



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
JOURNALS + DIGITAL PUBLISHING



Settlement Monitor

Author(s): Geoffrey Aronson

Source: *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Spring 2005), pp. 150-158

Published by: [University of California Press](#) on behalf of the [Institute for Palestine Studies](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jps.2005.34.3.150>

Accessed: 26/02/2015 16:56

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



University of California Press and Institute for Palestine Studies are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to Journal of Palestine Studies.

<http://www.jstor.org>

SETTLEMENT MONITOR

EDITED BY GEOFFREY ARONSON

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 have been written by Geoffrey Aronson 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.

Israel and the PA Plan for Disengagement

Settlers Losing the Battle For Gaza Settlements	150
Palestinians Consider Uses for Settlements after Disengagement	152

Settlement Expansion Continues

Quietly Carrying on Building, by Aluf Benn	153
Outpost Survey in the Occupied Territories, 2004, by Peace Now	156

Short Takes	157
------------------------------	-----

ISRAEL AND THE PA PLAN FOR DISENGAGEMENT

SETTLERS LOSING THE BATTLE FOR GAZA SETTLEMENTS

From Settlement Report, February-March 2005.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to "disengage" Israel from the Gaza Strip and a small part of the northern West Bank achieved political and operational critical mass in late 2004.

A December vote in the Likud Central Committee opened the way to a national unity "disengagement coalition" that features the Labor party as a junior partner, marking a signal political defeat for forces within Sharon's own party who opposed the plan.

The operational momentum of the plan also continued to grow. In early December the more than 200 teachers in Gaza settlements met with officials in the Ministry of Education to reach agreement on new employment after the evacuation of the 17 settlements in the Gaza Strip and four in the northern West Bank. On December 26,

Yonatan Bassi, head of the government Disengagement Administration, announced, "All of the residents of [the Gaza settlement] Pe'at Sadeh, 20 families in all, as well as five additional families from other settlements, will move together to moshav Mavqi'im" in Israel.

Military and logistical preparations for the \$680 million redeployment proceed apace, including advanced consideration of the construction of a trench along the Gaza-Egypt border—and the associated destruction of perhaps hundreds of Palestinian dwellings along its route—meant to prevent the construction of arms smuggling tunnels. The evacuation of Gaza settlements is to begin on 3, July 2005, and run for twelve weeks.

While the fate of the settlements noted in the plan has been all but sealed, the vast majority of settlements continue to thrive and prosper. The settler population increased by six percent during 2004 to 250,179 (not including 180,000 in East Jerusalem), and almost 4,000 new settlement dwelling units are currently under construction.

Notwithstanding the ever-present momentum of settlement expansion throughout the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the

Journal of Palestine Studies Vol. XXXIV, No. 3 (Spring 2005), pp. 150–158, ISSN: 0377-919X; electronic ISSN: 1533-8614. © 2005 by the Institute for Palestine Studies. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Rights and Permissions website, at <http://www.ucpress.edu/journals/rights.htm>.

settler-led campaign to block implementation of the disengagement plan, and more critically the campaign to undermine any future evacuation of additional settlements in the West Bank, has suffered a cascade of setbacks unprecedented in the history of Israel's 37-year settlement enterprise. These reversals have alarmed the settlement movement as never before and as a consequence have raised fears of a violent and perhaps bloody summer as settlements are evacuated.

The IDF, charged with the task of evacuating areas slated for disengagement, remains profoundly ambivalent about its mission. One day after settler leaders warned chief-of-staff Moshe Ya'alon that thousands of religious soldiers would not follow orders to evacuate settlements, Deputy Defense Minister Ze'ev Boim said that such a refusal could torpedo the disengagement plan. As the IDF issues the operational orders guiding evacuation, those settlers and their allies committed to physically obstructing the withdrawal are ambiguously described as "our forces." As the Israeli newspaper *Ma'ariv* described it, "In such a fashion a situation may be created in which 'our forces' will be required to evacuate 'our forces' from their homes, to manacle them and to confine them to holding camps. In the most extreme instance, 'our forces' (settlers and right-wing activists) battle 'our forces' (soldiers and police), even going so far as to open fire upon them."

