



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
JOURNALS + DIGITAL PUBLISHING



Settlement Monitor

Author(s): Geoffrey Aronson

Source: *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Summer 2006), pp. 131-143

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

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jps.2006.35.4.131>

Accessed: 26/02/2015 16:41

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.

<i>Evacuation of Additional Settlements on Olmert's Agenda</i>	131
<i>A New Concensus, by Gideon Levy</i>	133
Colonizing Greater Jerusalem	
Greater Jerusalem at the Crossroads: Sharon's Impact, Olmert's Vision, by Americans for Peace Now	135
The Battle for Jerusalem's Old City and Holy Basin, by American for Peace Now	137
The Republic of Elad, by Meron Rapoport	139

EVACUATION OF ADDITIONAL SETTLEMENTS ON OLMERT'S AGENDA

From Settlement Report, March–April 2006

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was keenly aware that the execution of Israel's "disengagement" from the Gaza Strip and a portion of the northern West Bank was critical if Israel is to continue to dominate the diplomatic playing field and maximize its security and settlement interests in the occupied territories. Sharon's exit from Israeli politics came far sooner than he had anticipated, but, as he intended, the process he set in motion and the principles that he established cannot be ignored by his elected successor, whatever his party affiliation.

Sharon initiated a revolution in two central aspects of Israel's settlement policy—he forced a reluctant Israel Defense Force (IDF) command to change its security doctrine regarding the occupied territories and thereby transformed the relationship between Israeli security and settlements; he also began to undermine the shared interests between the key elements of the settlement enterprise and the state.

It would not only be premature but also fundamentally incorrect, however, to sug-

gest that the changes wrought by Sharon have dealt a death blow to settlements. Neither he nor his successor harbors any such intention, even in many areas east of the separation barrier and certainly not in East Jerusalem, the "seam zone" west of the barrier, and the land-hungry settlement "blocs" where the majority of the almost one half million Israeli settlers live. Israel's settlement enterprise has been decades in the making. Billions of dollars have been allocated by the government, and the private sector is heavily invested. National institutions, laws, and political parties have been created and mobilized to nurture and expand settlements. A significant number of Israelis, many of them settlers, have a direct investment in national policies supporting their maintenance and expansion. Even if they desired (and as yet they do not), Israel's political and security leadership cannot easily undo what their predecessors have long labored to make permanent. Neither can Palestinian opposition in whatever form, nor policies of the international community, easily compel an Israeli retreat of dimensions necessary to establish the territorial basis for stable, peaceful relations between Israel and its Palestinian neighbors.

Journal of Palestine Studies Vol. XXXV, No. 4 (Summer 2006), pp. 131–143, ISSN 0377-919X, electronic ISSN 1533-8614. © 2006 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>.

Settlements Not a Security Asset

For almost four decades Israel based its defense doctrine in the Gaza Strip as well as the West Bank on the creation of a symbiotic relationship between Israeli civilian settlement and the IDF. This relationship was actually strengthened during the Oslo era, at great cost to Palestinians, as Israel redeployed within the area in a manner that boosted settlements and its overall strategic control of all the occupied territories.

Disengagement from the Gaza Strip marked the birth of a new defense concept and military deployment for Israel's territorial perimeter with the Gaza Strip, with significant implications for the West Bank as well. In Gaza, the protection of Israel's security is no longer based on civilian Israeli settlement and the IDF's direct physical control of Gaza and its border with Egypt. In its place, Israel now depends on perimeter security and the calibrated use of intensifying levels of airborne firepower and artillery to deter Palestinian violations of the border. The transformation is only beginning in the West Bank, where Israel evacuated less than 1,000 civilians from four small settlements in the Jenin region but maintained full Israeli security and civil control in the evacuated area.

Settlements and the IDF's expansive deployment and operational control within Gaza itself—the two key foundations of previous Israeli policy—have been abandoned under this new post-disengagement policy. Absent too is an Israeli intention to exercise absolute control over those elements of Gaza's external perimeter not immediately adjacent to Israel, including the Gaza-Egypt border and prospective sea and air links. As a consequence, Israel in practice has surrendered its longstanding demand for Gaza's demilitarization as a feature of a negotiated agreement—a key feature of the Oslo era—choosing instead to deploy deterrent, retaliatory, and special forces outside Gaza. In this sense, Israel's territorial relationship toward Gaza now exhibits a greater similarity to Israel's pre-1967 relationship than to the era of direct occupation from 1967 to 2005. Trade and labor relationships have also changed, although not yet so radically. Israel has signaled its lack of interest in maintaining the single economic envelope including Israel and the occupied territories that was for decades at the heart of occupation policy and was formulated in the Paris Protocols of 1994. Israel is actively considering alterna-

tive economic and trade options to govern the new era.

As part of this policy, Israel is not only separating itself from Gaza. It has also isolated Gaza from the West Bank and begun to separate itself from parts of the West Bank as well. Restrictive controls on the movement of Palestinians, as well as goods and services, from Gaza to Israel and the West Bank define Israeli policy today, notwithstanding agreements and understandings to the contrary. Suggestions by Israeli officials that these increasingly draconian policies are a result of Hamas's popular victory in elections to the Palestinian Council are meant to give a politically palatable justification to a wide-ranging Israeli policy that proceeds without reference to Palestinian needs regardless of the Palestinian party in power. This concept has emerged incrementally over the last fifteen years to a point where a "hard" border, administered by Israel increasingly through international-like crossing points, now limits and frequently prevents Palestinian passage from Gaza to Israel and the West Bank.

Updating Israeli Security in the West Bank—Evacuate More Settlements, Maintain Troops

On 14 December 1997, Israel's minister of defense Yitzhak Mordecai presented to the cabinet of Likud Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu an updated "Security Interests" map initially prepared by the IDF Planning Branch at Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's request during the Taba talks preceding the signing of the Oslo II accord in September 1995. This map left some 45 of 144 West Bank settlements outside Israeli sovereignty, while providing for their extraterritorial status through unspecified "special arrangements." The 1997 Security Interests map marked the following areas for annexation to Israel:

- a 10–15-km-wide strip along the Jordan Valley border;
- a 3–7-km-wide strip along the Green Line; and
- two roadways—one in the north and one in the south—running in an east-west direction across the West Bank.

