpe, Jr.*  
Founder  
(1917-1994)

*Lucius D. Battle*  
President

*Jean C. Newsom*  
Executive Director

*Geoffrey Aronson*  
Editor

*Efrat Shvili*  
Jerusalem Correspondent

*Elizabeth Olds*  
Intern

### ADVISERS

*Landrum R. Bolling*  
Former President, Tantur Ecumenical Institute, Jerusalem;  
President Emeritus, Earlham College

*Murray J. Gart*  
Former Chief of Correspondents,  
*Time* Magazine, Senior Editor,  
*Time*, Inc.

*Peter Gubser*  
President, American Near East  
Refugee Aid

*Sally S. Thorpe*

### TRUSTEES

*Peter M. Castleman*  
Chairman

*Lucius D. Battle*  
*Calvin H. Cobb, Jr.*

*James J. Cromwell*  
*Stephen Hartwell*

*Richard S.T. Marsh*  
*Frank Reifsnyder*

*Sally S. Thorpe*

The Foundation, a non-profit, I.R.C. 501(c)(3) organization, receives no U.S. or foreign government funds. It supports peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians through mutual recognition and a negotiated division of historic Palestine.

Copyright © 1996



## The Settlers Are Above the Law

The site chosen for the official opening ceremony of “Jerusalem 3000” celebrations is on the outskirts of a hill south of the Old City wall, an archeological site identified with the ancient City of David. Now it is called Wadi al-Khilwe and is one of the rural Bedouin neighborhoods that surround Silwan, called in Hebrew, Kfar Ha’shiloah. When Prime Minister Rabin, accompanied by a group of VIPs, visited it for a short time on a Monday afternoon, the whole area was surrounded by large army and police forces. Following the short ceremony, life returned to normal—seven Jewish families and a few yeshiva students live in several old buildings in the heart of a crowded Arab neighborhood. . . .

All components of the Hebron syndrome exist in Kfar Ha’shiloah. The settlers try to expand, take over and buy properties. From time to time stones are thrown at them and at the few visitors who dare to tour the area. There are many complaints about insults. An elderly Arab from the S’iam family told me after the ceremony on Monday that he will never forgive the two settlers who never cease harassing one of his daughters, saying things such as, “Everything here is Jewish property” and “We will drive you out.” According to him, they added to the threats rude curses of sexual nature which he would not repeat.

Immediately upon the establishment of the settlement over three years ago, the government set out to investigate the matter thoroughly—and shortly afterwards gave up. Why? Some weeks ago, Advocate Daniel Zeidman from Jerusalem submitted a petition to the Supreme Court on behalf of “Ir Shalem” (an organization working with Peace Now) concerning the settlers in Silwan, and possibly now the affair will once again be on the public agenda.

For the time being, the affair is dormant. It began more than four years ago. In the dead of the night, in October 1991, a group of yeshiva students took over several houses in the neighborhood. Their raid on the houses was carried out like a military action, and the issue was raised that same day in the government, then headed by Yitzhak Shamir. The Attorney General, Yosef Harish, gave permission to the yeshiva students to live in the houses they occupied.

In August 1992, a committee was formed, headed by the General Director of the Justice Ministry, Haim Klugman. One month later the committee submitted its findings to the [Rabin] government. Since the 1980s it has been known that yeshiva students with religious-nationalist views close to Gush Emunim have been trying to purchase houses and lands for settling Jews in Arab neighborhoods, mainly in the Moslem

Quarter of the Old City. The Klugman report presented for the first time well-founded revelations about the means by which those groups realize their aims. They established associations of which the best known are Ateret Cohanim, El’ad and Atara Le’Yoshna. Government owned agencies and companies, such as the Custodian of Absentee Property, the Company for Renovating the Jewish Quarter, the Housing and Justice Ministries, and the Israel Land Fund began funneling money to these associations.