One senior member of the security forces was reported to have called this scenario "a coalition of the insane. Thousands of settlers hunker down in the settlements scheduled for evacuation. Some of them are prepared to use arms. Settlers and soldiers grab each others' throats while Hamas missiles fly overhead."

As the political prospects favoring implementation of the disengagement plan have grown, so too has the militancy of the settler, religious, and right-wing opposition. The statements and actions of these opponents, however, have more often than not been uncharacteristically politically inept, highlighting their political marginalization and the Israeli public's increasing disaffection with their efforts.

The settlers made a key strategic mistake in underestimating Sharon's determination to evacuate a few settlements in order to secure the future of most of them. Many veterans of Gush Emmunim had long collaborated with Sharon in their shared mission to

expand the settlement enterprise throughout the occupied territories. But their motives were always based upon different assumptions. Whereas settler support for such activity has always been unconditional and absolute, Sharon, true to his political heritage, always viewed the colonization of the territories, even when it occurred in opposition to government policy, as an instrument for realizing state security, a goal viewed by the settlement movement as incidental if not irrelevant to their divinely inspired mission. As they embarked upon a campaign in mid-2004 to scuttle the plan, disengagement opponents discovered that they lacked the political patronage and military support that they had always enjoyed and that was necessary in assuring that their interests would remain paramount.

Throughout the summer and fall, Sharon's plan survived a series of coalition, party, and popular challenges by settlers and their political allies. As these campaigns failed, extra-parliamentary and extra-political actions were initiated, which, while not in and of themselves new, were increasingly viewed as illegitimate by the public-at-large that supports the Sharon plan by a wide margin. In June 2004, for example, Uri Elitzur, editor of the settler monthly *Nekuda*, justified a soldier's refusal of an order to evacuate a settlement, and violent opposition, including injury to soldiers, in resisting orders to evacuate settlements. In September, Nadia Matter, a leader of Women in Green, described the newly formed Disengagement Administration as "a modern-day Judenrat," raising associations between the Sharon administration and the Nazis that are so explosive culturally that they all but guarantee the political marginalization of their proponents. In October, Abraham Shapira, a former chief rabbi of Israel, called upon religious soldiers to refuse evacuation orders, claiming that the "expulsion of Jews from their homes is absolutely forbidden." Sixty rabbis endorsed his declaration to defy a "secular order" rather than ignore one ostensibly originating in the Bible. Days after the Likud Central Committee voted in December to join with the Labor party in a unity government, the YESHA Council, the official governmental representative of all settlements, endorsed settler leader Pinchas Wallerstein's call to break the law if necessary to prevent disengagement. Soon thereafter, some settlers in Gaza began wearing orange patches in the shape of a Star of David, once again employing Holocaust

imagery in the service of their efforts. This action confirmed the image of Sharon's opponents, in the words of one *Jerusalem Post* columnist, as a "crowd of fanatics." A public outcry forced the abandonment of the action within days. In January 2005, settlers once again violently confronted soldiers sent to dismantle two mobile homes placed in a settlement outpost without authorization. At one point, an IDF soldier fired a warning shot.

The program of opposition marked by exploitation of Holocaust imagery, calls for insubordination by soldiers, and appeals to the supremacy of divine imperatives over civil laws has placed settlers and their supporters at the ineffective margins of political action. What distinguishes this campaign from previous efforts, however, is not so much the use of these instruments. Settlers have, after all, never honored the sanctity of law when it obstructed their aims. Ariel Sharon himself once famously advised soldiers to ignore orders to confront settlers. What has changed, however, is the use of these tactics in a political environment that is no longer committed to their maximalist territorial agenda. This is not to suggest that the settlement movement itself is in danger or that Sharon has adopted the Geneva plan. The facts on the ground continue to attest that this is not the case. But it is this clash of interests that serves to highlight the radical and marginal core of the settlement movement as it has always been, from the days more than two decades ago when settlers clashed with the IDF at Sebastia to the recent confrontations at an outpost near Yitzhar.

PALESTINIANS CONSIDER USES FOR SETTLEMENTS AFTER DISENGAGEMENT

From Settlement Report, February-March 2005.

Palestinians are considering potential uses for settlement areas to be evacuated by Israel later this year in the Gaza Strip and West Bank as part of its disengagement plan. The following are excerpts from Reintegration and Development of Evacuated Areas, prepared by the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Planning.

