This section covers items—reprinted articles, statistics, and maps—pertaining to Israeli settlement activities in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. Unless otherwise stated, the items in this section have been written by Geoffrey Aronson directly for this section or drawn from material written by him for Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories (hereinafter Settlement Report), a Washington-based bimonthly newsletter published by the Foundation for Middle East Peace. JPS is grateful to the Foundation for permission to draw on its material. Major documents relating to settlements appear in the Documents and Source Material section.

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BARAK'S STRATEGIC VIEW

From Settlement Report, July–August 1999.

Ehud Barak's overwhelming victory against Benjamin Netanyahu in May 1999 signifies not only a change in Israel's regime. The government that will lead Israel into the new millennium also views Israel's place in the world, and in particular the nature of agreements possible with Syria and the Palestinians, differently than the defeated prime minister. The changes, both in style and substance, that Barak intends to introduce in Israeli policy offer both advantages and challenges to the international community in general and to the Arab world in particular.

Much has been made of Barak's relationship with Yitzhak Rabin, the slain prime minister of Israel who began the road of real diplomatic engagement with the Palestinians at Oslo in September 1993 and who gave substance to negotiations with Syria and Jordan begun at Madrid in October 1991. Rabin was Barak's political mentor, appointing the recently retired chief of staff to a cabinet position in his government.

Barak's guiding ideology, like Rabin's, is not an ideology at all, but rather an overriding attention to maximizing Israel's security—both regionally and internationally. For Barak, the two arenas are linked: agreements enhancing Israel's security vis-à-vis its former Arab antagonists will benefit Israel's relations with the international community at large. In this latter regard, rehabilitating the relationship with Washington—a relationship that soured during the later months of Netanyahu's tenure—is one of Barak's first foreign policy priorities.

His victory, in turn, offers obvious benefits to Washington, in style if not necessarily in substance. A Barak government, even if no less militant on core issues than its predecessors, will nonetheless present its policies to Washington in a more diplomatically astute fashion, precluding the kind of wrangling that characterized Netanyahu's relations with the Clinton administration. It will not be long before the Israeli prime minister, once again, is a more welcome guest at the White

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House than the chairman of the Palestinian Authority (PA).

But Barak's vision of the world, more than Rabin's and certainly more than Netanyahu's, extends beyond merely the parochial or American dimension. Barak's election raised "very high expectations internationally," explained Alon Liel, a former Israeli ambassador to South Africa and Turkey who advises Barak on strategic affairs, "and we will try to meet some of them. Reviving the Syrian channel and reestablishing credibility with the Palestinians are not only of great importance themselves, they are also important for changing the atmosphere toward Israel in the Middle East and the world."

Barak is what the Israelis call a "securityist." He views the Golan Heights and the West Bank, for example, not as a biblical scholar or sentimentalist but primarily through the lens of a modern-day general, comfortable commanding an army equipped with the latest in laser-guided munitions, intermediate-range missiles, and nuclear warheads. And like Rabin, he has a realistic appreciation of Israel's overwhelming military power and the opportunities that this power presents to create an architecture of relations in the region advantageous to Israel.

"Because we do not know what challenges await us around the corner," explained Barak in a 1996 interview, "in the next seven or eight years, we must take advantage of the moment in order to try to stabilize our immediate region so that when we confront those new challenges, we will not face them as well as the conflict closer to home."

Unlike Netanyahu, he will not fret, even as a negotiating tactic, over the military threat posed by Palestinian sovereignty. Yet as former Syrian chief of staff Hikmat Shihabi could attest from personal experience, Barak will not be reticent to make extraordinary demands for the military enfeeblement of Israel's Arab neighbors a central element of his negotiating strategy.

As Barak surveys the region, he will not attempt to resuscitate the widely discredited effort led by Shimon Peres to craft a "New Middle East." Peres's views "are not exactly those of Barak," noted Liel. "[Barak's] view is less ambitious. Who are we to impose our vision on the region? We have learned a lot in the last five or six years. We have lost some of the desire to change and to educate the region—there is almost nothing left of this. We do not want to teach anybody anything. We have no regional ambitions."

Suspicious of Israeli intentions will no doubt remain in Arab capitals, but there is bound to be disappointment with Barak's view in Ankara, which encouraged Netanyahu's efforts to establish a bilateral strategic partnership. "We know the Turkish thinking," explained Liel, "and it does not resemble ours."