In recent months, the IDF Planning Branch has revisited the issue, narrowing Israel's security interests in the Jordan Valley and noting a readiness to move the separation barrier closer to the Green Line in some areas (perhaps south of Hebron) while

pushing it to the east in others (near Ben-Gurion airport, for example). Building upon the premises of the Gaza disengagement plan, an authoritative 6 March report on the next stage of disengagement in the West Bank by *Ha'Aretz* correspondent Aluf Benn noted, "The general view in the defense establishment is that settlements do not contribute directly to security and also force the IDF to deploy troops for their defense. Moreover, there is no particular settlement whose location is viewed by the IDF as critical to security."

These are remarkable words. Had such sentiments prevailed in the first decades of occupation, there would have been no justification for the entire framework of Israeli settlement.

Israel's defense establishment has not addressed directly the politically explosive issue of which settlements to evacuate, limiting itself to recommendations based on controlling topographical features and water resources. Almost all settlements west of the separation barrier as well as those around greater Jerusalem and Ariel, however, appear to be politically untouchable.

While supporting an unspecified degree of settlement evacuation from the West Bank, the IDF assessment, building upon the precedent established in the September 2005 West Bank disengagement, supports continuing Israeli security control over evacuated areas in the West Bank, in contrast to Gaza, where Israel withdrew settlements as well as armed forces.

This type of deployment—which would place Israeli occupation troops in "foreign" territory without what has long been the politically vital rationale of protecting Israeli settlements—was rejected by Israeli policymakers after the 1967 war as politically unsustainable. Its adoption today represents a clear break with a central assumption of Israeli occupation and security policy that transformed Israel's own understanding of its presence in the territories from hostile occupation of another people into the protection of its own citizens (settlers) in Israel's homeland. It is not clear at all that this is a politically sustainable option among Israelis not anxious to repeat the IDF's divisive experience in south Lebanon.

The IDF may be prepared to take greater control over a settlement map that over the last two decades has developed a life of its own. In contrast to its 1997 effort, the new IDF map sanctions evacuation of the settlements of the Jordan Valley. Military officials

are apparently content with a limited "security belt" without civilian settlements in the Jordan Valley on the model presented at Camp David in July 2000. It also appears that the IDF is no longer committed to maintaining control over the west-east routes between Israel and the Jordan Valley running east from Ariel and Ma'ale Adumim, a concomitant of its desire to remain in the Jordan Valley, which can be resupplied via the Israeli town of Bet She'an to the valley's north. In contrast to the 1997 plan, the heights and settlements, if not military installations like the monitoring facility at Ba'al Hatzor west of the Jordan Valley along the route of the Allon Road, may also be dispensable. Evacuation of settlements along this route also suggests that the smaller settlement blocs between the Allon Road and Route 60 further west—traditionally the main north-south thoroughfare that Palestinians are all but prevented from using because of settlements sited along its route—could also be on the block. Indeed, Army Radio quoted former Security Service chief and Kadima party star Avi Dichter as saying that among the settlements to be evacuated would be Elon Moreh, Yitzhar, Itamar, Shilo, Psagot, and Tapuah, all of which lie along this route. Evacuation of these settlements makes no sense without an eventual evacuation of Jordan Valley and Allon Road settlements. Dichter also mentioned additional settlements located south of Jerusalem—Tekoa, P'nei Hever, Nokdim, Ma'on, and Otniel.

The settlement list noted by Dichter and other Israeli politicians should not be seen as authoritative, but rather as the first evidence of the furious jockeying to decide the scope of Israel's next evacuation from West Bank settlements. As Sharon intended, further withdrawals are almost certain to come. And as he intended, they will not signal an end to the battle between Israel and the Palestinians, but rather yet another chapter in their continuing conflict.

A NEW CONCENSUS

This article by Gideon Levy appeared in Ha'Aretz on 19 March 2006.

A new consensus has stumbled unannounced into the Israeli narrative, going by the name of "settlement blocs." While pundits and opinion polls indicate a seeming shift leftward, with a majority for the establishment of a Palestinian state and evacuation of settlements, the real political map has taken a sharp turn to the right.

The three large parties' platforms—Kadima, Labor, and the Likud, seemingly center, left, and right—are completely united in their agreement about keeping the large settlements in Israel's hands. Even the Geneva plan, which is seen as "radical," leaves Ma'ale Adumim inside Israel. Suddenly, we have woken to a new consensus. It is not clear how this right-wing consensus was established. Once there was a consensus over Jerusalem—now it has spread to half the West Bank—yet it's called "a move to the left."

Israelis have in fact moved to a position of "give peace no chance"—saying no to a just agreement, no to a Palestinian state. Since when has the size of the settlements determined their moral and legal standing? Whoever votes for one of the large parties must know he is casting his ballot for annexation.

Anyone fluctuating among the three should know this is a false indecision. Regarding the peace process and Palestinians, there is no difference among them. The self-congratulation over the end of the Greater Israel vision is groundless. So is the idea that Israelis are fed up with the occupation and wish for a just agreement. The large settlement blocs will foil any such chance. A dissected West Bank will never become an independent Palestinian state. This is exactly why the "settlement blocs" were built.

The most radical and dangerous settlement in the West Bank is Ma'ale Adumim. Not Yitzhar and Tapuach, not Itamar or Havat Maon, but the town destined to be connected to Jerusalem and become the capital's largest sleeping suburb. Its residents are among the most immoral settlers in the West Bank. Their settlement was built on private land confiscated from Abu Dis, Anata, Azariyya, al-Tur, and 'Isawiya, and was declared "state land" in a dubious legal procedure intended to sever the north of the West Bank from its south. Ma'ale Adumim is the settlement that has caused the most extensive deportation of residents from their homes—the Jahalin tribe, whose people are now forced to live in the Abu Dis garbage dump. This is a patent violation of international justice, which prohibits the transfer of residents in occupied territories.

