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Settlement Monitor

Author(s): Geoffrey Aronson

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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.

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ISRAEL'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY IN THE WEST BANK

SHARON'S WEST BANK POLICY LEAVES LITTLE ROOM FOR THE PA

From Settlement Report, November-December 2005.

Any informed assessment of the future direction of events in the West Bank must take as its point of departure a review of the main elements of current Israeli and Palestinian policies.

The Big Picture

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has adopted a wide-ranging and dynamic policy that makes no reference to Palestinians or the Oslo framework. This spirit of unilateralism has long been a central feature of Israel's policies in the occupied territories.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, an advocate of nonviolence, hopes to assert the leadership of the Palestinian Authority (PA) over Palestinian factions and their vio-

lent resistance to continuing occupation in an effort to convince Israel to resume negotiations on final status issues and restore territorial and security attributes lost during the intifada.

In December 2001, Israel's cabinet defined the PA as an "entity that supports terror," setting the stage for the body's subsequent emasculation. This declaration has not been amended or repudiated.

In May 2002, shortly after the beginning of Israel's restoration of direct security control over the entire West Bank, the *Settlement Report* observed, "A new, post-Oslo era has begun in the occupied territories. The understandings between Israel and the Palestinians that made possible the establishment of a Palestinian Authority led by Yasir Arafat and the creation of Palestinian security services with a mandate in Palestinian populated areas [Areas A] of the West Bank have been irrevocably undermined. Likewise, the territorial division of the West Bank that resulted from the Oslo process—the creation of Areas A, B, and C—is no

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longer relevant to the reality in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.”

Subsequent events, including Israel's departure from the Gaza Strip, have confirmed that the Sharon government has no interest or faith in the “land for security” bargain at the heart of Oslo. Nor do many Palestinians who see Israel's retreat from Gaza as a victory for the armed resistance. Abbas is relying upon the international community, particularly the Bush administration, to restore the Oslo equation, now updated by the moribund road map, to the diplomatic center stage.

Palestinian strategic objectives are freedom, independence, and sovereignty over all territories conquered by Israel in June 1967. In an April 2005 position paper presented to U.S. envoys, Palestinians demanded “full . . . sovereignty over the land borders, regional waters, and air space of these areas, including securing an international presence.” Minister for Civil Affairs Muhammad Dahlan explained, “There will be no separation between the West Bank and Gaza, and we will not allow the Gaza Strip to be turned into a prison.”

Measured against these Palestinian goals, Israel's disengagement from the Gaza Strip remains incomplete, pending a resolution of the residual powers Israel will retain over the movement of people and goods between the Gaza Strip and Egypt and beyond, and the degree of freedom established for movement between Gaza and the West Bank.

Crippling the PA

The government of Ariel Sharon has little interest in the creation of an effective Palestinian security force in the West Bank, and it is at best ambivalent about the rehabilitation of such a capability in the Gaza Strip.

In the West Bank, the Israeli army regularly exercises freedom of action everywhere, preempting the crippled security capabilities of the PA. Unilateral Israeli actions, notably the erection of the separation barrier, assassinations, and the complex and draconian system of controls on Palestinian movement, now define Israel's preferred security instruments. Despite Palestinian and international entreaties, Israel has shown no interest in reassessing these policies.

Beginning in March 2002, the government of Ariel Sharon effectively destroyed the principal feature of the Oslo framework when the IDF assumed direct control of security in Area A—covering the main Palestinian towns in the West Bank.

In November 2002, the *Settlement Report* noted, “Israel is now settling in for an extended period of the direct exercise of security responsibilities everywhere in the occupied territories, a dramatic transformation from the last decade, and one which the Bush administration, the road map notwithstanding, hesitates to confront.”

In the years that followed, Israel destroyed Palestinian operational security capabilities, adding to the already formidable internal obstacles a unified and decisive monopoly of force faced by the PA. Israel has continued to obstruct the reconstruction of Palestinian security institutions by refusing to cede operational control exercised by the IDF throughout what was formerly considered Area A and by opposing the enhancement of Palestinian security capabilities.

Maj. Gen. Ya'ir Naveh, who heads Israel's West Bank occupation forces, explains the difference between Israel's view of the Gaza Strip and West Bank as follows: “In Gaza, we are leaving and closing the gates behind us. We have no intention of leaving Judea and Samaria. We will remain here in one way or another for hundreds and thousands of years.”

