



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
JOURNALS + DIGITAL PUBLISHING



Settlement Monitor

Author(s): Geoffrey Aronson

Source: *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Autumn 2006), pp. 148-159

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

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jps.2006.36.1.148>

Accessed: 26/02/2015 16:23

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.

Jerusalem's Centrality

Olmert Divides Jerusalem	148
Israeli Party Platforms on Jerusalem	151
U.S. Policy on Jerusalem	152

Settler Leadership and Its Challengers

Who Leads the Settlers? by Americans for Peace Now (excerpts)	155
Challenges to the Settler Leadership, by Americans for Peace Now (excerpts)	157

JERUSALEM'S CENTRALITY

OLMERT DIVIDES JERUSALEM

From Settlement Report, Summer 2006 special report on Jerusalem.

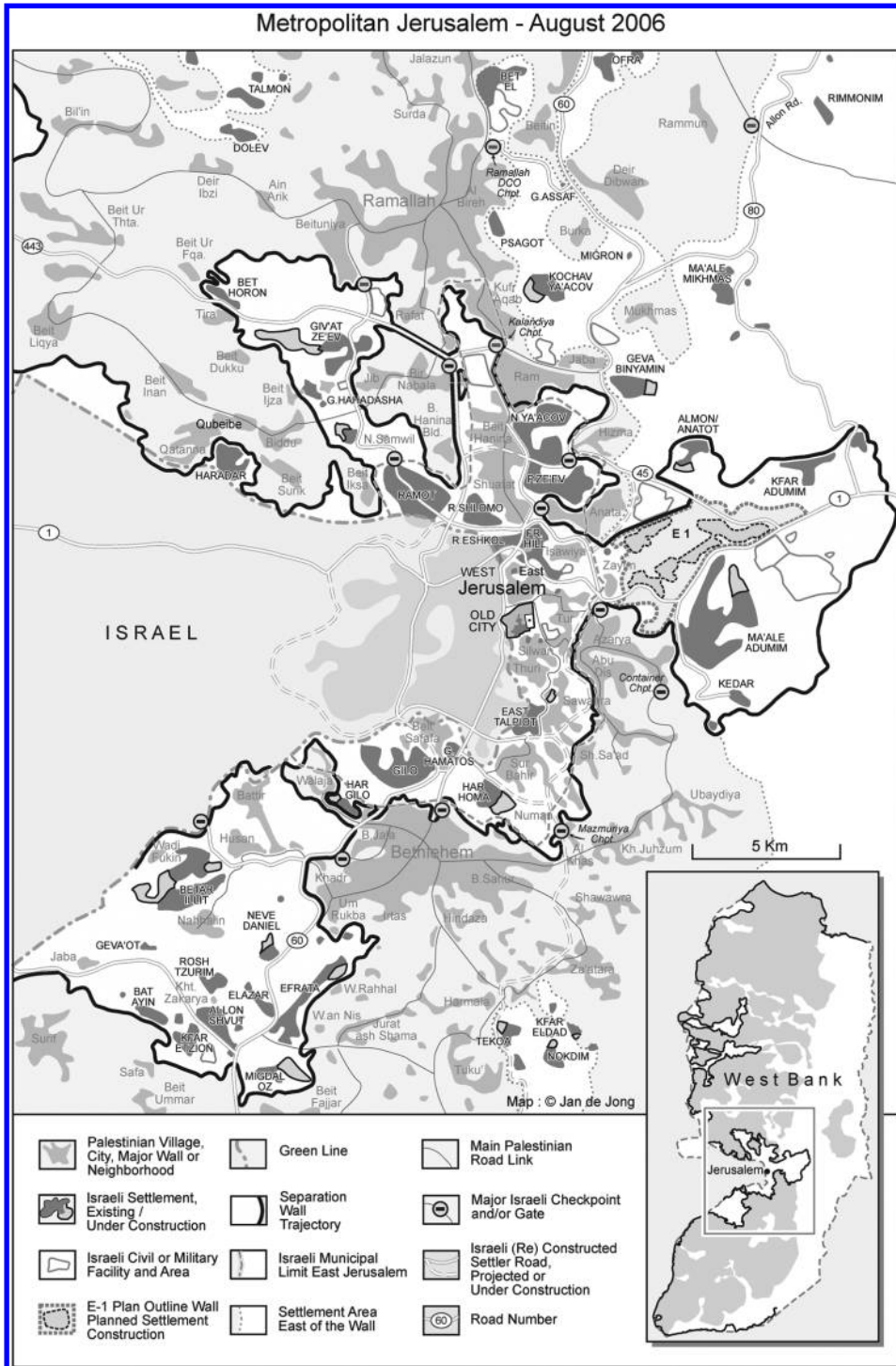
Since the Camp David talks between Israeli and Palestinian delegations in July 2000, the conventional wisdom shared by international diplomats and Israeli politicians of all stripes has been not whether but how to divide Jerusalem. The absence of diplomatic engagement between Israelis and Palestinians since that time and the PLO's enfeeblement have left critical decisions on the construction of a hard border to divide the city—almost four decades after Israel's destruction of the armistice border set in 1948—entirely in the hands of Israeli politicians, planners, and military officers, whose handiwork is now manifest across the city's skyline.

