

# REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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## NEWS

The number of settlers living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip rose by 12.4 percent to 169,339 in the 18 months ending June 30—163,173 in the West Bank and 6,166 in the Gaza Strip.

The number of settlers increased by 8.8 percent in 1997 and by another 3.3 percent during the first half of 1998.

The greatest population growth was registered in the ultra-Orthodox settlements of Kiryat Sefer (55 percent) and Betar (35 percent). In general, rural settlements grew at a faster pace than large urban settlements such as Ma'ale Adumim, Ariel or Efrat.

The Ministry of Housing is constructing new homes in the occupied territories (excluding East Jerusalem) at an annual rate of 2,025, compared to approximately 1,000 annually during 1996 and 1997.

### Also in this issue:

Spotlight on Gaza (with  
reference map page 2)

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## DIPLOMACY FAILS TO ADDRESS ISRAEL'S TRANSFORMATION OF OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

A curious dynamic has been created in relations between Israelis and Palestinians during this decade. The creation of a diplomatic framework for resolving the long-festered conflict has focused international attention—and, indeed, most Israeli and Palestinian attention—on the interminable rounds of negotiations and the minutia that are the fodder of diplomats.

In the long shadow cast by this process, another, more decisive effort to resolve the future of the territories captured by Israel in June 1967 has been underway. Israel's policy of "creating facts on the ground"—establishing new Israeli settlements and expanding existing ones throughout the occupied territories—is well on its way toward achieving an objective pursued by a succession of Israeli leaders during the last three decades: to obstruct the creation of an independent, truly sovereign Palestinian political entity west of the Jordan River. Israel's objective, on the face of it, is the antithesis of popular notions about the goal of the negotiations begun at Oslo in 1993.

During its two years in power, the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has learned the art of "building quietly" in the more than 170 settlement communities that house approximately 350,000 Israelis across the pre-1967 war cease-fire line separating Israel from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Of the settler population, 180,000 live in annexed East Jerusalem and another 170,000 in the West Bank and

Gaza Strip.

Tracking construction expansion in the settlements is more an art than a science. The government rarely makes data available, and press reports are usually imprecise and often contradictory. Israel's minister of defense, Yitzhak Mordechai, has approved the additional construction of slightly more than 2,000 units in the occupied territories excluding East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights since Netanyahu came to power. Notwithstanding this fact, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip there are reported to be some 6,000 units in various phases of construction.

At a June 22 meeting of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Security Committee, MK Yossi Sarid challenged Mordechai to give an accurate accounting of the expansion in Israeli settlements.

"I have asked you twice already to present before this committee all the approvals you have given for the expansion of settlements and all you do is evade the question. Either the increased construction in the West Bank proceeds with your approval, and that would be bad, or it proceeds without your approval and you cover it up and keep quiet, and that is much worse."

The upsurge in settlement expansion in the West Bank that began during the summer of 1997 has continued into 1998. The Netanyahu "Around Jerusalem" construction plan is being directed by Nach Kinarti, a close adviser to

DIPLOMACY, *continued on page 9*

## TO OUR READERS

Although news from the Arab-Israeli front has been pushed off the front pages in recent weeks, there is no reason to be sanguine about the state of relations today between Israel and its Arab neighbors, including the Palestinians.

The seemingly interminable talks on the next redeployment of the Israeli army in the West Bank have exhausted the interest and patience of all but the most committed observers. Nevertheless, the image of stalemate created by the diplomatic impasse has obscured the very real, often violent conflict that is today being waged on the roads and hilltops throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

A close reading of the time line that appears on pages xxx in this issue of the *Settlement Report* makes all too clear the upsurge of actions—by settlers as well as the Netanyahu government—aimed at pre-

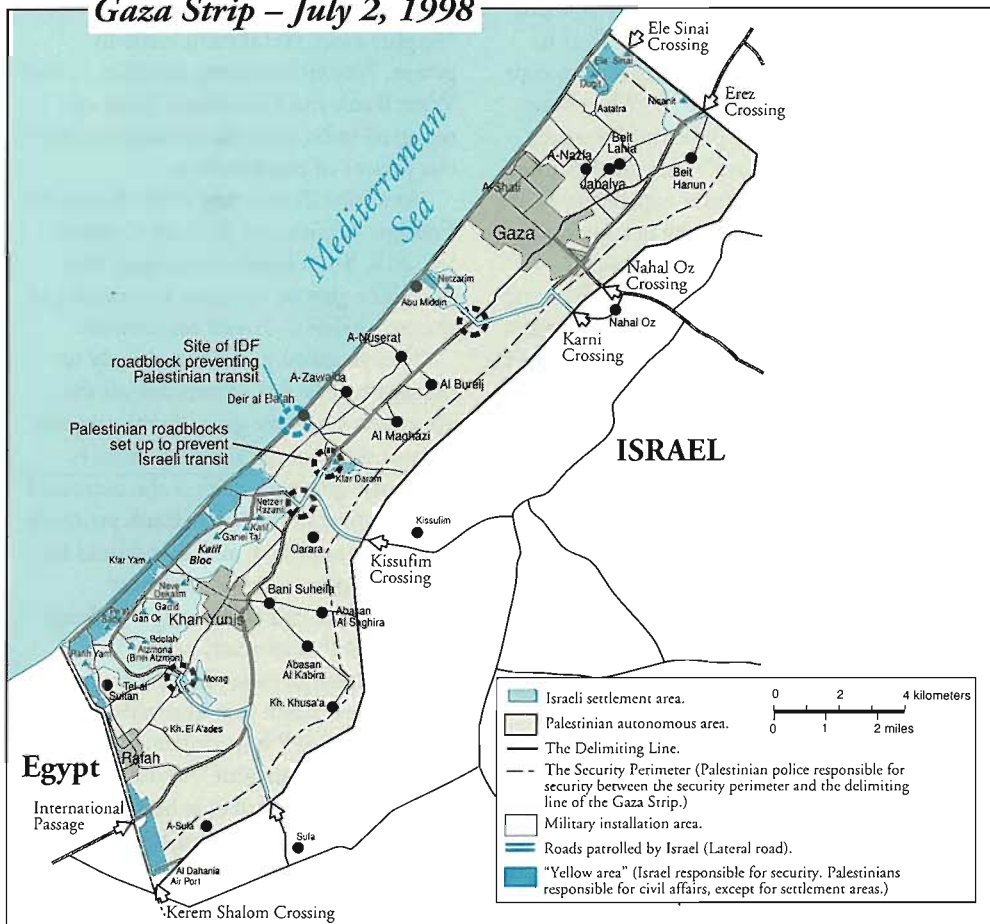
judging the final-status talks to which Israel committed itself in the Oslo and Hebron agreements.