The recent decision to build a police station in the E-1 zone joining Ma'ale Adumim and Jerusalem declares the absolute end of the chance of an agreement. After the police station the town will grow, completely

strangling the West Bank. There is nothing more certain than the forecast that the West Bank police headquarters to be built in E-1 will be followed by 3,200 housing units, with a tourism region between Jerusalem and Ma'ale Adumim all forming one territorial contiguity.

Kadima, the "center" party, which engraved on its banner the attempt to reach an agreement with the Palestinians, or at least to evacuate settlements unilaterally, is acting to deepen and perpetuate the occupation. Soon the United States too will remove its objection to building the housing units, just as it laundered the plan to build "only" the police headquarters—and Ma'ale Adumim will become an inseparable part of the eternal capital.

With this fraud Ma'ale Adumim was established. It started out as a seemingly innocent temporary camp set up in 1975 for 23 families. Thirty years later it has become a huge settlement of 32,000 residents, whose municipal area is larger than Tel Aviv's—50,553 dunams for the big city and 53,000 dunams for the consensus settlement. A B'Tselem report released in 1999 says Ma'ale Adumim has 2,120 square meters per capita in contrast to 76 square meters in Abu Dis across the way. The latter was built generations before Ma'ale Adumim and its land was usurped and given to that settlement. Is this not quite clearly an outrageous injustice?

The new Israeli consensus also says yes to the perpetuation of Gush Etzhar and Ariel; the Jordan Valley has been sanctified long ago; the gigantic neighborhoods in the occupied part of Jerusalem are not even up for discussion. From Likud to Labor, a unanimous choir is saying yes to the settlement project while columnist eulogize it.

Those who say the "Greater Israel vision" has given way to "dividing the land" are deceiving the country and the world. So are those who airily assert that Israelis now recognize the need to end the occupation. The truth is much worse: The Israeli discourse continues to foster the most deeply rooted national aspiration—to have the cake and eat it.

If Israeli society were more honest with itself it would have said the truth: the absolute majority of Israelis do not want just peace with the Palestinians, do not think they are entitled to a state of their own and do not see them as equal human beings. That's what we are and such is our wish for peace.

COLONIZING GREATER JERUSALEM

GREATER JERUSALEM AT THE CROSSROADS: SHARON'S IMPACT, OLMERT'S VISION

The "issue brief" excerpted from here appeared in the 5 May 2006 issue of Americans for Peace Now's publication Settlements in Focus (vol. 2, issue 7). Produced by Lara Friedman of Americans for Peace Now and Daniel Seideman of the Israeli organization Ir Amin, it appears in full at www.peacenow.org.

"Greater Jerusalem" generally refers to an area that encompasses about a 20 kilometer radius around the Old City. This area is home to around 600,000 Israelis and 600,000 Palestinians and comprises two overlapping metropolitan areas—West Jerusalem and the Israeli built-up areas located inside and on the periphery of East Jerusalem; and the traditionally Palestinian East Jerusalem, including its adjacent neighborhoods on the edges of Jerusalem's municipal borders.

There is virtually no Palestinian presence in West Jerusalem. However, in East Jerusalem (within the city's municipal borders) there is nearly numerical parity between the Jewish and Palestinian populations. This is the result of Israeli policies that since 1967 have actively worked to create a large Jewish presence in East Jerusalem—in new neighborhoods intertwined with Palestinian neighborhoods—in order to ensure that the city would forever be indivisible.

In recent years, however, the political winds have shifted in favor of separation from the Palestinians. Israeli policymakers and planners dealing with Jerusalem are finding it difficult to reconcile the new demand for "separation" with the results of decades of policy that sought to make any such separation impossible.

What is the situation with the security barrier in this area?

The route of the barrier in the Jerusalem area reflects three simultaneous, often contradictory strategies:

Reinforce the Municipal Borders

A strategy of "pouring concrete" on the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem was one idea behind the barrier in Jerusalem. It reflected, at least initially, the views of Jerusalem's political leaders, including then-mayor Olmert. This strategy is in evidence on the southern border of the city, as well as in areas of the north and east. . . . Two rationales underlie this strategy.

First, the municipal boundary represents, legally, the path of least resistance, since in the eyes of Israeli law it is the border between the West Bank and Israel. In reality, though, this line is generally oblivious to the patterns of life in the city, since for the past four decades it has existed for the most part only on paper, with little or no impact on the habits and movements of Israelis or Palestinians. As a result, placing the barrier on the municipal borders makes little sense in many areas (like the north and east of the city), where, rather than separating Israelis and Palestinians, it separates Palestinians from Palestinians, wreaking havoc on the lives of those left on both sides of the barrier. It should be noted that in some areas, like the southern part of Jerusalem, putting the barrier on this line actually does reflect geographic and demographic realities (and patterns of life). Thus, it should not be surprising that in such areas it corresponds closely to the borders delineated on the map developed as part of the Geneva Initiative.

Second, following Barak's breaking of the Jerusalem "taboo" at Camp David with open discussion about dividing the city, this approach represents an effort to reassert the hitherto sacred mantra of Jerusalem as the "eternal undivided capital of Israel, never to be divided."

Alter the Demographics

Even as plans were being carried out to reinforce the municipal borders in some areas, in other areas politicians and planners saw an opportunity "improve" the city's demography. Thus, certain segments of the barrier represent an effort to gerrymander the borders of Jerusalem in order to maximize the city's Jewish population and minimize its Palestinian population. This strategy is in evidence in the north of the city, where the Kafr Aqab neighborhood has been cut off by the barrier, as well as in the east, where the Shu'fat refugee camp has been left outside of the barrier.