For Barak, like his predecessors, Iran, Iraq, and Libya remain enemies of the Jewish state. The nonconventional weapons programs to Israel's east are viewed as a strategic threat. Yet, according to Liel, "if we remove the threats closer to us—Syria and the Palestinians—things will gradually look different in our conflict with the outer circle."

Barak will have no trouble distinguishing himself from his predecessor in the conduct of relations on the Syrian front, which has been stalemated since the last months of the Peres government in 1996. Netanyahu saw no value in making territorial concessions to Syria. For Barak, the depth of Israeli withdrawal from the Golan is linked to the extent of peace and normalization that Syria is prepared to offer. He has promised to remove Israeli troops from south Lebanon in a year, something which can only be done in coordination with Damascus.

"Israel is interested strategically in getting out of Lebanon and in peace with Syria," explained Liel. "Barak will do his best to reestablish negotiations with Syria."

The longstanding Syrian demand that negotiations resume where they left off in January 1996 at the Wye Plantation talks may, however, still prove to be an obstacle. Barak does not accept the Syrian view that there is an a priori Israeli agreement to withdraw to the June 1967 boundary. Nonetheless, he is prepared to undertake a review of the dialogue in order to reestablish ties and resume negotiations.

Syria has interpreted Barak's views with uncharacteristic enthusiasm. One source close to the regime has described Barak's equation linking peace and normalization with withdrawal as a "very good position."

Together with Syria and Lebanon, reestablishing a productive dialogue with the Palestinians is at the top of the list of Barak's regional priorities. Barak, according to one Palestinian who maintains intimate contact with Israeli officials, "has embarked on the road to Damascus, but he has not yet had a change of heart."
Barak believes that "on a historical level, the suffering of the Palestinian people that we caused them is smaller than the justice of our cause." The source of Israel's identity, Barak asserts, cannot be understood without reference to Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Barak is a reluctant champion of Oslo. Rabin and Peres kept the Oslo dialogue secret from then-chief of staff Barak for fear that he would scuttle it. Within the Labor party he has been the most vocal proponent of slowing down and extending the timetable for withdrawal outlined in Oslo II.

Palestinians are not celebrating his election. "There is no deep and warm contact with the Palestinians," Liel acknowledged. "We have to build bridges."

Barak is anxious to reestablish Israel's relations with the PA. He views Arafat and the PA as strategic partners in the effort to establish productive relations. And he does not oppose the kind of Palestinian sovereignty that can exist under Israeli tutelage. His view of the territorial division of the occupied territories fits squarely within the broad Israeli consensus: a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty, no withdrawal to the June 1967 border, no foreign or Palestinian army west of the Jordan River, and the annexation of large settlement blocks to Israel throughout the West Bank. Yet he feels no particular enthusiasm for the diplomatic framework created by Netanyahu. Barak will try to refresh diplomacy with the Palestinians according to his own preferences. A first casualty may well be the West Bank redeployments agreed to at the Wye talks in October 1998.

"The key issue," explained Liel, "is to start the final status talks and try to create movement. We have to hear from the Palestinians whether the route they took with Netanyahu is the route they want to take with us. I think the [Wye agreement] should be completed, but I want to hear from the Palestinians. Maybe final status talks can proceed simultaneously with Wye."

THE OSLO PROCESS
SETTLEMENT SABOTAGES PROSPECTS FOR PALESTINIAN SOVEREIGNTY


The signing of the Oslo accords raised the prospect of an agreed upon framework for the resolution of the century-old conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine. For its Israeli architects, Oslo was made possible by the participation of the popularly acknowledged leadership of Palestinian nationalism—symbolized by Yasser Arafat himself—in a negotiated agreement meant to enhance Israel's strategic control of all the occupied territories. For the Palestinian leadership, Oslo held out the promise of Israeli and U.S. recognition of Palestinian statehood on some part of historic Palestine.