Israeli policies reflect an intention to permit the PA to exercise only the most limited of security functions. As Naveh explains, “I am pleased with the operation of the [Palestinian security] apparatus. There is a positive trend: returning Israelis who stray into Palestinian cities, returning [Israeli] stolen cars, and collecting weapons. I don't expect much more from them.”

Occupation Forever

Every aspect of Israeli policy, including the separation barrier; the system of checkpoints, closures, and bypass routes; and arguably the retreat from Gaza, is inspired by the intention to remain in strategic control of all of the West Bank and in permanent, exclusive physical control of between 20 and 50 percent of it. The evacuation of four settlements and army bases in the northern part of the West Bank did not result in the change in status of these areas from Area C, another indication of Israel's current lack of interest in reviving the territorial hierarchy that characterized the Oslo period.

Israel is prepared to evacuate additional settlements in the West Bank, although the timing and extent of the retreat remain to be decided. Notwithstanding this readiness, settlement expansion and the consolidation

of new settlements, even in areas that are deemed to be potential candidates for evacuation, continues apace, without reference to concerns raised by third parties, including the United States.

ISRAEL REDRAW THE ROAD MAP, BUILDING QUIETLY AND QUICKLY

This article by Chris McGreal originally appeared in the Guardian on 18 October 2005.

At the northern edge of Jerusalem, on the main road to the Palestinian city of Ramallah, three towering concrete walls are converging around a rapidly built maze of cages, turnstiles, and bomb-proof rooms.

When construction at Qalandia is completed in the coming weeks, the remaining gaps in the 8 meter- (26 foot-) high walls will close and those still permitted to travel between the two cities will be channeled through a warren of identity and security checks reminiscent of an international frontier.

The Israeli military built the crossing without fanfare over recent months, along with other similar posts along the length of the vast new "security barrier" that is enveloping Jerusalem, while the world's attention was focused on the Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon's removal of Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip.

But these de facto border posts are just one element in a web of construction evidently intended to redraw Israel's borders deep inside the Palestinian territories and secure all of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and to do it fast so as to put the whole issue beyond negotiation. As foreign leaders, including Tony Blair, praised Mr. Sharon for his "courage" in pulling out of Gaza last month, Israel was accelerating construction of the West Bank barrier, expropriating more land in the West Bank than it was surrendering in Gaza, and building thousands of new homes in Jewish settlements.

"It's a trade off: the Gaza Strip for the settlement blocks; the Gaza Strip for Palestinian land; the Gaza Strip for unilaterally imposing borders," said Dror Etkes, director of the Israeli organization Settlement Watch. "They don't know how long they've got. That's why they're building like maniacs."

At the core of the strategy is the 420-mile West Bank barrier which many Israeli politicians regard as marking out a future border. Its route carves out large areas for expansion of the main Jewish settlements of Ariel, Ma'ale Adumim, and Gush Etzion, and

expropriates swaths of Palestinian land by separating it from its owners.

In parallel, new building on Jewish settlements during the first quarter of this year rose by 83 percent on the same period in 2004. About 4,000 homes are under construction in Israel's West Bank colonies, with thousands more homes approved in the Ariel and Ma'ale Adumim blocks that penetrate deep into the occupied territories. The total number of settlers has risen again this year with an estimated 14,000 moving to the West Bank, compared with 8,500 forced to leave Gaza.

Israel is also continuing to expand the amount of territory it intends to retain. In July alone, it seized more land in the West Bank than it surrendered in Gaza: it withdrew from about 19 square miles of territory while sealing off 23 square miles of the West Bank around Ma'ale Adumim.

Israel's strategy is to "strengthen the control over areas which will constitute an inseparable part of the state of Israel," the prime minister said after the Gaza pullout. Last month, he told a meeting of his Likud party allies that it was important to expand the settlements without drawing the world's attention. "There's no need to talk. We need to build, and we're building without talking," he said. A few days later, one of the prime minister's senior advisors, Eyal Arad, publicly advocated "a strategy of unilaterally determining the permanent borders of the state of Israel."