Settlers and government alike are currently engaged in a broad series of acts intended to deny Palestinians control over disputed lands. This conflict—the day-to-day struggle over control of the land—deserves strict attention and concern. Left unchallenged, Israel's effort to command territory strikes at the heart of the rationale pursued by Israeli, Palestinian, and U.S. negotiators.

The Clinton administration has a range of methods of telegraphing its displeasure with Israel's policy of "creating facts." It is high time that it begin exercising them.

*Lucius D. Battle*

### Gaza Strip – July 2, 1998



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## SPOTLIGHT ON GAZA

According to Carmi Gillon, former chief of Shabak, Israel's internal security service, the roadblock incident in the Gaza Strip on July 2 raises the question of the future of the settlements, or at least some of them, in the "Judea, Samaria" and Gaza areas. (See Time Line, page 5.)

"Exactly four years after Arafat and his people entered the Gaza Strip, some 5,000 Israeli settlers are living in the Gaza Strip area surrounded by approximately 1 million Palestinians, who have complete control of almost the entire area around them," wrote Gillon in *Yediot Aharonot* on July 6.

"Gush Katif is an exemplary settlement bloc, whose entire establishment was planned by several Israeli governments. On the eve of the Gaza Strip's transfer to the Palestinians, the question was not raised of the settlements' continued existence under the new conditions on the ground and a lot of thought was given to safeguarding approach roads and complicated security arrangements between us and the Palestinians.

"Three settlements isolated from the Katif Bloc—Netzarim, Kfar Darom, and Morag—created a special security problem, which called for the allocation of numerous forces to protect them and especially complicated traffic arrangements.

"To the surprise of many people, these provisions, despite their intricacy, have ever since provided a reasonable answer to everyday life most days of the year.

"Last week, a legitimate question was asked of Major General Shlomo Yanai at the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee: Were those settlements, all or some of them, a security asset or a security burden?

"Yanai [who noted that 59 of 150 West Bank settlements were not included in the IDF "National Interests" map] gave a legitimate answer, from which it could have been understood that at least some were a security burden. He came in for heavy criticism, which again shifted the public debate on matters of so much principle.

"Many years before anyone thought of holding a concrete debate on the settlements' future, discussions took place and extensive works were written in various IDF frameworks on the strategic issue of the settlements' security value.

"Since the establishment of the 'wall and tower' settlements [in the 1930s], until the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the defense doctrine considered frontier communities as a key facet of the plan to defend the country's borders, to the extent that Hanita [on the Lebanese border], for example, became a legend.

"The Syrian invasion of the Golan Heights, and the effort and cost invested in extricating its residents from the battle areas, gave rise to this professional discussion in the framework of the IDF's strategic planning and its study colleges.

"The conclusion of most research was that, in a state of war, settlements on the confrontation line with the enemy, wherever it may be, are a burden. But like other works of this kind they became covered with dust for fear of the political repercussions stemming from their conclusions." ♦

*The following advertisement appeared in the July 1998 issue of Nekuda, a monthly magazine published by the settler council, YESHA.*

Only six years ago, a small group of young families settled on the land and founded the community of Netzarim in a spirit of courage, faith, and security in the new road they were taking. Complicated by hardships that they endured, the community nonetheless persisted—to build, create, and renew, and succeed, with god's blessing, to gather together and raise the flag of settlement.

### Today:

- The community has about 45 families and 200 children and 15 seminary students.
- Educational Institutions—day care, kindergarten and an elementary school through fourth grade. After school programs and a separate Bnei Akiva [religious] youth movement.
- Agriculture—50 dunams devoted to hothouse agriculture, 100 dunams of fruit trees and henhouses.
- Religious instruction—groups organized for weekends.

### Projects underway in the community:

- Education—A large and permanent elementary school.
- Construction—A permanent building for a synagogue and a new neighborhood of permanent houses.
- Agriculture—More hothouses and planting orchards.

### If you want

- To join a stable community and to give a Jewish education to your children,
- To realize a dream and to build a home in a developed community,
- To establish an agricultural community with institutional assistance,
- To study in development towns or in the Negev,

### Telephone us.

We ask you to contribute to "The Fund for the Development of Netzarim," and in so doing join us in consolidating the community in both material and spirit. (No stamp required.)

## IN OUR MAILBOX

*The following solicitation announcement from the municipality of the settlement of Ariel was recently received by the Report. It attests to the consistent development and expansion of settlements during the Oslo years.*



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

July 10, 1998

Dear Friends,

I am writing to share some wonderful news with you.