This bargain has been sorely tested. Leaders of Israel's settlement movement have always opposed any diminution of Israeli power anywhere in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, while at the same time acknowledging that the limited extent of the territorial concessions envisioned by Israel would never prove satisfactory to Palestinians. But these settlers, like Palestinian organizations outside of the Palestinian Authority (PA), were isolated in their pessimistic assumptions about the ability of Oslo to create a sustainable architecture for peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Today, almost six years after Oslo's debut, and at a time when the major decision said to be facing the PA is how to assert sovereignty over an undefinable part of Palestine, there is a growing sense among many Palestinians active in the PA, including some near the center of Palestinian decision making, that Oslo is incapable of producing the degree of Palestinian sovereignty necessary to satisfy minimal Palestinian expectations. Veteran Israeli reporter Danny Rubinstein, who has covered Palestinian affairs for more than two decades, wrote recently that "many political activists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip no longer believe that the dream of setting up a sovereign Palestinian state in the territories is really feasible. This is because they do not see a practical way to dismantle the Jewish settlements, satisfy Israel's security demands, and convince Israel to make concessions in East Jerusalem."

In recent months, some Palestinian and Israeli intellectuals have begun considering the options available in an environment where the failure of Oslo is a working assumption, where, as Rubinstein notes, "full separation between the two peoples in a way that will enable division of the land between them is no longer possible."

The division of land is at the heart of the Palestinian view of diplomacy inaugurated by the Oslo accords. And it is settlement expansion—the growth of existing communities, the creation of new ones, the expanding network of bypass roads, and the expansion of settlement-related commercial and indus-
trial enterprises—and the transformation of the geography of the occupied territory that it entails, that has played a key role in sabotaging Palestinian objectives.

The continuing expansion of settlements, facilitated by Oslo, is a reflection of Israel's basic understanding of its continuing freedom of action during its diplomacy with the PLO. This basic understanding, reinforced through great effort throughout the negotiating process, is evident in the agreements reached between Israel and Palestinians that have punctuated the last six years—Oslo's Declaration of Principles (September 1993), Oslo I (May 1994), Oslo II (September 1995), Hebron (January 1997), and Wye (October 1998). Israel's freedom of settlement action is also reflected in a host of U.S.-Israeli understandings, from Secretary of State James Baker's original letters of assurance before the Madrid conference in 1991 to U.S. amplifications of the Hebron accord in January 1997 to the unconsummated agreement on the nature of the “time-out” in settlement expansion demanded in mid-1997 by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

Occasional U.S. statements critical of Israeli settlement practices pale when compared to the understandings contained in this extensive record. U.S. special envoy Dennis Ross noted on 13 March that the U.S. views settlement activity “as very destructive to the pursuit of peace precisely because it predestines and prejudgets what ought to be negotiated.” President Clinton employed similar language in his recent letter to PA leader Yasir Arafat.

Palestinians were gratified that the Clinton administration lowered the bar of U.S. disenchantment with settlements to a point where they are now presumably viewed as more than a “complicating factor” in negotiations. “Ross's statements on settlement activities were positive,” explained Ahmad 'Abd al-Rahman, PA cabinet secretary, “but we would like to see American action against settlements.”

Indeed, rather than representing an American attack on settlements, Ross's remarks, and others similar to it, are more properly viewed as part of the successful U.S. effort to win Palestinian approval to refrain from a unilateral declaration of statehood in May, when the five-year interim period outlined in the Oslo I (Gaza-Jericho) agreement expires.

On the ground, where the rhetoric of the “peace process” and the continuing debate over a Palestinian declaration of independence meet reality, the Netanyahu govern-

ment is engaged in the biggest expansion of settlements since the massive immigration to Israel from the Commonwealth of Independent States in the early 1990s.

**Barak and Oslo**

*From Settlement Report, July–August 1999*

The election of Ehud Barak opens a new chapter in Israel's approach toward settlement expansion and the implementation of the Oslo and Wye accords reached by earlier Israeli governments.

Barak shares Yitzhak Rabin's strategic vision of the need and ability of Israel to resolve the Palestinian question in a way that mirrors Israel's overwhelming power and preserves its vital security and national interests—settlements included. The conflict, he believes, is not immanent, but can be solved. And Israel's power should be employed to create an architecture for peace rather than be used as a rationale for inaction. In Barak's view, rapprochement with the Palestinians, on terms that Israel can impose, is a clear-cut security interest.

"It is up to us," he explained in a September 1996 interview in *Ha'aretz*, "to prevent the development of a situation in which the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians becomes a vital symbol of the clash between Islam and Western culture, between North and South, between the haves and have-nots."