The greatest impact of recent Israeli actions has been in and around Jerusalem, as Israel stepped up construction of the wall along the most controversial part of its route.

"What we are seeing is an acceleration of construction of the barrier," said David Shearer, head of the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Jerusalem. "Because of the barrier, Jerusalem is being sealed off from the rest of the West Bank. Movement in Jerusalem will be with a magnetic card and a sophisticated system of gates. The access the Palestinians have enjoyed to their places of worship, to some of the best schools, to hospitals is now going to be severely restricted."

The concrete wall through Jerusalem carves out Arab enclaves in the city, restricts the growth of non-Jewish neighborhoods, and separates some 200,000 Palestinian residents from the occupied territories.

East Jerusalem will be further isolated from the rest of the West Bank by moves to link the city with the Ma'ale Adumim

settlement, using the barrier to mark out a boundary. The effect will be to entirely surround the Arab areas of Jerusalem with large Jewish neighborhoods and to push Israel's frontier almost half way across the West Bank, virtually severing the north and south of the Palestinian territory at its narrowest point.

Organizations such as the International Crisis Group say it could have potentially explosive consequences. "Current policies in and around the city will vastly complicate, and perhaps doom, future attempts to resolve the conflict by both preventing the establishment of a viable Palestinian capital in Arab East Jerusalem and obstructing the territorial contiguity of a Palestinian state," it said in a recent report. "The measures currently being implemented are at war with any viable two-state solution and will not bolster Israel's safety; in fact, they will undermine it, weakening Palestinian pragmatists, incorporating hundreds of thousands of Palestinians on the Israeli side of the fence, and sowing the seeds of growing radicalization."

In recent years, both sides have generally accepted that a negotiated agreement would leave the main settlement blocks close to Jerusalem in Israeli hands. Last year, Mr. Bush wrote to Mr. Sharon assuring him that Israel would not be expected to return to the 1967 borders "in light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli population centers."

But Daniel Seidemann, an Israeli lawyer fighting legal cases over the barrier, said the government has worked to make those realities on the ground as extensive as possible while foreign governments shied away from criticism of Mr. Sharon for fear of jeopardizing the Gaza pullout. "It's clear what's happening. It's clear the wall is used to designate the border that Sharon thinks he can get with the Americans," he said.

Mr. Sharon appears to be counting on continued silence from America and European capitals because he faces a general election next year that Washington would like to see him win over his main challenger on the far right, Benjamin Netanyahu. The Palestinian leadership believes Mr. Sharon has little incentive to negotiate because the Palestinians will not agree to surrender their claim to East Jerusalem or the large areas of land he wants to annex.

But Yossi Beilin, a former Israeli cabinet minister and a peace negotiator, said that a lack of pressure from Washington and other members of the Quartet overseeing the

"roadmap" peace plan leaves Mr. Sharon free to redraw Israel's borders. "The commitment to the roadmap is a big joke. It's hot air all the time," Mr. Beilin said. "I'm very pessimistic. I see the big gap between the speeches—how high the roadmap is on the agenda and how foreign governments say they have to deal with it—and nothing is happening on the ground. Nothing. Sharon just does what he wants."

BUILDING IN AND AROUND JERUSALEM

ISRAEL GEARS UP FOR NEW SETTLEMENT MASTERPLAN

This article by Hazel Ward for Agence France-Presse originally appeared on 1 September 2005.

The bare hills separating the largest West Bank settlement from Jerusalem will soon be transformed into urban sprawl if Israel pushes ahead with a plan that experts warn could be a terminal blow for Palestinian statehood. Aside from a handful of grazing goats, little graces the slopes of these rock-studded hills to the northeast of occupied and annexed East Jerusalem. But this largely unremarkable desert landscape, where Israel plans to build some 3,500 housing units, is at the center of a bitter Israeli-Palestinian controversy over the future of the holy city.

For the last 10 years, successive Israeli governments have intended to settle the area known as E-1, short for East 1 neighborhood, but until now nothing has been done to further plans, which would ensure Israel territorial continuity between Maale Adumim and Jerusalem. Last week, however, Israel announced plans to build a new West Bank police headquarters in the area. And on Thursday, Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said nothing would deter Israel from constructing the planned housing units, which would be home to an estimated 20,000 settlers, despite fierce opposition from the United States. Palestinian officials and experts, however, warn that Israeli construction in E-1 would completely block the narrow corridor of land running east of Jerusalem that is crucial for any future connection between the southern and northern West Bank.