However, this strategy has run headfirst into the "law of unintended consequences." Given a situation in which East Jerusalem residents have an annual income of around \$3,500 and West Bank residents have an annual income of around \$1,100 (compared to West Jerusalem residents, who have an annual income of around \$17,000), East Jerusalem residents understand that ending up on the "wrong" side of the barrier would mean being plunged almost overnight into poverty, with their standard of living

dramatically reduced and leaving them cut off from their center of life—such as schools, health services, sources of employment, and family. As a result, efforts to gerrymander the borders in East Jerusalem have resulted in Palestinian residents of affected and potentially affected areas moving to neighborhoods on the “right” side of the fence, thereby increasing the overall percentage of Palestinians in a relatively smaller Jerusalem. (Note: After the 1967 War, Israel granted Palestinian residents of the newly-united and newly-expanded East Jerusalem the status of legal residents in the city. Over the years their status has repeatedly come under attack, with efforts to revoke residency rights of Palestinians based, for example, on the claim that their “center of life” was not actually Jerusalem or on the fact that they hold a dual nationality. In such cases, the “law of unintended consequences” yielded similar results).

Even more ironic, this unintended consequence has led to such a steep rise in housing costs in Palestinian neighborhoods that many East Jerusalem Palestinians are reportedly now renting housing in Israeli areas, in particular in the East Jerusalem settlement of Pisgat Ze’ev, where rentals are reportedly now cheaper than in adjacent Palestinian neighborhoods.

Demarcate “Greater Jerusalem”

This approach, more than the others, represents the approach of former Prime Minister Sharon and the current approach of Prime Minister Olmert. It should be recalled that when the idea of a security barrier was first broached, then–Prime Minister Sharon strongly opposed it, both in Jerusalem and in the West Bank as a whole. Later he came to accept and even embrace the idea, recognizing how popular it was with Israelis. With respect to Jerusalem, Sharon ultimately viewed the construction of the barrier as an opportunity to achieve his longstanding goal of expanding and cementing Israeli control over Greater Jerusalem, with the implicit approval of the U.S. administration. This strategy is evidenced in plans for expansion of the barrier to the north (to include the settlement of Givat Ze’ev and most of the surrounding land up to the outskirts of Ramallah), to the east (to include Ma’ale Adumim and the E-1 area), and the south (toward Bethlehem and the Etzion bloc of settlements). Sharon’s Greater Jerusalem strategy is the genesis of the “cloverleaf” design of the barrier, with each leaf extend-

ing far beyond the municipal boundaries of the city to take in a settlement bloc and surrounding areas. Sharon’s thinking evolved in this area as well, with his earliest idea of the cloverleaf including leaves that extend right up to the outskirts of Ramallah, the Jordan Valley, and Bethlehem.

Does Olmert share the same views as Sharon with respect to Jerusalem?

Looking at Prime Minister Olmert’s statements on the issue of Jerusalem—dating back to years before the latest election campaign—it is clear that he and Sharon share similar views with respect to key areas that “resonate” for them in Jerusalem. Specifically, they both believe that Israel cannot ever give up control of the Old City, the visual basin of the Old City, and the East Jerusalem central business district (i.e., Salah Eddin Street, Zahra Steet, etc).

During a March 23rd debate on the future of Jerusalem held at the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, the Kadima representative (Otniel Schneller, a former leader of the YESHA Council of Settlements) was quoted in *Ha’Aretz* as stating:

The Old City, Mount Scopus, the Mount of Olives, the City of David, Sheikh Jarrah will remain in our hands, but Kafr Akeb, A-Ram, Shuafat, Hizma, A-Zaim, A-Tur, Abu Dis are not part of historic Jerusalem, and in the future, when the Palestinian state is established, they will become its capital.

Schneller gave more details during interviews with the Associated Press the first week of May 2006, when he was quoted as saying that under the new Olmert government plan, the Old City and the Holy Basin “would become ‘a special region with special understandings,’ but remain under Israeli sovereignty.”

How does Olmert differ from Sharon with respect to his views on Jerusalem?

When comparing Olmert and Sharon on Jerusalem, it is important to note the changing concept of the security barrier. In the 2003 Israeli election, what resonated among Israelis was the issue of security and the need to build the barrier in order to achieve security. In the March 2006 election, the issue was no longer simply security but also borders, and more specifically, the need for Israel to define its borders. This reflected the growing Israeli desire for normalcy—to know “who we are” and “where we start and where we end.” This changing concept of the role of the security barrier is the current

“zeitgeist” and appears to have had a strong impact on Olmert’s plans for Jerusalem. . . .

. . . While Sharon was devoted to the idea of a territorially maximalist Greater Jerusalem, Olmert is more focused on demographics—achieving a strongly Jewish Jerusalem. Thus, he is likely to be less interested in maintaining Israeli control in some areas of Jerusalem that do not resonate historically or religiously and have a large Palestinian population (e.g., the Palestinian neighborhoods on the northern, eastern and southern fringes of the current municipal boundary). . . .

Olmert can be expected to try to impose a modified version of Sharon’s map on Jerusalem. Such a map will include the key areas that resonate historically or religiously for Jews, as well as the large settlement blocs that surround the city and create the Sharon “cloverleaf.” At the same time, he is likely to seek to re-draw Jerusalem’s borders to leave out major Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem. . . .

Two important things are happening today on the ground in Jerusalem:

Lining the Route of the Barrier with Settlements

First, there is an ongoing effort to line the route of the security barrier with settlements. . . . This effort is evident in the east, with the continuing efforts to proceed with E-1, which would close off Jerusalem from the West Bank on the northeast quadrant of the city. . . .

This effort is also evident in the southern part of the city, where a chain of settlements is planned that would close off East Jerusalem from Bethlehem and Jerusalem’s southern hinterland along the route of the barrier. These latter settlements are still in the embryonic stage, largely because the land on which they would be built is owned by Palestinians. Efforts to invoke the “Absentee Property Law” to deprive the owners of their land have been declared illegal by Israel’s attorney general, although that same attorney general has subsequently issued contradictory statements, raising some concern that the battle over that issue is not yet over.