The Klugman report made clear that tens of millions of shekels had been illegally transferred to these [private religious] associations without supervision or monitoring. . . . According to the picture that was drawn, a group of government ministers, together with senior officials and the directors of government and public companies, banded together in a conspiracy to assist the settlers. And the assistance that they received was not only contrary to administrative rules, but also constituted criminal offenses. . . .



Klugman showed that state authorities, supposed to uphold the law, in fact acted as agents of these associations, conducting and funding a campaign for confiscating Arab properties illegally. . . . Placing the settlers above the law, mentioned time and again in the context of the West Bank and Gaza, was also practiced in East Jerusalem. . . .

Three years have passed since the report was submitted to the government, and nothing has been done. Not one penny of the funds illegally transferred to the associations was returned to the government. In one case, it was possible to

demand that associations return the money intended for young couples but MK Hanan Porat hurried to inform his friend Rabin of the situation. Rabin at once ordered that the matter be dropped.

The funds that were transferred to the associations were estimated at \$30 million and no one knows exactly where the money went. Not one property that made its way into the hands of these associations and settlers illegally was restored to its rightful owners. . . .

The settlers in Arab neighborhoods and in Kfar Ha’shiloah continue their efforts to take over Arab properties, perhaps employing the same illegal means they previously used. Now it seems that the funds reaching the associations are coming from private sources and not from government agencies. Yet, even if that is the case, the settlers should be forced to return the money that they illegally took from the state. In any case, the government is not dealing with them on the basis of the law of the land.

Danny Rubinstein  
*Ha'aretz*, September 8, 1995

---

## SHORT TAKES

Even if there is any logic in the security budget increase, it is impossible to say this about other aspects of the 1996 budget. While one hand holds the wheel of state, the other hand spends lavishly on settlements. Each of these actions contradicts the other, or perhaps there is someone in government who can explain that the strengthening of settlements contributes to the normalization of relations between Israel and the Palestinians.

In the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture, for example, a sum of \$40 million is allocated for “new settlement in the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip.” Only recently the ministry began the “Growth of the Negev” project, part of which includes extensive benefits to the settlers of the Katif Bloc [in the Gaza Strip], which has been annexed for these purposes to the Negev. Every new applicant who wants to settle is entitled to monetary grants for the development of hot houses and fish ponds.

*Davar Rishon*, November 27, 1995

There are a number of U.S. companies that subcontract work to firms located in West Bank settlements. The latest entrants are Playtex and MacDonalds.

A textile manufacturing facility costing \$25 million will be established in Ma’ale Adumim. It is planned to produce as a contractor for the Playtex company. A request for [subsidized government] financing will shortly be presented to the Investment Center.

MacDonalds will use potatoes planted on 60 acres farmed in the Golan settlement of Merom Golan near Quenitra.

*Yediot Abaranot*, November 7, 1995,  
*Ma’ariv*, September 28, 1995

It has once again become clear that the Ministry of Housing has not heard of the revolution that took place in the country in 1992. This year’s budget shows an entry marked “security in the eastern part of the city.” It doesn’t specify which city, but the reference is to costs associated with the protection of the usually empty house of Ariel Sharon in the Old City and the security of settlers in Silwan and the Muslim Quarter. In the fourth year of Labor rule, the housing ministry still expends large sums for actions the government adamantly opposes. It is not clear why the Ministry of Housing guards property inhabited by private individuals through doubtful means. . . . It seems that someone in the Labor Party needs to raise once again the [campaign] slogan “Money for neighborhoods—not settlements.

*Kol Ha’ir*, November 3, 1995

Since January 1993, when the Rabin government ordered a halt to all planning for West Bank settlements, the government’s “exceptions committee” has approved 417 requests for settlement construction and planning, according to informa-

tion provided by the government to MK Dedi Zucker.

The government reported that 80 settlement plans were deposited and 89 approved by the committee. The plans range from single building plots to settlement master plans.

Zucker, a frequent critic of settlement policies, criticized the exceptions committee for “continuing to assist settlement in Judea and Samaria behind the government’s back.”