Notwithstanding Barak's essential sympathy with the views of his political mentor Yitzhak Rabin, the new prime minister has always viewed the Oslo process with far more skepticism than almost all of his colleagues in the Labor party. As minister of interior in Rabin's cabinet, he abstained on the Knesset vote on the Oslo II accords barely one month before Rabin's assassination. His prime concerns related to the accord's security provisions, which he thought too lax, and its timetable, which he believed would place too much territory in Palestinian hands before final status talks commenced and which, he argued, should be extended.

"It would be best if more time were allowed between the phases in the redeployment scheme," he explained in January 1997, "so that there would be a real trial period to see how things work out. I would like to see as many as three years between each phase."

The three redeployments of the IDF in the West Bank agreed to in the Oslo II accord were to have been completed by September 1997. The first redeployment outlined in...
Oslo II, which was supposed to have begun in September 1996 was implemented only in November 1998. Yossi Beilin, Oslo's architect, described Barak's position as "a serious mistake which is likely to harm Israel and the peace process."

Unlike his Labor colleagues, Barak has always taken pains to keep PA head Yasser Arafat at arm's length. Even as chief of staff, Barak left the task of relations with Arafat to his deputy, Amnon Shahak, now a leader of the Center party. As foreign minister from November 1995 to June 1996, Barak met with Arafat only three times, all of them at conferences abroad. And after his election as Labor party chairman in June 1997, he met with Arafat only after meeting with Egyptian, Jordanian, U.S., and European leaders.

Like Israeli leaders before him, Barak is prepared to countenance the creation of an independent Palestinian state—although he prefers a Palestinian confederation with Jordan. Indeed, some form of Palestinian self-determination is viewed by Barak as an essential Israeli interest, if Israeli is to maintain its existing political institutions and Jewish majority. No matter what this Palestinian entity is called, its sovereign powers must be circumscribed in keeping with Israeli security and settlement-related demands.

"An absolutely sovereign Palestinian state will very much complicate the chances for an agreement," Barak noted in October 1996. "It will not produce an existential threat to Israel but rather create a threat of irredentism, among other problems. The issue of two states for two people is not so simple. Two real states west of the Jordan River is a problem. In my opinion, our demand must be for a Palestinian entity that is less than a state, and we must hope that over time, in a natural fashion, that this entity will form a confederation with Jordan."

Barak's view of the need for "separation" between Israel and the Palestinian entity stands in contrast to the conventional Likud view and the post-1967 Labor actions, which opposed the re-creation of a border between Israel and the occupied territories, including the prohibition of the movement of Arab labor into Israel.

"Only physical separation from the Palestinians will give us both personal and national security, but in no way will we withdraw to the 1967 border," he explained in January 1998. Ten days after his election as prime minister, he reaffirmed his view of separation: "Beit El and Ofra will be ours forever. Ramallah and Nablus will forever belong to the Palestinians." Indeed, he would even like to enforce a more permanent exclusion of Palestinians across the border into Israel, a policy he described in January 1998 as "bringing to zero the number of Palestinian laborers entering Israel."

At the same time, Barak insists that Israel maintain the strategic and settlement benefits resulting from its continuing linkage to the occupied territories. He does, however, concede a "certain tension" between the objective of linkage and his policy of "high fences make good neighbors."

The prism through which Barak views the West Bank and Gaza Strip is also colored by his identification with Israel's Jewish and Zionist heritage. Barak himself resides in the Israeli town of Kochav Ya'ir, in a house only fifty meters from the Green Line. When he looks out his window at the hills rising in the east, what he sees, by his own account, is not Palestine but the Land of Israel.

"There is no meaning to our identity and to all that we are here without the connection to Shilo and to Tekoa, to Beit El and to Efrat," he has explained. "When I say that we should not settle on another hill near Efrat or Bet El, I don't say it because we do not have such a right, or that we stole something there from someone. Just the opposite. We have a complete right to settle there. We didn't steal anything from anyone. We have deep ties with these places. So when I suggest to weigh withdrawing from a certain hilltop it is because I want to increase the chances of creating a stable equilibrium between us and the Palestinians that will protect both of our vital interests."

He does not believe that most settlers are outside Israel's national consensus. In this he differs from Rabin, whose confrontations with Gush Emunim settlers created a permanent disaffection between them. For Barak, those excluded from the consensus are exceptions, "a small radical group, sitting in Tal Rumayda and El David and a few other places. But the overwhelming majority are people with whom I personally share a political identification."