For 20 years, since Ariel was founded, we have referred to our community as a city. There were a number of reasons. First and foremost, the vision of our dynamic Mayor, Ron Nachman, was infectious. We never doubted that one day, Ariel really would become a city - even when only 40 families lived here. Moreover, our official status as a "Moatza" was difficult to translate. Municipal Council was the most accurate translation but sometimes we used the term "Town" or just settled for "Community". No less important, we objected to the use of the word settlement because it conjured up an image that was totally inaccurate.

Our dilemma over which term to use is over. On June 11, 1998, the Israeli Government granted Ariel the official status of a city. There are far-reaching implications to this decision, a clear message that reverberates throughout Israel and abroad that Ariel, the capital of Samaria, is here to stay. There is recognition that as the largest community in the area, with services of all kinds, Ariel has become a magnet, attracting new residents and providing services to smaller communities in the region.

Ariel meets the criteria for a city in many other ways, as well. Here are just a few examples:

- Almost 16,000 people live in Ariel, 40% immigrants from the former USSR.
- Our educational system includes 26 pre-schools, 4 elementary school, 2 junior high schools and a high school, with a total of 4,200 children learning in these facilities.
- The College of Judea & Samaria, in Ariel, has a current enrollment of 5,500 students.
- Ariel's Hotel Eshel Hashomron, with over 100 rooms, hosts visitors from around the world.
- 128 businesses operate in Ariel to meet the needs of local and area residents and new commercial area of some 60,000 square feet is currently under construction.
- There are over 150 industries in Ariel and the adjacent regional industrial park. A new industrial park is now being developed on 220 acres.
- In Ariel's R&D center, 11 projects are in various stages of development. 5 projects that have completed the R&D stage have become new industries for Israel.
- 400 new housing units will be completed this year and 700 new housing starts are scheduled for 1999. By the year 2000, Ariel's population will pass the 20,000 mark.

Mayor Ron Nachman has asked me to convey his heartfelt thanks to you. Your support throughout the years helped make this happen. Now we would like you to share in the celebration. This year, marking Israel's Jubilee year, Ariel celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. Becoming a city will add tremendously to our celebration. This upcoming edition of our newsmagazine, Shalom Ariel, will focus on all these good reasons to celebrate. On the enclosed card, you can add your own words of celebration and congratulations to the wonderful residents of Israel's newest city. Let's keep our partnership strong. Together, we've made Ariel a City.

Sincerely,

Dina Shalit  
Assistant Mayor

P.O. Box 25 ARIEL 44837 ISRAEL. TEL: 972-3-936-4406 ~ FAX: 972-3-936-7150 ~ e-mail: shalit@trendline.co.il

## SETTLEMENT TIME LINE

**May 4** Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu promises representatives of the National Religious Party that construction at Har Homa will begin. He does not give them a specific date or construction schedule.

**May 5** *Ha'aretz* reports that 1,000 Jews live in the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City.

**May 6** A 28 year-old Israeli is stabbed to death in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City. He had attended the Ateret Cohanim seminary in Jerusalem's Old City.

A knife-wielding Palestinian is shot dead in the settlement of Eli.

Palestinians erect a tent outside the settlement of Metzad, northeast of Hebron, to protest groundwork undertaken by settlers outside the settlement's perimeter fence. Settlers plan to establish an agricultural farm at the disputed site.

**May 7** At a seminar in Switzerland, U.S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton tells Israeli and Arab students, "I think it will be in the long-term interests of the Middle East for Palestine to be a state."

**May 11** *Ma'ariv* reports that a sale offering 1,000 houses in 27 settlements was being held in Paris. A similar sale is reported scheduled for New York. According to the settlement organization YESHA, 500 French families currently live in settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with 200 additional families scheduled to settle in 1998.

**May 12** During a visit to the West Bank settlement of Bet El, Labor Party leader Ehud Barak declares, "Bet El will remain in our hands forever! And the Palestinians will remain in Ramallah forever."

**May 13** Barak's May 12 declaration sparks calls in the Meretz Party and Peace Now for a different Labor member to head the party. Abraham Burg, chairman of the Jewish Agency, notes that Barak's statement was a "legitimate" expression of the party's platform.

**May 14-15** Palestinians protest throughout the occupied territories to commemorate the 50th anniversary of "al-Naqba" (the catastrophe). The protests escalate into clashes between IDF soldiers and Palestinians. The fiercest clashes occur near the Katif Bloc of settlements in the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Center for Human Rights reports that 4

Palestinians were killed by IDF soldiers during the protests; 71 Palestinians were injured—46 by live ammunition, 25 with rubber bullets.

**May 15** Israel Television Channel 1 reports that Ateret Cohanim officials plan to turn Zedekiah's cave in Jerusalem into "a religious Disneyland exhibiting biblical themes." The plan includes a tunnel to be built beneath the Muslim Quarter of the Old City. The settler association Ateret Cohanim plans to build the underground park on 13,000 sq. meters and has already begun fundraising.

**May 19** Peace Now reports that 29,000 housing units, equaling 70 percent of planned housing for Israel's orthodox Jewish sector, are to be located in these West Bank settlements: 14,000 in the settlements of Modi'in Elite and Kiryat Sefer, 5,700 in Betar, 1,200 in Emmanuel, 1,100 in Hashmona'im, and 6,624 in Matityahu. There were, however no firm commitments to build most of them.

**May 20** A petition is filed by Palestinians with Israel's High Court to nullify the E-1 plan for the expansion of Ma'ale Adumim, in the West Bank.