"The E-1 masterplan will totally cut the West Bank in half, and it will totally seal off east Jerusalem from the rest of the Palestinian territories," explains Amos Gil, executive director of Ir Amim, an organization that

monitors Jewish settlement activity in and around Jerusalem.

Covering 12 square kilometers (nearly five square miles), E-1 comprises private Palestinian land and public territory claimed by Israel as "state land." Jan de Jong, a Dutch strategic planning consultant who works with Palestinian national and civil institutions, says E-1 development plans would see Israel building on state land while leaving small pockets of private land untouched. "Israel is planning to develop on the state land, but not on the private land, which would be left as enclaves inside E-1, meaning they would be inaccessible for the Palestinians," de Jong said.

On the Jerusalem–Jericho road, several hundred meters (yards) of newly tarmacked road snakes its way up a hillside to a construction site where the new police headquarters is being built. "Building a police station in E-1 is tantamount to standing over the roadmap and pissing on it," says Dror Etkes from anti-settlement watchdog Peace Now of the Middle East peace blueprint that demands Israel freeze all settlement activity on occupied Palestinian land. "They are just seeing how far they can push things with the Americans." The United States has sharply rebuked Israel over plans to develop the area and expand Ma'ale Adumim, given its obligations under the roadmap.

Palestinian officials warn that construction in E-1 is the last step in careful plans to completely encircle Arab East Jerusalem with Jewish settlements. "This is the last undeveloped area that provides access for Palestinians in East Jerusalem to the rest of the occupied territories," said Michael Tarazi, aide to the Palestinian minister for Jerusalem affairs, Hind Khoury. "When Israel builds here, it will have completely encircled Arab East Jerusalem with settlements, carving it away from the rest of the occupied territories and completely destroying the possibility of having any kind of capital there."

Despite the sharp noises of disapproval from the United States, Tarazi has few hopes from Washington. "Look at history. At one point, the Americans were opposed to settlements. But Israel kept building and lo and behold, [U.S. President George W.] Bush said Israel could keep hold of large population centers," he said. "The U.S. might say it is against construction in E-1 now, but in the long run that will mean nothing. The world is simply not prepared to spend the political capital needed to confront Israel and enforce its own principles."

Bush said in April 2004 that it would be "unrealistic" for Israel to give up its largest West Bank settlements in any final peace with the Palestinians.

IRVING MOSKOWITZ STEPPING UP ACTIVITIES IN EAST JERUSALEM

This article by Jonathan Lis and Meron Rapoport originally appeared in Ha'Aretz on 3 November 2005.

American Jewish millionaire Irving Moskowitz is behind a plan to establish a new Jewish neighborhood within the Shaykh Jarrah quarter of East Jerusalem.

The new neighborhood is slated to be set up on a hill between the National Police Headquarters and the Hyatt Hotel, thus creating a contiguous stretch of Jewish neighborhoods through eastern Jerusalem, reaching Mount Scopus. A request to build the complex was submitted to the Jerusalem Municipality this week.

The proposed neighborhood would be built around the Shepherd's Hotel, which Moskowitz acquired in 1985. Organizers hope to build six eight-story buildings containing 90 apartments, as well as a synagogue and kindergarten.

The municipal planning and construction company has not yet met to discuss the request, but the city's conservation committee has decided that the hotel can be knocked down since it has no special architectural value.

The compound originally belonged to Grand Mufti Haj Amin al-Husayni and served as a hotel starting in 1945. After the Six Day War, it was transferred to the custodian general. When Moskowitz acquired it, the hotel was being rented to the border police as a base.

Yosef Alalo, head of the Meretz faction on the Jerusalem City Council, said yesterday that building at the site would constitute a provocation, since it had been agreed that no Jewish building would take place inside Arab neighborhoods. He said such construction would contribute toward delegitimizing other Jewish neighborhoods built beyond the Green Line, such as Ramot, that had received some form of international recognition.

