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israeli
settlement
and the
peace
process

SIGNED, SEALED, DELIVERED:
ISRAELI SETTLEMENT AND THE PEACE PROCESS

researched/written by
Khader Abusway
Rose-Marie Barbeau
Muhammed el-Hasan

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JMCC
po box 25047, east jerusalem
tel +972.2.581.9776
fax +972.2.582.9534
email jmcc@baraka.org

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introduction

— no settlement freeze

The peace negotiations which began so auspiciously in Madrid ended in Washington, deadlocked over the Israelis' refusal to agree to halt settlement of the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the interim phase. The negotiators from the Occupied Territories were united in their contention that settlements posed the greatest obstacle to achievement of peace and stability. The Palestinians at these first negotiations called for the Israelis to freeze settlement activity before further talks went ahead, or to agree that a settlement freeze would be included in any agreement to be signed.

The Oslo Accords were directly negotiated by the PLO. Under the terms of these agreements covering the interim phase to 1999, Israel and the Palestinians must not 'initiate or take any step that will change the status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip pending the outcome of the permanent status negotiations.'¹ As the final status negotiations are to cover Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, and borders, among other issues, the Palestinians consider that this precludes the Israelis from continuing settlement activity until the issue is resolved. However, while former prime minister Rabin promised the US administration that there would be no new settlements, expansion of existing settlements (currently numbered at approximately 194)² has been ongoing throughout the peace process. Moreover, the bulk of the land being taken from Palestinians in this interim phase has been for the settler bypass and security roads in the West Bank and Gaza Strip agreed to in the Oslo Accords.

Therefore, as pictures of the Israeli army withdrawing from Palestinian cities went out over wire services, the impression grew internationally and even locally that the occupation was over, Palestinians were autonomous, and the settlers a radical but marginalised element who would be dealt with in the final phase of peace talks. Talk of a settlement freeze in this interim phase was common, with the Israeli right-wing protesting and the left applauding this supposed freeze. The reality bears little more than a superficial resemblance to this impression: in fact, during the Rabin-Peres administrations, the number of settlers increased by almost 50 percent. Not only are almost 300,000 settlers, their settlements, industrial zones and highways, and the military zones and installations necessary to defend them, still occupying some 70 percent of the West Bank and some 40

percent of the Gaza Strip, but the security of this 'marginalised' group remains the justification for the almost absurd limitations placed on Palestinian autonomy under the current peace accords. And, since the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Oslo II) - signed in September 1995 - 30,000 dunams* of land have been taken for settler bypass roads alone.³

Furthermore, the false sense of a peaceful resolution provided by the celebrated handshake on the White House lawn paved the way for an even further easing of the already muted US opposition to settlement. This, together with the approach of the 1996 US presidential elections (and the wish of candidates to show themselves friendly to Israel) allowed Israel to move ahead with unilateral changes which are slowly consolidating its territorial control, particularly over East Jerusalem and the greater West Bank.

Moves by the new Netanyahu government have not been encouraging. At a summit of European heads of state in Lisbon in early December 1996, prime minister Netanyahu spoke out firmly in support of continued settlement expansion, saying that he wanted to match the previous government's rate of settlement growth and regretting the possible constraint of economic considerations. (At the same time, he called for confidence-building measures from the Palestinians.) Settlement expansion will clearly continue at an even greater rate (the proposed construction of an additional 3,000 housing units in West Bank settlements was announced in late September 1996, and another 1200 were approved in November); Ariel Sharon, an aggressive proponent of settlement, is now in charge of a 'super ministry' which has at least partial jurisdiction over road construction, settlement, and water negotiations; and the Israeli redeployment in Hebron agreed to in the Oslo Accords has only now been carried out seven months past deadline.

Settlers and settlements have always played and continue to play a key role in the implementation of Israeli plans for control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Far from being determined by any negotiations that have taken place in the last few years, the current cantonisation of the West Bank and Gaza is detailed in maps and settlement plans dating back twenty years and has been pursued by Labour and Likud alike. Further, the continued presence of settlements and armed settlers - still illegally occupying and controlling the majority of land, still enjoying favourable access to natural resources at the expense of their Palestinian 'neighbours', justifying a large deployment of Israeli troops in and around Palestinian locales - can only be a source of extreme provocation to people free in name only from the term 'occupation'.

* One dunam is approximately .25 acres of land.

— long-term plans come to fruition

Israeli settlement policies have been fairly consistent over the years, with the most significant variations found only in the public rhetoric and declarations, shaded by the political leanings of the different governments. Meanwhile, Palestinians inside the West Bank and Gaza Strip have for years pointed out that the settlements will have a tremendous negative impact on any long-term solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As one former negotiator from the West Bank pointed out, 'How can you talk about an end to the occupation when you still have settlements - the very essence of occupation - at the same time?' Even as the start of final status talks remains on hold, the implications of Israel's policy over the past decades is only too clear:

1. The 1967 Green Line, the border existing at the time of the armistice, has effectively been 'erased' and at the very least Israel would be unable to 'return' to it. Yet the peace process began with the understanding that any solution would be based on UN Resolution 242 and the return of lands taken in 1967.
2. The geographic placement of settlements and the construction of roads linking them to each other and to Israel, along with 'security' prohibitions on adjacent lands, have resulted in the disintegration of the West Bank into isolated cantons, and in the inability of the majority of Palestinian villages and towns to accommodate their natural expansion or exercise their right to develop.
3. The recognition by Israel of settlements and settlers as full Israeli citizens regulated by Israeli law only and the provision of infrastructure and services as to any community inside Israel has given them an assumption of permanence which encourages the adoption of an 'inter-ethnic' perspective. According to this approach (most clearly illustrated in Jerusalem), acceptance of which has been aided by the 'withdrawal' of troops, the problems are those of any two communities of different ethnicity living side by side. The question of where settlers came from, how and why - questions of rights and legality - are now practically irrelevant; it appears to be accepted by many non-Palestinians that the settlers are there to stay, with the only remaining question being how to regulate relations between them and their Palestinian 'neighbours'.

In effect - at this stage in the negotiations - Israel would appear to have achieved the de facto annexation Palestinian leaders have long believed they were aiming

for. While the most problematic issues in the conflict - refugees, settlements, Jerusalem, borders - are not to be addressed until the last stage of negotiations - Israel has by its actions on the ground already begun implementing its vision of what a final settlement will look like.

Our decisions on [delaying] the unification of Jerusalem, the return of those refugees who wish it, and Israel's refraining from establishing settlements and military settlements in the territories beyond Israel's borders since the eve of the war can only be interpreted in the rest of the world, in the Arab world, and among the population of the administered territory and the Israeli public, as if we are reconciling ourselves, or at least are prepared to reconcile ourselves, to giving up these territories. If such a recognition takes root among the interested parties on such an important issue, it is liable to make things very difficult for us in the future. If we wish to hold on to them in one way or another, it will be interpreted as a more inflexible and surprising step than it is in reality; and if . . . a decision is made to return the West Bank or most of it . . . we will be in a weak bargaining position.

We must also make decisions and determine facts in order to assure ourselves what we want to assure, and also in order to be in a position of strength in negotiations between us and any interested party, if and when they begin.

Yigal Allon, presenting his plan for the West Bank and Gaza Strip to the Israeli cabinet in July 1967

One month before he was killed, then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin spoke to the Knesset about the Oslo II Accord which defines this current phase:

We view the permanent solution in the framework of the State of Israel which will include most of the area of the Land of Israel [sic] as it was under the rule of the British Mandate . . . The borders of the State of Israel, during the permanent solution, will be beyond the lines which existed before the Six-Day War. We will not return to the June 4, 1967 lines. . . . The security border of the State of Israel will be located in the Jordan Valley, in the broadest meaning of that term.⁴

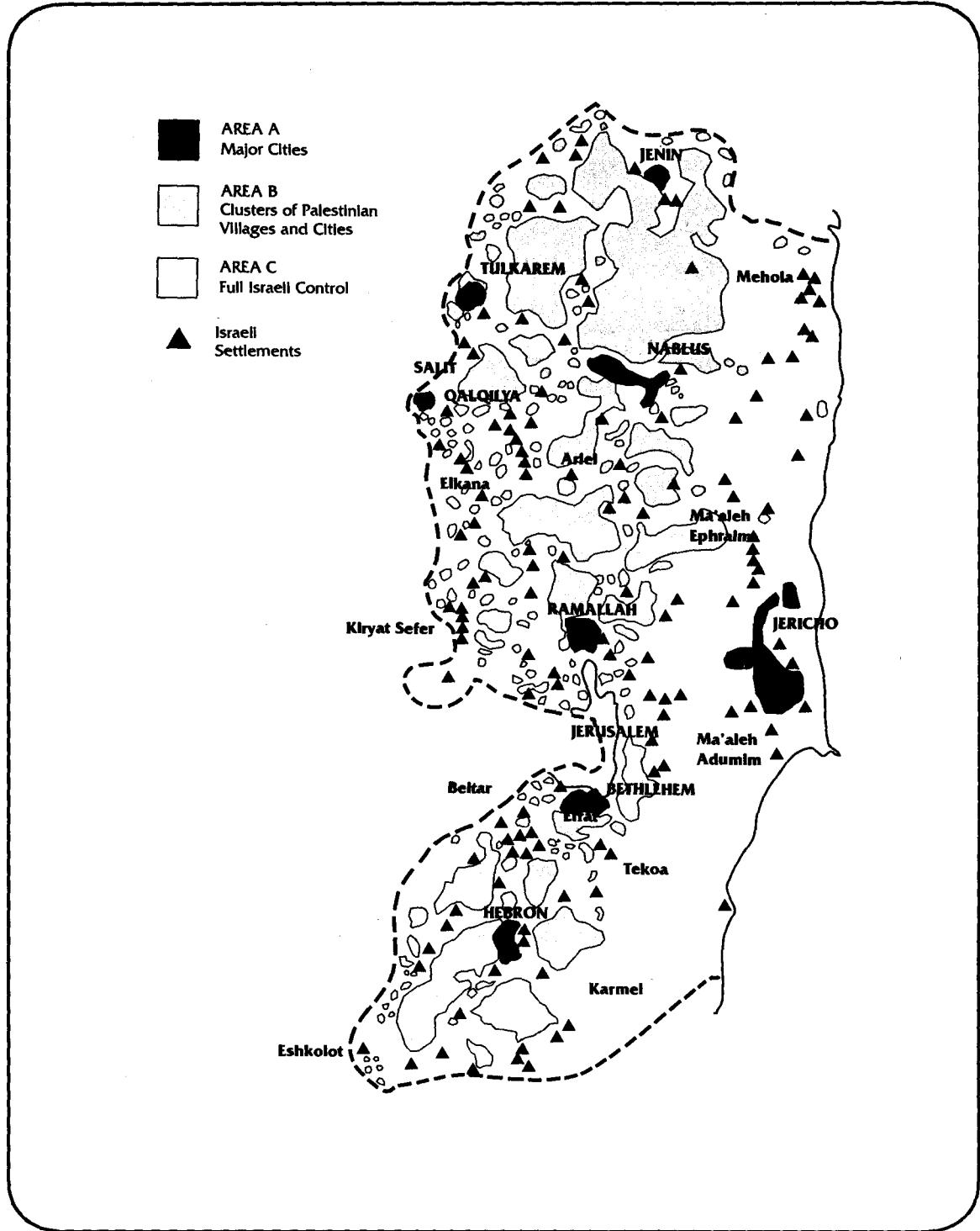
He further reassured Knesset members wary of the agreement by reminding them that:

Areas A and B [over which the Palestinian authorities have some limited jurisdiction] constitute less than 30 percent of the area of the West Bank. Area C, which is under our control, constitutes more than 70 percent of the area of the West Bank . . .⁵

The day-to-day reality of living under what was supposed to be an interim arrangement is that Palestinians are suffering greater economic deprivation and more severe movement restrictions than at any time during the occupation. Most of the population are denied the right to enter Jerusalem; Palestinian institutions and residents are being forced out even as Jewish settlements expand. Despite the presence of a Palestinian Legislative Council, elected in January 1996, the Israeli authorities remain the ultimate authority, occupying the bulk of the land and controlling the majority of roadways, all under the framework of protecting Israeli security. The settlements throughout the West Bank and Gaza are the most visible symbol of Israel's continued control. Meanwhile, for Palestinian communities, the irrevocable destruction of land being carried out to create and expand the vast network of bypass and settlement roads contradicts assurances that this is a transition phase only, with final resolution yet to be determined.

And all the while, economic conditions are worsening for the Palestinian population, due to the Israeli-imposed closure which has been effect in some form or another since 1993. Under this closure special permits are required for entry to Jerusalem, usually issued for very short terms and subject to cancellation without notice; West Bank and Jerusalem ID holders (and frequently even international aid workers) are generally not allowed into Gaza; and travel between the north and south West Bank is disrupted due to the inability to pass through Jerusalem.

Largely due to this closure policy and the resulting decrease in trade and employment, per capita GNP for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza has fallen by 38.8 per cent from 1992 levels.⁶ While support for the peace process in general has remained consistent (over 70 percent⁷), public confidence in the Oslo accords, the elected council and prospects of achieving real peace are all decreasing rapidly: the level of strong support for Oslo II went from a high of almost 40 percent in December 1995 to 23.6 percent in October 1996⁸, while the level of pessimism rose from 27 percent in December 1995 to 56 percent in October 1996.⁹ Palestinian and Israeli analysts are warning of the danger of the growing sense of frustration and despair among Palestinians. With the close proximity of settlers and a new Israeli government determined to roll back or confine the extent of Palestinian autonomy of movement, growth, development and subsistence, it is difficult to predict future events with any degree of optimism.



West Bank : Map of the Interim Phase

(Source: The Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine)

Zone A - Palestinian control

Zone B - joint Palestinian-Israeli control

Zone C - Israeli control

settlements: a threat to peace

At the peace talks in Madrid and Washington, the position of the [Palestinian] negotiators was firm on this issue, that a halt to settlement activity must be the basis for any progress in the preliminary phase of the negotiations which were to decide the transition period. . . . [T]his caused a crisis which continued throughout the negotiations; the international community knew there was a crisis with no way forward and that Israel was responsible. The settlements are illegal according to all international resolutions; they are an obstacle to peace and the idea of final status negotiations is senseless and illogical as long as Israeli settlement continues.

'The Political Dimensions of Settlement', speech [in Arabic] by Dr. Haider Abdel Shafi at conference Settlements: a Challenge to Peace, 24 March 1995, Jerusalem, sponsored by the Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre (emphasis added).