**May 21** Israel Television Channel 1 reports that Prime Minister Netanyahu plans to ask the U.S. for \$1 billion in aid to finance the construction of bridges, elevated and bypass roads, and additional infrastructure in the occupied territories in the event that an agreement on redeployment is reached. The U.S. would also be asked to provide the Palestinian Authority with approximately \$100 million.

**May 22** U.S. Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich cancels a visit to the proposed site of the U.S. embassy in Jerusalem at the request of the White House.

**May 24** Arutz 7 radio reports that a Palestinian employee of the Jerusalem municipality is being held on suspicion of providing information to the PA on Arab landowners wanting to sell their land to Jews. An intelligence officer for the Minorities Department of the Jerusalem Police notes that authorities suspect other employees have given information to the PA.

**May 25** In the Golan Heights, 380 garden homes in 14 settlements are put up for sale. Monetary assistance of up to 95 percent of the value of the property was being offered. The population of the Golan settlements,

according to the Golan settler council, is 16,500, including 6,500 in the settlement community of Katzrin.

*Al-Quds* newspaper reports that barrels containing dangerous chemical waste were returned by the PA to Israel. The waste was first seized in July 1997 when Palestinian naval police caught a Palestinian on his way to dump it at the Gaza coastal area of al-Mouassi. The man had taken the barrels from the car of a settler. A representative of the Israeli Environmental Authority in the Gaza Strip said that the barrels contained dangerous chemical waste. Legal measures were to be taken against the settler who tried to dump the chemicals. Palestinian officials warned that other barrels may have been smuggled by settlers from the West Bank into the Gaza Strip.

Settlers from Ateret Cohanim, accompanied by Israeli police, evict Na'ila Jawdat al Zarou from her rented home of 60 years in the Old City's Muslim Quarter. The settlers claimed that they owned the house. Settlers first attempted to take possession of the house in 1986, but until recently Zarou had successfully challenged the legal basis of her eviction based on the grounds that a tenant cannot be evicted, even if ownership changes hands.

Arutz 7 radio reports that PA official Ahmed Abdel Rahman told a Saudi Arabian newspaper that PA Chairman Yasser Arafat has vowed to declare a Palestinian state next year, "leading to war with Israel, with the first target being the destruction of the settlements." He said the declaration of the state would cover "all the territories conquered since 1967, including eastern Jerusalem."

**May 26** Members of Ateret Cohanim begin laying foundations for nine new buildings in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City. The construction, performed by Palestinian laborers, was proceeding without permission from the city.

Protesters, including Palestinian Legislative Council members, clash with police at the building site.

"This is the first time the PA has confronted the settlers and the police in an attempt to prevent the establishment of a new Jewish residential neighborhood in the Old City," wrote one Israeli journalist. "It is an example for the future of the lengths Pales-

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tinians are willing to go in the struggle for Jerusalem and against the settlements. Settlements like these can ruffianize Jerusalem, leading, as in Hebron, to incessant friction between Arabs and Jews."

Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert later issues a demolition order instructing Ateret Cohanim to dismantle and evacuate the structures. His order followed a court order to halt construction, issued at the request of the Israeli Antiquities Authority, which claims that the construction is damaging an archaeological site.

Opposition parties in the Knesset temporarily block approval of IS120 million (\$33 million) for additional bypass roads. Settlement leader Moshe Yegev complains, "Not one new bypass road in Judea [the southern West Bank] has been paved by this government, and the paving of Route 60 in Samaria [the northern West Bank] has been halted."

**May 28** The city of Jerusalem agrees to consider constructing temporary buildings for Ateret Cohanim members taking part in an "archaeological dig" planned for the site where the organization attempted to erect residential dwellings. The settlements of Ofra and Shilo in the West Bank had similar origins. Settlers vow to establish an educational center at the site with hundreds of students.

**May 29** The Knesset Finance Committee approves IS130 million (\$36 million) for religious schools and West Bank settlements. Ten million dollars is allocated for new bypass roads: including a road from the settlement of Tekoa to Jerusalem; a road by passing El Aroub (in the Etzion Bloc), and one to by pass Bitunia (near Ramallah). An additional \$5 million was to be provided for settler regional councils.

**June 1** A new restaurant/banquet hall is dedicated on HaGai Street in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City. Mayor Olmert, praising the Ateret Cohanim association, says, "House after house, we will build Jerusalem."

**June 2** YESHA distributes to Israeli households 1 million booklets arguing against any Israeli redeployment in the West Bank.

**June 3** Five Ethiopian families living in the West Bank settlement of Ofra ask to leave, after living there for two months.

Three houses in and around Jerusalem owned by Palestinians are destroyed by Israel because they were constructed without permits. *Ha'aretz* reports that during his

four-and-one-half year tenure, Jerusalem mayor Olmert has overseen the demolition of 49 Palestinian homes constructed without permits. In contrast, during the last four years of Mayor Teddy Kollek's administration, 91 homes were destroyed. *Ha'aretz* reports that five structures have been demolished in 1998.

**June 5** Palestinians try to prevent the expansion of the settlement of Betar Ilit, west of Bethlehem, to a 5,000 dunam area of "state land" northwest of the existing settlement (also see June 9 entry).

The Follow-Up Committee for Israeli Arab Affairs calls on Arab citizens of Israel to "boycott" the products of Israeli settlements. The committee also plans to compile a list of goods produced in the settlements to distribute to Arab villages, the Arab press, and institutions in Europe.

The PA calls for a "general mobilization" to confront Israel's settlement policies after Israel's Ministry of Interior approves the construction of 58 new dwelling units at a Jewish seminary on the Mount of Olives. The land in question was once zoned for a school for Palestinian girls from the neighboring village of at-Tur.