Israelis describe this project as a "security fence." But like the now passé slogan "reunification" that once championed Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem and parts of its West Bank hinterland after their conquest in 1967, the term "security fence" betrays an Israeli state of mind far more accurately than the more complex reality on the ground.

For one thing, the barrier now rising to Jerusalem's north, east, and south does not look like a fence in the commonly understood use of the term. As long as Palestinians are prepared to contest its presence, the best that can be expected by those living on the "right" (i.e., Israeli) side of the eight-meter-high concrete wall now imposing itself on the city landscape is a heartfelt but nevertheless misplaced, and no doubt fleeting, sense of security. For Palestinians and Israelis who live in nearby West Bank settlements—on the wall's "wrong" (i.e., Palestinian) side—the new border is a constant and inescapable provocation, a mark of their exclusion, and perhaps even an existential threat to their well-being, not only as individuals but also as a social, and, in the Palestinians' case, national community.

After Israel's 1967 conquest of East Jerusalem, Israel marked out large sections of the newly expanded city for Jewish settlement, determined that the number of Arabs not exceed 27 percent. A new economic concept linking East Jerusalem and the West Bank and Gaza Strip to a more vibrant and advanced Israeli economy defined the post-war city as much as did Israel's land grab and settlement program. Both were related elements of a determined Israeli strategy aimed

Journal of Palestine Studies Vol. XXXVI, No. 1 (Autumn 2006), pp. 148-159, 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>.



at subordinating all the occupied territories, particularly East Jerusalem, to Israel. In 1987 more than 50 percent of Jerusalem's Palestinians were employed in Israel, including West Jerusalem. In 1993, Israelis living in East Jerusalem settlements, 160,000, reached parity with resident Palestinians. Yet, despite decades of intensive settlement that today have brought almost 200,000 Israelis to East Jerusalem, Israeli plans were confounded as the percentage of Palestinians in the city rose from 25.8 percent in 1967 to 32.6 percent in 2000. Occupation, ironically, also promoted a highly charged political environment in which Jerusalem's centrality in the political drama of Palestine's quest for independence was reaffirmed.

The era of *intifada*—the rebellion of Palestinians against Israeli rule that commenced in 1987—changed Israel's policies toward East Jerusalem, exacerbating the Palestinians' ever-present fears about their destiny in the city. The imposition of a hard border—the separation wall now nearing completion—is the latest and most onerous feature of an Israeli policy now characterized by separation, closure, and East Jerusalem's economic decline and dislocation.

The separation wall aims at severing the most elementary of linkages between Palestinians and their putative capital. Since 2000, Israel has reversed modest Palestinian political achievements won during the Oslo era, outlawing political activities directed by the now-closed and shuttered Orient House. More recently, it has arrested PA legislators representing the city and even threatened to outlaw their right to reside in Jerusalem unless they renounce their political affiliation with the ruling Hamas movement.

As in the past, Israel alone seeks to determine the city's new map. The vision of the city outlined by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, however, reflects both a more pessimistic view than his predecessors of Israel's demographic battle against the city's Palestinians and a greater appetite for West Bank territory.

"I, as prime minister of Israel, will never, ever, ever agree to a compromise on the complete control over the Temple Mount. And not only the Temple Mount, but also the Old City, Mount of Olives, and every place that is an inseparable part of the Jewish history," declared Olmert at a 14 June 2006 press conference in France after meeting with President Jacques Chirac. Palestinians, Olmert suggested in a 13 June speech to

the British Parliament, would have to make do with those parts of the city annexed by Olmert's predecessors but now considered demographically indigestible. "We don't pray facing Bayt Naballah or Issawiya, or any of the other Palestinian neighborhoods that have been added to Jerusalem by someone who drew a map one day," he stated.