Since (and prior to) the autonomy period, the presence of settlements and settlers in Gaza has frequently disrupted the situation in the Strip by provoking clashes between Palestinians and Israelis. In the West Bank, where implementation of autonomy began in late 1995, settlers are far more numerous (and organised). In the West Bank, clashes have most often been sparked by land seizures for settlement expansion or bypass roads.

Clearly, Israel is not contemplating any future evacuation of settlers. Citing the security needs of the settlements and settlers, Israel has succeeded in maintaining an extensive military presence throughout the West Bank and consolidating its territorial control through a vast interlinking road construction project to connect settlements to each other and to Israel, at enormous cost to Palestinian farmers, yet attracting little attention either from Israeli or international peace activists traditionally vocal on the subject of settlement. Only recently was criticism of the bypass roads heard from outside the Palestinian community, when the \$42 million bypass road connecting the Gush Etzion settlement bloc to Jerusalem from the south was completed and it was revealed that no Palestinians would be permitted to use the road. This despite the fact that land seizures for road building are often described as 'for public purposes', or benefitting all the residents of the Occupied Territories, Jewish and Arab.

Palestinian land use remains restricted and in many cases prohibited near settlements and bordering roads designated as 'security roads'. Palestinians are at all times subject to the continued authority of the Israeli police and armed forces; Israeli settlers and settlements are not answerable to the authority of Palestinian police or security forces. Furthermore, the 2000 military orders issued during the course of the occupation by Israel remain in force, and the Palestinian legislative council's power is ultimately subject to control by the Israelis. The situation in effect could at worst be described as continued occupation without its most obvious trappings; at best all the factors are there for potentially grave conflict between Palestinians and Israelis (as well as between the general population and the Palestinian leadership hamstrung by the accords). Already the situation has given rise to serious ruptures within both Israeli and Palestinian society and political parties (evidenced most clearly in Israel by the assassination of the Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1994).

In an analysis of several possible scenarios for a peace settlement, Joseph Alpher of the Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies warned policy-makers that:

. . . [O]ur basic assumption holds that the mixing of populations - Israeli and Palestinian - is the single factor that most disrupts attempts (by both sides) to achieve security. . . . Hence any solution that leaves enclaves of Israeli settlements in the heart of Palestinian territory is liable to constitute a source of friction and a liability for current security.¹⁰

Contrary to the reasoning that '**s**ecurity concerns, then, dictate an approach based on separation, and on **logical territorial contiguity and ease of approach for both sides**', the arrangements enshrined in the Oslo II agreement, while based on separation, in fact allow logical territorial contiguity for Israelis only, with enclaves of Palestinian towns, villages and camps in the heart of Israeli contiguous territory, with decreased accessibility between communities for Palestinians.¹¹ This lack of territorial integrity was only too evident with the imposition of a ten-day 'internal' closure by the Israeli authorities in March 1996, which not only reinforced the separation between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but confined West Bank Palestinians to their place of residence, unable even to travel to the next village or town. Yet it was stipulated in the Oslo II Accords that:

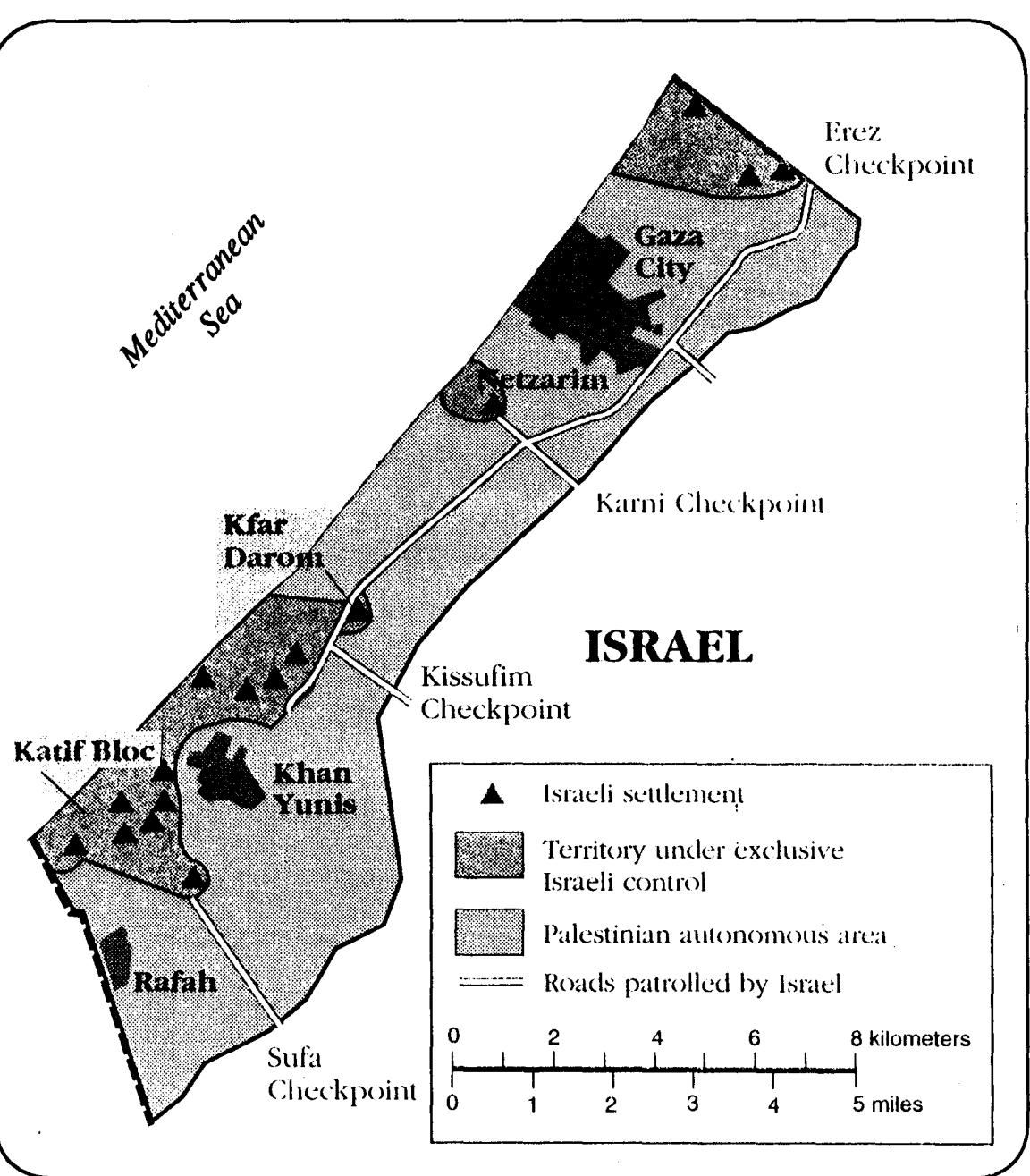
. . . in order to maintain the territorial integrity of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as a single territorial unity, and to promote their economic growth and the demographic and geographical links between them, both sides shall implement the provisions of this Annex, while respecting and preserving **without obstacles**, normal and smooth movement of people, vehicles, and goods within the West Bank, and between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.¹²

— testing the redeployment model

The Cairo Agreement of May 1994, which spelled out the scope and nature of self-rule in parts of the Gaza Strip and Jericho area, was portrayed as a test for both sides to judge whether Palestinian autonomy could succeed before its extension to the West Bank. Currently, autonomy has been allowed in a small portion of the West Bank, comprising six major Palestinian towns and parts of the surrounding areas. Some 200 villages and 20 percent of the southern town of Hebron lie in the 70 percent of the West Bank left under Israeli control.

It appears that the success of this interim phase will be judged (by those in control of the peace process) not only on the ability of the Palestinian Authority to solve the social and economic problems left behind by decades of occupation, but by the ability of Palestinian communities to live side-by-side with radical armed settlers who travel, trade, build and prosper freely, while Palestinians' freedom of movement, their ability to earn a living, to develop and expand as natural growth demands, remain tightly restricted by Israel. (It would also appear that the definition of 'success' is in part the level to which the impact of Palestinian autonomy on settlers/Israel can be restrained rather than any internal growth and development on the Palestinian side, since Israeli 'concessions' to Palestinian self-determination are outweighed by the limitations placed on Palestinian autonomy.)

In the Gaza Strip 18 exclusively Jewish settlements, though sparsely populated with some 5000 residents, enable the Israeli military to control and occupy some 40 percent of the territory. They are a constant source of tension and provocation as they remain a vivid symbol of Israel's continued occupation of the Strip and there have been numerous clashes and attacks near or at settlements in Gaza since the handover to the Palestinian Authority of some 60 percent of the Strip. New road arrangements were implemented by the Israelis, effective as of the 'withdrawal'. The main road running north-south down the centre of the Gaza Strip is subject to Israeli control and closure, and has been closed a number of times as a 'security' measure, effectively isolating the south and north of Gaza from each other. (See map.) (This centre road is the only north-south access, since the coastal road is inaccessible to Palestinians in a number of places due to the presence of one settlement bloc; you cannot pass directly from the north to the south using this route.) Coastal access can be and has been closed by the Israeli authorities on 'security' grounds, restricting Palestinian fishermen from working. Besides being able to shut down Gaza internally and cut off external access - both measures which have been used frequently since handover - under the Cairo Agreement, the Israeli army has the right to re-enter Palestinian population centers in Gaza and the West Bank if it is deemed necessary to Israel's security.



Gaza Strip : Map of the Interim Phase

(Source: Foundation for Middle East Peace)

— taking the model to the west bank

Redeployment in Gaza was a relatively simple process by comparison with the West Bank. With the exception of Netzarim, a small, isolated settlement located near Gaza City, settlements in Gaza are concentrated in the Gush Katif bloc. With a total settler population of not more than 5000, Palestinian autonomy extends to some 60 percent of the Strip, in a largely contiguous bloc. Israelis are concentrated at the borders and around settlements, and have left the one north-south road for Palestinian access. Redeployment has been generally effective in public relations terms; Palestinians in Gaza enjoy relative freedom from the presence of Israeli troops and public opinion polls show a consistent and significantly higher level of optimism and feeling of security in Gaza as opposed to the West Bank.

Partial redeployment was carried out in the West Bank within a very different geographical and political context. There is a far greater concentration of settlements and settlers throughout the West Bank. Settlement sites were usually chosen frequently for strategic reasons, with the result that many overlook or encroach on the Palestinian village whose lands were taken over. Often there is merely a road separating the two communities. Often the settlement was planned with the specific aim of breaking up a cluster of Palestinian communities - a demographic bloc - much the same tactic that has been used inside Israel in the Galilee and other region with high Arab populations.¹³

This intermingling of armed settlers and a civilian population (until the arrival of the Palestinian security forces) left Palestinians at risk not just from the official army of occupation. In addition to the over 1200 Palestinians killed by Israeli army and undercover units, between December 1987 and August 1996, 103 Palestinians were killed by Jewish Israeli civilians (mostly settlers).¹⁴

The differences between the interim phase arrangements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip - the splintering of the West Bank vs. the relative geographic contiguity of the Palestinian section of Gaza - are perhaps responsible for the widely differing attitudes between people in the two regions with regard to security. When polled on their feeling of security following the introduction of autonomy, only half of those surveyed in the West Bank felt that things were better, compared with almost 77 percent in Gaza. Over 20 percent of those living in the West Bank felt that things had not changed.¹⁵

It was in the West Bank town of Hebron, where a handful of extremist settlers are situated in the town centre, that the most violent attack against Palestinians occurred. In the early morning hours of 25 February 1994, during the Muslim holy

month of Ramadan, as hundreds of worshippers were kneeling at dawn prayers, Baruch Goldstein, a settler from nearby Kiryat Arba, entered al-Ibrahimiyyeh mosque in Hebron wearing his reserve army uniform and began shooting people from behind. Some 30 men and boys were killed instantly or died later of their wounds. The murders sparked massive demonstrations and rock-throwing throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip in which more Palestinians were killed by Israeli troops. Tensions after the massacre were aggravated not only by the many settlers and other Israelis who praised Goldstein's actions, but by the collective measures taken on the community of the victims - the lengthy curfew imposed on Palestinians in Hebron, and the army-imposed closure of some 20 Palestinian shops (which remain closed to date) on 'security' grounds.

During the official Israeli investigation into the massacre, it emerged that Goldstein had entered the unguarded mosque armed with three automatic weapons. Soldiers stationed at al-Ibrahimiyyeh mosque testified that they could not have stopped Goldstein from committing the massacre because they are under orders 'never' to shoot at a settler even if the settler is firing on Palestinians with the intent to kill.¹⁶ To date, fully-armed settlers continue to walk through Palestinian neighborhoods and in front of al-Ibrahimiyyeh mosque in Hebron. The town has a population of roughly 100,000; it is the only major Palestinian town where Israeli troops have not been redeployed. The initial justification given for this was the security needs of the approximately 400 Jewish fundamentalists living in the centre of the southern West Bank city. Later, following suicide bomb attacks inside Israel by Islamic activists, Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres refused to allow redeployment until the Palestinian Authority had taken what the Israeli government would consider sufficient action against the Islamic movement, Hamas. Following the election of Binyamin Netanyahu, redeployment in Hebron has been put on hold as a new redeployment agreement is demanded by the Israelis.

In general, Jewish settlers in the West Bank have been far more vocal in presenting their claims to Palestinian land and protesting the peace process than settlers elsewhere. West Bank settlements (as opposed to those in Gaza) have also been more successful in obtaining both public and private funds to support their presence, which has served the various ideological, religious, and political aims of successive Israeli governments (both Labour and Likud), Jewish fundamentalist groups, and diaspora Jewish organisations. In general, there is a shared adherence among these various groups in the concept of 'Eretz Yisrael'. Following Netanyahu's meeting with Arafat, although long-delayed, unproductive and unenthusiastic, Aharon Domb, a spokesperson for the Council of Jewish Communities in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, warned that:

Netanyahu errs if he thinks he is guaranteed the support of the residents of Judea, Samaria and Gaza at any price. [We] are loyal to the idea of the land of Israel, not to a particular person.¹⁷

Most of the settlements are well-entrenched, well-armed and fortified against attack. Settlers are not governed by the same laws which control Palestinians. For years they have also been accustomed to acting either outside or at the very edge of even that which is permissible under Israeli law. As Israeli citizens, the settlers serve their annual reserve military duty like everyone else, thereby being assigned to police and control the areas they illegally occupy. They are permitted to carry arms, and these have often been used against Palestinians, with few repercussions. The 'kid glove' treatment accorded to settlers carrying out criminal acts against Palestinians is well-documented.^{**}

Against this backdrop the peace process was initiated. Settlers suddenly felt their continued presence was being called into question. After decades of acting out the role of courageous 'pioneers' (funded and fully supported to a far greater extent than Israeli citizens living inside Israel), the settlers felt abandoned. Settlers from Kadumim settlement west of Nablus threatened to set up armed patrols to carry out 'security' duties in areas outside their settlements. Head of the Kadumim Settlement Council Joseph Kippah said that settlers '... are in danger here. But if the soldiers leave the area like the agreements with the PLO stipulate, then we'll have no choice but to defend ourselves ... and we will know how to do that.'