**June 8** *Ma'ariv* reports that the Ministry of Defense will invest IS2 million (\$500,000) to restore the Jewish seminary building at Joseph's Tomb in Nablus, the site of the most violent Israeli-Palestinian armed confrontation during the September 1996 "tunnel affair."

In the Silwan area of East Jerusalem, members of the settler organization, El Ad, move into four buildings that the group purchases for IS700,000 (\$200,000). It is rumored that the seller received a house somewhere in Scandinavia where he has relocated.

**June 9** *Al Ayyam*, the official Palestinian newspaper, reports that a new settlement called Hadar Betar is being built adjacent to the Green Line near the villages of Wadi Fukin and Husan, southwest of Bethlehem. Hadar Betar will be an extension of the existing settlement Betar Ilit. The paper also reports that settlers attacked citizens of the Arab villages near the settlement of Ma'ale Amos, pelting them with stones and threatening to kill them. Settlers also attacked the villagers of Husan, deploying foot and mounted patrols along the roads leading to farms and fields to deny them access to their land and trees. PA Legislative Council members warn that the lands of the Bethlehem governorate are seriously threatened by the Israeli settlement campaign.

**June 10** *Al-Quds* reports that a Palestinian is killed by Israeli soldiers near the Gaza settlement of Morag. The Palestinian Center for Human Rights calls upon the international community to intervene against the escalating use of force by the occupation forces, also noting the wounding of another Palestinian citizen on June 3 by a settler near the Gaza settlement of Atzmona.

**June 11** For the first time since 1967, a civilian guard is established for settlements in West Bank. The guard is to operate independently of the Israeli police or military.

The West Bank settlement of Ariel is classified as a city.

**June 12** *Kol Ha'ir* reports that construction on a new neighborhood of 170 dwellings in the settlement of Bet El will begin within two months.

**June 15** Plans to establish a new industrial park on 1,200 dunams next to the settlement of Kaddumim are announced. Land is priced at \$32,000 a dunam, including development costs. Businesses locating to the site will enjoy benefits available to "Priority A" areas.

**June 16** Settlers from Bet HaGai, near Hebron, kill a Palestinian in a random attack.

YESHA decides to launch a public campaign against Prime Minister Netanyahu and the second IDF redeployment. The campaign's first stage will include setting up a protest tent opposite the prime minister's office.

*Kol Ha'ir* reports that the strategic master plan for Jerusalem recommends that the metropolitan region, including the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim, be divided into eight to ten regions of between 60,000 and 100,000 residents each.

**June 18** A European Union executive commission statement on EU-Israeli trade relations states that the EU plans to investigate goods imported from Israel to determine if they originate in East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, or the Gaza Strip. The document claims that products from these areas are receiving illegal customs concessions due to inappropriate use of the "made in Israel" label which permits them to enter the EU duty free.

**June 21** The Netanyahu cabinet gives preliminary approval to a plan to establish an "umbrella municipality" encompassing metropolitan Jerusalem. The new plan would invest Israeli civilian agencies with more extensive powers over the development and

expansion of settlements to be included in the scheme. U.S. officials call the plan “unhelpful at this delicate stage of negotiations.” The PLO’s UN representative calls the Israeli action a “concrete step toward the illegal annexation of more occupied Palestinian lands to the already illegally expanded Jerusalem municipality.”

Israeli officials, however, insist that the proposal, important details of which remain to be approved, “is entirely an internal Israeli matter on the municipal administrative level rather than on the international level.”

Before implementation, the plan must be placed before the cabinet once again, where it appears to enjoy almost unanimous appeal. No settlements were specified for inclusion in the proposal, but it is likely that Ma’ale Adumim, Givat Ze’ev, and Betar Ilit, with combined populations of almost 40,000, are high on the list of potential participants.

**June 22** Peace Now reports that from January to mid-June, the Netanyahu government demolished 68 Palestinian dwellings in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, compared with 14 during a similar period in 1997.

*Ha’aretz* reports that 249 Palestinian dwellings were demolished in 1997 in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

**June 23** The PA claims that 40 Palestinian buildings have been destroyed since the beginning of the year in East Jerusalem.

Five Palestinian houses are destroyed in the Hebron region and 30 families are evicted, bringing to 81 the total number of homes demolished this year in the West Bank.

**June 24** An Israeli Television Channel 1 investigation into the transfer of hundreds of trailers into the territories by the Ministry of Construction and Housing reveals that there are 3,600 mobile homes—1,400 of which stand empty—stationed in West Bank settlements. One thousand seven hundred state-owned apartments are also state property, are also reported empty. Amana, the settlement construction subsidiary of Gush Emmunim, was responsible for receiving the trailers. In the past two years, Amana has become the almost exclusive controller of state assets in the West Bank.

**June 25** For the first time in five years, new construction is approved for the settlement of Kiryat Arba, bordering Hebron. Approval for the construction of 150 new units was facilitated by reclassifying the neighborhood of Harsina Hill in the settlement as a “village.”

Similarly, the settlements of Ma’ale Ephraim and Avnei Hefetz are also transferred to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Housing’s Village Construction Administration.

The Knesset Finance Committee approves IS88 million (\$24 million) for the construction of 400 new units in village settlements.

**June 26** *Kol Ha’Ir* reports that because of the lack of affordable housing in Jerusalem, one orthodox sect rescinds the prohibition on living in the West Bank, setting the stage for “massive purchases” in the settlement of Kiryat Sefer.