*Yediot Abaranot*, October 26, 1995

The security of the settlers is the heart of Oslo II. The agreement is detailed and complex particularly because we wanted to guarantee 100% security—if there is such a thing—while not removing any settlements. These were the Prime Minister’s two instructions, and they dictated the structure of the Accord. The agreement is primarily security oriented. It is multi-faceted, but its core is security, and we can ensure the security of the residents. The areas of Judea, Samaria and Gaza have always been the target of attacks. Nobody thinks that the attacks will now disappear, but we do believe that residents of the area have been offered an appropriate answer.

Matan Vilnai, Deputy Chief of Staff, IDF  
*Davar Rishon*, November 24, 1995

The situation in the West Bank is more complicated than the situation in the Gaza Strip. Under the provisions of the Oslo and Taba agreements, the Israeli occupation army will remain in the West Bank on a greater and more extensive scale than in the Gaza Strip, and the same applies to the settlements. Redeployment means reorganization not elimination of the occupation, and that dictates that we continue our jihad as long as the occupation or any of its manifestations continue.

Dr. Ramadan ‘Abdallah Shallah  
Secretary General of the Islamic Jihad Movement in  
Palestine, *Al-Hayab*, November 27, 1995

Lt.-Col. Micha Regev warns of impending attacks by “right-wing extremists.”

Regev, a graduate of the Merchaz HaRav yeshiva in Jerusalem, stated that in the territories there is a cell of “right-wing messianic extremists” that intends to continue attacks against PLO policemen in order to put a stop to the IDF withdrawal from Arab population centers.

Regev went on to attack the government for giving funding to the IDF preparatory program under the leadership of Rabbi Druckman, which in his words “has instructed its students to disobey orders” [that call for the eviction of Jews from their homes]. He called for the government and security officials “to make order” in the many IDF preparatory programs that are religious and based on Torah.

*Yediot Abaranot*  
November 14, 1995



## BUILDING SETTLEMENTS QUIETLY

Binyamin Ben Eliezer, a former general in the IDF, has held the construction portfolio in Israel since July 1992. During that time he has eased the transition from a housing construction market forced into overdrive by massive immigration from the former Soviet Union; marketed large numbers of dwelling units left empty when immigration slowed; and continued construction at a pace enabling the continued growth and expansion of settlement communities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Unlike his predecessor Ariel Sharon, Ben Eliezer prefers, in his own words, to “build quietly.” Like Sharon, Ben Eliezer, known by his nickname “Fuad,” has also been called “the bulldozing builder” for his energetic efforts on behalf of settlers. He expressed his views on settlements in an interview in the Israeli periodical, *Bonus*, on September 29, 1995.

### On Jerusalem

“There are building sites in East Pisgat Ze’ev, Har Homa, in Gilo, in Ramot [all located in East Jerusalem], and also other parts of the city. We have authorized 1,100 units in Pisgat Ze’ev, 2,300 in Har Homa . . . We are in an era of heavy political pressure; there are many “Movements Now” that cause problems for our construction efforts. There is Peace Now and Peace Yesterday and Peace two days ago, and with all these movements I look for peace with our children, with our young couples, and I need to provide them with housing.

“My next challenge in Jerusalem is at Har Homa. Here my powers as minister of construction and those of the government itself will be tested. I am not going to surrender.”

**On Har Homa** [a planned settlement community in East Jerusalem]

“Eighty percent of Har Homa’s land is Jewish land, the property of Jews who purchased it in the forties and even before. I advise you that the tractors will be working there before year’s end. There will be 6,500 dwelling units built on Har Homa. Full stop. That is all.

### The politics of settlement construction

**Q:** Until a year ago you were the preferred minister of the right wing—the bulldozer of building, that didn’t care about Meretz and the moderate ministers in your own party. You spoke of greater Jerusalem, of the confiscation of land, and even today you repeat these expressions.