Settler leaders also initially threatened to form militias to challenge the authority of Palestinian police. Many settlers said they would refuse to recognise the authority of Palestinian police even in the center of autonomous Palestinian cities. Binyamin Regional Council head Pinhas Wallerstein has stated publicly said that he would not hesitate to shoot if stopped by Palestinian police deployed in the West Bank. In January 1996 Zo Artzenu, an organisation of militant settlement activists, began armed patrols on the Jerusalem-Bethlehem road that passes the Gush Etzion bloc, in order to 'demonstrate a presence on the road' and to 'provide security' for Jewish travelers, according to one of the group's leaders.¹⁸

The Israeli security services appear to have ignored the potential threat of settler violence, as long as that threat was directed at Palestinians. Even when the tone of the rhetoric increased in anger and intensity and Israeli government officials received death threats, extremist Jewish groups were not perceived as a security

^{**} In September 1988, Rabbi Moshe Levinger, a Gush Emunim leader, shot and killed a Palestinian shoeshop owner who was standing outside his shop in Hebron. Levinger was sentenced to five months in prison. He was released after three and a half months, receiving a hero's welcome from settlers. See B'Tselem's 1994 Law Enforcement vis-à-vis Israeli Civilians in the Occupied Territories.

threat. The error of this underestimation was made only too clear by the assassination last November of the Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin by a religious-nationalist Jewish Israeli with links to the settler movement.

In the period leading up to Rabin's assassination, settlers took on an active role in mass protests and sometimes violent confrontations with soldiers and Palestinians, one of these events resulted in the shooting death in July 1995 of a 30-year-old Palestinian man while involved in a peaceful protest against settlers taking additional land for the Beit El settlement. Mass civil disobedience tactics have been under consideration or actually carried out by settlers. Groups of right-wing activists blockaded major roads inside Israel on several occasions. Some right-wing rabbis have reportedly advised soldiers that if they were ever asked to participate in evacuating settlers, under halachic law they would have to refuse.

In early 1996, an underground cell of militant settlers from Kiryat Arba was uncovered by the Israeli internal intelligence service, the General Security Services or 'Shabak'. Four members of the group were arrested, including an army commander suspected of supplying the cell with heavy weapons.¹⁹ In mid-1996, the Israeli military disclosed the existence of additional settler cells in the West Bank, reportedly planning to carry out attacks on Palestinians.

The settlers have not been appeased by the election of Binyamin Netanyahu. Despite the fact that the current government will allow the settlement movement greater flexibility in expansion and support than the previous Labour administrations, (under which there was already a consistently higher than average rate of settlement construction²⁰), hardline elements in the settler movement have been outraged by the failure to immediately rollback the few Palestinian gains from the Oslo Accords, and the recent agreement to redeploy in Hebron. After the first Arafat-Netanyahu meeting, Shmuel Sackett of Zo Artenu, expressed the opinion that Netanyahu has 'lived down to all my expectations':

The Likud's first prime minister, Menachem Begin, shook Anwar Sadat's hand and gave the Palestinians legitimacy by referring to them as 'a people'. . . . The Likud's second prime minister, Yitzhak Shamir, continued the trend with his presence at the Madrid conference, promising to start negotiations with Arafat's representatives. . . . Anyone who thought that Netanyahu would be anything more than the third leg in a series of Likud prime ministers hasn't learned from history. . .²¹

Countering this group of settlers increasingly disenchanted with their new government for, in their view, not being sufficiently hawkish, are the Palestinians, experiencing with each passing day greater hardship, and greater disappointment and frustration as they continue to wait for the fruits of the Oslo agreements.

— continuing settlement expansion

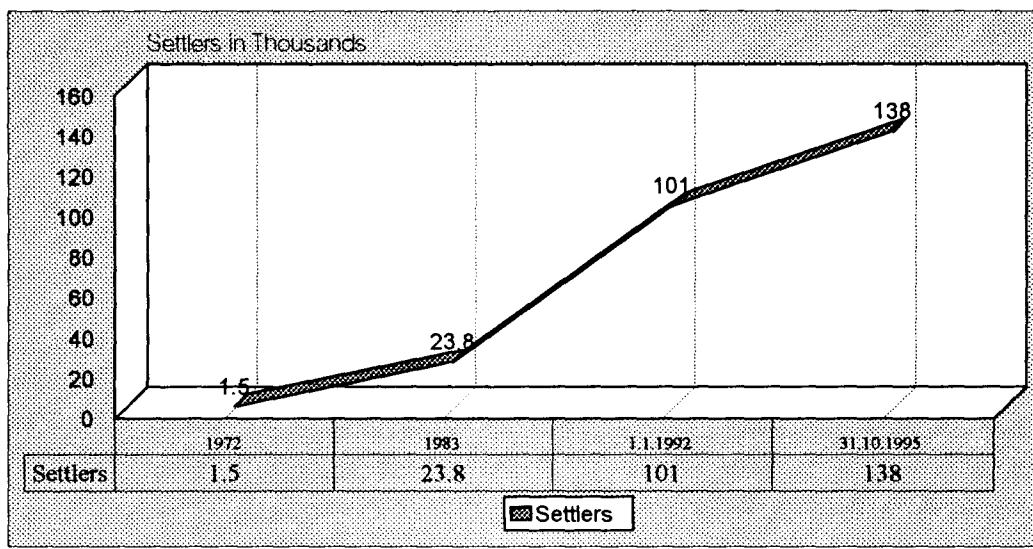
Despite the outrage expressed by the settler factions on the signing of accords between Israelis and Palestinians, settlers have only prospered since the gathering in Madrid. Settlement expansion has continued at an even greater rate in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; massive funding has been aimed at providing settlers with the best infrastructure and security provisions; and Israeli politicians from both sides courted the settler vote in the recent elections. There has been no slowdown in settlement activity since the initial meetings between Israelis and Arabs in Spain. In 1992, the Labour party platform on which they would be voted into power contained a promise to halt new settlement activity; however, there was no later government promise to 'freeze' settlement activity²² and it is expansion of existing settlements rather than establishment of new outposts that makes up the vast majority of settlement construction in the Occupied Territories. Even in the first years of peace negotiations, when levels of optimism on all sides were still high, 'up until 1994, Rabin built housing for settlers at . . . a rate unequalled in Israel's 26-year occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip'.²³

Added to the actual construction of new units in existing settlements is the expansion onto even more land for the construction of the new bypass and other settler roads. Land seizures for the use of settlers has continued alongside ongoing Palestinian-Israeli peace talks. For people on the ground, the continued presence of settlers and ongoing seizures of land have resulted in violent clashes with Palestinian landowners and land rights activists facing off against Israeli soldiers and armed settlers. The striking contradiction of continued settlement activity and ongoing peace talks has raised Palestinian suspicions about the value of the current peace process.

The inevitable result of continued land seizures and efforts to isolate Jerusalem has been vocal and frequent calls from some Palestinian leaders and members of the grassroots for a suspension of negotiations with Israel. However, although Palestinian negotiators have often walked out of the talks to protest certain issues, there has been no formal ultimatum issued vis-a-vis settlement growth, possibly because they have been left no grounds for doing so. Debate on the issue of Jewish settlements is not even scheduled to begin until the final status talks (which were to start no later than May 1996). Until that time settlements as an issue are not on the agenda of the negotiators. Furthermore, while it has been stipulated that prior to the scheduled conclusion of the final phase of negotiations in 1999 there are to be no unilateral changes in the status quo on the ground, this commitment has not been honoured by the Israelis with regard to settlement and road construction activity.

By and large, international protests against land seizures and settlement expansion were muted, and Palestinian protests small and virtually unnoticed, possibly because settlement expansion was done fairly quietly, away from the glare of media. It was not until the attempt by Efrat residents in late 1994 to expand on land from the Palestinian village of al-Khader that the protests gained greater momentum and media attention and widespread calls were heard from across the Palestinian political spectrum for a suspension of peace talks.

Increase in Israeli Settlers Between the Years 1967-1995



Number of Settlers (1995)
 West Bank: 1138,000 approx.
 Gaza Strip: 5300 approx.
 * Does not include Jerusalem

Sources: Palestinian Geographic Center, Survey of Israeli Settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, 1995.

Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, Population and Households, 1995.

Peace Now Settlement Report No. 8.

EXAMPLES OF RECENT SETTLEMENT-RELATED ACTIVITY

- A 36-year-old father of seven from Ne'lin village, a member of the local Land Defense Committee, is shot dead and 12 other Palestinians are injured when Israeli soldiers open fire on a peaceful protest being held at the site of land confiscations from Deir Qaddees village near Ramallah on 10 November (*Palestine Report 15.11.96*).
- Al-Far'a Agriculture Station in Nablus, some 360 dunams of land run by the Ministry of Agriculture, is taken over by a group of settlers who begin working the land, while guarded by Israeli soldiers (*Palestine Report 15.11.96*).
- Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai approves plan for construction of 1800 housing units in Mattityahu, a Ramallah-area settlement built on lands from Ne'lin and Deir Qaddis villages. Construction is to take place on an additional 508 dunams confiscated from the two villages. Once completed, the expansion will double the population of the settlement, currently numbering 2500 (*Palestine Report 04.10.96*).
- The Higher Planning Council of the Israeli Civil Administration approves the construction of 310 new housing units in Jordan Valley settlements, 900 new homes in Alfei Menashe, which straddles the Green Line in the northern West Bank, and 700 housing units in the Nablus-area settlements of Emanuel and Kadumin (*Palestine Report 04.10.96*).
- Israeli military sources announce that 15 dunams of Palestinian-owned land lying inside the Hebron municipal boundaries is to be expropriated for 'military purposes'. Owners have received 10-day notices to vacate. Hebron mayor Mustafa Natsheh condemns the seizure, charging that the land will be used to link up Jewish settlements in the centre of Hebron with the larger Kiryat Arba settlement, lying outside the city. Israeli Deputy Housing Minister Meir Porush, meanwhile, announces that he has the go-ahead for 70 new homes for settlers to be built southeast of Hebron (*Palestine Report 04.10.96*).
- Israeli surveyors begin surveying land in Qarawa Bani Hassan near Qalqilia prior to scheduled takeover of 100 dunams of land. The area is apparently slated for expansion of Notafim settlement (established on land taken from Hares village). This latest confiscation brings to 300 dunams the amount of land taken over in the area (*al-Quds 12.9.96*).

- Settlers accompanied by army guard set up 10 mobile housing units in Im al-Khous, east of the Sousia settlement near Yatta village, Hebron district (*al-Ayyam* 12.9.96).
- Mobile housing units begin arriving in Beitar settlement (in the Gush Etzion bloc). According to Israeli officials, some 50 caravans are scheduled to be in place by the end of the following week, for use as classrooms and municipality offices (*al-Quds* 11.9.96).
- Israeli bulldozers guarded by Israeli police and army begin working on land in Silwan belonging to the family of Ahmed Sarhan, in preparation for the land's takeover and use by the Jerusalem Municipality (*al-Quds* 4.9.96).
- National and Islamic Committee Against Settlement announces that the Israeli authorities have begun implementing a previously-issued confiscation order for 4000 dunams of land from Sinjel, near to the Shiloh settlement. The official justification for the seizure is 'security' (*al-Quds* 3.9.96).
- Local residents report surveying work has begun on 1500 dunams of land lying near the Ariel settlement, Nablus area, north of Salfit (*al-Bilad* 2.9.96).
- Israeli Defense Ministry approves expansion of Hashmona'im settlement by 1050 new housing units (*al-Hayat al-Jadida* 30.8.96).
- Israeli government spokesman Moshe Fogel announces that Defense Ministry permission has been given for expansion of the Kiryat Sefer settlement by 900 housing units. Kiryat Sefer is one of the Seven Stars, straddling the Green Line (*al-Ayyam* 28.8.96).
- The National and Islamic Committee Against Settlements organises protest in coordination with residents from 15 villages south of Ramallah, to hold a march on 4 September protesting settlement road no. 45, which will swallow 7000 dunams of land (*JMCC Daily Press Summary* 28.8.96).
- Israeli authorities confiscate 5000 dunams of land from Toubas village, near Nablus (*al-Quds* 25.8.96).
- Hundreds of Palestinians gather at the 177-dunam site being taken for expansion of Morag settlement near Rafah, planting olive and palm tree seedlings in solidarity with the owners (*al-Quds* 9.8.96).

— a case study: al-Khader village

Al-Khader is a Palestinian village which lies south of Bethlehem in the West Bank. As with other rural communities in the West Bank, the economy of the village is based on the output of its farmlands, much of which has already been illegally used by Israel to establish and expand nearby settlement areas. The settlement of Efrat was built on al-Khader land in 1979 and has now grown to some 4,000 inhabitants, living in what is portrayed as a suburb of Jerusalem.

The confrontations at al-Khader began on 22 December 1994 when a group of settlers from Efrat, accompanied by 70 Israeli soldiers, began bulldozing 125 acres of al-Khader farmland for the construction of some 500 additional settlement housing units. The soldiers forcibly removed protesting villagers from the land to let the bulldozers level the area.

Village residents returned to confront the soldiers with their land ownership documents. The soldiers refused appeals to stop the bulldozers, and the Israeli military's Civil Administration in the area charged that the protesters were 'trespassing' on Israeli 'state land'. According to the Civil Administration, the al-Khader farmland had been appropriated by the military in 1983, and therefore the settlement construction could proceed.*** But the Palestinian landowners challenged the legality of the Civil Administration's position.

After repeated appeals to return the land met with no success, al-Khader residents began squatting on the roughly 125 acres of fertile fields, to prevent the settlers' expansion plans. The villagers vowed to continue squatting on the land until the settlers gave up their plans, saying they were prepared to 'die under the bulldozers'.

Their resistance quickly gained momentum as Palestinians from other parts of the West Bank, as well as Israeli peace activists, joined the squatting villagers in their peaceful protest. But clashes broke out when on 27 December Efrat settlers, backed by about 500 Israeli soldiers, tried to uproot the squatters.