*Yerushala’im* reports that 150 mobile homes were transferred to the settlements of Dolev, Neve Tzuf, and Shavut Rachel as part of the settler campaign against redeployment. The Ministry of Defense approved the transfer.

*Yerushala’im* reports that Shimon Shitreet, the Labor Party candidate for mayor, has announced his support for construction at Har Homa.

**June 28** The Netanyahu cabinet approves Minister of National Infrastructure Ariel Sharon’s plan to extend the construction of new Israeli cities along the Green Line to the region opposite Hebron, where six cities are to be built.

The civil administration demolishes six dwellings in the West Bank village of Qatana and destroys two rooms that were added to a seventh home without a permit. Qatana is under full Israeli control (Area C) near the settlement of Har Adar.

**June 30** Prime Minister Netanyahu fails to convince settlement leaders to support a 13 percent IDF redeployment and to “get the settlers off my back.”

The IDF “Security Interests” map presented to a Knesset committee excludes 59 of 150 West Bank settlements.

At a UN Security Council debate on Israel’s plan for the Jerusalem umbrella municipality, U.S. ambassador Bill Richardson, who attempted to postpone the debate, characterizes the Israeli decision as “not helpful at this delicate stage of negotiations.”

**July 2** A standoff develops along the road from the Gaza town of Deir al-Balah to the al-Mouassi district after IDF forces prevent passage to a group of Palestinians, including a PA minister. The road had been closed to Palestinian traffic for three years. Palestinians, in turn, block major road junctions near settlements.

**July 3** At 4 a.m. a compromise is reached

on the standoff in Gaza that began when passage was refused to Palestinians on July 2.

The blocked Palestinian convoy was allowed to proceed (without the Palestinian minister), Israel lifted the closure imposed on the Gaza Strip during the standoff, and Palestinians cleared road junctions at Morag, Netzarim, and Gush Katif. Prime Minister Netanyahu describes the incident as a “planned Palestinian provocation.” Further discussions were to take place about opening roads currently closed to Palestinian vehicles. Settlers criticize the IDF “surrender” to the Palestinians.

During the incident, IDF reinforcements were sent to Gaza. Settlers were unable to enter or leave many settlements due to the Palestinian blockades. At one point, the IDF offered residents of Netzarim an airlift by helicopter to their settlement, but the 50 men, women, and children stranded at the Karni crossing declined the offer.

*Kol Ha’Ir* reports that the settlement of Kadumim has established a mobile home site for Ethiopian immigrants, notwithstanding the fact that the Ministry of Absorption denies any plan to send people there.

*Kol Ha’Ir* reports that new residential construction is expected to begin shortly in Ma’ale Ephraim. Pressure from the Third Way Party expedites planning approval for the 34-unit project by the Village Construction Administration and the transfer of IS2.5 million (\$700,000) for mortgage subsidies and grants.

*Yerushala’im* reports that there are 2,000 illegal buildings, half of which are built on public land, in the Palestinian-inhabited sections of Jerusalem.

**July 5** A communique issued after a meeting in Cairo of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, King Hussein of Jordan, and PA chairman Yasser Arafat states that “the leaders assert their absolute rejection of Judaizing Jerusalem.”

Two Israelis remain in jail after their arrest on suspicion of damaging Palestinian vehicles with chains on July 3 as they rode, dressed as Arabs, through refugee neighborhoods adjacent to Hebron on horseback.

**July 6** *Ma’ariv* reports that settlers are planning to block large numbers of transport junctions throughout the West Bank if Palestinians attempt to repeat the blockades imposed on Gaza routes on July 2.

The Knesset Law Committee endorses a draft law submitted by the Moledet faction

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that would extend Israeli law, justice, and jurisdiction to the local and regional councils of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Netanyahu government opposes the legislation.

**July 8** *Ma'ariv* reports that Israeli police are investigating "suspicions that soldiers living on the Golan Heights have begun to store weapons and ammunition in order to prevent a removal of Golan settlements."

**July 10** *Ha'aretz* reports that "for the first time in the history of the state, it is said this year in the annual estimate of the security services that radical groups in Israeli society may react violently—including the use of weapons—as a consequence of developments in the peace process that require a territorial withdrawal and perhaps the removal of settlements."

*Kol Ha'Ir* reports that due to increased demand for construction material, the first cement factory is being constructed in the Etzion Bloc of settlements, south of Bethlehem, despite complaints of nearby Palestinian villagers. Construction of a new high-tech industrial area in the Etzion Bloc was to begin within three months on 400 dunams.

**July 13** The U.N. Security Council issues a statement on Israel's decision to consider the creation of an umbrella municipality in the metropolitan Jerusalem area. The statement declares that the Security Council "considers the decision by the government of Israel on June 21, 1998, to take steps to broaden the jurisdiction and planning boundaries of Jerusalem a serious and damaging development.

"The Council therefore calls upon the government of Israel not to proceed with that decision and also not to take any other steps which would prejudice the outcome of the permanent-status negotiations."

**July 17** A UN conference approves the creation of the International Criminal Court. Israel votes against the ICC because of the conference's designation of settlement construction as a war crime. The legal adviser to Israel's Foreign Ministry states, "This new treaty does not give anyone immunity. Anybody who is involved in the decision-making connected to settling citizens in occupied territory could be arrested under the ICC—from the prime minister to the last citizen."

*Yerushala'im* reports that Amana has received permission to build and market 1,000 new

dwellings, including 72 units at Adam, 43 at Rimonim, 44 at Elon Moreh, and 196 at Bet El—all in the West Bank—at prices starting at \$40,000.