Looking at the totality of these settlement efforts on Jerusalem’s periphery, it is clear that if implemented, the result will be the severing of East Jerusalem from its West Bank environs—consistent with Sharon’s long-held view that East Jerusalem must be cut off geographically and politically from the West Bank.

Strengthening Jewish Extremists In and Around the Old City

Second, there is a new and extremely dangerous trend in recent months: the most extremist Jewish settlers are taking control of some of the most highly contested areas of Jerusalem, in some cases apparently abetted by elements of the Israeli government.

THE BATTLE FOR JERUSALEM’S OLD CITY AND HOLY BASIN

This “issue brief” excerpted here appeared in the 19 May 2006 issue of Americans for Peace Now’s publication Settlements in Focus (vol. 2, issue 8). Produced by Lara Friedman of Americans for Peace Now and Daniel Seideman of the Israeli organization Ir Amin, it is available in full at www.peacenow.org.

In recent months Israel has begun allowing the most extremist Jewish settlers to take control of some of the most highly contested areas of Jerusalem. In some specific cases, government authorities are clearly abetting the settlers’ efforts.

Perhaps the most egregious example of this is the case of the large national park that surrounds the Old City on its south and east. Israel recently handed de facto control of this national park—and the many religious and historic sites it contains—to the extremist settler organization El Ad (which for years has led efforts to establish a Jewish presence in the neighborhood of Silwan, also known as the City of David. . . .). As reported recently in *Ha’Aretz* newspaper, visitors to the sites buy admission tickets from El Ad employees, admission fees go into El Ad coffers, and tour guides and staff at the site preach El Ad’s own brand of extremist, exclusionist history. The Jerusalem Municipality Web site’s page on the City of David refers visitors to a link to the El Ad website; the link no longer works, since El Ad is in the process of launching a new, sophisticated and evidently well-financed site, which thus far lacks any English-language content.

Another national park northeast of the Old City, to be placed under the control of Jewish extremists, is in the planning stages. In addition, in recent months the Jerusalem settlers have once again begun taking over Palestinian properties and intensifying activities in the heart of the Muslim Quarter, in Silwan, and in the areas around and overlooking the Old City (sometimes referred to as its “visual basin” or “the Holy Basin”). . . .

... From the scope of the efforts, the covert manner in which they are being undertaken, and the involvement of properties that are controlled by the state of Israel, it does appear clear that this new campaign involves the consent and active support of some elements within the Israeli government. The Antiquities Authority, the National Parks Authority, the Ministry of Construction, and the Ministry of Infrastructures, for example, are clearly complicit, in varying degrees. Given former Prime Minister Sharon's strong support for and direct involvement in such efforts in the past... some observers believe it is not a coincidence that this resurgence of activity arose during his tenure as prime minister. However, until there is greater investigation—and possibly a new commission of inquiry—it is likely that the full extent of the government's role will remain murky.

Nonetheless, there is clear evidence of active Israeli government support for the settlers. For example, in 2005 the Knesset approved NIS 60 million (around \$13.5 million) per year for 7 years to fund restoration of the Old City and its environs—funds that some experts argue are tantamount to a slush fund for settler activities in the area. In addition, the decision to give settlers control over various public areas—like the national park discussed earlier and an historic quarry, discussed below—indicate clear support from at least some elements in the Israeli government (since the decisions and authorization had to have come from within the government).

In addition, past experience suggests that the extremist settler groups are receiving substantial assistance from groups and individuals outside Israel, including from sources in the United States (where such assistance is tax-exempt).

What areas exactly are the settlers targeting?

Settlers are targeting sites in key areas of the Old City and the Holy Basin, including some areas that the settlers have never in the past succeeded in penetrating:

The Old City

- Muslim Quarter: The Government of Israel is preparing to move ahead with a plan to build a new settlement inside Herod's Gate, in the heart of the Muslim Quarter (discussed in detail in *Settlements in Focus*, vol. 1, issue 8).
- Muslim Quarter: The Government of Israel recently handed over to the Ateret

Cohanim settler organization a new project to “restore” a 3,000-year-old quarry running under the Old City, from Herod's Gate 280 meters toward the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif. The project is being funded by, among others, the Ministry of Infrastructure, from monies budgeted for the rehabilitation of quarries (funds ostensibly meant to deal with the blight on the land left by modern quarries, not the transformation of a 3,000-year-old underground quarry into a tourist site run by far right-wing settlers).

- Jaffa Gate: In 2005 settlers claimed to have acquired—under questionable circumstances that are now the subject of legal proceedings—two Palestinian hotels located at Jaffa Gate. . . . This is the entrance to the Old City that will under the best of circumstances . . . require the most delicate and complicated arrangements, since it represents a key point of control, with access to all four quarters of the Old City.

The Holy Basin

- Sheikh Jarrah (north of the Old City): The Shepherd's Hotel, a property formerly owned by the Mufti of Jerusalem, came under Israeli control in 1967 and was used for years as an Israeli Border Police station. In recent years the site has stood vacant, but the building is to be demolished imminently to make way for a new privately funded settlement compound, funded by a company controlled by Irving Moskowitz, a wealthy American businessman and longtime patron of the far right-wing settlers in Jerusalem.
- North of the Old City: A national park is being planned for this area and will reportedly be turned over to the settlers to run.
- A-Tur (Mount of Olives): In April 2006 settlers took over . . . two large buildings in the neighborhood of A-Tur on the Mount of Olives, overlooking the Old City. This is the first time since 1967 the settlers have succeeded in acquiring property in this densely-populated Palestinian neighborhood. . . . The circumstances of these takeovers are of highly questionable legality and the subject of legal proceedings.
- Ras al-Amud (Mount of Olives): The recent commencement of construction of the new Israeli police station in E-1

means that the current police station in Ras al-Amud will soon be turned over to the settlers. Reportedly the settlers are funding the construction of the new police station in order to facilitate the handover of the property in Ras al-Amud, where the settlers plan to construct a large new settlement complex. . . .