At least 76 squatters were arrested, and seven wounded in the process. Palestinian Authority Local Governance Minister Saeb Erekat, who was at the al-

*** A frequent tactic in establishing settlements has been the closure or seizure of Palestinian land for unspecified 'military' or 'security' reasons and, usually much later, the turnover of the land to settlement construction.

Khader fields in solidarity with the villagers, was beaten by one of the soldiers and fell to the ground, losing consciousness.

Later, after the confrontations had ceased, al-Khader residents and supporters tried to reverse the damage done by planting 100 olive saplings to replace the 200 uprooted by settlers. However, the following day Israelis from the Civil Administration and settlers tore out the new saplings. Hundreds of Palestinian and Israeli peace activists gathered once again at the site to protest and were dispersed by the army. On 30 December, confrontations broke out between al-Khader residents and Israeli soldiers trying to keep the villagers off the land. Sixteen people were injured; the army then clamped a curfew on the area.

Twenty-one Palestinian landowners appealed to the Israeli High Court for a restraining order on the proposed settlement expansion. However, the High Court rejected the request, on grounds that under the terms of the Oslo Accords, al-Khader residents would have to settle the matter directly with the Israeli military establishment.

The growing frustration and sense of crisis led to the creation of the Land Defense Committees, comprised of farmers, activists and politicians who wanted to focus local and international attention on the issue of Israel's continuing settlement activity in the Occupied Territories.

As one 60-year-old al-Khader resident, Na'im Abusway, stated, 'We are not fighting the Jews, but the Israeli government which promises us peace on the one hand and then continues to expand settlements.'

Abusway's sentiments were echoed by many Palestinians elsewhere in the West Bank and Gaza who saw the al-Khader confiscations as only the latest bit of proof of Israeli bad faith in the peace process. The growing popular outrage was not lost on Palestinian leaders and numerous prominent Palestinian figures from across the political spectrum called for a suspension of peace talks with Israel until settlement expansion was frozen, which, however did not occur.

Former chief Palestinian negotiator Dr Haider Abdul Shafi called on the PLO to suspend all negotiations with Israel, insisting that Israel's actions had 'emptied the [peace] talks of their credibility.'

Two Hamas leaders in the West Bank, Sheikh Hussein Abu Kweik and Sheikh Hasan Yousef, used the al-Khader land confiscations to promote their movement's position that negotiations with Israel should be halted immediately, charging that Israel was using the peace process in order to lend legitimacy to its settlement policy and general violation of Palestinian human rights.

Even PLO leader Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), the main architect of the Declaration of Principles, called for a suspension of negotiations with Israel unless settlement expansion was stopped. Yasser Arafat, recognising that Israeli settlement activity was threatening support for the peace negotiations at a wide popular level, appealed to Israel to stop the land takeover in al-Khader immediately. He stopped short, however, of pulling out of the talks.

Ultimately, the Israeli government ordered the settlement expansion on al-Khader land frozen. However, Efrat settlement was permitted to expand on another large plot of land further away from the village.

A week after the crisis at Al-Khader village had abated, the student wing of the mainstream Fatah faction, Shabiba, called on the PLO to suspend negotiations until 'settlement ends and Israel respects the price of the peace process'.

To date, settlement construction and expansion and Palestinian protests continue. Large-scale land seizures for settlement roads and settlement expansion are occurring even as the start of final stage negotiations remain on hold. In all, from the date of the signing of the Taba accord (September 1995) to mid-1996, some 30,000 dunams of Palestinian were expropriated for settlement bypass roads alone.²⁴ Days and weeks continue to pass with no movement on the political front; all the while the creeping expansionism of Israeli settlement, with all its implications for the future of Palestinian communities, shows no sign of ending.

'The settlement issue confronts the Palestinians with concerns which go beyond the legal debate and the political complications. It makes Palestinian life, in terms of its daily requirements as well as ultimate promise, hazardous and fraught with worrisome uncertainties. It permeates it with tension and violence, it impoverishes it, narrows its margins, and diminishes its possibilities.'

'Palestinian opposition to Jewish settlement must be viewed from this perspective to be truly understood. It is not the product of ideological posturing or political maneuvering; it is, in the truest sense of the word, a matter of self-preservation.'

Muhammad Hallaj, 'Impact of Settlements on Palestinian Society',
in Settlements and Peace: The Problem of Jewish Colonization in Palestine,
The Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine, July 1995, Washington DC, p. 26

**A DEMONSTRATION OF GOOD FAITH:
THE MT. ABU GHNEIM HOUSING PROJECT**

Not long after the signing of the Declaration of Principles and implementation of the Gaza-Jericho agreement, it was announced that 1850 dunams of Palestinian land had been designated for exclusively Jewish settlement in the Abu Ghneim area of Beit Sahour, on the southeast side of Jerusalem. The construction start seems certain, although delayed by legal and popular protests, and if so, the settlement of Har Homa will be the latest link in the encirclement of East Jerusalem.

Forty Palestinian families from Beit Sahour and the village of Um Tuba own the land on the mountain. Most of it is forested or planted with almond trees, but some has been seasonally planted for scores of years. The government plans for Har Homa calls for 8000 housing units, along with schools, playing fields, hotels and public halls on the area of land already confiscated, to accommodate 30,000 to 40,000 Jewish residents. The first stage of the plan involves construction of 4000 housing units. The second stage involves a similar project on the west end of the Abu Ghneim Mountain, referred to as Khirbet Mazmourieh, now facing imminent confiscation. Land in this area belongs to families from Beit Sahour.

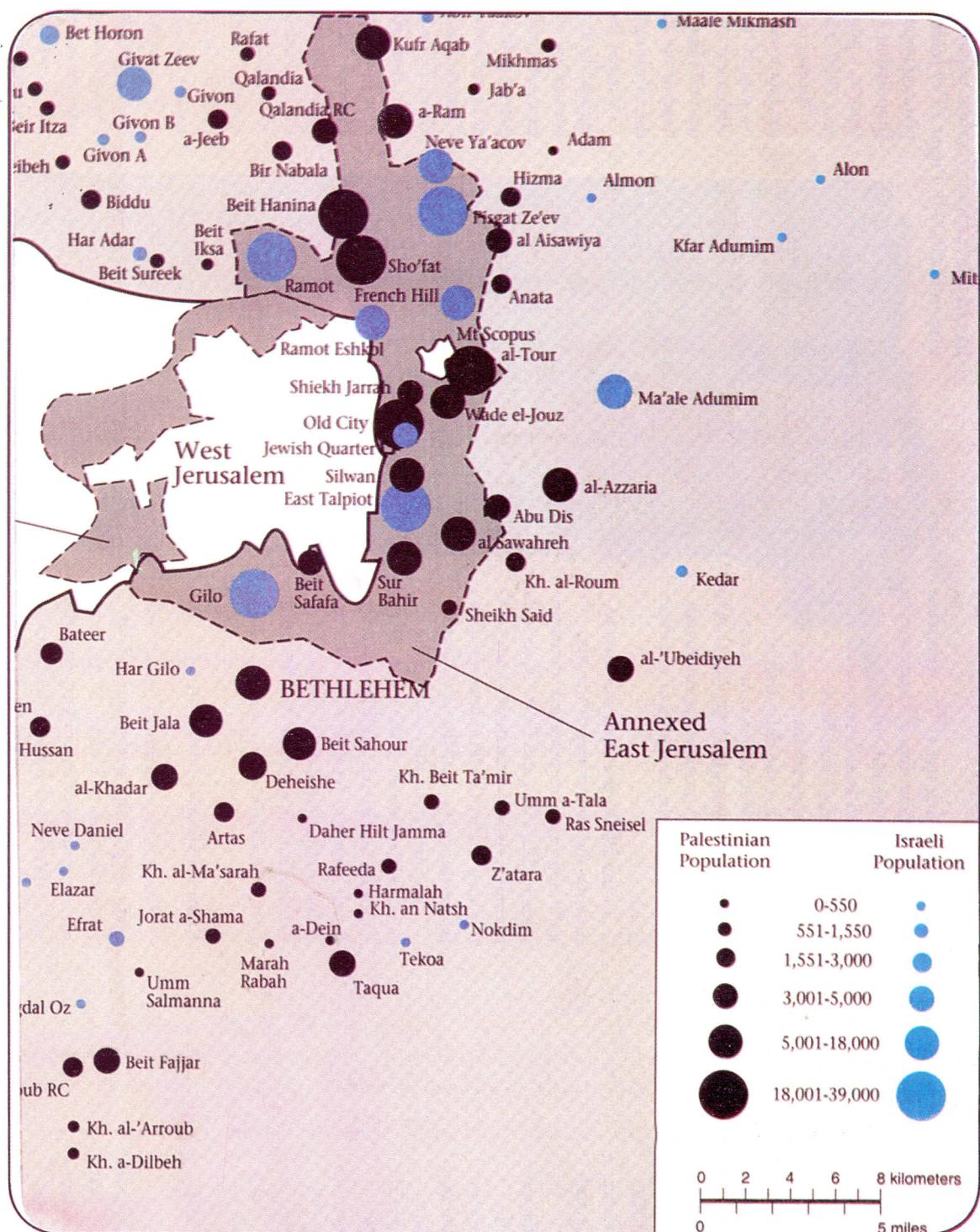
Building a settlement city of this size on the borders overlooking Bethlehem and Beit Sahour is an aggressive act. Beit Sahour, with a population of approximately 10,000 will be swamped by an Israeli settlement with at least 30,000 people, and will be gradually suffocated as local residents are denied the opportunity of future development or agricultural use of the land.

In 1967 after its occupation of the West Bank, the Israeli government expanded the borders of the Jerusalem municipality to include all the lands of the Abu Ghneim area. The land became part of Israel, but the residents of Beit Sahour were left outside the new boundaries. Owners who lived only a few meters from their land became 'absentee' owners (with the land then taken under control of the Israeli Custodian of Absentee Property). On 6 June 1991, Israel's finance minister published an announcement of the confiscation of 1850 dunams (including the aforementioned 1000 dunams) of Abu Ghneim Mountain for 'public benefit'. Only later was it clarified that the confiscation was the result of a request from an Israeli company, Mekor, claiming ownership (from the 1930s) of approximately 670 dunams of the 1000 dunams. Mekor had plans to develop the land with backing from the government. →

Both Palestinian and Israeli landowners affected by the confiscation filed appeals. However, departing Finance Minister Yitzhak Moda'i signed the final order hours before leaving his post, without hearing their protests. The Palestinians, refusing to recognise Israeli jurisdiction over their land, did not take their case to the Israeli courts (which rarely if ever overturn confiscation orders). The Israeli landowners, on the other hand, proceeded to the Israeli High Court claiming that the confiscation orders issued by Moda'i were invalid. The Israeli landowners regarded the confiscation as breaking a promise made to them previously by the Israeli government, namely that Har Homa would be built by private landowners and not by the government. It appears that the main reason for the government's decision to break its promise was its fear that if private Jewish companies were allowed to build a residential area in Abu Ghneim, Palestinian companies could also claim rights to build there. Such legal difficulties would not arise if the land was confiscated by the government, and a settlement was built for Jews only. In addition, the government could confiscate an area larger than that claimed by the Jewish owners.

There are other considerations which stand in opposition to the government's building plans. Abu Ghneim Mountain is located on the edge of the desert, and the pine forest and land cultivation have prevented the desertification of this area. If this forest is uprooted and the trees are replaced with tall buildings, the sensitive natural balance in the area will be disturbed, and the creeping desertification will threaten large areas of now fertile land.

But if the land is to be sacrificed for construction, the rights of the Palestinian owners and adjacent villages should be considered. Um Tuba village was annexed to Jerusalem in 1967 and like all Palestinian residential quarters in Jerusalem has suffered from lack of space to accommodate its natural growth. With this latest confiscation, Um Tuba is losing the only land on which the village could possibly expand. Demands for building permits have been consistently denied by the government on the pretext that the final planning map of the area was not determined. Only later was it discovered that final plans had in fact been determined and the land scheduled as the site for this large (exclusively Jewish) development. (Former Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kollek was known to have boasted about his policy of designating Palestinian land as 'green areas', where construction is prohibited in the interest of nature preservation. Once Jewish settlement plans were developed, these areas were then transformed into densely populated housing compounds.) Har Homa is bound to be yet another site of friction and tension between Palestinians and Israelis, serving as one more example of Israel's bad faith in negotiating agreements it does not intend to keep.



Israeli Settlement of the Jerusalem Area
(Source: Foundation for Middle East Peace)

— *east jerusalem*

Jerusalem is a key symbol in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. For Palestinians, the city has traditionally been the centre of political, cultural, religious and social life. Part of the West Bank captured by the Israelis in 1967, East Jerusalem is thus included in United Nations Resolution 242, which stipulates the return of these territories. East Jerusalem has served as a rallying cry for Palestinian protests against settlement, for this is where the Israeli push for territorial control and demographic dominance has been centred. (The demographic battle at least appears to be won, with Jewish residents of East Jerusalem numbering 155,000 to 150,000 Palestinians in 1993,²⁵ and currently estimated at 170,000.)

On their side, Israelis reject the application of UNR 242 to Jerusalem. For Israelis across the political spectrum there is a consensus on Jerusalem as the 'eternal' capital of the state of Israel, 'unified' under Israeli sovereignty, despite the fact that this 'unification' contravenes international law and has never been formally sanctioned by the international community. Through massive settlement on lands occupied in 1967, successive Israeli governments have implemented this policy of 'unification', clearly aimed at preventing any future division of the city. Since 1967, the overwhelming popular domestic consensus supported governmental policies directed towards never having to give up East Jerusalem, through:

. . . simply establishing a Jewish majority and unilateral Israeli control (1967-1991), [then shifting] to a more refined policy, preparing the ground for Palestinian and international recognition of permanent Israeli sovereignty over both parts of the city. Thus Israel has strived, since 1991, for the geographic and demographic separation of East Jerusalem from the rest of the Palestinian West Bank, and for the establishment of a stable and controllable Palestinian minority inside the city boundaries.²⁶

Along with relentless construction in and around East Jerusalem, ignoring UN resolutions and rejecting the protests of the international community and Palestinians, Israel has worked to foster the idea of Arabs and Jews co-existing in their 'unified' capital. For the almost thirty years of his reign as mayor of (West) Jerusalem, Labour's Teddy Kollek referred to Israel's unification of Jerusalem and characterised the city as an ethnic and cultural mosaic. Kollek refused to acknowledge the de facto continued division of the city, the nationalist sentiments of Palestinian Jerusalemites, and the failure of his efforts to get Palestinians to participate in municipal elections or Israeli-organised neighbourhood councils. He also refused to acknowledge that, while claiming East Jerusalem as part of Israel's capital, the percentage of tax monies returned in infrastructure and services to the

(albeit unwilling) tax-paying residents of that part of the 'capital' was far less than that in the western side of the city.