Settlements, under his administration, will not be "dried out." On a visit in February of this year to Alfe Menashe, a settlement near the Green Line, Barak declared, "This place here is at the center of one of the big settlement blocs that will be under Israeli sovereignty as part of the permanent agreement. We have clear red lines. Yitzhar and Tal
Rumayda are one thing, but Alfe Menashe, the Etzion Bloc, Ariel, Nirit, the corridor, the Jordan Valley settlements, and many more places are part of the state of Israel, now and in the permanent agreement."

Barak's chief complaint against the settlement policies of his predecessor was that they were tactically inept. "Look back and think how the 150,000 [Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem] came to live there," he said in an October 1997 interview. "It was not by a government that just talks, talks, and defers action to the next generations. No! That [Lab- or] government brought 150,000 people to live in Jerusalem without any provocative actions."

In contrast, Barak cited Netanyahu's efforts to inaugurate construction at Har Homa/Jabal Abu Ghunaym and Ras al-Amud. Barak never opposed construction at either site. "The Rabin government and then the Peres government decided that there should be construction on Har Homa," he explained in the same interview. "All that was left was the when and how. The Har Homa construction was designed to add housing units in Jerusalem and to strengthen Israel's hold on Jerusalem. The way this government has been doing it, the opposite has happened. We are weakening Israel's hold on Jeru-salem. I said at the very outset what we should do: invite every television network in the world (this government is very adept at doing this) to the inauguration of the East Jerusalem sewage project. People who live there are under our sovereignty. Then I would take them to see a [Palestinian] housing project—and there is one south of Ras al-Amud. I am familiar with these projects from my term as minister of interior. This project should be carried out, because there are people living there. Then I would start Har Homa. The Arabs would not applaud, they would criticize us, but honest people around the world would say that this is one serious government, a serious municipality, one that cares for its people, one that builds. We would have had a neighborhood in Har Homa without all this international commotion."

The Netanyahu government, on the other hand, "did the opposite. It banged its head against the wall. The moment the thing was done as a declarative, political act rather than as a housing project for East Jerusalem Palest- inians and Jews, every government in the world was forced to voice its stand on the issue of Jerusalem. And it is a known fact that their stands are closer to the Palestinians' than to ours."

Barak's preferred policy expression, repeated in January 1998, is that "most of the settlers will remain under Israeli sovereignty. I specifically did not say all of the settle- ments."

True to Labor party tradition, and unlike Netanyahu, Barak prefers to "draft principles, not maps." The principles are broad: a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty; no re- turn to the 1967 borders; no foreign army west of the Jordan River; most of the West Bank settlers—not even most of the settle- ments—to remain under Israeli sovereignty in the permanent arrangement; a defense and settlement presence in the Jordan Valley.

These principles, according to Barak, will create an extended corridor, large blocs, and an "expanded Alon plan," which he sees as the basis for permanent status negotiations. "As for the borders," he says, "it would natu- rally make no sense to draw them prema- turely. The borders will be determined in the permanent status talks."

SETTLEMENT CHRONOLOGY


16 February
Defense Minister Moshe Arens visits settle- ler leaders in Hebron but does not commit himself to increased settlement construction in the city.

17 February
Ha'aretz reports the construction by set- tlers of roads east of the settlement of Efрат to an area east of Herodion. Palestinians whose lands have been affected and who fear additional confiscations have attempted to prevent the bulldozers from operating.

19 February
Qol Ha'yr reports on a government plan to establish scores of government-subsidized agricultural farms on strategic hilltops located on state lands in area C in the Judean Desert region of the West Bank during the next six months. The official administering the project "did not deny that the project's objective is to create facts on the ground before the opening of talks on the final status." Settlement leaders note that it is easier from a bu- reaucratic standpoint to establish a farm than a settlement.

22 February
A tender is published in Yedi'ot Aharanot for the construction of eighty dwelling units
at Olive Hill in the West Bank settlement of Efrat.

The second tender for construction at Har Homa/Jabal Abu Ghunaym results in the planned construction of 300 of 350 units tendered.

Fifteen West Bank settlements are cited among a tabulation of the 200 richest Israeli communities. The Green Line settlement of Oranit tops the list at number 16, followed by the nearby settlements of Bet Arye (21), Alfe Menashe (24), and Elkana (28). The settlements are considered by Israelis to be bedroom suburbs of metropolitan Tel Aviv.

23 February

In an appearance before the Knesset’s Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, Defense Minister Arens explains that in an era when Israel’s permanent borders are being defined and despite technological developments, there is still great importance and meaning to control over territory.