Policies championed by Olmert aim at maximizing the physical and political exclusion of Palestinians from a redefined Jerusalem that includes the Old City and its associated holy sites and settlements in (i.e., Pisgat Ze'ev) and around (i.e., Ma'ale Adumim) the city. As a consequence, Palestinians and their religious, cultural, social, health, and civic institutions remaining within the city's new border are being progressively separated from Palestinians beyond the new perimeter. Sooner rather than later, they will find it all but impossible to maintain normal relations with people and institutions outside the wall. Palestinian East Jerusalem is the heart and center of Palestinian national political aspirations and now faded center for commerce and finance. The city is being redefined by a fast-emerging border that challenges not only the Palestinian political claim to East Jerusalem as capital of a Palestinian state, but also poses a far broader civic, social, and economic threat to the Palestinians' ability to sustain a functioning urban community.

For Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza long accustomed to partaking in the simple pleasures of the city, or drawn by faith or necessity to its variety of institutions, churches, and mosques, the separation wall formalizes a policy of exclusion that has evolved over the last sixteen years. This process, more than the upheavals of 1948 that left the eastern rump of the city intact, or the war in 1967, which broadened horizons even as Israeli settlement encroached, strikes at the heart of the Palestinian ability to shape the city's destiny and to claim it as the center of their political, economic, and cultural life.

In March 2006, MK Otnel Schneller, a confidant of Prime Minister Olmert, former leader of the YESHA Council, and a member of Kadima, offered Palestinians the prospect of sovereignty over a much-diminished rump of East Jerusalem:

"The Old City, Mount Scopus, the Mount of Olives, the City of David, Shaykh Jarrah will remain in our hands, but Kufr Aqab, al-Ram, Shu'fat, Hizma, al-Zaym, al-Tur, and Abu Dis are not part of historic Jerusalem,

and in the future, when the Palestinian state is established, they will become its capital.”

Israel is yet again defining Jerusalem in its mind's eye. “Historic Jerusalem” is one of the new mantras, one that ostensibly defines and thus limits the territorial extent of Israeli designs. Israel continues to reserve this right for itself alone and to modify it as it sees fit. Palestinians' enduring opposition to occupation, in whatever guise, however, has forced an Israeli reconsideration of its own Jerusalem. The separation wall marks another chapter in this enduring confrontation, not its conclusion.

ISRAELI PARTY PLATFORMS ON JERUSALEM

From Settlement Report, Summer 2006 special report on Jerusalem.

Kadima

From the Party Platform

“Determining the permanent borders for the State of Israel will be based on the following assumptions:

1. Inclusion of areas necessary for Israel's security
2. Inclusion of Jewish holy sites and those that are considered national symbols, paramount is a united Jerusalem, the capital of Israel.”

From Spokesperson Roni Bar-On

“There are no compromises with regards to Jerusalem. Kadima hopes that final permanent borders will be determined within the framework of a peace accord, but in any case, these will be our principles.”

On annexation of Ma'ale Adumim: “In our opinion the answer is definitive: yes to the annexation of Ma'ale Adumim. [Prime Minister Ehud] Olmert declared that Ma'ale Adumim, like the Etzion bloc and Ariel, will remain inside the separation barrier and will be part of the State of Israel.”

On territorial contiguity: “We have already begun constructing a police station [in the E-1 area], and our intention is to continue to build in the area without upsetting the daughter of our capital [Washington]. There will be territorial contiguity.”

On East Jerusalem: “East Jerusalem will remain inside the separation barrier, however, there are many Palestinian neighborhoods and refugee camps that neither you nor I want.”

On the separation wall: “We are investing great effort to complete construction around Jerusalem, which we consider one of the greatest priorities.”

Likud

From the Party Platform

“Jerusalem is the eternal capital of the Jewish people, one united city that is not to be shared or divided. Israel will do everything in her power to strengthen the character and the Jewish symbols of Jerusalem and will strengthen Jewish settlement in every area of the city. Establishing Jerusalem as our capital is the foremost national mission. The government will act swiftly to strengthen and develop the city in every aspect for the sake of her residents. Israel will promise religious freedom and access to religious sites for all religions in Jerusalem.”

From Spokesperson Ruby Rivlin

“Jerusalem is a microcosm, and compromising on the city will give the Palestinians the feeling that we have lost our faith in the righteousness of our cause. Compromises, even on one neighborhood, would bring about a sense that everything can be returned, even to the boundaries before the Six-Day War in 1967.”