**July 19** Peace Now reports that 11 percent of the apartments built and marketed by the Ministry of Housing and Construction in 1998 are located in settlements (excluding East Jerusalem). Figures from the ministry and the Israel Land Authority reveal that 5,242 of the 48,862 units that are planned for marketing in 1998 are located in settlements (excluding East Jerusalem).

**July 24** Shots are fired at settlers from Itamar, near Nablus. "In recent months," reports *Ha'aretz*, "settlers from Itamar established a farm on hills far from the settlement, for the purpose of expanding the settlement or establishing a new one. This farm, named 'Gideon's neighborhood,' sits on hill 866."

**July 27** *Ha'aretz* reports that more than half a million Palestinians in the West Bank—one-third of the population—are without reliable regular sources of water. Palestinians blame the distribution policies of Israel's water carrier, Mekorot, a charge denied by Israel.

**July 28** *Ha'aretz* reports that housing sales during the first five months of 1998 in East and West Jerusalem and in the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim have declined by 49.6 percent and 58.3 percent, respectively, compared to a similar period in 1997.

**July 31** *Kol Ha'Ir* reports that the civil administration approved the construction of a new neighborhood of 200 units in the settlement of Kiryat Arba (population 6,000), with prices starting at \$90,000. Potential purchasers are eligible for loans and mortgages of \$70,000 and grants of \$40,000.

**August 1** At the Gaza Strip settlement of Ele Sinai, Palestinian police destroy a fence constructed illegally by settlers after a standoff in which armed settlers faced armed Palestinian police. "Who cares if [Palestinians] have deeds [to the land in question]. They also have deeds to Ashkelon, Jaffa, and Sheikh Munis [the Knesset]," commented one settlement leader.

During the night, the fence is re-erected by the IDF, which prevents the Palestinian police from destroying it once again.

**August 4** Two Israelis from the West Bank settlement of Yitzhar are killed while patrolling on a road recently opened by settlers outside the settlement's boundaries. Israeli security sources believe that a local dispute

between settlers and Palestinians over land rights precipitated the planned attack.

Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics reports that 1,300 immigrants from the CIS moved to settlements during 1996, compared to 1,200 in 1995.

**August 7** *Yerushala'im* reports the \$1.1 million purchase of two apartments by Amana in Jerusalem's Muslim Quarter.

**August 10** *Ma'ariv* reports the construction of two dwellings at a site outside the master plan boundary of the West Bank settlement of Yitzhar. The wooden buildings were constructed less than 48 hours after the August 4 ambush of two Yitzhar settlers.

**August 11** New regulations are issued regarding the treatment of settlers by Israeli police, military, and intelligence services. "Settlers," according to *Ha'aretz*, "will not enjoy special treatment because they live amid an Arab population." Israeli police will have ultimate authority over cases involving settlers and a special effort is to be made "to prevent deterioration in relations between Israelis and Palestinians over land ownership questions." Until now, the IDF has exercised ultimate authority over the enforcement of law in the occupied territories.

**August 13** Peace Now reports 5,892 new units under construction and 2,888 empty dwelling units in West Bank and Gaza settlements, a vacancy rate of almost 7 percent of 42,000 existing units.

**August 19** The Netanyahu government unveils a plan to almost double the settler population on the Golan Heights by constructing 4,500 new dwellings, including 2,500 vacation homes.

**August 20** *Ha'aretz* reports that Palestinians are supplied with 50 to 85 liters of water per person a day; settlers consume 280 to 300 liters a day.

Under an agreement reached between Israeli and Palestinian security forces, settlers can remain overnight at Joseph's Tomb in Nablus until the beginning of September, after which overnight stays will be allowed only in coordination with the PA.

**August 23** The Netanyahu cabinet decides to replace with permanent structures, "as soon as possible," the seven mobile homes housing settlers at the Tel Rumeida site in Hebron, the scene of the killing of a settler on August 20. The permanent housing will cost approximately \$3 million.



Yitzhak Rabin who oversaw settlement expansion for the Rabin government, a telling illustration of the national consensus in Israel favoring the permanent retention of the heart of the West Bank.

According to an article in the Israeli weekly *Yerushala'im*, "thousands of apartments will be built in communities east of the city in order to produce a ring of Jewish settlement around Jerusalem and a territorial bridge between Ma'ale Adumim and the [settlement] communities of the Benjamin region [north and west of Jerusalem]." Thousands of dunams of land currently under military control will be transferred to civil authorities for housing construction.

Construction will begin in an area of the West Bank next to the East Jerusalem settlement of Neve Ya'acov toward the area of the settlement of Adam, also known as Givat Benjamin, according to the head of the Village Construction Administration, a branch of the Ministry of Interior that has recently emerged as a central administrative instrument for facilitating settlement expansion.

Planning and expansion plans for metropolitan settlements will be undertaken on a regional rather than individual settlement basis by the Village Construction Administration.

Another program, the plan for an "umbrella municipality" for Jerusalem and environs unveiled in June, will, if implemented, bring West Bank settlements in "Greater Jerusalem" one administrative step farther along the road to de facto annexation.

In the Etzion Bloc of settlements south of Jerusalem, 630 new dwelling units are currently under construction alongside 1,300 existing houses.

A new industrial plant for the production of concrete has opened in the settlement bloc, the first in the settler area, to supply the increased demand for construction materials nearby. Hundreds more are under construction nearby in the larger settlement towns of Efrat, Ma'ale Adumim, and Betar Ilit.