24 February

The Israeli Trade Ministry announces that it has allocated new lands to build moderate- and small-scale factories in several West Bank and Gaza settlements, including Efraim, Erez, and Kedumim.

7 March

Jewish settlers from the West Bank settlement of Tene Oranim near Hebron move seven trailers to a nearby hilltop to start a new enclave.

8 March

Fistfights break out between Palestinians and Jewish settlers from Efrat who began digging trenches on nearby Palestinian land to lay water pipes to their settlement.

9 March

The scheduled evacuation of ten settler families residing on Hill 777 near Tamar is canceled due to the intervention of Education Minister Rabbi Yitzhak Levy. Despite the cancellation, Israel demolishes six West Bank Palestinian homes and a number of other structures originally intended to "offset" the evacuation of Hill 777.

11 March

A tender is published in Yedioth Aharonot for the construction of fifty-seven single-family homes in the West Bank settlement of Karnei Shomron.

A tender is published in Haaretz for the construction of Road 60—the Dahariyya bypass—in the West Bank.

12 March

U.S. special envoy Dennis Ross criticizes Israeli settlement activity in an interview with Reuters, stating, "We see settlement activity as very destructive to the pursuit of peace precisely because it predetermines and prejudices what ought to be negotiated."

Yerushalmi reports that a group of Israelis has purchased 24 dunams of land in the Palestinian neighborhood of Jabal Mukabbir at $42,000 per dunam—a price far higher than the average selling price for similar agricultural land. The new owners intend to rezone the land to allow for construction for Israeli Jews.

Qol Ha’ir reports that during January and February, thirty-two demolition orders were executed in Palestinian areas of East Jerusalem. During 1998, thirty-eight similar orders were executed.

14 March

IsraelWire reports a U.S. diplomat’s alleged use of the highly sophisticated Magellan site-location system to survey disputed land in the West Bank.

15 March

Some 200 Palestinians with five tractors attempt to uproot an olive orchard of the Gush Katif settlement community of Morag. They are dispersed by the IDF.

17 March

Israel announces plans to build 120 new housing units in Gilo settlement.

23 March

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu lays the cornerstone for Sha’ar Binyamin, an industrial park in the West Bank northeast of Jerusalem. The area will include communication networks, exercise and child-care facilities, wide roads and sidewalks, a shopping mall, and a water purification unit.

24 March

Haaretz cites Israeli intelligence reports that “illegal” residential construction by Palestinians in Jerusalem is encouraged with mortgages arranged by the PA and Orient House.

The Israeli cabinet, meeting in the Jerusalem City Hall, decides to transfer $75 million to the Jerusalem municipality to be invested in East Jerusalem’s infrastructure.

26 March

The Jerusalem municipality estimates that it will cost $180 million to bring infrastructure in the Palestinian areas of East Jerusalem
to the prevailing standard in West Jerusalem. The 1999 municipal budget allocates $100,000 for the planning of settlement areas in East Jerusalem, a 25 percent increase over the 1998 development budget. At least $20 million will be spent on improving major new roads in East Jerusalem, facilitating movement between the city, the coastal region, and Greater Jerusalem settlements.

29 March

U.S. Senator Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) writes to National Security Adviser Sandy Berger calling for the establishment of a structure for diplomatic functions in anticipation of the construction of a U.S. embassy in Jerusalem.

4 April

Tens of thousands of Israelis attend a cornerstone-laying ceremony in Hebron for a new building next to Hadassah House. Education Minister Levy, head of the National Religious party, declares, "Six apartments in this 'House of the Six' and the doubling of Tal Rumayda is only the beginning of the road. There will be thousands more Jews who will live in Hebron."

Industry and Trade Minister Natan Sharansky declares that his Yisrael Ba'Aliya party is establishing its own settlement movement to provide housing for Russian immigrants.

Ten new buses are displayed in the settlement of Ariel. They are equipped with reinforced glass windows and "panic buttons" to immediately notify security officers in case of attack.

8 April

Ha'aretz reports that Faisal Husseini, PA minister for Jerusalem affairs, believes that 6,000 new housing units have been built by Palestinians in East Jerusalem during the last three years, as Palestinians reestablish residence in the city to preempt Israeli efforts to invalidate their residency documents.

The Israeli organization Peace Bloc calls for a boycott of a recently introduced postage stamp featuring the settlement in Hebron.