- Kidmat Zion (Abu Dis): There is a government-sponsored plan, approved by the Jerusalem Municipality, for the construction of several hundred housing units in this area, located in the heart of the Palestinian neighborhood of Abu Dis—an area isolated from any other Israeli presence. Two new houses (one built illegally) have already been turned over to settlers.
- Silwan (south of the Old City): In March 2006 settlers took over a Palestinian home in Silwan. Earlier attempts to evict the family living in this home in the late 1990s were abandoned after they drew critical media coverage. The media at that time reported in detail on the history of the family living in the home—a family that had been celebrated for intervening during Arab riots in 1929 to save Jewish lives.
- Silwan (south of the Old City): As mentioned earlier, the Government of Israel has handed control of the major elements in the national park adjacent to the Old City to the settlers.
- Abu Tor (south of the Old City): Settlers recently took over a Palestinian property in this neighborhood. The site they took over was being used to serve the mentally disabled.

From these activities, what can we infer about the settlers' goals?

The patterns of settlement activity in Jerusalem reveal three “rings” of settlements; two of these reflect religious/messianic ideology, and the other reflects a political/strategic plan for the city. Clearly, there is a “thermal map” of Jerusalem—not all areas resonate equally for the settlers (and other Israelis). The settlers concentrate their energies on those areas that resonate the most strongly.

Ring 1: The Old City

Plotting the settlement activities inside and immediately around the Old City, it appears clear that the settlers are focusing their activities on a band of settlements extending from Herod's Gate, through the Old City, to Silwan. By establishing a presence in these

areas, the settlers appear to want to “ring” the Temple Mount (where the messianic settlers aspire to rebuild the Jewish temple) and cut it off from the Palestinian population.

Ring 2: The Holy Basin

Plotting the settlement activities in the areas beyond the Old City but still within Jerusalem's municipal borders, the settlements clearly delineate the larger area of greatest importance to religious and messianic Jews—the Old City and its visual basin (i.e., the surrounding areas and those areas looking out onto the Old City from the Mount of Olives). These are the areas that resonate with Jewish history (and also with Christian and Muslim traditions).

Ring 3: Greater Jerusalem

Plotting settlement activities further from the Old City, on the periphery of the municipal borders, reveals a third ring of settlements—one which defines the shape and scope of former Prime Minister Sharon's concept of Greater Jerusalem—consistent with his long-held view that blocking geographic contiguity between the West Bank and East Jerusalem is necessary to ensure that there is no political contiguity between the two. . . . In the past there has generally been a clear distinction between these largely government-planned and -supported settlement activities throughout East Jerusalem and on its periphery, and the activities of the messianic settlers in and around the Old City. However, these two parallel lines of settlement appear now to be converging, with the increased (or renewed) government support for the activities of the extremist settlers in and around the Old City (discussed above), and with the extremist settlers becoming active in the drive for the large settlements in other areas as well, in particular with respect to new massive governmental settlements planned on Jerusalem's southern flank.

THE REPUBLIC OF ELAD

This article by Meron Rapoport appeared in Ha'Aretz on 23 April 2006.

On a Sunday, during the intermediate days of Pesach, Jerusalem was quite empty. Maybe the sudden rain kept the tourists away. In the city center, next to the Ben-Yehuda pedestrian mall, one could easily find a parking space, which is usually just about impossible. But to the east, in Silwan, the place was crowded with hikers.

To be more precise, not in all of Silwan. The crowds were present only in the first few

meters of the road that descends from Dung Gate in the direction of Silwan, a Palestinian village that was annexed to Jerusalem in 1967 and has become a poor neighborhood of 40,000 people, right next to the southern wall of the Old City.

The thousands of hikers exited from Dung Gate, marched up to the recently built magnificent gate bearing the words "City of David," entered and, probably without being aware of it, joined the battle for Jerusalem.

The battle for Jerusalem, or in effect the battle over the Judaization of the city, has been waged with ups and downs since East Jerusalem was annexed to Israel. Recently, it has reached a higher plane. One aspect of it is apparent and understood by everyone: the battle over assets. During the past three weeks, the association Elad, through legal acquisition, as it claims, or through violent invasion, according to the Palestinians, has taken over about 15 apartments in three different buildings, and another four houses in two Palestinian neighborhoods, Silwan and al-Tur. In al-Tur, the entry of the settlers ended in clashes with the local residents, and the murder of a Palestinian who was suspected of selling assets to Jews. The first casualty in a renewed battle for the city.

But this battle for Jerusalem has another, less known side: the battle for public opinion. In recent weeks, a public relations campaign has been waged on Internet sites, over the radio and on television, calling on Israeli citizens to come and visit "ancient Jerusalem." Ostensibly, this is an advertising campaign to encourage tourists to come and visit the national park in the City of David, with the impressive antiquities found there, and the Shiloah Tunnel. In fact, this is a kind of advertising campaign for Elad, which operates the national park according to an agreement with the Israel Nature and National Parks Protection Authority (NNPA), and charges an entry fee of NIS 23. This is the same association that seized the assets in East Jerusalem and—in the belief of Palestinian residents—is about to enter additional homes in Silwan immediately after Pesach.

Story of a Man

Elad is to a great extent the story of one man. David Beeri, who is known to everyone as Davideleh, first worked in Ateret Cohanim and then, in the early 1980s, cast his eye on Silwan. The City of David is not populated, he told his wife Michal (according to her testimony, which can be found in the Elad archive)—we have to do something. Beeri

discovered that some of the village land belonged to Jewish institutions before the 1948 War of Independence. He turned to the Jewish National Fund (JNF), asking it to authorize him to remove the Palestinian residents from that land. The JNF agreed. And Elad took over other assets by means of a very dubious implementation of the Absentee Property Law. The attorney general at the time, Meir Shamgar, instructed that this law not be used in East Jerusalem as a main instrument for taking control of assets.

Michal Beeri tells—in the same conversation that is documented in the archive—about one of those shady tricks. Beeri had his eye on the home of the Abbasi family, which is located near the Shiloah Pool. He thought it might be possible to declare it an absentee property and then to confiscate it and to transfer it to the state.