**A:** Fuad does everything quietly.

**Q:** That is to say?

**A:** In Ma’ale Adumim, in Givat Ze’ev and Beitar, I am building. It is clear that all the noise [protest] doesn’t affect this effort. The moment that I have the complete protection of the prime minister, I build quietly. My goal is to build and not to encourage opposition to my efforts. . . . Meretz is not exactly a party which believes that Har Homa should be built for Jews. It is a fact that Har Homa is about to be put up for bid. The neighborhood will be built, even if Meretz manages to put thousands of its activists in the streets and prevents construction.

I prefer to build and not to play with politics. It is important to me to build with the greatest effort in Givat Ze’ev, Ma’ale Adumim, and Beitar. [Jerusalem mayor Ehud] Olmert speaks of politically joining [these areas with Jerusalem]. This may occur, but not today. What is important to me is to build, build, build, and build some more. . . . No one considers raising the possibility of dismantling Ma’ale Adumim and Givat Ze’ev. It won’t happen.

**Q:** The ministerial committee on settlement established to vet new construction has prevented you from building according to your priorities?

**A:** What a question! Of course! This is a political committee [established after the disputes over construction near the Efrat settlement in January 1995]. It has not permitted me to do all that I want, but in the meantime, I get along with it, and continue to build in Ma’ale Adumim and Givat Ze’ev. Within the framework of limitations imposed by the ministerial committee we continue to build.

### On greater Jerusalem

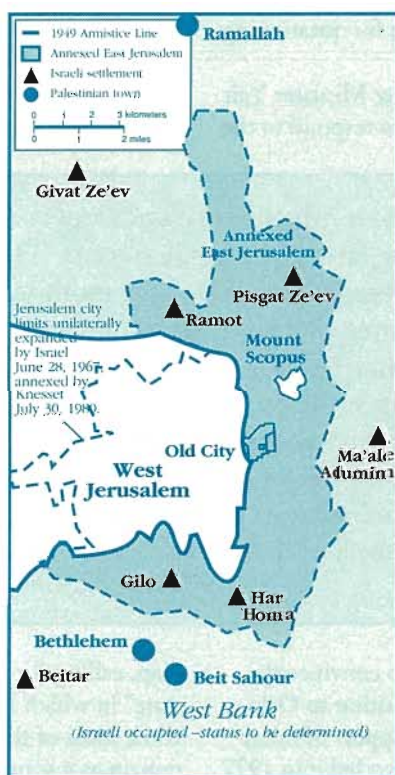
**Q:** Do you see Ma’ale Adumim, Givat Ze’ev, and Beitar as part of Jerusalem?

**A:** Without a doubt. I see one Jerusalem. I see a chain of settlements that surround it in two circles. The first circle is Ma’ale Adumim and Givat Ze’ev. The natural growth of these communities will continue. If you ask whether apartment prices in these places will fall—my answer is no. Half of Meretz lives in Givat Ze’ev and Ma’ale Adumim.

**Q:** Will these communities be under the authority of the Palestinians?

**A:** God forbid! That isn’t to say that the Arabs don’t believe otherwise. It is important to know what we want.

. . . I, Fuad, don’t see any possibility of returning Gush Etzion. For me, this is greater Israel. Givat Ze’ev, Ma’ale Adumim, and Beitar—they are integral parts of the State of Israel. ♦



their needs. And without violating agreements, we will talk with them, in order to resolve the real problems that have arisen—or will arise—because of changes on the ground.”

On November 19, the cabinet declared that “extremist, violent, racist, and terrorist organizations are a severe danger to Israel’s democratic regime, the security of the state, and public welfare; the cabinet will work to outlaw them.”

Administrative detention orders have been issued, confining members of right-wing groups associated, for example, with the late Meir Kahane. More than 120 indictments for such offenses as disorderly conduct, assault, and violating military commands have been handed down against settlement activists, including members of the “This is Our Way” and “Women in Green” groups that led protests last summer. A number of prominent rabbis were also called in for questioning but all were released for lack of evidence.

Among members of the government, Meretz Minister Yair Tsaban noted that the government had failed to respond to the “fanatic rabbis whose role in incitement is clearly evident.” Another minister, Efraim Sneh, said that a confrontation with the radical right wing is unavoidable.