9 April

In Washington, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright meets with Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon and criticizes Israel's creation of new settlements and expansion of existing ones since Wye, noting that these actions are a violation of commitments made by Netanyahu to President Bill Clinton.

On settlements, State Department spokesman James Rubin said, "we also made clear that we're opposed to unilateral acts by Israel, including and especially settlement activity. Specifically, we're concerned about an accelerated pattern of Israeli actions on the ground . . . that involve both construction of new settlements, as well as an expansion of settlements well beyond their perimeters—in many cases involving expansion to distant hilltops. We were told that such activities would not be promoted or allowed to take place as a matter of Israeli policy."

11 April

A small group of Israelis attempts to establish a temporary settlement on the Givat Harsina hilltop near Hebron and Kiryat Arba before being evacuated by Israeli soldiers.

Meeting with PM Netanyahu in Jerusalem, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk publicly criticizes Israeli settlement expansion as an obstacle to peace and tells Netanyahu of U.S. "concerns" about "some settlement activity that has been going on in the central West Bank." Netanyahu says that "we have never had an agreement to limit our activities in the settlements . . . nor is this part of Oslo." Indyk replies that "this is not the point."

Prime ministerial candidate Ehud Barak promises in a television interview that, if elected, he will conduct a national referendum on any final status agreement reached with the PA. He also notes four "red lines" for any agreement: Jerusalem undivided as Israel's capital; no withdrawal to the June 1967 borders; no foreign army west of the Jordan River; most settlers to remain in large territorial blocs under Israeli sovereignty.

12 April

Pinhas Wallerstein, chairman of YESHA settler council, states that the settler population of the West Bank has increased by 30 percent, to 200,000, during Netanyahu's tenure.

Peace Now reports a new settlement one kilometer south of the settlement of Brakha, on the outskirts of Nablus, the seventeenth founded since the Wye summit.

13 April

Peace Now reports that Israeli building starts in West Bank settlements were up 105 percent in 1998, while housing starts inside the Green Line were down 20 percent.
14 April
Ha'aretz reports that U.S. satellites reveal the establishment of twelve new settlement encampments on West Bank hilltops since the Wye summit.

MK Shimon Peres, in a Knesset debate on Kosovo, states that “what is going on in the settlements is ethnic confusion.” Turning to Rechavam Ze'evi, a former Labor party member and founder of the Moledet party, which favors the “transfer of Palestinians,” Peres continues, “Don't generate ethnic confusion so that we don't have to implement ethnic cleansing.” Ze'evi retorts, “I learned that from you [in the Labor movement]. You perpetrated a forced transfer. You should be ashamed to raise the subject.” Ze'evi notes that the NATO intervention sets a “dangerous precedent.” “Couldn't it happen here, too, in a different variation today or tomorrow?”

23 April
Jewish settlers set up new enclave on a hilltop near Ma'ale Levona, near Ramallah.

28 April
U.S. State Department spokesman Rubin says that the United States is “deeply concerned” that Israel has repeatedly broken promises not to expand settlements onto land not immediately adjacent to existing settlements.

29 April
Jewish settlers begin expansion of Ofarim settlement onto 1,000 dunams of Palestinian land. Some 8,000 new housing units are planned.

1 May
Netanyahu aide David Bar-Illan admits that at Wye, Netanyahu promised President Clinton that he would halt settlement expansion “except for a few exceptions . . . where there is a danger that the land allotted to the settlements would be taken over by illegal building by Palestinians.”

4 May
Contradicting Bar-Illan, PM Netanyahu denies U.S. charges that he has broken a promise to build only on land adjacent to existing settlements, saying that he made it clear to the United States that he would build settlements in “undeveloped areas.”

9 May
The Israeli cabinet approves a five-year program that would give $5,000 cash grants to Jews buying housing units in East Jerusalem and a five-year, $100 million project for infrastructure improvements in East Jerusalem. The Labor party files a formal complaint denouncing the spending plans as “election bribery,” noting that the projects would bloat the deficit.

IDF begins bulldozing 1,050 dunams of Palestinian land near the West Bank village of al-Shuyukh reportedly for development of a new industrial zone.

12 May
Settlers try to seize Palestinian land in Asira al-Qibliyya, sparking a clash with local Palestinians. The IDF intervenes when settlers fire in the air to intimidate the Palestinians.