Gaza Strip

The sand dune areas in the north and south, where the two major colony blocs [Nisanit and the Katif bloc] are located, contain the best water aquifers, represent landscapes and natural features of very high value, and constitute an important potential for environmentally sound, sustainable

agriculture. According to the *Regional Plan for Gaza Governorates*, it is of the utmost importance that these areas are protected against unplanned development. As a rule, the sand dune areas will be reintegrated as areas under environmental protection against urban development. The assets in the urban built-up areas of the colonies must therefore be removed, because they endanger Palestinian long-term sustainability requirements. This would also include service buildings, such as fire stations, clinics, and schools.

Netzarim can be a part of the urban growth strategy of Gaza City and would serve as a core for low-density development.

Morag is situated on the main road between Khan Yunis and Rafah. The location does not coincide with the growth strategy for these two cities; however, Morag is interesting because of its function as an agricultural colony. It could serve as a research and development facility in agriculture, in connection with university expansion plans in the south. . . .

Kefar Darom does not coincide with growth strategies for Dayr al-Balah, but neither does the location contradict them. . . . These considerations point to the conclusion that Kfar Darom is better suited for agricultural purposes than for urban functions.

Erez [industrial zone] will retain its significance after the withdrawal of Israeli forces and should be integrated and strengthened as an industrial zone when transferred to Palestinian control.

The **Neve Dekalim** industrial plant does not coincide with any Palestinian needs or interests for development. It contradicts the environmental considerations and, therefore, must be removed and the soil restored.

Some of the sand dune colonies [Katif bloc] have a typical suburban residential quality that could be utilized as tourist villages/resorts. They contain residential and recreational structures such as the hotel and pool in the south, and restaurants, playgrounds, [and] sports facilities in other areas that could be reintegrated within a Palestinian tourism and recreation concept. Further investigation is required in order to ensure their compliance with the relevant environmental considerations. These units, if reintegrated, must not be allowed to form clusters for random densification based on pure speculation.

Areas used for agriculture can be easily reintegrated as such, with an emphasis on

changing cropping patterns and irrigation methods, etc., to minimize water use such as [in] horticulture and production of value crops, e.g., vegetables, strawberries, and flowers. This concerns all colony areas.

The road network in the colony areas coincides with the configuration of the regional road network in the Gaza Strip. Hence, the main road network of the colonies should be kept intact. The utility of local roads will be decided upon after inspection.

Infrastructure, such as electricity, water, [and] wastewater and telecommunication networks and facilities, can largely be taken over and reused, pending inspection and evaluation. . . .

All formal and informal solid waste dumps must be removed. Toxic and otherwise harmful waste [must also be] completely removed and the natural state restored.

West Bank

Israeli withdrawal from the four colonies with maintenance of the existing closure system would not bring any benefits to the Palestinian community. It would provide only marginal benefits for Palestinian development. In political and humanitarian terms, mere withdrawal will not contribute to any significant improvement. . . .

Ganim and **Qadim** are located within a Nature Protection Area. There are two alternative uses of the area, which to varying degrees, could be combined:

Rehabilitate the area as a natural reserve, reestablish lost vegetation, and reintegrate it into the Nature Protection Area.

Explore the area's potential for local tourism and recreation based on ecological principles and sustainable use. . . .

Sanur is located within a valuable agricultural area. . . . The site has potential use primarily in military/administrative uses.

Homesh is a hilltop settlement. Because of topographical conditions, according to the *Regional Plan for the West Bank Governorates*, it has no potential for urban development. Before colonization, it was used for agricultural purposes, primarily horticulture and grazing. It should thus be rehabilitated as an agricultural area, where fruit trees could be replanted, etc.

The northern part of [the] West Bank is neither an independently functional territory nor a political entity in itself, particularly if existing restrictions on movement of goods, services, people, and capital persist. Full withdrawal would still leave the area isolated from its regional center, Nablus, from

the rest of the West Bank and Gaza, and from neighboring countries.

Mere withdrawal from the four colonies would create a limited number of minor project possibilities—at a local level—which would represent a very marginal but positive contribution.

SETTLEMENT EXPANSION CONTINUES

QUIETLY CARRYING ON BUILDING

The article excerpted here, written by Aluf Benn, appeared in Ha'Aretz on 7 January 2005. The full text is available online at www.haaretz.com.