Within such a context, any problems can be characterised as the outcome of inter-ethnic conflicts between the 'Jewish majority' and the 'Arab minority that both live on the same territory, a Jerusalem unified under Israeli sovereignty.²⁷ As expressed during a conference in early 1996 on the status of East Jerusalem,

[i]mplicitly, Jewish and Arab coexistence in the city is explained as if it is only a natural and historical phenomena and not the result of a process of colonisation. Arab and Jews are symmetrically posed, thus avoiding the issue of conquest and colonisation in the presence of Jews which legitimises by historical and religious arguments their . . . practices over the whole of the Jerusalem territory.²⁸

Subsequent to the 1967 war, in what has been labeled 'the most impressive Jewish settlement operation by the Israeli government over the Green Line,'²⁹ eight major Jewish 'neighbourhoods' were constructed in Jerusalem (Ramot, Ramat Eshkol, French Hill, Shu'fat Heights, Neveh Ya'akov, Pisgat Ze'ev, East Talpiot and Gilo), situated on land taken in the 1967 war and containing at present some 170,000 Israelis who are generally not considered by themselves or others as settlers.

In the 1990s, in order to facilitate better access from these 'neighbourhoods' into (western) Jerusalem, new roads were built, again on Palestinian lands from eastern Jerusalem, which allowed settlers to bypass Palestinian neighbourhoods and arrive directly in West Jerusalem. Side by side with ease of access and increased housing for Jewish settlers of Jerusalem, tighter restrictions on the entry of Palestinians to the city were introduced in March 1993 and have remained in place to a greater or lesser degree ever since. (Hence it is not strictly correct to speak of the current closure as if it was only introduced following the suicide bombings in Israel in early 1996). Tighter restrictions on residency rights of Palestinians from East Jerusalem were invoked as well, beginning in 1994 and with renewed impetus in 1996.

In July 1996, Likud Jerusalem mayor Ehud Olmert's consultant on settlement, Menashe Ben Arieh, proposed the closure of some 50 Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem and the removal or demolition of some 2500 homes and commercial establishments, on grounds they were illegal, unlicensed structures.³⁰ Shortly thereafter, Israeli National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon stressed the importance of revitalising the 'Greater Jerusalem' plans, which include a continuous line of settlement from East Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, a 10-kilometre unbroken line of settlement around Arab East Jerusalem, and adding thousands

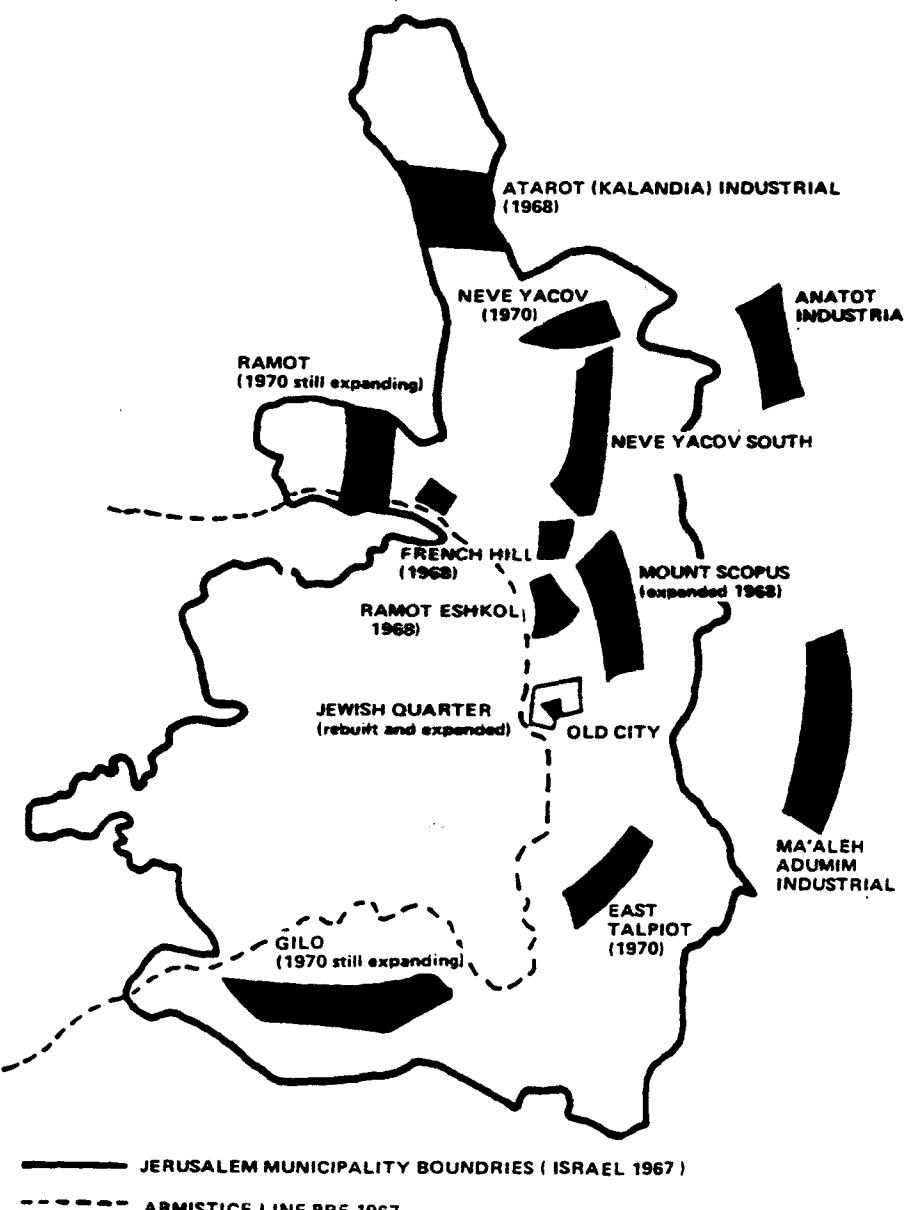
of additional housing units in Ma'aleh Adumim, Givat Ze'ev and other settlements.³¹ Simultaneously, Israeli Interior Minister Elia Suissa was declaring his support for the expansion of Jewish settlement inside East Jerusalem, and promising to push on with Jewish housing projects in the Palestinian neighbourhoods of Mount of Olives and Ras al-Amoud.³²

Meanwhile, Palestinians are largely barred from free entry to the city. Many institutions have been forced to relocate outside of East Jerusalem simply because they cannot function under the Israeli-imposed closure. On the political level, in August 1996 Yasser Arafat ordered the relocation of three PA-related offices to outside of the Jerusalem municipal boundaries, which was widely seen as a concession made to try and bring the reluctant Israeli premier (Netanyahu) to a face-to-face meeting with the Palestinian leader, and attempting to convince Palestinians, Israelis and the world that the peace process had not stalled. The Orient House is manned by an Israeli army checkpoint, and foreign governments have been informed by the Israelis that visits to the Orient House violate Israeli government policy.

International protests against the abrogation of Palestinian rights in East Jerusalem have been dying down, with the permit system of access for Palestinians virtually unchallenged by UN and other agencies based in the city, with mandates to work with the Palestinian people. This means that even as final status negotiations appear to recede into a distant and uncertain future, Palestinians in East Jerusalem and Palestinian rights vis-à-vis their capital can draw on less and less support, particularly from outside. As the number of settlers increases rapidly, and Palestinian residents of the city and Palestinian institutions are denied residency rights or pressured through direct or indirect means to leave the city, the fear is that:

. . . Israel may then argue in the final status negotiations that, due to the limited scope of Palestinian presence in the city, the claim for Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem is baseless, and that the only question on the agenda are negotiations over limited minority rights in the remaining Palestinian neighbourhoods of the city.³³

Today, East Jerusalem is arguably the most isolated city in the West Bank. Although still the symbolic centre for Palestinian political, religious and cultural aspirations, its influence in Palestinian life and the Palestinian influence on the city are slowly decreasing, due to Israel's relentless campaign of closure and separation.



Settlement belts around East Jerusalem

3

background on settlements

— *what are settlements?*

Israel began establishing Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip after the 1967 war as a means of consolidating its control of Palestinian lands from both a security and ideological standpoint. Settlement has traditionally served the aims of groups from across the Israeli political spectrum: for religious fundamentalists it is laying claim to the land ordained to them by God; for the vast majority of secular Israelis from left to right-wing, settlement was always permissible and even desired in varying degrees for reasons of security - security of person and security of resources, ie., water. Thus, settlement was an issue around which there was a huge public consensus. For example, the 'moshavim' in the Jordan Valley, bordering Jordan, or the 'unification' of Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty are excluded from much of the Israeli discourse on illegal settlement.

Since 1967, settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza has gone through a variety of phases, depending on the Israeli political climate. There are now almost 300,000 settlers living in some 200 settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

Israel's first settlement efforts after the 1967 war were unofficially guided by the Allon Plan, under the Labor alignment governments in power from 1967 to 1977. The primary concern was the establishment of security buffers against the Egyptian and Jordanian borders, which called for the annexation to Israel as 'an integral part of the state':³⁴

1. A strip approximately 10-15 kilometres wide along the Jordan Rift Valley from the Beit She'an Valley to the north of the Dead Sea, with the inclusion of minimal Arab population.
2. A strip several kilometres wide from north of the Dead Sea road to the north of greater Jerusalem.
3. All of Mount Hebron, or at least the Judean Desert going towards the Negev.
... In the territories to be joined to Israel, new settlements will be established, and permanent military bases will be built according to security needs.

. . . In eastern Jerusalem, urban neighbourhoods populated by Jews will be built . . .³⁵

Implementation of the Allon plan secured geographical control over Palestinian East Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley, and the vital West Bank underground aquifers. Today East Jerusalem is surrounded by Jewish settlements and major roads linking those settlements to West Jerusalem, thus isolating the eastern part of the city from the greater West Bank.

The Allon plan tried to avoid settling the higher-density population areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, reserving these areas -- roughly 60 percent of the Occupied Territories -- as a potential bargaining chip in a future land-for-peace agreement with Jordan and possibly Egypt.³⁶

The Ofer Plan which followed was popularly termed the 'thickening Jerusalem' plan. It differed from its predecessor by extending 'Jerusalem' settlement activity as far north as Ramallah and as far south as Bethlehem, major Palestinian population centres. Its major aim was containment of the Palestinian population, the prevention of expansion which might encourage emigration and help facilitate Israeli control of the city.

In the 1977 Israeli elections, the right-wing Likud party ousted Labour and remained in power until 1992. There was a dramatic and sustained increase in settlement activity and government funding throughout this period. It is at this time that the more hard-line elements among settlement proponents were positively encouraged, notably the religious/nationalist group, Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful), and the hawkish military elements in the government, led by Ariel Sharon.³⁷

Gush Emunim's 1978 plan was far more provocative than previous (Labour-led) settlement efforts. The right-wing, religious and secular, had as their main objective to make future territorial concession to any Arab party impossible through extensive settlement which attacked Palestinian territorial contiguity, thereby facilitating an eventual annexation of the Gaza Strip and (particularly) the West Bank.³⁸ Thus they established settlements in the heartland of the West Bank, close by and in some cases in major Palestinian population centres such as Hebron, Nablus, Ramallah and Jenin.

Former IDF general Ariel Sharon, who held a number of different portfolios in the Israeli government during this period, including the Housing Ministry, introduced his Sharon Plan, formulated from a strategic military angle. It too sought to isolate Palestinian communities from each other along the east-west axes by settling hilltops overlooking major Palestinian towns, thus achieving tactical dominance

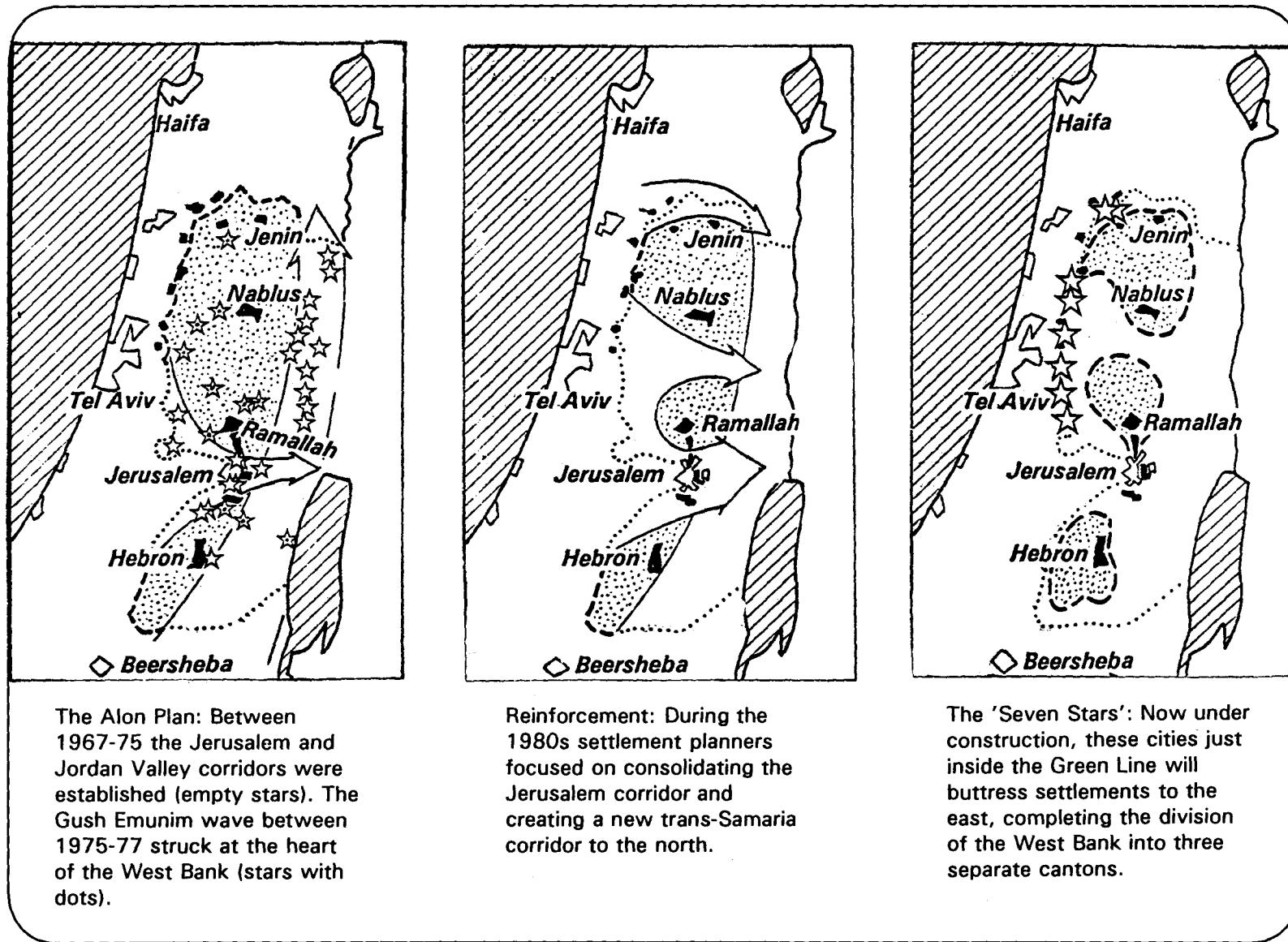
over the population and complementing the previous settlements plans securing north-south dominance. Under this plan, in the event of any future peace negotiations, only some 50 percent of the West Bank and Gaza would be left to the Palestinians, mostly centred around the major towns.³⁹

In 1991, implementation began on the Seven Stars Plan, an evolution of Sharon's earlier plan which sought to establish seven new Israeli settlements in a contiguous bloc that would straddle the Green Line to the east and west, effectively 'erasing' the 1967 border and extending Israel proper eastward into the West Bank. The foremost of these communities, Modi'in, is slated for a projected population of 250,000. By mid-1991, when the extent of the plan was beginning to attract the attention of Palestinians and anti-settlement activists, there were already settlers living in three of the locations; two were under construction and two more in the planning stages.⁴⁰ Currently, under the Netanyahu government, the Modi'in bloc is scheduled for massive expansion. Examining the scope and geographic placement of land confiscations for settlement expansion and road construction approved 1992 to the present, Palestinian settlement monitors believe that a Gush Etzion-style bloc is planned for this area west of Ramallah, to be in place prior to any final status talks, in order to then be considered as an area that must be annexed to Israel.