Peres, however, is attempting to defuse what Sneh and others see as an inevitable conflict. He has dismissed calls to dismantle the military education system of “Hesder yeshivas,” which combine religious studies, often led by rightist rabbis, with military service.

With great success, Peres has also sought to convince the National Religious Party to moderate its opposition to Oslo. Peres views the NRP, which commands the support of many religious settlers and whose pro-settlement views led it in 1977 to desert Labor in favor of a coalition with the Likud, as critical to his efforts to broaden public support for his government and the Oslo process. In efforts to court the NRP, he has reversed his view of the need to dismantle its settlement of Netzarim in Gaza. He also engaged Minister Yossi Beilin to declare, in the context of a dialogue with the NRP, not only that he was glad that the settlement in Hebron existed, but also the view that Israel “can attain a permanent arrangement in which most of the settlers would remain in their settlements and the areas they live in would be annexed to Israel and become part of sovereign Israel.”

The NRP, and the settlers it represents, are far more comfortable with Peres’ preference for a “functional” compromise of the kind outlined in the Oslo II accords than with Rabin’s preferred territorial “separation” from the West Bank.

An editorial in *Ha’aretz*, Israel’s leading newspaper, observed that Beilin’s remarks to the NRP were “especially surprising to those who thought that the Peres government would be at least as dovish as the previous government.” It suggested that “the electoral future of the Labor Party depends on its being able to point to clear differences between it and the right.”

Meretz minister Yossi Sarid, a supporter of Rabin’s preference for territorial separation, criticized Labor’s growing affinity for a functional solution.

“To my dismay, a cantonization plan for the West Bank is taking shape in the Labor Party today that returns us to the old and terrible idea of a functional compromise. I can only describe this plan as a policy of annexation-in-the-making, little different from the enclave plan of Ariel Sharon.”

In the weeks after Rabin’s assassination, however, it has become ever more clear that a national Israeli consensus supporting Oslo II, shrouded by rhetorical opposition during Rabin’s tenure, has blossomed in the wake of his assassination. Peres has encouraged this sentiment, preferring to lead a

campaign of national unity rather than a divisive assault on the promoters of Greater Israel.

The NRP turnabout is one indication of the national consensus in favor of Oslo II. Former Likud minister Ariel Sharon reiterated his support when he noted that a Likud government could accept the implementation of Oslo II.

Even Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu has suggested a plan not far different from the Oslo II

The most ridiculous Likud accusation is that of [Labor] abandoning the settlers. The [Oslo II] agreement was delayed for months in order to guarantee that all the settlements would remain intact and that the settlers would have maximum security. This entailed an immense financial investment. The situation in the settlements was never better than that which was created following the Oslo agreement.

Yossi Beilin, Minister, Office of the Prime Minister  
*Ma’ariv*, September 27, 1995

map, calling for a “demarcated autonomy, not a Palestinian state” in which Palestinians will rule Arab-inhabited areas while most of the West Bank, uninhabited by Arabs, will remain as a security area as defined in both the Camp David accords—formulated by a Likud government—and the Oslo agreement devised by Labor.

In the West Bank itself, settlers may not like the Oslo agreement, but they are becoming reconciled to its existence. The implementation of the initial IDF redeployments, including the opening of bypass roads, has produced complaints by settlers, principally because of continuing attacks on West Bank roads. But redeployment has not yet resulted in any calamity. Settlers are anticipating with trepidation what Oslo II calls “further redeployment”: the transfer of parts of Area C—comprising almost three quarters of the West Bank—from Israeli to Palestinian rule. Settlers are determined that this land will remain under Israeli control. ♦



the assassination, there have been a few arrests of settler activists, some inconsequential interrogations of militant rabbis, and declarations banning the entry to Israel of extremist Jews from the United States.

The government's intent seems merely to purge the settler movement of its most radical proponents—those who threaten to upset even the favorable treatment won for settlements in the Oslo accords.