"Davideleh took a tour guide's card from his friend, placed his photo on it, put on the hat and the tag, and for a long time would take imaginary tourists for tours," said Beeri. "Slowly but surely he became friendly with Abbasi. At some stage Abbasi began to invite him, and that was what he [Davideleh—M. R.] wanted."

The trick succeeded. In the early 1990s, the Custodian of Absentee Property declared the Abbasi home absentee property, perhaps also relying on information he received from Elad. The asset was transferred to Elad, and Abbasi found Davideleh, the imaginary tour guide and imaginary friend, settling in his house while he, Abbasi, was evicted.

Later on, when the issue blew up, it turned out in the Klugman Committee (a committee headed by the then-director general of the Ministry of Justice) that the attorneys of Elad and of Ateret Cohanim were the ones who had brought the custodian the declarations testifying to the fact that certain assets were absentee property—and that some of the declarations were false. In the discussion of a petition to the High Court of Justice, three justices decided that the activities of the custodian in the matter of the Abbasi home "were tainted by extreme lack of good faith."

That was the beginning. Later on, Elad received several more assets in Silwan through the Custodian for Absentee Property. There are still legal disputes regarding some of them. Additional assets were acquired over the years from their Palestinian owners, in return for full payment. The association does the construction by itself, sometimes even without a permit. The Jerusalem

Municipality is aware of at least two criminal indictments for illegal construction that were filed against the association; two of them ended up somehow in the conviction of a Palestinian mediator.

An administrative demolition order was carried out against another of the association's buildings, and the expansion of a visitors' center was carried out without a permit. But all these offences did not prevent the Nature and National Parks Protection Authority from transferring control over the administration of the antiquities site in the City of David to the association. An area of 24 dunams, many times the size of everything that Elad has managed to take over on its own. Now Elad has become the real master of the area. Simply put, the government gave a private association, with a clear political bent, control over one of the most sensitive sites in Israel, if not in the entire Middle East.

It Costs

Elad did in fact take over the area. The area was cleaned and developed, a visitors' center was built, and the visitors began to return. Not free of charge. In order to walk through the Shiloah Tunnel, visitors today must pay NIS 23, which are transferred to Elad's coffers. The guided tours are also conducted almost solely by Elad guides. The spirit of the tours reflects their worldview. "The people from the NNPPA are only advisers, the people from the visitors' center run the show," says someone who worked in the NNPPA. "The focus of the tours is on the Temple, on King David. At the end of the tour, the guides tell how they redeemed the neighborhood, how Davideleh lives there alone. Stories of heroism."

The main feature of the compound is the huge archaeological dig. The Antiquities Authority digs, Elad pays, also with the help of the government. The findings are definitely impressive. On the slope of the hill, stairs from the Second Temple period were found; in another place, ancient seals (bullae) from the beginning of the First Temple period. Ayelet Mazar, who is digging independently, claims that she has found vestiges of David's palace. Most of the archaeologists in Israel are doubtful about this finding, but there is no question that it suits the spirit of Elad: to prove that King David walked in this very place. All the other periods don't really interest them. In a list of dates that appears on the City of David Web site, the time line jumps from the year 70 CE, the

destruction of the Second Temple, to 1882, the beginning of immigration to the Land of Israel in modern times. For Elad, during the 1,800 years that passed between these dates, nothing happened on this hill.

Elad tried to market its ideas with its most recent campaign. This is not a matter of a desire for income. Elad lost almost NIS 1 million on the visitors' center in 2004. This is something else: "It was important to them that the names 'City of David' and 'Mount of Olives' enter people's awareness, and replace the names 'Silwan' or 'Ras al-Amud,'" says one person who was involved in the campaign. Another such person says that the goal was much more political. "The City of David, with its amazing findings, is 200 meters from the Old City," says the man, who is not suspected of being overly fond of the settlers. "They want the people of Israel to become accustomed to the idea that the City of David is among the places that cannot be given up, even in the context of a final status agreement."

In this context, one can understand Elad's latest moves. These moves are meant to reinforce its control in Silwan, and to start building in new Palestinian neighborhoods surrounding the Old City, such as al-Tur, which is located on the Mount of Olives and overlooks the Temple Mount. Thus 30 members of the Guzman family found themselves outside their compound in Silwan. The father of the family, Haj Guzman, saved Jews from a pogrom in 1920. He even received a letter of appreciation for his act. "In West Jerusalem they plant an avenue named after such a person," says attorney Danny Seideman of the Ir Amim association, who represented the family. In East Jerusalem, three weeks ago they evacuated Guzman's descendants from the four houses in which they lived, near the City of David compound.

The Family Asked to Stay

The legal story is complicated, and went on for years, but the bottom line is that the High Court of Justice ruled seven years ago that the land belongs to the JNF. The family asked to remain in the area as protected residents. The JNF refused. Now it has become clear why. The Israel Lands Administration (ILA), which received the area from the JNF about three years ago, told *Ha'Aretz* that even before it transferred the land to the ILA, the JNF signed a protected tenant agreement with Elad, and therefore Elad can enter the area without going through the tender

process. Seideman says that there is a question about the legality of the move, since even the JNF cannot transfer its assets to whomever it pleases, without a tender, in addition to the fact that during the legal proceedings the JNF did not mention that it had signed a protected residency agreement with Elad. "They, from Elad, who didn't live here for a single day, are protected residents," says Ahmad Guzman. "And we, who have been living here since 1966, are not considered protected residents? Is that logical?" The JNF did not respond to the claims "because of the Pesach holiday."

The feeling among the Palestinians is that Elad is the real ruler in Silwan. There is some truth to this. A few months ago, tractors began work on a plot of land at the bottom of the hill, near the Gihon Spring square. The Palestinian landowners rushed to the place and managed to stop the work, partly by force and partly with the help of a stop-work court injunction. The Jerusalem Municipality said later that the area had been declared expropriated for public needs, but the work itself was not carried out by the municipality, but by a contractor working on the construction of a parking lot for the Ministry of Transportation and for Elad.