If built, the Shepherd's Hotel complex would abut the Shimon Hatzadik neighborhood, where six or seven Jewish families have taken up residence and there is a yeshiva with approximately 50 students. Jewish activists are trying to acquire control of more of that neighborhood, which

borders on the American Colony Hotel and Route 1. The buildings there were apparently in Jewish hands before 1948 and are currently inhabited by Palestinians.

Moskowitz, who first hit the headlines when he built a Jewish neighborhood in the Ras al-Amud quarter, has recently stepped up his activities in East Jerusalem. He is behind the building of a new Jewish neighborhood inside the Old City and has bought another site in Abu Dis, just outside Jerusalem. He apparently was responsible also for buying two hotels just inside the Jaffa Gate from the Greek Orthodox Church.

CHRISTIAN SETTLERS IN ARIEL

NETZARIM VERSUS THE CHRISTIANS

From Settlement Report, November–December 2005.

Ariel Mayor Ron Nahman wants “to strengthen the Jewish character of the city,” according to a 9 September 2005 article in the *Ma’ariv* supplement. The settlement was established in 1978 and enjoys a growing population of 18,000. Close to half the settlement’s population arrived from the former Soviet Union during the last 15 years, including a large percentage (up to 50 percent) who are Christian. Ariel is home to Russian evangelicals and a group of “Jews for Jesus”—the “Hope of Samaria”—who count Christians from Waco, Texas as members. These Americans were first introduced to the settlement by Nahman, who has long solicited financial and political support from Christian fundamentalist groups throughout the United States.

Ariel’s popularity among Christians has prompted a backlash of sorts. As part of his campaign “to strengthen the ideological religious [Jewish] public that lives in the Land of Israel” and to double its population in the settlement to 20 percent, Nahman invited evacuees from the Gaza settlement of Netzarim, now residing temporarily in the settlement, to establish a new, permanent neighborhood.

“If they intend to build a new little Gaza with beautiful houses and money-earning hothouses,” said one Christian resident, “I’ll be very happy.”

THE MESSIAH OF ARIEL

From Americans for Peace Now’s Middle East Peace Report 7, no. 8, 19 September 2005.

Despite his efforts to convince religious Jewish evacuees from the Gaza settlement of

Netzarim to move to the settlement of Ariel, Ron Nahman, the mayor of Ariel, is finding it a hard sell. Nahman described how he had doubled the number of the city’s residents by exploiting the new immigrants from the former Soviet Union. But he’s missing the religious element. “I need a religious vanguard to hoist the flag. I haven’t been able to persuade the religious public to move here,” he said in reference to the former Netzarim settlers. For instance, during a tour of Ariel, Nava Mann from Netzarim asked, “Perhaps the religious public is scared of the influence of the goys? And how many people here aren’t Jewish? I’ve heard that it’s 30 percent. And is everyone in the city equal? We’ve heard that there are churches here. If we live here, that will turn us into Christians. Is the goy population equal to the rest of the citizens? And where do the goy children go to school? As a Jew, don’t I have any advantage?”

Despite energetic denials, it seems that Nahman’s motivation to strengthen the Jewish identity of Ariel has quite a bit to do with its image, which is reflected in Mann’s questions and only getting stronger, of having a Christian-messianic character. In Ariel, in the Land of Israel, about a hundred messianic Jewish believers live in the settlement in community frameworks that have a Protestant character. Some consist mainly of Russian speaking families, some are English speaking families, and there are even quite a few native Israelis who have chosen to belong to this community. The Haredi Yad Leahim organization, which fights missionaries, is convinced that these are missionary organizations that want to convert Jews in general and new immigrants specifically. The organization has serious complaints about the link between the Ariel municipality, its mayor, and Christian communities in the southern U.S. They say the children of Ariel go in delegations to the Christian communities in America that have donated money to Ariel.

“We believe in Jesus, but consider ourselves Jews, messianic Jews,” explains Ina (not her real name), who emigrated from Moscow 14 years ago and who heads the Tikvat Shomron messianic-Jewish community. “In our view, Christianity is the continuation of Judaism, and Jesus is the messiah. We observe the Jewish holidays as well as the Christian holidays.” Hanna Weiss has been a settler in Ariel since immigrating from the U.S. 17 years ago and has drawn around her a small group of Jews who believe in Jesus.

