



Settlement Monitor

16 MAY–15 AUGUST 2017

This section presents items—articles, statistics, reports, and maps—pertaining to Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. What follows are summaries of the items with links to the originals.

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Significant developments this quarter: Several reports and news analyses were released, which, taken together, provided further evidence that annexation, land appropriation, and settlement construction continued to advance unchecked this quarter. An investigative report by Haaretz revealed that, as part of a “framework for peace” being pursued in 2014 by then–U.S. secy. of state John Kerry, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu demanded the inclusion of a provision that would allow Israeli settlers to remain in areas of the West Bank to be included in a future Palestinian state, thus relegating them to Palestinian jurisdiction. Peace Now provided data indicating that U.S. Jews were disproportionately moving into West Bank settlements, and Haaretz also reported that Netanyahu supported a bill that would de facto annex settlements into Jerusalem. Finally, Peace Now’s annual construction report reveals that settlement construction starts in 2016 rose 34% in comparison to 2015.

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SETTLERS

NETANYAHU DEMANDED SETTLERS BE ALLOWED TO LIVE UNDER PALESTINIAN JURISDICTION, DOCUMENT REVEALS

In 2014, as Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu was negotiating a “framework for peace” with U.S. secretary of state John Kerry (see JPS 43 [3]), he “demanded that the Obama administration insert a provision stating that Israeli settlers and settlements in the West Bank would be allowed to remain in a future Palestinian state under Palestinian jurisdiction,” according to a 11 June 2017 report by Haaretz. Based on a working draft of the “framework for peace” that the newspaper obtained as well as interviews with Israeli and U.S. negotiators, the article suggested that Netanyahu asked for the provision to solve the eventual problem of evacuating tens of thousands of settlers from the West Bank.

The prime minister eventually rescinded his demand under pressure from members of the far-right settler Jewish Home Party as well as his own Likud. A highly sensitive topic in Israeli politics, the evacuation of settlers could possibly roil the coalition government’s settler base, Haaretz wrote. Then-justice minister Tzipi Livni, who was part of the negotiating team, said the clause was moot because settlers most likely would not stay in a Palestinian state.

[Read the full article.](#)

“HOW MANY SETTLERS REALLY LIVE IN THE WEST BANK?”

The number of settlers in the West Bank has grown exponentially in the last 30 years, from 50,000 in 1977 to more than 380,000 in 2017, according to an investigative report by Haaretz published on 15 June 2017. The report attributed the growth of settlements to the rise of right-wing parties after 1977. “The dramatic increase in the settlers’ numbers began only after Likud, headed by Menachem Begin, rose to power. Immediately after the 1977 election, there were 38 settlements in the West Bank with a total of 1,900 residents. A decade later, settler population was close to 50,000—in more than 100 settlements.”

[Read the full report.](#)

AMERICANS DISPROPORTIONATELY MOVING TO WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS

While Jews from countries such as France and Russia emigrated in larger numbers than other nationalities to Israel, Americans were the largest immigrant group moving into illegal settlements in the West Bank, according to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, which cited data from Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics. Because restrictions on U.S. loan guarantees to Israel prohibit using U.S. taxpayer money to fund the settlement industry—including helping relocate immigrants to settlements—Israeli officials do not openly advertise West Bank settlements. However, the government does work with the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization, which “are involved in coordinating aspects of development in the occupied territories and in bringing Americans to tour, take pilot trips and eventually immigrate there,” Haaretz reported.

The study found that most Jewish immigrants moved to areas within Israel and not the occupied Palestinian territories. Most U.S. Jews who moved to settlements in the West Bank

were Orthodox, and more closely aligned with the far-right religious nationalism of the settler movement. “While French Jews accounted for 16% of all immigrants last year, their share among the settler immigrants was just over 2%. While Russians accounted for 27% of all immigrants, their share among the settler immigrants was just under 2.5%. . . . But while Americans accounted for just 10% of all immigrants, their share among the settler immigrants topped 9%. Similar trends were evident in the 2015 figures from the statistics bureau.”

The Haaretz report also highlighted how much support the Israeli government provided to organizations working to attract immigrants.

[Read the full article.](#)

SETTLEMENT CONSTRUCTION

“ANNUAL CONSTRUCTION REPORT SHOWS A 34% INCREASE IN CONSTRUCTION STARTS IN THE SETTLEMENTS”

A report released in May 2017 by the Israeli settlement watchdog group Peace Now showed a “stark increase” in settlement construction in 2016. The report revealed that construction starts increased 34% over 2015 and that settlement expansion was pursued using a variety of means, including through “the construction of housing units and public structures—legal and illegal—the construction of a new bypass road, the approval of a new settlement, the establishment of two illegal outposts, the declaration of ‘state lands’ and expansion of municipal jurisdictions.”

Key findings included:

- Construction began on 1,814 new housing units, an increase of 34%, over the same time period in the previous year (1,350 housing units).
- Nearly 70% (1,263 housing units) of housing starts were in the settlements that are likely to be evicted in a two-state agreement.
- More than 26% (474 housing units) of the new construction was in areas that are east of the separation barrier.
- The vast majority of the new construction, almost 94% (1,700 housing units), was for permanent structures, while the remaining 6% (114 housing units), was for mobile homes in both outposts and settlements.

[Read the full report.](#)

JERUSALEM BOUNDARIES

“NETANYAHU BACKS EXPANDING JERUSALEM’S JURISDICTION TO INCLUDE WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS”

On 27 July 2017, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu publicly supported a bill in the Knesset calling for the de facto annexation of several West Bank settlements to within the municipal borders of Jerusalem, and the removal of some Palestinian neighborhoods from the

city's jurisdiction. In so doing, Israel will significantly increase the city's Jewish majority, and correspondingly decrease the number of its Arab residents. Significantly, the legislation would allow settlers to cast votes in Jerusalem's mayoral and city council elections while also preserving their right to vote in their own local council elections. At the same time, several of Jerusalem's Palestinian neighborhoods would become independent boroughs within the city's boundaries. If the bill were to become law, 70,000 Palestinian Jerusalemites would lose their right to vote in municipal elections.

[Read the full article.](#)

JEWISH NATIONAL FUND

"JEWISH NATIONAL FUND RENEWS LAND PURCHASES FROM PALESTINIANS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES"

A statement released by the Israeli settlement watchdog NGO Peace Now on 13 August 2017 revealed that the Jewish National Fund (JNF) had resumed the practice of secretly buying up Palestinian land for settlement expansion, a practice the Zionist organization was thought to have suspended. Peace Now became aware of the change in policy after the JNF published a tender for the position of a "Judea and Samaria Transactions Coordinator," who would be responsible for "examining land transactions of the 'Himanuta' company . . . and identifying properties and contacting their owners." The JNF, which was established in 1901 for the purpose of purchasing Palestinian land in preparation for Zionist immigration, formed Himanuta to act as its purchasing agent before the creation of the state of Israel. It has been purchasing Palestinian land "fraudulently" by using "straw men" and "extortion" ever since, according to Peace Now.

The JNF is directly responsible for the creation of settlements and their expansion. It is also implicated in the creation of Jewish-only public parks on private Palestinian land. According to Peace Now, "The majority of JNF's activities in settlements today include infrastructure development, tourism, education and roads."

[Read the full report.](#)