In the Benjamin region, more than 20,000 Israelis live in 30 settlements. In this area, 1,500 new dwellings are under construction, enough to increase the population by 6,000. Expansion is occurring even at Bet El, where 150 of the new homes are under construction, with an additional 50 expected to begin before year's end. Located just north of Ramallah, Bet El is already home to almost 700 families and is one of the few settlements that may be in closer proximity to territory controlled by the PA following the anticipated redeployment of the Israeli military forces required by the Oslo accords.

Even in the Jordan Valley settlements, depressed by economic problems and stagnant population, a new wave of expansion is underway as part of a coalition agreement between Prime Minister Netanyahu and the Third Way Party. These settlement efforts are producing a set of circumstances that at best complicate, and at worst preempt, any Israeli diplomatic attempt to disengage from the occupied territories. ♦

## AROUND JERUSALEM

Excerpts from interviews with Shimon Einstein, head of the Israeli Ministry of Interior's Village Construction Administration, and Nach Kinarti, administrator of the "Around Jerusalem" project and liaison with the minister of defense, appear below. The interviews were published in *Yerushala'im* on April 24, 1998.

**Q:** Will you expand existing communities or establish new ones in the West Bank?

**Einstein:** Both. We aren't concealing anything. The [Around Jerusalem] plan includes connecting existing settlement communities through new construction and creating territorial continuity. We are interested in expanding the existing areas of jurisdiction, to link them together, and to link them all to Jerusalem.

**Q:** To link them to the Jerusalem municipality?

**Einstein:** No. We have no intention to create a municipal linkage. We are interested in territorial continuity.

**Q:** There is a government decision not to build new settlements.

**Einstein:** We aren't starting from scratch. [Our department] is the executing agency.

**Q:** We are speaking of an area outside what is known as "sovereign Jerusalem."

**Einstein:** That is correct, but our concept is different. We are not looking for headlines and we have no intention to create an uproar. We do it quietly and secretly.

**Q:** Would Yitzhak Rabin approve the Around Jerusalem plan of Bibi Netanyahu?

**Kinarti:** Yitzhak had a clear policy on the subject of Jerusalem. He was always in favor of strengthening the city and its surroundings. I have no doubt that this project is within the national consensus.

**Q:** But the Labor Party opposes construction in the [West Bank] territories?

**Kinarti:** This is not in the territories.

**Q:** Adam [a West Bank settlement] is not in the West Bank?

**Kinarti:** If Kfar Adumim and Pisgat Ze'ev and Betar are in the territories, then Around Jerusalem is in the territories. And if they aren't in the territories, then Around Jerusalem is not in the territories.

**Q:** Are you at peace with yourself and can you seriously claim that in your appointment you will continue Rabin's policies?

**Kinarti:** Yitzhak and Shimon Peres gave this very serious attention in the past. They discussed very similar ideas. I am absolutely at peace that this project is in accord with Rabin's intent to strengthen Jerusalem.

## FROM THE ISRAELI PRESS

### What's Really Happening in the Settlements?

Recent ad campaigns promoting house sales in Judea, Samaria, Gaza and the Jordan Valley give the impression that intensive construction is taking place, but statistics show that more building permits were approved under the former government than under the current one.

Between 1995 and 1996, the Labor government granted 3,942 permits, while the Likud coalition has authorized only 2,200 over the past 11 months.

But Yechiel Leiter, head of the foreign desk of the Council of Jewish Communities in Judea, Samaria and Gaza (known by the Hebrew acronym YESHA), claims the figures are much higher under the present government.

"In Kiryat Sefer alone, 2,000 permits were granted, in Ma'aleh Adumim over 1,000, in Kadumim there were 200," he says. Settlers had hoped the current government would allow more construction in the occupied territories, he says, and many had expected a building binge.

Settlements are inundated with requests from families throughout the country seeking to purchase a house on an

individual plot. Where once ideology served as the springboard, the majority of those now applying appear more intent on obtaining a higher standard of living.

Earlier this year, the Jordan Valley advertised under the slogan, "Jordan Valley, A Strip of Opportunities." Three months after the campaign started, the regional council offices had received more than 1,300 requests from people seeking to purchase a house on a plot of land.

"We were amazed with the results," said one ministry official, adding that people applied from all over the country. The candidates included teachers, salesmen, artists, a clinical psychologist, a medical secretary, dentists, lawyers and engineers. "People didn't even raise political issues, but stressed they were fed up with city life," she said. Meanwhile, the Samaria Regional Council is planning to sell 900 houses in settlements such as Barkan, Ginot Shomron and Karnei Shomron.

By Margot Dudkevitch, excerpted from the *Jerusalem Post*, daily Internet edition at <http://www.jpost.co.il/com/Archive/21.May.1998/RealEstate/Article-21.html>

**"Israel's security is contained in the Oslo accords—but not the security of the settlers. We made peace with Israel within the borders of 1967—and not with the settlers. We make our peace with the settlers if they build their settlements within Israel in the boundaries of 1967; there they can build as much as they want. But we cannot accept Israeli settlers in the few areas west of their own nation.**

**"[Settlements] are illegal. The land on which the settlements were built was stolen. The water is stolen. No one pays a penny for it.**

**Israelis find it completely all right to confiscate the land of the Palestinians and to occupy it. I cannot accept that. We agreed with Israel in Oslo that we would find a joint solution for the Israeli settlements.**

**Israel must live up to that; we are prepared to do so. Foreign settlers are unacceptable in the long term. The West Bank and Gaza Strip are only 5,000 square kilometers, only a minor part of the 27,000 square kilometers of Palestine within the 1948 borders. We are now so many people that we need this land ourselves."**

Interview with Yasser Arafat, chairman of the Palestinian Authority  
*Die Welt* (Berlin, Internet edition), June 8, 1998

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