"I combine my faith that I learned as a little girl in Christianity with the Torah of Israel," she said. Last Friday, the seventy families from Netzarim, who are living temporarily in Ariel, made a decision regarding their future. Sixty percent voted in favor of moving to a temporary community in Yevul and afterwards building the permanent community in Halutzit. Just 40 percent voted to stay in Ariel. The future plan is to move Netzarim and Atzmona to permanent communities called Halutzit A and Halutzit B, near Kerem Shalom. (*Ma'ariv*, 9 September 2005, and *Yedi'ot Abaronot*, 18 September 2005)

ISRAELI PRESS REVIEW

Excerpted from Americans for Peace Now's Middle East Peace Report 7, no. 8, 19 September 2005.

Stray Katz Strut

Six months have passed since the report on illegal settlement outposts was published in a blaze of publicity, but it is hard to find any sign that its recommendations are being implemented. Construction continues unabated, the settlers are being reinforced, and Agriculture Minister Israel Katz wants "to strengthen our grip on the land." Katz wishes to seize control of 15,000 dunams in the southern Hebron hills, near the Lucifer Farm settlement outpost. Last week he visited the area and ordered that thousands of dunams be fenced in as pasture for two flocks, each with 250–300 sheep and goats. The land is defined as state-owned by the Jewish Agency Settlement Division, but it lies close to one of the settlement outposts defined as illegal in the government report submitted by Talia Sasson [see Doc. C2 in *JPS* 135]. It was only a few months ago that the Israeli government decided to leave this area outside the separation fence, but Katz is now creating facts on the ground and intends to create a situation in which the area is surrounded by agricultural fences instead of the security fence, which is located close to the Green Line.

"This is an area of the Land with magnificent Jewish agricultural settlement," Katz said, "and in the vicinity there are large tracts of state land which are empty. The Ministry of Agriculture, with me at its head, will help the settlers to strengthen their hold upon the land. The government's decision to leave this area outside the security fence was a mistake. It is an area with no Arab inhabitants, and it is very important that the Israeli set-

tlements there should be protected by the security fence." This is not the first time that Katz has established farms with the aim of keeping land. In the past he used a similar method in the Jordan Valley, when he helped with the establishment of the Becker Farm, in order to prevent Palestinians from taking over territory.

Meanwhile, at a time when the security establishment was preoccupied with disengagement, the settlers expedited construction in the illegal settlements in the West Bank. About 130 new housing units have been built in them recently, most of them permanent homes. The most significant expansion is at the outpost of Bruchin, west of Ariel, where roughly 40 new homes have been built. The Israeli Peace Now movement found that the number of settlers living in the illegal outposts has increased by several hundred, and it is now approaching 1,000 families. (*Ma'ariv*, 7 September 2005)

IDF vs. Toddler Throttlers

At noon, after the bell rings in the school in Khirbat Atwana near the West Bank settlement of Ma'on in the southern Hebron hills, ten Palestinian urchins make their way past the school gate and begin to march in the direction of a military jeep that is waiting for them. Not far away, an IDF soldier doing lookout duty on the road sees them and gives the word to his company commander, "They're on their way in your direction." The ten children, pupils in the first through fourth grade, live in Khirbat Umm Tuba, near Ma'on. They make their way to the road twice daily, once from home to school and then back home from school. Each time they are escorted by a military jeep, an officer, and a contingent of soldiers and police officers. Why? Without this escort, they would be unable to make their way down the 800-meter dirt road that connects their home to their school. Were it not for the "bodyguards," the young pupils would suffer at the hands of their neighbors, the settlers from Ma'on.

The Ma'on settlers refuse to allow their Palestinian neighbors to use the dirt road that runs near the settlement, not even the first graders among them. The only way the children are able to exercise their right to go to school is if they receive the protection of the Israeli Police and the IDF. When the children reach the twisty part of the road that runs right behind the settlers' homes, they decide not to take their chances and break into a run. Eight-year-old Tareq explains,

"When the army is here with us there's nothing for us to be afraid of. But without the soldiers it's frightening, because the settlers beat us up." "This isn't a standard task—it's an ethical-moral task whose purpose is to allow the Palestinian schoolchildren to get to school every day and back home," explained Dep. Cmdr. Ali Zamir, the commander of the Hebron police station. "We view with gravity the behavior of a small handful of settlers who do not represent the majority, who harass helpless Palestinian schoolchildren." Zamir said that the task of protecting the children came at the expense of other tasks. (*Yedi'ot Aharonot*, 8 September 2005)

Westward, Ho!