At the Netiv Avot outpost, near the Jewish settlement of Elazar in the Etzion Bloc, they are covering mobile homes with cement-block walls and gradually turning them into stone houses. In the neighboring outpost, Givat Hahish, someone has built an improvised two-story villa that rises above the mobile homes. The tenants are getting ready for the snow that will fall soon and cut off the muddy roads that were paved with funding from the Housing Ministry in the days when National Religious Party MK Effie Eitam was the minister. When the water on the roads freezes, even Jeeps with snow chains on their tires will find it difficult to drive here.

The head of the Etzion Bloc local council, Shaul Goldstein, is proud of his outposts. On Saturdays he walks with his neighbors from the Jewish settlement of Neveh Daniel to pray at the nearby outpost of Neveh Daniel North. They have developed a worship service there that is suited to youngsters in a mobile home that serves as a synagogue. There are no stone houses in Neveh Daniel North, only a few mobile homes and an Israel Defense Forces observation post opposite the nearby Arab village of Nahlin. One of the inhabitants serves as an officer in the police's special antiterror unit; another young settler who has been at the outpost for five months is now trying to get accepted to the unit.

Goldstein knows that these outposts are on the evacuation list and claims: "This is our land of Israel and it is our right to be on it." The outposts, he adds, were set up to prevent a Palestinian takeover of lands: "If the state would show concern for the lands the way it should, I would have no need of outposts."

The government's claims that this is illegal construction seems to him like an excuse. He knows that this is a political matter.

In the Etzion Bloc there are no violent confrontations between Jewish settlers and the security forces, like in Yitzhar, nor are there conflicts with Arab neighbors over groves of trees and cultivated lands. Here the struggle over the land of Israel is being conducted quietly. The Etzion Bloc is known as one of the "consensus blocs" that will be annexed to the state of Israel in the permanent status agreement, even in Yossi Beilin's Geneva accord.

Jewish settlement in the Etzion Bloc dates back to the days of the British Mandate; it was destroyed in the War of Independence and renewed after 1967. But despite the political consensus, there are no "quality of life" settlers here like there are near Kfar Sava. The majorities of the inhabitants are religious and settled on the ridge for ideological reasons. . . .

In recent months Goldstein has been conducting a lobbying campaign to influence the route of the separation fence in his area. The problem is knotty, because in the vicinity there are four Palestinian villages with 18,000 inhabitants and a great many Palestinian fields and vineyards. The Palestinian grapevines are planted between the Jewish settlements, in less crowded rows than those used in Israeli vineyards. But where the land is worked, even to a meager extent, it is impossible to declare it "state land" and settle Jews there. Goldstein has proposed annexing the villages to Israel and giving rights to their inhabitants. The idea has not been accepted and now he is fighting to distance the fence from the outermost houses in the Jewish settlements and to position it on the next ridge—without too much success. The authorities have decided to put Givat Itim, which was supposed to have greatly expanded the Jewish settlement of Efrat, on the other side of the fence. The land, some of which was under Jewish ownership before 1948, will be encircled by a patrol road; the army will leave for its patrols there through a gate in the fence.

This month Sharon will bring the route of the separation fence in Gush Etzion to the government for approval, but it is clear that the final decision will be made by the High Court of Justice. This will be the first time that Israel tries to put a large settlement bloc on its side of the fence, and it will put to the test the commitment of U.S. President George W. Bush to recognize the existence of "Israeli population centers" in the territories. Bush was talking about the permanent status agreement, but the

practical test of his promise is in the facts that are being established now in the building of the fence and in the expansion of the Jewish settlements.

Not Afraid of Rice

When he announced the plan to disengage from the Gaza Strip last year, Sharon declared that the government would "act to strengthen Israel's control in those parts of the land of Israel that will be an inalienable part of the state in any future agreement." In other words, Israel is leaving Gaza and taking a deeper hold in the settlement blocs in the West Bank. The problem is that at the same time Sharon also promised the Americans that there would be no building in Jewish settlements "beyond the existing construction line" and that the outposts that were established during the period of his tenure would be evacuated. Since then the government has been pursuing a double policy: One arm is getting ready to freeze the settlements and evacuate the outposts, while the other is approving plans for building and taking control of lands.