On annexation of Ma'ale Adumim:

“Ma'ale Adumim is part of the consensus, because she was built by Yitzhak Rabin. Every Zionist party agrees that she is an inseparable part [of our country]. Everyone with eyes knows that this is only a question of time, because the annexation is already under way.”

On territorial contiguity: “Without E-1, Ma'ale Adumim will remain isolated like Mount Scopus was after 1948. Let us not delude ourselves. If there is Palestinian construction in the area, Ma'ale Adumim will be cut off from Israel.”

On East Jerusalem: “The holy places and the Old City cannot be cut off. Two national authorities cannot govern the same place. Israel has proven that it allows for freedom of access to holy places.”

On the separation wall: “Like many others today, I admit that the separation barrier serves as a deterrent to terrorists, but it does not completely prevent their entry. It is important to consider it a security fence, but also to understand that outside of Israel it is considered a boundary (i.e., political) fence.”

Shas

The party does not have a specific platform with regards to Jerusalem. Everything that relates to the city comes from the statements of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef.

From Spokesperson Nasim Zeev

"Obviously Jerusalem will remain united; we do not compromise on Jerusalem. The rise of Hamas to power sharpens this point. We will not put our souls on the line by allowing the border to pass to 500 meters from the Wailing Wall."

On annexation of Ma'ale Adumim:

"Ma'ale Adumim is part of Jerusalem. Even 20 years ago it was the original plan, and it doesn't need to be changed. It does not matter if Ma'ale Adumim is part of Jerusalem or its own city, because it is not up for negotiation."

On territorial contiguity: "It is my opinion that we need to do it in stages and continue until Kfar Adumim."

On East Jerusalem: "There is no intention to give up parts of East Jerusalem. The main guideline is that the Arabs will remain in their autonomous neighborhoods and will administer their own cultural and educational programs. Only the extremists on the left will agree to returning neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. If there are Arab neighborhoods in Lod and Akko, will we have to return them too?"

On the separation wall: "We have to separate, and the quicker the better, because Hamas rose to power and terrorist acts have increased. We have to prevent the entry of terrorists."

Labor*From the Party Platform*

"Jerusalem and all of her Jewish neighborhoods will be the eternal capital of the State of Israel, and the holy sites will remain in Israel's hands."

From Spokesperson Matan Vilnai

"The Labor party is working towards keeping Jerusalem as Israel's capital, as has been the case for years. Our mayor, Teddy Kollek, maintained Jerusalem in an impressive way. Since Olmert's tenure as Jerusalem's mayor things have been going downhill.

"Jerusalem will remain Israel's capital. There will not be compromises in Jerusalem, but there will be compromises with regards to the villages that were absorbed into Jerusalem by the separation barrier. At the end of the day, Jerusalem will remain united."

On annexation of Ma'ale Adumim: "In my opinion, construction in the E-1 area is a central aspect of maintaining territorial contiguity of Jerusalem. It is a strategic strengthening of the city."

On East Jerusalem: "Everything that is inside the barrier belongs to the State of Israel."

On the separation wall: "The separation barrier determines the boundaries of Jerusalem and it is correct, even though we have to limit the harm done to people living there. The barrier maintains a Jewish majority next to a Palestinian minority, and we predict that a million Jews will live in the municipal area of Jerusalem."

Meretz*From the Party Platform*

"In Jerusalem there will be two capitals for two countries side by side. Because a barrier cannot be constructed on the Green Line in Jerusalem, a wall should not be built at all inside Jerusalem."

From Spokesperson Ran Cohen

"We oppose unconditionally construction in the E-1 area, which we believe will certainly lead to disaster and the opening of wounds that will not bring about a solution, but rather hard clashes."

On East Jerusalem: "Our stance is that the Palestinian areas do not need to remain under Israel's control, but rather should be used as the capital of Palestine. West Jerusalem will be the permanent capital of the State of Israel. I believe that the two capitals side by side will create political and municipal stability."

On the Old City: "The Old City has to be in the consensus, and the holy places will belong to both sides. The Temple Mount will remain open to Israelis. We believe that it needs to be open to the whole world. The Jewish Quarter will remain under Israeli control, the Muslim Quarter will be under Palestinian control, and control over the other two quarters will be decided upon through an agreement that will deal with the area by geographic terms."

On the separation wall: "From the outset, the separation fence was a mistake. It is not possible to have a wall in the heart of a city. This is a crazy thing that creates today tremendous damage to the Palestinians. We have to erect a security unit that will monitor the borders in Jerusalem."