The intent and impact of this cross-border construction is clear. In January 1996, after protests were raised against plans for the approval of additional housing in Kiryat Sefer to house religious Jews, a minister from the then governing Labour Party replied that this area (the Modi'in region) was one where **border adjustments would have to be made anyway.**⁴¹

With Ariel Sharon now in charge of what has been called the 'super-Ministry' of Infrastructure and the government in coalition with national religious parties, construction and infrastructural support for all Seven Stars communities has been revitalised, with housing for an additional 70,000 on the immediate political agenda,⁴² largely aimed at the ultra-orthodox settlements. Government ministers and settlement activists both speak of a target settler population of 500,000 by the year 2000.

Clearly, the Israelis are working to reinforce the irreversible nature of the majority of the facts on the ground created through the steady construction and expansion of settlement over the years. Israel, claiming what it sees as its rights under the terms of the interim agreement, is consolidating full territorial contiguity between the settlements, through the extensive road system now being built at the expense of thousands more dunams of Palestinian land - territorial contiguity which is denied the Palestinians.



The Evolution of Cantonisation

Source: *Challenge*, Vol. II, No.4

— how is land taken for settlement?

Palestinian lands have been expropriated, closed off or otherwise restricted through a variety of quasi-legal methods, ostensibly based on laws in force prior to the occupation. However, since 1967, the Israeli military authorities have issued some 2000 military orders amending the existing laws in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; it is on the basis of the relevant military orders that the legality of land confiscations are adjudged if challenged in Israeli courts. These military orders remain in force throughout the 'autonomy' phase of the peace process; the newly-elected Palestinian legislative council has no authority to amend or abrogate Israeli military orders, or in fact to make any new legislation without Israel's approval.

Under the terms of the peace agreement, Israel retains wide-ranging rights over 'security' issues. However, construction of settlements and settler roads, the presence and arming of settlers, and land seizures for settlement have been in the past and continue to be justified on these same 'security' grounds.

Israeli acquisition of Palestinian land is most frequently based on the following justifications:****

1. The military authorities can declare land '**closed for military or security purposes**', which implies a temporary measure. Closure of land has been used as a punitive measure following incidents such as stone-throwing or attacks on settlers. The landowner is denied access to the land, offered no compensation, and has no control over its ultimate disposition.
2. Land closed for military or security purposes is often subsequently '**requisitioned for military use**', and in some cases has been turned over to settlers. The landowner is only offered compensation for requisitioned land if military troops are physically stationed on the land.
3. Any land not designated for use of the Islamic Waqf [Trust] or individually registered is subject to designation as '**state land**'. With land in many villages owned by the same families for generations or shared as common pasture land, ownership was acknowledged without formal title documents.

**** Source: Raja Shehadeh, Occupier's Law: Israel and the West Bank, rev. ed., Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1988. This summary reprinted from ...Beg, Borrow or Steal: Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Jerusalem Media & Communication Centre, 1991.

When the 1967 war broke out, it interrupted a slow process of official land registration that was being conducted under the Jordanian authorities, which aimed at formalising traditional land ownership. After conquering the territory, the Israeli authorities halted the registration process. Furthermore, while prior to 1967, any land that did fall under the state authority was to be held in trusteeship, under the Israeli military government much of it was turned over to Jewish settlements. No compensation is paid for land determined to be 'state land'.

4. Land can be expropriated for the '**public benefit**', which under the Israeli authorities has been interpreted to cover the establishment of settlements, etc. The owner is entitled to compensation at current market value but in practice compensation is minimal and is customarily refused by the owners as a protest against the confiscation.
5. Land in the West Bank was claimed as '**abandoned**' if the owner left the areas before, during or after the 1967 war. Many properties were taken into trusteeship by the Custodian of Absentee Property, who is enabled by Israeli military law to enter into transactions with third parties, including settlers or Israeli development companies. Even if it is later proved that the land is not government property, the transaction stands if it was conducted in '**good faith**'.

Many of the required procedures for land takeover or establishment of a settlement have frequently been ignored. For example, the Israeli Ministry of Justice has often permitted the placement of caravans by settlers and their connection to electricity grids, water networks and sewage systems even before a site plan has been drawn up. Other methods include setting land aside for military purposes and only later allowing establishment of a settlement (a suggestion originating in the Allon plan), or declaring '**green zones**' where construction is prohibited by the Palestinian owners, until a later confiscation for '**public purposes**'.

In the West Bank, growth of Palestinian villages has been limited by the Israelis to that allowed in planning maps drawn prior to the end of the British Mandate in 1948. Any houses not authorised under these plans are subject to demolition as illegal structures. When Palestinian villages in the 1980s presented new plans for development and expansion to the Israeli Civil Administration, they were routinely rejected.⁴³

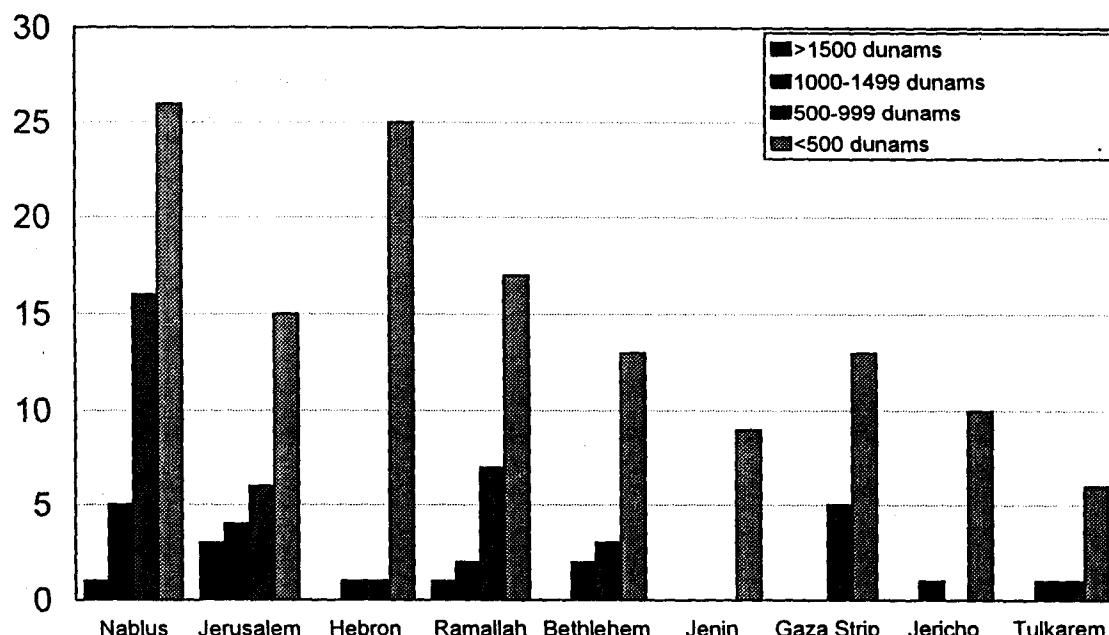
Fighting confiscation orders and encroaching settlements which were only part of a larger strategic framework were Palestinian landowners, usually farmers on their own or small groups of village residents. Unfortunately,

the Palestinian people and their leadership have not had a clear strategy to protest against these settlement and land confiscation policies. Palestinian owners of the land were forced to work individually using Israeli legal procedures which . . . have usually been doomed to failure from the beginning.⁴⁴

The Israelis, by contrast, have been remarkably consistent in the formulation of policies aimed at gaining territorial control and establishing facts on the ground which would be difficult to combat in later negotiations. Only one month after the close of the 1967 war, Yigal Allon was already arguing that 'avoiding the determination of strategic facts in advance is exactly like inviting endless demands . . . including demands regarding Jerusalem'.⁴⁵ For Allon, the 'creation of the fact of an Israeli settlement and military presence' did not preclude any later return of the wider area of land 'on terms that include a political union with a lack of territorial and strategic connection between the [areas] . . .'.⁴⁶ His detailed description of a proposed autonomous entity, the nature of which would allow for attainment of Israel's objectives vis-à-vis the West Bank and Gaza, was made 30 years prior to negotiation of a remarkably similar Palestinian authority.

Israeli Settlements by Size/District

No. settlements



Source: Palestinian Geographic Centre

— who are the settlers?

Approximately 300,000 Jewish settlers live on occupied land in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with some 170,000 in East Jerusalem alone. These settlers can be divided into several different categories. However, for the most part all fall into one of the following two groups:

- **Economic settlers:** This group constitutes about 60 percent of the total settler population.⁴⁷ Their motivation for living in settlements is primarily to improve their standard of living (although many then adopt the political line which justifies their presence in the Occupied Territories); these settlers are attracted by the lower housing prices, and the government subsidies and other financial incentives attached to living in a settlement. They tend to be secular and live for the most part in 'urban settlements' such as Ma'aleh Adumim, Gilo and Ariel in the central West Bank not far from jobs in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. They tend to express publicly the hope for good 'neighbourly relations with the Palestinians living nearby.
- **Ideological settlers:** Primarily members of the Gush Emunim movement and politically further to the right (e.g., Kach, Tsomet, Molodet), these settlers live in the West Bank and Gaza in accordance with an interpretation of Zionism that calls for Jews to live in every part of what is known as 'Eretz Yisrael' or Greater Israel. This group, comprising some 40 percent of the settler population, most often choose to live or establish settlements close to Palestinian communities. A relatively small proportion of this branch of the settler population are those who routinely provoke and attack Palestinians, and have expressed their violent opposition to even the suggestion of a future evacuation of settlements. Rabbi Moshe Levinger, a Gush Emunim leader jailed for three months for shooting dead a Palestinian shopkeeper in Hebron, is one of the most visible of these types of settlers, although Dr Baruch Goldstein, a Kiryat Arba resident and Kach member responsible for the mass murder at the Hebron mosque in 1993, is the most infamous.

Within the two main streams of the settler movement can be found a number of subgroups, including:

- **Haredi (ultra-orthodox Jewish) settlers:** For this group, settlement is not only ordained by God, but offers a solution to the severe housing shortage in the overcrowded ultra-orthodox neighborhoods of West Jerusalem. The haredi number currently only some 6000 and are presently concentrated

mainly in the West Bank settlements of Emmanuel and Betar (although a new 'neighbourhood' for the ultra-orthodox has been established near the Jerusalem village of Shu'fat). The haredi community has a relatively high birth rate compared with the Israeli norm. (This has been conveniently cited with regard to the recent proposed building boom in the Modi'in region, given that the US administration has long ceased its objections to settlement expansion occasioned by the 'natural expansion' of settler communities.)

- Immigrant settlers: Although officially there has been no policy to channel new immigrants to settlements, many incomers from the former Soviet Union (arriving in the hundreds of thousands in 1991-92) and other countries are attracted to a variety of incentives offered by settlements such as Hebrew language study centers, the option to purchase a house at a lower price, special loans and grants, etc. Immigrants who choose to live in settlements prefer 'urban settlements' within easy distance of Israeli centres such as Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Often they may be unaware of the exact location of a settlement until after they relocate.
- Settlers in East Jerusalem: Israelis living in Palestinian East Jerusalem constitute more than half of all settlers. Although living on occupied land illegally annexed by Israel (an annexation not recognised by the international community), these people generally do not see themselves as settlers since they consider that Jerusalem was 'unified' by the 1967 occupation and is Israel's 'eternal capital'. Some are religious Jews interested in living near sites they consider holy or spiritually significant. Others are ideologically motivated, settling in the heart of Palestinian neighbourhoods, particularly in the Old City (e.g., Ateret Kohanim). However, many are secular Israelis who easily fit the profile of economic settlers.

— why settle in the west bank and gaza?

Aside from the ideological standpoint, there are other reasons that Israelis or new immigrants choose to settle in the Occupied Territories:

- **The Suburban Myth**

Israel's settlement policy has always included packages of low-interest loans, grants and tax breaks to actively encourage individuals and businesses to relocate to settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In addition, because the overall strategy behind settlement was to encourage Israelis to consider the West Bank and Gaza Strip as parts of Israel, the majority of settlement blocs were built within driving distance of major cities inside Israel, allowing for an 'easy commute', fostering the idea of settlements as merely suburbs of Jerusalem or Tel Aviv. To facilitate this myth, large amounts of money were poured into road construction, so that settlers could travel (often on roads better maintained than those inside Israel proper) undisturbed by a view of any Palestinian village or town.