The implementation of the promises to the Americans is advancing slowly but surely. White House National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice recently told an Israeli personage: "We know that things are under control."

At the Defense Ministry they have completed the demarcation of the "Blue Line," which will establish the boundaries of Jewish settlement in the West Bank. The demarcation team, headed by Brigadier General (res.) Baruch Spiegel, adviser to the defense minister, has already mapped out 65 settlements—half of the total in the West Bank. The old, manually drawn maps have been redrawn and computerized. Progress is being made according to an alphabetical order. Since its work methods have been determined, the team is advancing at a rate of 20 settlements per month. In the spring, the government echelon will be presented with an orderly file, denoting the permissible areas for construction in each settlement, the illegal construction and the building that has been done outside settled areas. The mapping team was surprised by the deviations it has discovered—like a house divided such that half of it was inside the demarcation plan and half outside.

On February 1, attorney Talia Sasson, who was appointed to examine the problem of the outposts, will present her interim report to the prime minister's adviser, Dov

Weisglass [see Doc. C2]. Among other things, she will recommend strengthening the coordination among government ministries so that they will not be able to fund illegal building. Housing Minister Tzipi Livni has already toughened the procedures for approving projects and locating mobile homes. The list of the 20 illegal outposts is still waiting for evacuation orders, but preparations are going ahead and in the near future an "evacuation director" will be appointed to deal with the property of the evacuees.

American pressure is deterring the establishments of new outposts or construction deep in the territories. Dror Etkes, the settlement-tracker from Peace Now, says that during the past year, only one significant outpost was set up, and others are developing at a snail's pace. Etkes and his gray truck are familiar visitors at the outposts. "Are you from Peace Now? We don't agree with you, but at least you're objective," an armed settler at an outpost near Eli says to him, by way of flattery.

The impression that has been created by the procrastination in clearing the outposts—as if they had been established secretly and need to be discovered by satellites and planes—is very much exaggerated. The settlers are not hiding. The Nofei Nehemia outpost near Ariel, two rows of mobile homes with a strange scarecrow in the guard's booth, is mentioned on the Samaria local council's Internet site as a community that was established in 2002—during the "forbidden" era.

Sharon and Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz are quietly releasing building permits in the large settlements or those close to the Green Line (pre-1967 War border). There is also building being done according to older permits. The claims by the settler leaders that everything is dried out and frozen are helping the government vis-à-vis the American pressure. The official level is advancing the declaration of state lands in the E-1 plan to link Jerusalem to Ma'ale Adumim, which is perceived on the left as a deathblow to the final status agreement because it will cut the northern West Bank off from the southern part and prevent the Palestinian state from having essential territorial contiguity. MK Ephraim Sneh (Labor) wrote this week to the chairman of his party, MK Shimon Peres, that it is incumbent upon him to fight in the government against this plan. But the Americans are keeping mum:

The understandings with them are about actual construction, not planning procedures.

Between Line and Fence

"The policy is that everything is frozen, but in the large blocs the implementation of the freeze rules is different," explains a senior official source. "In a small community it is easy to demarcate the construction line, but in large blocs it is difficult. There are residential neighborhoods, there are industrial zones, and you need common sense." According to this source, in the meantime Israel and the U.S. are refraining from demarcating the settlement blocs. "The freeze is not a punishment, but rather a process aimed at preserving reserves of land for the Palestinian state," he says. "If the U.S. recognizes your claim that the blocs will remain yours forever, why should it make a fuss when you build on your own property?"

The Americans had a scare a few months ago when a tender was issued for the construction of 640 housing units in the ultra-Orthodox city of Upper Beitar. At Sharon's bureau they were told that these are multi-story buildings that take up little land. But in the Jewish settlement of Eli, in the heart of the northern West Bank, the building of a neighborhood of several dozen apartments was prevented: "There are serious doubts there as to whether the place will be in our hands. At Alfe Menashe there are no such doubts," says the official source. Another construction project was quietly stopped in Kiryat Arba.

According to Peace Now, the main building effort in the Jewish settlements in the West Bank is now focused on the area between the Green Line and the separation fence, and it is aimed at turning the fence into Israel's permanent border. There are many signs of this on the ground. The huge gate that has been set up in the fence near Alfe Menashe, on the road that goes up to Karnei Shomron and Keddim, looks like a border crossing point and not like a temporary barrier, even though the smiling female soldiers there make do with hearing the drivers speak Hebrew and don't ask for identification.