Rabin knew better than most the costs of failing to challenge what he came to call in his last months "the hallucination of Greater Israel." Twenty years ago, during his first term as prime minister, Rabin permitted extremist settlers to establish the West Bank settlement of Elon Moreh in defiance of government policy. The settlers of Gush Emunim—the Bloc of the Faithful, who saw Israel's victory in June 1967 as a sign of God's support for settlement in the West Bank—exploited the indecision and rivalries in the Rabin government. They played upon a basic Israeli identification with the settlers' "pioneering" spirit to create settlement facts on the ground.

Rabin's failure to dislodge these settlers, whose efforts were, by the way, supported by then Minister of Defense Shimon Peres, led directly to Labor's defeat in 1977. One of Menachem Begin's first acts as prime minister was to declare, "There will be many more Elon Morehs." And there were.

For the next 20 years, during governments led by both Likud and Labor, settler activists grew ever more successful and confident—so successful that today close to 150,000 Israelis live in 144 settlements scattered throughout the West Bank (see page 8). Even as it declared opposition to the Likud's settlement policies, the Rabin government continued to nurture, expand, and protect this enterprise by spending hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

It is not the least of ironies that in the Oslo agreements with the Palestinians, Rabin won for West Bank settlements a measure of recognition and permanence that no other Israeli leader managed to achieve, achievements that a significant minority of Israelis nonetheless believes marks a sell-out of Israel's interests—achievements for which Rabin paid with his life.

So confident are settlers of the government's support that they have grown used to breaking the law with virtual impunity. They routinely take the law into their own hands by assaulting Palestinians and encouraging religious edicts by prominent rabbis advising soldiers to refuse orders to dismantle settlements—edicts that have been reaffirmed since Rabin's death. Two prominent rabbis, including one considered "among the Torah giants of the Jewish people," have been accused by one of their own of "indirect responsibility" for the murder of Rabin.

Peres, far more deliberately than Rabin, has decided to defuse settler opposition to the Oslo process by convincing religious settlers that Oslo protects rather than threatens their everyday if not their cosmological interests. He has traditionally viewed settlements and settlers as a problem to be managed

by negotiating a new relationship between them and the Palestinians. He believes that settlements can be permanently secured and expanded while satisfying Palestinian national aspirations. A close reading of the Oslo II agreement reflects that Yasser Arafat has acquiesced in this seductive view.

The actions Peres has taken so far suggest that Rabin's assassination will not result in a different set of calculations. It appears that Peres will continue to coddle settlers and to subsidize the incitement of extremist rabbis. He shows no inclination to stop funding the expansion of settlements by spending hundreds of millions of dollars each year. And he does not seem about to change his

view of settlers as instruments for Israel's permanent control over the West Bank rather than as bearers of an ideology that cannot be appeased but only fought and defeated.

Peres, according to one Israeli journalist, "has learned all the lessons" of Rabin's antipathy toward the settlers. "He's not going to be combative toward the settlers. He's going to open channels of communication. In private he used to say last year that Yitzhak [Rabin] made a mistake by refusing to communicate with the settlers."

Rabin was undone by the extremist fringe of a political movement that will not be weakened by the half measures so far adopted by the Israeli government. Peres does not seem prepared to confront the extremists even to the degree that Rabin himself did. ♦

### Trying to Understand Peres

Peres would like to stabilize the map of the interim settlements, hoping that this will be the permanent map of Israel and the Palestinian entity. Neither separation, nor annexation. To swallow the Palestinians, but not to eat them. That is why Peres is so enthusiastic about the Oslo II accords which gave the Palestinians control of only about 27 percent of the West Bank, and left Israel with authority over Palestinian security and foreign affairs. Perhaps that is also the reason why he rubbed his hands with glee after the accord was signed and said in private conversation at the home of the Chinese ambassador, "We screwed the Palestinians."

Indeed, Peres conducted the lengthy negotiations at Taba mainly about the authority to be transferred to the Palestinians and said hardly anything about the borders. Peres believes, or wants to believe, that the 150,000 Jewish settlers will remain in the Territories in perpetuity and that no Jewish settlement will ever be evacuated.