SETTLEMENT EXPANSION, 1998
BUILDING BOOM

Figures recently released by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics confirm reports of a major increase in settlement expansion during 1998. According to the bureau, construction proceeded at a pace not seen since 1992, at the height of the influx of immigrants from the Commonwealth of Independent States to Israel. A comparison with estimates of settlement construction in previous years compiled by the U.S. State Department suggests that the Israeli figures may reflect only 50 percent of actual construction. According to the Israeli figures, during 1998, at least 4,000 units were begun in West Bank and Gaza settlements alone, excluding construction in East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. This settlement expansion comprised 9 percent of all residential construction in Israel, a proportion last achieved during the tenure of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir earlier this decade. The 1998 figure of 3,900 construction starts marks a more than 100 percent increase above the 1997 figure of 1,630. There were increases in construction funded by both public- and private-sector interests. Publicly financed construction, mostly smaller units for young families, increased by 70 percent. Private-sector construction, including single-family homes, grew by more than 250 percent. This latter figure is significant because it attests to the existence of a robust residential real estate market in settlements during Prime Minister Netanyahu's tenure and at a time of extended stalemate in the implementation of the Oslo II, Hebron, and Wye accords. More than 5,000 units are currently under active construction, with a capacity to increase the settler population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to more than 200,000.
SETTLEMENT CONSTRUCTION IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP, 1990–98

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publicly Financed</td>
<td>1,740</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,040</td>
<td>1,850</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>410</td>
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<td>Privately Financed</td>
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<td>720</td>
<td>570</td>
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<td>1,900</td>
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<td>2,520</td>
<td>1,320</td>
<td>980</td>
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<td>Total Construction in Israel and the Occupied Territories</td>
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<td>55,940</td>
<td>68,900</td>
<td>43,320</td>
<td>33,630</td>
<td>44,900</td>
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<td>870</td>
<td>3,290</td>
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<td>640</td>
<td>970</td>
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<td>980</td>
<td>980</td>
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<td>Total Settlement Construction</td>
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<td>1,510</td>
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<td>6,870</td>
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<td>33,930</td>
<td>43,190</td>
<td>70,110</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active Construction (units)</td>
<td>2,640</td>
<td>1,780</td>
<td>2,290</td>
<td>2,850</td>
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<td>Privately Financed</td>
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<td>1,080</td>
<td>2,410</td>
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<td>Total Settlement Construction</td>
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<td>3,140</td>
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<td>3,939</td>
<td>4,991</td>
<td>5,630</td>
<td>8,680</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Construction in Israel Proper and Settlements</td>
<td>81,530</td>
<td>88,920</td>
<td>100,750</td>
<td>94,250</td>
<td>72,500</td>
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<td>95,200</td>
<td>54,910</td>
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* From the U.S. State Department reports on Israeli settlement activity mandated by the now-expired U.S. loan guarantee program, 1993–98.

Note: Figures exclude significant construction in Greater Jerusalem and along the Green Line.

SETTLER POPULATION EXPANSION

*From Settlement Report, May-June 1999.*

The population of the nine largest West Bank settlements, comprising more than half the settler population of the West Bank, increased by 6 percent to almost 90,000 during the first nine months of 1998, according to a recent report by Peace Now. The greatest increases were in the Orthodox religious settlements of Mod'in Illit and Betar Illit, where the populations grew by 21.4 percent (1,706 people) and 9.8 percent (953), respectively. Mod'in Illit is located east of the Green Line, next to the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway. Betar Illit, like Ma'ale Adumim and Givat Ze'ev, which also registered considerable growth, is located in metropolitan Jerusalem.

The Benjamin region, which covers much of the West Bank heartland between Ramallah and Nablus, experienced some of the largest increases, according to Housing Ministry figures. The settlement of Ofarim grew by 40 percent, Eli by 29 percent, Dolev by 15 percent, and Ma'alé Levona by 16 percent. Even Sanur, in the Jenin region where Israel recently redeployed in the wake of the Wye accord, grew by 25 percent to more than 100 residents. Nearby Reihan grew by 14 percent to more than 150 residents. Significant population increases also occurred in Gaza Strip settlements, which now boast a population of more than 6,100. Nisanit, Netzarim, and Pat Sadeh each grew by more than 20 percent during 1997, the most recent period for which figures are available.

![Settler Population in the West Bank and Gaza, 1990-98](image)