An advertisement circulated in the early 1990s aimed at the wave of new immigrants then coming to Israel touted Kfar Adumim and Ofra as 'booming community villages' 'far from the urban rush and crush of the big city but as close as 15 minutes from Jerusalem or Tel Aviv'. The promotional ad, depicting the settlements as suburbs with a village ambiance, never specified that they were located in the occupied West Bank.⁴⁸

Industrial Incentives

For a long time, industrial entrepreneurs were encouraged to invest in commercial enterprises in the settlements by either government grants of up to 38 percent of start-up costs, or tax breaks for the first ten years of operation. Along with these direct incentives, entrepreneurs could pay taxes and fees for industrial space as low as one-tenth of the cost of the same space in some areas in Israel. These measures not only encouraged Israeli investment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, but enticed potential settlers with the prospect of employment close to their new homes. As a result, many settlers no longer have to turn to Israel for employment, being able to find jobs in the industrial areas of their own settlements. The Barkan industrial zone, near Ariel settlement, is the largest such zone in all of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, due to government incentives.⁴⁹ Such incentives were cut back under the Rabin government, but they have been reinstated by the new Israeli administration.

— *settlement blocs*

An important component of Israel's settlement policy is the situating of settlements close to one another to form settlement blocs. The establishment of settlement blocs can have political, economic and security advantages.

From a security point of view, Israel benefits from organising its settlements into blocs since it is easier to maintain the security of a collection of settlements within the same general area than to maintain the security of a number of isolated settlements.

The case of the secluded settlement of Netzarim in the Gaza Strip is one illustration of an isolated settlement that has created many security problems for Israel. Located in northern Gaza, Netzarim has proven difficult and costly for Israel to protect, especially with regard to the routes leading to and from the settlement.

The economic advantages of establishing settlement blocs are also considerable. The industrial zones of settlements tend to depend on Israel for raw materials, processing, sales, etc. However, a bloc of settlements can relieve these industrial zones of much of their dependence on Israel. This is because the industrial zone of each settlement in a settlement bloc can conveniently coordinate with its counterparts within the bloc. This arrangement in many ways unites a settlement bloc economically, allowing for increased productivity and efficiency, in addition to creating diverse employment opportunities for residents of the bloc.

Perhaps the most important benefit of settlement blocs to Israel is their political value. By establishing densely-populated pockets of settlers in the Occupied Territory, and especially in the West Bank, Israel has not only disrupted the geographic contiguity of Palestinian territory, thus complicating the period of Palestinian autonomy and making the establishment of a Palestinian state even more difficult and unlikely, but it has also created a geographic and demographic fait accompli that the negotiators are then forced to take into consideration. (It could be considered that the relatively few isolated settlements are potentially valuable as a bargaining point. However, a Peace Watch proposal to evacuate 25

**Existing Jewish settlements: West Bank & Gaza Strip
blocks and areas of settlement concentration
(urban areas only) / 1995**



(Source: Palestine Geographic Centre)

of the smallest settlements as part of a proposed compromise agreement with the Palestinians would have reduced the number of settlers by only 7000.)

In Gaza, the coastline is dominated by the Gush Katif settlement bloc which runs along the edge of the Mediterranean in southern Gaza and contains a dozen settlements with a combined population of about 3000 Israelis. In general, settlements in Gaza small and lightly populated. Therefore, Gush Katif serves to unite the populations of its member settlements, thus enhancing their economic productivity and improving the general security situation of the bloc. The settlements of Gush Katif effectively avoid many of the security problems created by the relative seclusion and small size of Netzarim by virtue of their united status.

In the West Bank, the political impact of bloc development is clear. The two largest settlement blocs are Gush Etzion and Gush Adumim. The Gush Etzion settlement bloc south of Bethlehem has a combined population of over 12,000, and runs from just beside Husan village in the north to just above Beit Fajjar in the south (see map on p. 24). Gush Etzion's size, proximity to Jerusalem, and the investment in roads linking it to Jerusalem (including what has been called a new 'apartheid' road to Jerusalem on which Arabs are prohibited from driving) have helped to bring the Gush Etzion inside the borders of 'greater Jerusalem' in the Israeli perspective, making official annexation seem an obvious outcome for the settlement bloc.

Gush Adumim is located just east of East Jerusalem and includes about 20,000 Israelis. The centerpiece of this settlement bloc is Ma'ale Adumim, with a population of over 15,000. Gush Adumim's most significant political consequence is its de facto extension of Greater Jerusalem eastward by offering a geographic and demographic link between settler communities in the central West Bank and settlements in the Jordan Valley. Similar to Gush Etzion, Ma'ale Adumim, the first officially designated Israeli 'city' in the West Bank, is so large and so close to Jerusalem that it has become entrenched in the Israeli popular perception as a suburb of Jerusalem and - certainly to Israeli negotiators - annexation to Israel is a foregone and non-negotiable conclusion.

Closely knit groups of settlement are found elsewhere in the West Bank as well. Just north of Jerusalem, along what Israelis call the Latrun salient, are located a collection of settlements that contribute over 10,000 Israelis to the overall settler population. The settlements, further north, lying southwest of Nablus, house tens of thousands of settlers. Because these settlements also have large industrial zones, many of the settlers find employment in one of the settlements in the area, thus increasing the economic independence of these settlements, as well as their political significance and influence. The Hebron area settlements, anchored by

Kiryat Arba, are, through the addition of linking and bypass roads, creating a physical bloc to further reinforce what is already an aggressive political bloc.

All the advantages that Israel derives from settlement blocs, of course, negatively affect the Palestinian situation. Settlement blocs have taken thousands of acres of Palestinian land, reinforced the Israeli presence in the Occupied Territory, and geographically and demographically divided the Palestinian territory. In addition, the presence of several hundred thousand Israeli Jews in communities virtually next door to Palestinian towns and villages allows for the adoption of an 'inter-ethnic' rhetoric, as if differences were merely those of two different ethnic communities living side by side rather than the imposition of a foreign presence on illegally controlled land. Jerusalem provides a clear example of this phenomenon.

The settlement proposed for the Palestinian quarter of Ras al-Amoud in Jerusalem would implant a 132-unit exclusively Jewish housing project in the midst of 11,000 Palestinians living in overcrowded conditions, due to the obstructionist policies of the municipality in issuing building permits to Palestinian residents of the city. Interior Minister Elia Suissa, in fact, inferred that obtaining building permits would be linked to approval of the new settlement, which an attorney representing Palestinian and Israeli objectors termed 'scandalous and illegal'.⁵⁰ Deputy Housing Minister Meir Porush, in a Jerusalem planning commission meeting at which both Israeli and Palestinian politicians warned of the serious consequences of going ahead with the settlement plan, responded that in his view it could 'lead to co-existence'.⁵¹

Perhaps the most dangerous consequence of settlement blocs is their affect on future negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis on the final status of the Occupied Territory. The geographic and demographic faits accomplis they have created will pose significant obstacles to peace negotiators, something of which former Prime Minister Rabin was fully aware:

. . . we committed ourselves, that is, we came to an agreement, and committed ourselves before the Knesset, not to uproot a single settlement in the framework of the interim agreement, and not to hinder building for natural growth. . . . An examination of the maps and of the paragraphs of the agreement regarding the additional stages of the redeployment shows that **Israel retains complete freedom of action, in order to implement its security and political objectives relating to the permanent solution.** . . .⁵²

— *settlement roads*

Israel has been developing an intricate road network in the West Bank serving the settlers and army. The construction of what are termed 'bypass' roads was a condition of Israeli military redeployment.

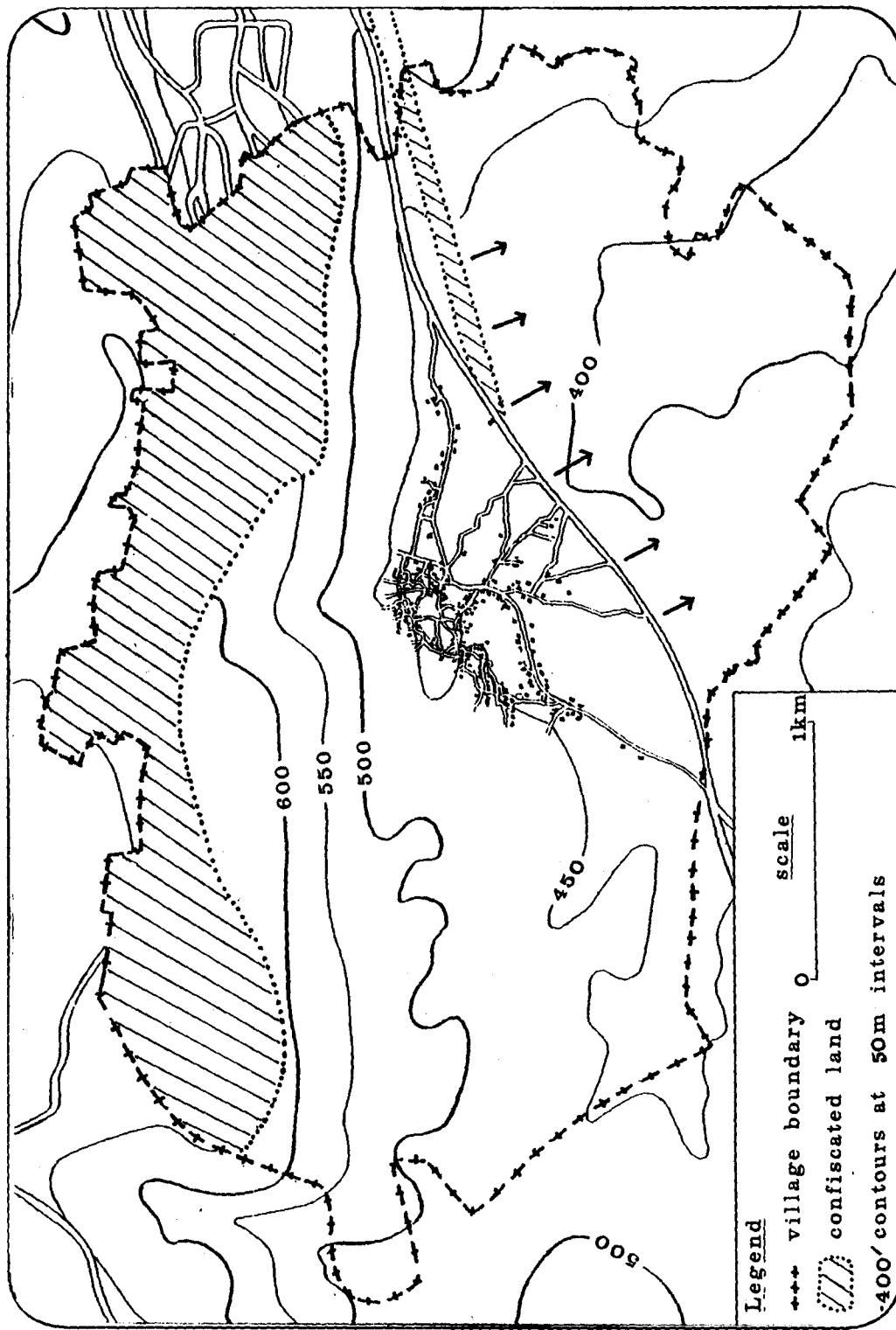
In September 1991, Israel established a committee to oversee planning and construction of roads and settlements in the Occupied Territories, consisting of representatives from the Israeli military's Civil Administration, Israeli Housing Ministry and World Zionist Organisation. Its policies are guided by a general precept that Israeli settlements should be incorporated into Israeli communities inside Israel. And this is being done through a large-scale road network that serves as a natural link to the road system in Israel.

Israel has thus been developing a transport and transportation infrastructure between itself and its settlements which would appear to be long-term and permanent, putting into question the possibility that even a small number of settlements might be dismantled.

Road Plan 50, which is Israel's most comprehensive road network in the West Bank, encompasses an area a little less than the total built-up area of the West Bank and incorporates approximately 300 Palestinian villages. The principle pattern of the plan, which was designed by officials of the Israeli ministries of defense and housing, involves eight roads linking the West Bank with Israel. The road plan will establish a connection between Jericho area settlements and Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv via various settlements, and Hebron area settlements with Gaza via Ashdod. The plan will also establish a route that will connect the West Bank and Gaza Strip via Beersheba.

Highway No. 6, once constructed, will stretch from the Lebanese border in the north to the Negev in the south, cutting through large areas of Palestinian lands, both inside the Green Line and in the West Bank. The road plan virtually ignores the Green Line as a border between the West Bank and Israel.

Highway No.6 was initially conceived in the 1970s as a road located exclusively within Israel, but it was never implemented. In 1990, then-Israeli Housing Minister Ariel Sharon revived and modified the plan, using it as the backbone of his Seven Stars Settlement Plan to terminate the Green Line's significance as an international border. As stated elsewhere, the Seven Stars plan is now being given fresh momentum, and Sharon's powers are comprehensive, including housing and road construction.



The West Bank village of Marda, showing lands already taken by Ariel settlement. A proposed new highway would join the existing road, but expand to 30 metres in width, with use of additional land on either side of the highway prohibited. The village would thereby be unable to grow beyond its enforced boundaries.