The attorneys of the landowners claim that the expropriation procedure was not carried out, but in any case, they ask, how is it that a private group like Elad is carrying out work on an area that even according to the municipality does not belong to it? Fakhri Abu-Diab, the chair of the neighborhood committee of nearby al-Bustan—a neighborhood all of whose 90 houses the municipality threatened to demolish last year—says that he was recently invited to a discussion in city hall about the future of the neighborhood, together with senior city officials, and with the "Jewish mukhtar" of the City of David. Abu-Diab refused to come. What connection is there between the people from Elad and the future of my houses, he asked.

In East Jerusalem they claim that even the police are on the side of the settlers. This perception is reinforced by the manner in which the buildings in al-Tur have been seized. What is involved are two buildings and a single apartment in an adjacent third building. Elad claims that it acquired them legally. The Palestinian residents claim that this is squatting.

Attorney Menahem Blum, who represents the Abu al-Hawa family, says that two brothers from the family, Muhammad and

Khalil, sold a building that was not registered in their name. Muhammad Abu al-Hawa was murdered last week in Jericho. His brother Khalil has fled to Jordan.

But the police, says attorney Blum, did not try to clarify these details. They burst into the building together with the settlers the day after the elections. "I have experience with evictions in East Jerusalem," says Blum. "There is no chance that the police will ever evict a tenant for you. You have to take a bailiff's contractor, which costs you at least NIS 100,000. In any case, the police cannot operate without a file in the bailiff's office. I don't know about the opening of any such file."

Rafi Strauss, a judge in the Jerusalem Magistrate's Court, came to a conclusion similar to Blum's regarding the apartment the settlers entered in al-Tur. The entry, a day before Seder night, was carried out by force. Policemen accompanied by private guards of Elad evicted the Hijazi family from an apartment it was renting. The dispute reached the courts, and the police really did not succeed in convincing Judge Strauss. "The behavior of the respondent [the Jerusalem police—M.R.] does not accord with the existence of the basic condition for police intervention in a civil dispute," wrote Strauss, and instructed the police to evict the settlers from the apartment that they had broken into by force, under protection of the police and the security guards. The matter of the security guards is interesting in itself. A committee established by former housing minister Yitzhak Herzog recommended that the guarding of the settlers in East Jerusalem, which cost NIS 40 million annually and is funded by the ministry, be transferred to the police. The associations were not happy. "It's convenient for them with the private firms," says someone who was involved in the work of the committee. "The security guards transport the children to school. No police force will do that." The recommendation of the committee is stuck in the Justice Ministry at the moment.

Plenty of Money

There is no question about the fact that Elad has money. They paid at least \$925,000 for the building of the Abu al-Hawa family alone. And that is only one of two buildings they acquired. Advertising people estimate that the City of David campaign, which included television commercials, also cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Palestinians in Silwan tell of many attempts to buy, for

cash, which have greatly intensified over the past year. Such sums are even greater than Elad's very tidy budget, which in 2004 was NIS 11.5 million. Elad boasts of its tremendous fund-raising, which in 2004 netted NIS 8.5 million—NIS 1.5 million from government sources and the rest from the revenues from the national park.

But for Elad's projects, even such a sum is insufficient. About two months ago, when a new park was dedicated at the visitors' center, the ceremony was attended by Lev Leviev and Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich, accompanied by David Beerli and Natan Sharansky. Leviev's office said that he was a "guest" at the event and is not a contributor to the association. It was impossible to get a response from Abramovich. Does the presence of the two billionaire friends hint at another, new channel for donations? Perhaps.

The map of the Jewish presence in East Jerusalem leaves no room for doubt. The Shepherd Hotel near Mount Scopus, the hotels at the Jaffa Gate, two houses in Abu Dis, a new neighborhood in Jabal Mukabir—these are only part of the "conquests" of the settlers in the past year or two. Adi Mintz, a member of the Elad administration, told *Ha'Aretz* immediately after taking over the assets in al-Tur and Silwan about three weeks ago that this was a "significant achievement." The goal of Elad is clear, says Mintz: "To get a foothold in East Jerusalem and to create an irreversible situation in the holy basin around the Old City."

Seideman, as usual, was more apocalyptic. "The battle for the holy basin is at its height," he says. "There is an unholy alliance here between the settlers and the fundamentalist Christians who support it, who want Jerusalem to turn into the arena of Armageddon. They want this battle to turn our conflict from a national to a religious one. That is the thing that should concern us."

Asset No. 36

A document prepared by architect Gideon Harlap for the settlers' associations in the early 1990s may indicate that Seideman is right. Harlap mapped the Jewish and state-owned assets for the settlers; these are assets that can be used to build new Jewish neighborhoods. Alongside each asset, Harlap notes the type of ownership and the number of housing units that can be built on it. There are several dozen assets listed there. Asset no. 36 is especially interesting. Harlap writes that the *waqf* (the Muslim religious trust) wanted to own this asset, but the British Mandatory government refused to grant it to them. The name of the asset is "the Temple Mount." The space for the number of housing units on the Temple Mount is empty. For the time being.

Elad refused to answer the detailed questions sent to them. "People at *Ha'Aretz* are trying, and not for the first time, to attack the City of David and those working to develop it, for ideological-political reasons," they wrote in the reply sent to the newspaper. "The Elad association has been working for 20 years to promote the development and flourishing of the historical City of David, a site of national importance and a top-priority, international issue. The association initiates and funds archaeological digs, and invests in audio-visual presentations, development of infrastructure, and widespread advertising. These resources are paid for by donations alone. . . . The Elad association operates to strengthen the link of the Jewish people to Jerusalem, and for the continuation of the return of the Jewish people to visit and live in the City of David. . . . In the past decade, the City of David has constituted a unique model, which combines old and new, Jews and Arabs, who conduct a cooperative fabric of life characterized by mutual respect, personal and economic ties and mutual assistance."