In the most recent Peace Index survey of Israeli public opinion conducted by the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research at Tel Aviv University, a plurality of Israelis supports further settlement evacuation from the West Bank. The survey was taken shortly after the pullout of the Gaza settlements, with the difficult images of the evacuation, not yet forgotten, helping to strengthen the emotional component of the views. But even under these circumstances, 71.5 percent of the Jewish public thinks the unilateral disengagement from Gaza is not the end of the story, but only a first step toward an extensive evacuation of Jewish settlements from the West Bank in the context of a final agreement with the Palestinian Authority. When asked for their position on an extensive evacuation of West Bank settlements, a plurality of 47.8 percent said they favored it (34.3 percent replying that they would support it only in the framework of a peace agreement with the Palestinians and 13.5 percent that they would favor it even in a unilateral framework), while 41.8 percent said they would not support a far-reaching evacuation of the West Bank under any conditions. Compared to responses from a similar poll taken in April, these results reflect a 50 percent drop of support for unilateral action, but an increase of those who favor evacuation in the context of an agreement or don't like the idea at all.

Not all West Bank settlers would necessarily oppose leaving some time soon. Matthew Gutman reports in the *Jerusalem Post* that 66 of 83 settler families in the south Hebron hills settlement of Tene Oranim signed a petition last month demanding evacuation and compensation from the government. "With the evacuation part of the Sharon disengagement having gone more smoothly than

anyone expected and additional settlements headed for the chopping block," he wrote, "settlers in various communities marooned on the Palestinian side of the security barrier have begun to clamor for a way out. Settlers not only from the West Bank's southern rim but also those in the north, and in major towns like Karnei Shomron that may not be included inside the fence, have said they would leave if equitably compensated. Some 30 percent of the 80,000 settlers living on the 'Palestinian side' of the security barrier would move if compensated, according to a recent poll conducted by One Home, a non-profit organization that aims to help settlers move to Israel proper." (August Peace Index Survey, 7 September 2005, and *Jerusalem Post*, 9 September 2005)

Accessories to Settler Crime

The legal advisor of the city of Jerusalem has told the Israel Police and the Housing Ministry that police and the ministry became "accessories to a crime" when they helped settlers from the Ateret Cohanim nonprofit organization take possession of an illegally constructed building in East Jerusalem and paid for its protection. *Ha'Aretz* reported in April that a Palestinian named Muhammad Maragha had built a seven-story building in the Silwan neighborhood of East Jerusalem on behalf of Ateret Cohanim, which had also purchased the land rights from him. The building was constructed without any permit from the Jerusalem municipality, and the city inspectors failed to identify construction at the site, even though it went on for more than a year. Despite this, police secured the entry of Ateret Cohanim people into the building in April 2004 and evicted members of Maragha's family who were living there at the time. Since then, the settlers have been living there under the protection of a private security firm that is paid by the Housing Ministry. The building still lacks a permit and does not pay Jerusalem municipal taxes. The letter from attorney Yossi Havilo to the Housing Ministry and police says that at issue is a building code violation "of the utmost severity" and that an indictment will be filed shortly.

The Housing Ministry spends approximately NIS 32 million a year on private security firms providing protection for settlers in East Jerusalem. City Council member Yosef Papa Alalu said that Havilo's letter demonstrates, "You cannot give criminals government and police support. Protection

must be given to the residents, not to people who come to the eastern part of the city to wreak havoc." Alalu also said that the mayor of Jerusalem has a stricter demolition policy when it comes to Arabs living in East Jerusalem. During the first half of 2005,

the mayor declined to sign 4 percent of demolition order issues for East Jerusalem, compared to 37 percent of those in the western part of the city. Execution of demolition orders requires the mayor's signature. (*Ha'Aretz*, 7 September 2005)



Palestinian farmers from the West Bank village of Salim near Nablus wait for Israeli permission to reach their olive groves near Elon Moreh settlement, 20 October 2005. (Jaafar Ashtiyeh/AFP/Getty Images)