Shalom Yerushalmi  
*Ma'ariv*, October 25, 1995

## SETTLER POPULATION GROWS BY 4 PERCENT IN 1995

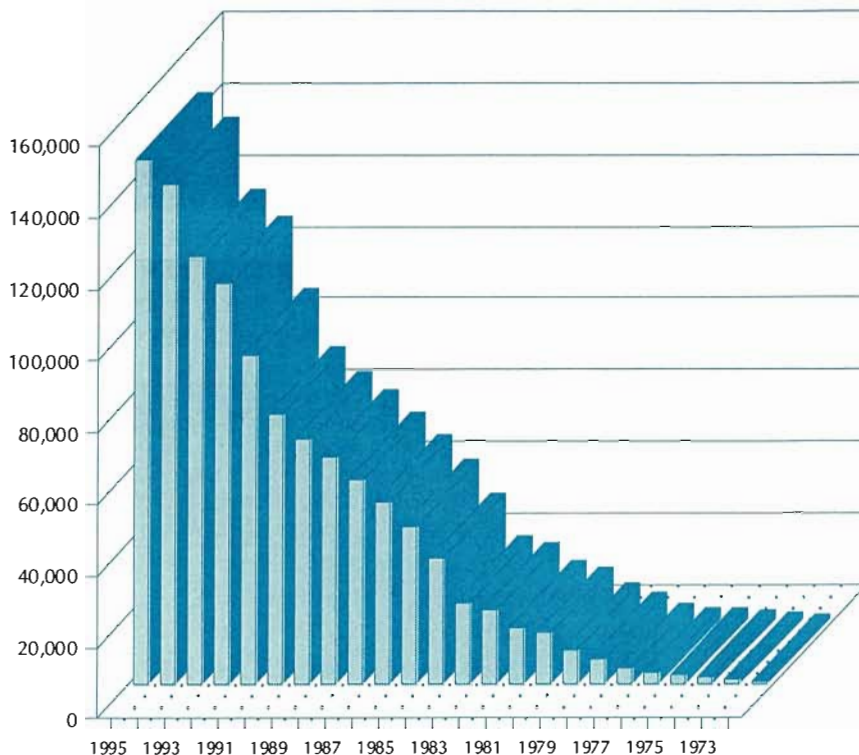
Israel's settler population in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip (excluding annexed East Jerusalem) grew 4 percent to 133,000 during 1995, according to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS)—a growth rate higher than for any region in Israel.

According to the Council of Jewish Settlements in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip (Yesha), the settler population in the West Bank and Gaza now numbers 147,200.

All settler population numbers are necessarily approximations, reflecting informed estimates as well as the political bias of the reporting organization. Yesha's figures, which are based on local tax records, are usually higher than those of Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics.

The Yesha estimates are the first in more than one year. According to a report in the newspaper *Ha'aretz*, "Yesha has refrained from publishing estimates because of the government's policy of freezing construction and fears that reports of an increase in population would result in further construction cutbacks." ♦

Settler Population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip – 1995



NOTE: Not including Israelis living in annexed Jerusalem. Population figures vary [sometimes by as much as 20 percent] depending on the source. These numbers should be considered conservative approximations.

**“The increase in the security budget to 54 percent of Israel’s 1996 budget results not only from the fact that the peace process is still in its initial stages, but also because of the character of the agreement with the Palestinians. Because of the new military redeployments in the territories, including the paving of bypass roads [for the settlers] and heavy logistical burdens, military expenditures will increase in coming years.”**

*Davar Rishon*, November 27, 1995

Foundation for Middle East Peace  
1763 N Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
Telephone: 202-835-3650  
Fax: 202-835-3651  
E-mail: [Jeff@clark.net](mailto:Jeff@clark.net)

On January 31, 1996, the Foundation for Middle East Peace will move its offices to 1763 N Street, Northwest, one block east of Dupont Circle Metro station.