Development is booming at Alfe Menashe, which has been left on the Israeli side of the fence. Council head Hisdai Eliezer says he has not been given approval for new plans, "but the truth is that I don't need more. Alfe Menashe is organized with respect to construction, the pace is accelerated and the sales are good. The place is

beautiful, and it is not perceived as an ideological settlement.”

At Givat Tal, which is between the veteran settlement and the fence, they are now completing the water tower for a new neighborhood where about 1,000 apartments will be built, doubling the number of inhabitants. Another neighborhood, located near the community of Nirit that is inside the Green Line, is causing public and legal controversy. At Tzofim, between Qalqilya and Tulkarm, they are preparing land for a new neighborhood north of the settlement, at the site of an old quarry. In recent days the place has attracted demonstrations by the left against “land theft,” but it does not look like the project is going to be stopped.

Bimkom, the Planners for Planning Rights nonprofit association of architects, which acts to promote human rights in planning procedures, is helping petitioners to the High Court of Justice against the route of the separation fence. Its people have gathered information about extensive building plans in Jewish settlements between the Green Line and the fence, like Salit and Reihan, which have been through various stages of approval. Alon Cohen-Lifschitz of Bimkom says that these plans were prepared before the construction of the fence, and they prove that its route has been suited to expansion needs in the Jewish settlements, divorced from security considerations.

Security, however, is a relative concept. It can be viewed in the narrow perspective of stopping terrorists and preventing terror attacks. And it is also possible to argue, as the prime minister believes, that there is an important security need for expanding the state’s narrow “waist” between Kfar Sava and Netanya, and for physical control over the groundwater reservoir. This too is a part of the struggle for the land of Israel, and Sharon is focusing on this with the backing of promises from Bush.

OUTPOST SURVEY IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, 2004

The following report by Peace Now’s Dror Etkes was published on 26 January 2005 and is available online at www.peacenow.org.il. While all settlements in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem are illegal under international law, new settlement “outposts,” all located in the West Bank, are also illegal under Israeli law, since they were built after Is-

rael’s 1996 official commitment not to build new settlements and yet are entirely distinct from pre-1996 “authorized” settlements, and therefore cannot be considered expansion of authorized settlements.

Overview

Today there are 99 outposts in the West Bank.

Two outposts were dismantled in 2004.

One outpost was dismantled and rebuilt in 2004.

Three new outposts were erected in 2004.

Twelve outposts were expanded significantly.

Permanent construction is being carried out in 15 outposts.

Outposts dismantled during 2004

1. Ginot Arye
2. Tal Binyamin Synagogue

Outpost dismantled and rebuilt in 2004

1. Mitzpe Yitzhar

New outposts erected during 2004

1. Migron South
2. Ofra Northeast
3. Ofra Southeast

Outposts under expansion in 2004

1. Alt. 468 (Nofei Prat)
2. Eli 762-Haro’e
3. Esh Kodesh
4. Gilad Farm
5. Giva’ot Olam (Avri Ran Farm)
6. Givat Asaf
7. Givat Hatamar (Efrat)
8. Kida (Adei Ad North)
9. Ma’ale Rehava’am
10. Nofei Nehemiah
11. Rachelim South
12. Tzur Shalem

Outposts in which permanent construction is being carried out

1. Adei Ad
2. Ahiya
3. Amona
4. Bruchin
5. Derech Ha’avot
6. Givat Harel
7. Haresha
8. Hayovel Section
9. Itamar Hill 777
10. Itamar Hill 782
11. Nof Harim
12. Palgei Mayim
13. Shalhavet Yitzhar
14. Tekoa D
15. Yair Farm

Summary

The surge in new outposts during the first two years of the intifada (2001–2) and the first half of 2003 (until the line was drawn in July 2003) decelerated during 2004. This year saw a minor increase in the overall number of outposts.