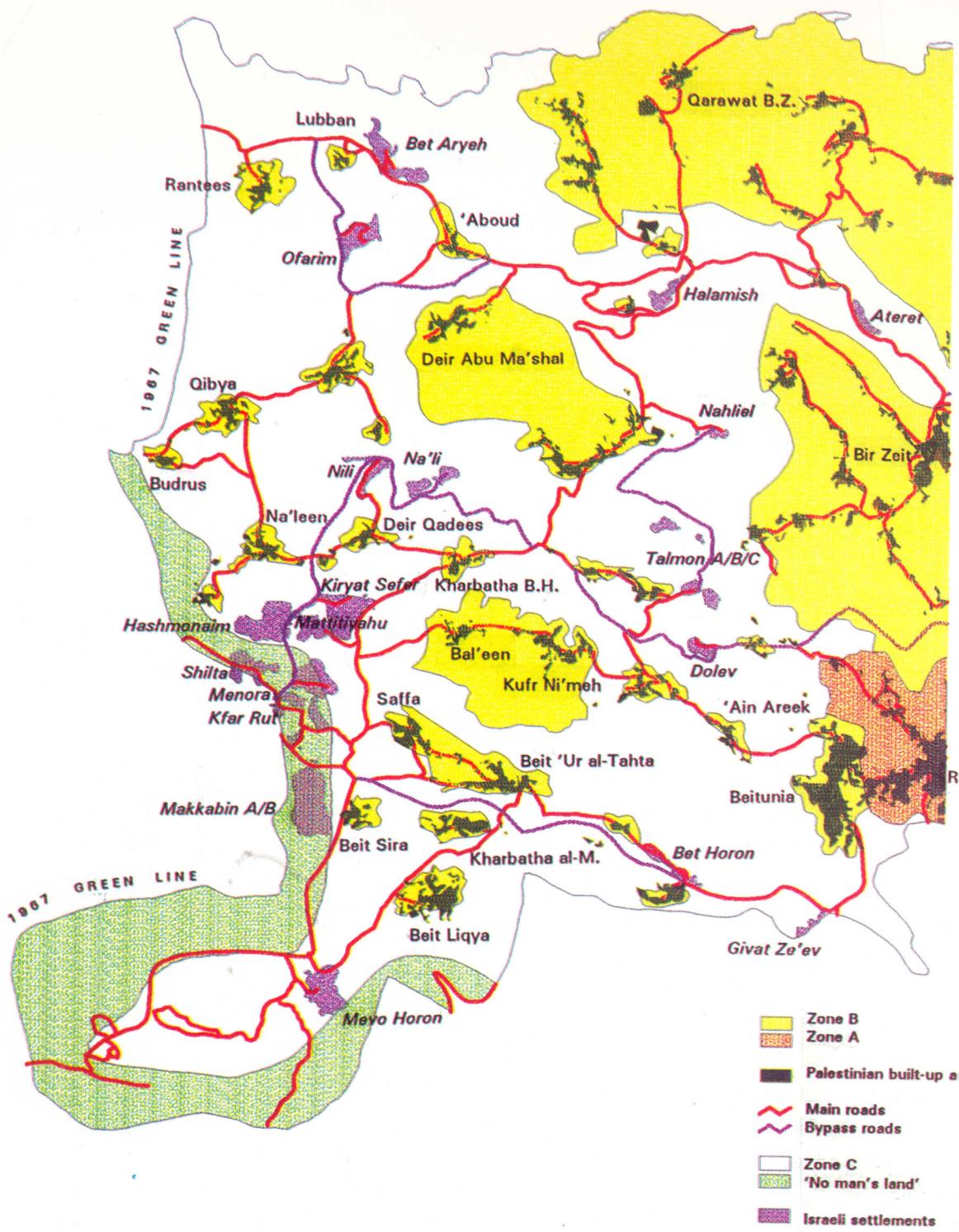
Palestinian landowners are outraged by the continuing land seizures and the zoning prohibitions that stretch out from every settlement road. Palestinian politicians are troubled by what is clearly emerging as an effective maintenance of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and much of Gaza. The development of this major road network throughout the Occupied Territory has already guaranteed and continues to ensure that thousands of acres of Palestinian land will be expropriated and roads will be built near or even through Palestinian towns and villages without consideration for the economic or agricultural interests or developmental requirements of these communities.

One example of this is the road Israel is planning to widen between the town of Salfit and Iskaka village, south of Nablus. The 2.5 km stretch of road to the northeast of Salfit will serve Israelis traveling to and from nearby Ariel settlement. The narrow road will be expanded to a width of 80 meters, with a prohibition on building along the 80 meters on either side of the road. In all, 75 acres will be confiscated for the project, and another 150 acres will be a construction-free zone. The land to be taken is farmland belonging to the village of Marda, which is dominated by the settlement of Ariel, which stands on the strategic hillside above the village. Marda has suffered extensive loss of land over the years due to the establishment and expansion of Ariel which towers over the low-lying village from a strategic hilltop site, and the land earmarked for the road expansion is the only direction in which the village could grow (see map, preceding page).

In the Ramallah area, the linkage of settlements in the Modi'in bloc to each other, to other West Bank settlements and to cities inside Israel, is being accomplished through a network of road construction that has cut off a number of Palestinian villages from each other and from the rest of the West Bank (see map, following page). The villages of Qibya, Budras, Na'leen and Midya lie in an area now bounded by the 1967 Green Line (which cannot be crossed with an Israeli-issued permit), and on the other side by a roadway connecting the settlements of Na'aleh and Nili. Expansion of the Palestinian communities in this area is obviously restricted, and former ease of access between neighbouring villages has been destroyed.

This situation is repeated in many other areas throughout the West Bank, the result being the loss of thousands of acres of income-generating agricultural land and a de facto limit on the extent and nature of the possible expansion of Palestinian communities.

Western Ramallah District



kilometres

8 16

PALGRIC
(GIS)



— settler bypass roads

Settler bypass roads are the travel and transport routes Israel is constructing throughout the West Bank, as a condition of its redeployment. Settlers use these roads to bypass those Palestinian towns and villages under the protection of Palestinian security personnel. Israel insisted on, and won passive PLO approval for, constructing the bypass roads to preserve the security of settlers traveling in the West Bank.

Because the bypass roads are being built around most Palestinian cities, as well as other towns and villages, the extent of the resulting Israeli land takeovers is amounting to thousands of acres. In fact, the placement of certain 'bypass' roads (ie., acting to limit natural expansion of villages) and their almost total lack of use by settlers raises the question of whether the intent of these numerous roads is merely to help ensure the Palestinians' lack of territorial contiguity.

The bypass roads, like Israel's other road plans in the Occupied Territory, are well on the way to establishing de facto borders beyond which Palestinian communities will not be allowed to expand. This Israeli-imposed limits on expansion will be especially crippling for Palestinian cities, since cities will be surrounded by the bypass roads. Since the bypass roads are considered part and parcel of settlements, any nearby construction must not 'harm, damage or adversely affect them'⁵³ judgment of which shall be made by the Joint Civil Affairs Coordination and Cooperation Committee.

— moving the green line eastward

Under the previous Labour-led government, much of the settlement activity was focused in areas along the Green Line. The result has been to effectively move the Green Line eastward, making a final peace settlement with the Palestinians along the 1967 borders nearly impossible.

The Green Line settlements in the West Bank create a geographic and demographic link between Israel and occupied Palestinian territory. Many settlements which were originally built just east of the Green Line have gradually expanded to juxtapose or even cross over the Green Line, thus blurring the internationally recognised border.

The settlement of Alfei Menashe south of Qalqilia is one example of a West Bank settlement that is gradually edging toward the Green Line. The settlement was established in 1979 on Azzun village land and has grown to encompass about 3000 settlers.

In September 1994 (exactly one year after the signing of the DOP), the Israeli government approved plans for a dramatic expansion of Alfei Menashe by an additional 1000 housing units, on land between the settlement and the 1967 Green Line. When Palestinian officials protested the settlement expansion and accused Israel of trying to erase the Green Line, the head of the Alfei Menashe council, Shlomo Katan, responded by boasting that his settlement would expand even more. 'I have in my desk projects for thousands of houses in the three kilometers that separate my city [sic] from the old [1967] borders,' he said.

South of Alfei Menashe is the settlement of Oranit, with a population of 3000 settlers. Oranit is effectively on the Green Line, thereby blurring its identity as a settlement and diminishing the clarity of the 1967 borders.

Shani Levne, south of Hebron, is a tiny settlement, whose only distinguishing feature is that it is adjacent to the Green Line. While only about 250 settlers live there, its proximity to the 1967 borders makes it much more problematic than many larger settlements further away from the Green Line because expansion for the 'natural growth' now virtually approved by the US and the international community would allow further encroachment into the West Bank and erasure of the armistice line.

The clearest example of this strategy is in the area west of Ramallah. A cluster of settlements there (the Modi'in bloc) has been targeted for massive growth. These settlements began by straddling the border or by sitting in close proximity to it, but with ongoing expansion and many new roads, the internationally recognised border is blurred and the West Bank is gradually being eaten away from the west. The Modi'in bloc (see map) is the cornerstone of the Seven Stars plan and its growth has the full support of the Netanyahu government. The plans for enlarging Kiryat Sefer and Matitiyahu as well as other Seven Stars settlements were quickly approved following the establishment of the new government, in accordance with the current Housing Ministry's view that settlement in this area had not been adequately supported by the previous Labour government.



5

a cantonised peace

In the early 1990s, when plans for Sharon's 'Seven Stars' were initially publicised, Palestinian and Israeli peace activists protested against what was clearly intended to be a process of 'cantonisation' in the West Bank.

This process of separation of Palestinian communities from each other, the destruction of the geographical entity 'Palestine' by physical infrastructure and by continuing movement restrictions, is virtually complete. All that remains is to finalise the world's acceptance of Palestinian bantustans in further accords, and to dress up the reality with the discourse of multiculturalism.

The continued presence of these settlements surrounding and dividing Palestinian communities will not only make the creation of a Palestinian state impossible, but will effectively obstruct Palestinian growth and development and thereby sustainability. Palestinian autonomous zones are already separated by Israeli-controlled roads and areas; Palestinians pass through numerous Israeli barriers just to move between zones of the autonomous entity.

If the current arrangement is finalised in the ultimate phase of negotiations, Palestinian communities surrounded by settlements will be unable to expand to meet the needs of economic development or even natural population increase. Any large-scale repatriation of Palestinian refugees is also not viable in this context.

If the current arrangement is finalised, it would formally submit Palestinian economic, social, educational and political interaction between areas to the control of the Israeli army, without even the promise of possible change through further negotiations.

One example is the case of autonomous Jericho. Israel has cut off Jericho from the rest of the West Bank on numerous occasions due to 'security reasons.' Before autonomy, Palestinians were allowed to enter Jericho freely, and Jericho residents were allowed to leave without problems. But the inception of autonomy in the city has brought with it the threat of seclusion as well as promise of freedom.

The present relationship between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, whereby travel and the transport of goods between the two areas is severely limited, serves as

an ominous warning of what may be to come if the presence of settlements continues. Today, no Palestinian from Gaza can reach the West Bank without an Israeli-issued permit, and the same is true for West Bank Palestinians wishing to reach Gaza. Often, even the permits become useless if Israel decides to impose a complete security closure on one or both areas, after a military operation or other politically notable event.

Cantonisation also threatens to divide cities from their surrounding rural areas. This would complicate travel and the transport of goods between cities and villages, and even between two villages within the same district. Therefore, a farmer can easily be separated from his land or be prevented from transporting his goods to market if the political situation leads to an Israeli closure of the roads to Palestinians.

The centerpiece of Israel's cantonisation drive is the collection of settlements in Greater Jerusalem. By establishing a concentrated presence of settlements in and around occupied East Jerusalem, Israel has effectively cut off the northern West Bank from the south through a system of checkpoints and permits. Today, only a special Israeli-issued permit can facilitate entry to the city or travel from northern West Bank cities to the south without taking an extended and dangerous detour around the city. However, in a few years even passing along the detour route may require a permit.

Settlements, by their visual representation of continued Israeli control, can only be a continuing provocation (as the September 1996 clashes clearly illustrate) as the price of their presence and prosperity becomes even clearer to their Palestinian 'neighbours': the denial of Palestinian rights to develop and to accommodate their natural expansion, to live, work, prosper and raise families in their birthplace.

NOT SEPARATE, NOT EQUAL:
No Sovereignty, No Development

ISRAELIS

Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip -
Gaza Strip: approx 5000
Greater West Bank: approx 140,000
East Jerusalem: approx 170,000

Israeli imports of Palestinian goods - \$300 million in 1995.

Israeli markets protected against Palestinian goods.

Settlers enjoy freedom of economic activity and investment, as for other Israeli citizens, and receive financial incentives for residence or investment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Settlers enjoy freedom of movement for goods and people, as for other Israeli citizens.

Settlers enjoy freedom to build and receive discounted loans and other incentives to purchase; right of settlements to accommodate 'natural expansion' approved by US policy.

PALESTINIANS

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip -
Gaza Strip: approx 900,000
Greater West Bank: approx 1.2 million
East Jerusalem: approx 150,000

Palestinian imports of Israeli goods - \$1.8 billion in 1995.

Palestinian markets open to Israeli goods.

Economic activity subject to approval and regulation by joint Israeli/Palestinian committee, without prospect of outside mediation.

Movement of goods and people subject to Israeli-imposed closure, which has been in place in varying degrees since 1993. In particular, movement of goods and people between West Bank and Gaza is severely restricted by the difficulties in obtaining permits to cross through Israel.

Mid-1996 unemployment levels 29.2 percent for West Bank; 39 percent for Gaza Strip. 60 percent rise in average unemployment rate since end of 1995, due primarily to effects of closure.

Freedom to build subject to Israeli 'security' concerns and Israeli-approved development plans. Use of land prohibited in areas adjacent to settlement roads, bypass roads, settlements.

— future prospects for peace

There can no longer be much doubt that the continuous expansion of Israeli settlers and settlements, the security arrangements they demand, with its resulting friction, can turn deadly. In hammering out the Oslo Accords, PLO negotiators had demanded a meaningful redeployment that would give Palestinians a feeling of real independence and freedom from occupation. However, Israel insisted on a limited redeployment, justifying its continued presence by citing the settlers and the proximity of settlements to Palestinian villages, towns and refugee camps. (No firm start date for final status talks has yet been set, and the deadline start date has long passed.) Given the pace of developments on the ground vis-a-vis road and settlement construction and the destruction of Palestinian land for these purposes, the prospects for an equitable resolution are not hopeful.

The Israeli position has created a dilemma in the peace talks and implementation of agreements. With settlements expanding, Israeli redeployment in the West Bank and Gaza has remained limited; in fact, checkpoints are more numerous in parts of the West Bank since redeployment. The persistent presence of Israelis - both military and armed settlers - threatens the success of the autonomy phase in the eyes of many Palestinians. Many would argue that the presence of these settlers is providing the justification necessary for Israeli measures (land seizures, massive road construction, settlement expansion) that are rapidly ensuring Israeli territorial control and thus future sovereignty over major portions of the West Bank and Gaza and dictating the outcome to negotiations only just beginning.

For Palestinians, the goal of the negotiations is an end to the Israeli occupation. Settlement of Israelis in the West Bank and Gaza has been the central element in establishing and maintaining that occupation, consolidating territorial control and justifying the presence of Israeli troops on Palestinian lands. To see the continuation of Israeli settlement side-by-side with negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis based on UN resolution 242, a return of Palestinian lands, raises serious doubts about the credibility of the entire peace process.

Continuous disappointment of political hopes combined with increasing economic deprivation can only create a situation which threatens all prospects for stability. Trying to ignore or suppress the voices of opposition is not the answer. Rather, a true redeployment of the Israeli military and a real implementation of Palestinian autonomy is key to the continuation of the process of peace-making. The obstacle to peace which has yet even to be discussed in the negotiations is the continued occupation of Palestinian land by Jewish settlements and armed settlers violently opposed to the peace process and ready to stand against their government, if necessary.

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JMCC

POBox 25047, East Jerusalem

Tel 02-5819777 Fax 02-5829534

E-MAIL jmcc@baraka.org

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