The outpost called Gintot Arye (south of Ofra) was dismantled. Its dismantlement by the settlers themselves, which was carried out despite all the threats and promises that it would be hotly contested, did not signal the beginning of a new trend regarding the government's attitude toward the outposts, but rather was the continuation of its old policy, which could be described as "sleight of hand." The dismantlement of Gintot Arye, which, from the very beginning, was established on land which even the State of Israel recognized as being private Palestinian land, was intended to alleviate immediate legal pressures, without attempting to deal with the depth and breadth of the all-inclusive problem of the outposts. Therefore, as this outpost has been dismantled, the caravans were transferred to two sites located east of Ofra, thereby establishing two new outposts, one of which (Ofra Northeast) was quickly populated. That very week, permanent construction of 10 buildings in the veteran outpost of Amona, also located east of Ofra, began. There is no doubt that these events (the dismantling of the outpost, the transfer of the caravans to two eastward locations, the construction of permanent buildings in Amona) are part of an unwritten agreement between the settlers and the Ministry of Defense.

Peace Now recently received an official letter from the Civil Administration of the West Bank, stating that the Israeli authorities consider the construction activity in Amona to be illegal.

SHORT TAKES

From Settlement Report, February-March 2005.

A Flexible Freeze at State

Is it also your [view] that Israel is committed to all parts of the road map, including the freeze on settlements, which would include natural growth?

Ereli: Those are commitments that have been made—to work toward a freeze of settlement activity, including natural growth.

Well, to work toward a freeze in settlement activity? No, no, the road map says freeze

all settlement activity.

Ereli: Yes.

Not work towards a freeze . . .

Ereli: And we are—our position is that that is the goal that we are working toward, a freeze on settlement activity.

And in the meantime, it may be okay for there to be growth of settlements?

Ereli: We need to get from where we are to a freeze, and that is a process that we are engaged with the Israelis on.

—State Department Daily Press Briefing,
Adam Ereli, Deputy Spokesman,
6 October 2004

No Penalty for Settlement Expansion

The Bush Administration has decided not to penalize Israel for its settlement construction activities in the occupied territories by reducing the amount of U.S. loan guarantees made available to Israel. The three-year \$9 billion program of guarantees is similar to a \$10 billion program established in the early 1990s to facilitate the absorption of Soviet immigrants. Last year the United States deducted \$170 million from the loan guarantee amount.

The More Things Change . . .

Since the summer of 2002, Israeli officials have claimed, and U.S. officials have denied, that the Bush administration has agreed to settlement expansion within the built-up areas of existing settlements and that all settlement expansion taking place is consistent with that limitation. Notwithstanding the problematic nature of such an agreement, which is a deliberately ineffective means of constraining settlement expansion, even a cursory survey of expansion activities in the West Bank suggests that Israel is blatantly ignoring its territorial restrictions.

The idea of a formal U.S.-Israel agreement establishing permissible settlement expansion in each settlement has been an on-again-off-again proposition. Professionals at the State Department and elsewhere remain vehemently opposed to such an effort, arguing that it engages the U.S. in micromanaging settlement expansion and formally makes Washington an accomplice in an Israeli effort U.S. policy has opposed for almost four decades.

Support for the idea is said to be centered at the Middle East bureau at the National Security Council headed by Elliot Abrams.

The *Washington Post* reported on 30 October 2004 that “some key administration officials, such as Elliott Abrams, the top Middle East specialist on the White House’s National Security Council staff, privately have long pressed for a more expansive definition of natural growth. After [Israeli PM Ariel] Sharon announced his plan to withdraw from Gaza last December, a senior administration official told reporters at a briefing that the purpose of a settlement freeze is to make sure additional settlers would not impede Palestinian life or prevent the formation of a viable Palestinian state. It makes no difference, he said, if the Israelis add another house within a block of existing homes. ‘We have not taken the position there has to be an end to natural growth in settlements,’ he said.”

Washington’s support for the natural growth of settlements was first declared in March 1993, during the Clinton administration.

“Parsing a Settlement Freeze”

We are concerned about all kinds of settlement activity, to include different definitions of what growth is. And we’re working with the Israelis to define what a settlement is and what the difference is between natural growth and expansion, and is natural growth something that is consistent with the Israelis’ commitments to us.

—Secretary of State Colin Powell,
Egyptian Television interview,
29 October 2004



Israeli backhoes work on a new settlers-only bypass road that will connect a number of Jewish settlements near Bethlehem, 10 February 2005. (Magnus Johansson/Reuters)