U.S. POLICY ON JERUSALEM*From Settlement Report, Summer 2006 special report on Jerusalem.*

The United States has compiled a record of diplomatic pronouncements on Jerusalem spanning more than half a century. During

this time, U.S. policy has evolved from adherence to the concept of an internationalized Jerusalem, to acceptance if not recognition of Jerusalem's division. For some years after the 1967 war, the U.S. opposed all Israeli settlement efforts as "illegal." The administration of George W. Bush has, in contrast, unilaterally acknowledged the success of Israel's policy of creating settlement "facts" in Jerusalem, notwithstanding the view that a negotiated solution to the city's status is required to formalize U.S. recognition.

In 1947, the United States, in concert with the United Nations, supported Jerusalem's internationalization as an appropriate means of safeguarding the religious rights of Jews, Christians, and Muslims. That option was eclipsed in 1948 by the first Arab-Israeli war, which resulted in Jerusalem being divided between Israeli forces, which controlled its western half, and Jordanian forces, which held the east.

Presidents Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower both continued to view the city's status as unsettled, however, and balked at recognizing West Jerusalem as the Israeli capital.

"We continue to support, within the framework of the United Nations, the internationalization of Jerusalem and the protection of the holy places in Palestine," declared Truman on 24 October 1948. The Eisenhower administration even opposed Israel's decision to move its foreign ministry to the city in 1952, noting in a 9 July aide-memoire that "the Government of the United States has adhered and continues to adhere to the policy that there should be a special international regime for Jerusalem which will not only provide protection for the holy places but which will be acceptable to Israel and Jordan as well as the world community."

U.S. Policy, Post-1967 War

The Johnson administration protested Israel's effort to unilaterally change the city's status even as it implicitly acknowledged Israel's right to take "provisional" steps. Responding to the Knesset's extension of Israeli law to an expanded East Jerusalem on 28 June 1967, the State Department noted that "the United States has never recognized such unilateral actions by any of the states in the area as governing the international status of Jerusalem."

UN representative Arthur Goldberg explained on 14 July 1967, "I wish to make

it clear that the United States does not accept or recognize these measures as altering the status of Jerusalem. . . . We insist that the measures taken cannot be considered as other than interim and provisional, and not as prejudging the final and permanent status of Jerusalem."

President Richard Nixon's UN representative, Charles Yost, noted on 1 July 1969, "The pattern of behavior authorized under the Geneva Convention and international law is clear: the occupier must maintain the occupied area as intact and unaltered as possible, without interfering with the customary life of the area, and any changes must be necessitated by the immediate needs of the occupation. I regret to say that the actions of Israel in the occupied portion of Jerusalem present a different picture, one which gives rise to understandable concern that the eventual disposition of East Jerusalem may be prejudiced and that the private rights and activities of the population are already being affected and altered.

"My Government regrets and deplores this pattern of activity, and it has so informed the Government of Israel on numerous occasions since June 1967. We have consistently refused to recognize those measures as having anything but a provisional character and do not accept them as affecting the ultimate status of Jerusalem. . . .

"I emphasize, as did Mr. Goldberg, that as far as the United States is concerned such unilateral measures, including expropriation of land or other administrative action taken by the Government of Israel, cannot be considered other than interim and provisional and cannot affect the present international status nor prejudice the final and permanent status of Jerusalem. The United States position could not be clearer."

President Gerald Ford's UN envoy, William Scranton, noted on 23 March 1976, "Clearly, then, substantial resettlement of the Israeli civilian population in occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, is illegal under the [Geneva] Convention and cannot be considered to have prejudged the outcome of future negotiations between the parties on the location of the borders of States of the Middle East. Indeed, the presence of these settlements is seen by my Government as an obstacle to the success of the negotiations for a just and final peace between Israel and its neighbors."

By the end of President Jimmy Carter's term, U.S. policy, despite its rhetorical

opposition to Israel's policy of annexation, had evolved to a position more closely resembling Israel's. Washington emphasized the need to maintain Jerusalem's "undivided" status. It focused on safeguarding the religious rights of all, while downplaying political challenges to Israeli sovereignty, and it continued to hold that Jerusalem's final status could only be determined by negotiation.

Ronald Reagan noted in 1982 that "we remain convinced that Jerusalem must remain undivided, but its final status should be decided through negotiations." In 1984 he stopped a move to relocate the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv by threatening to veto proposed legislation that would recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Such opposition, however, was not meant to favor Arab claims to the city. Alexander Haig, Reagan's first secretary of state, declared the establishment of Palestinian sovereignty in East Jerusalem to be "unacceptable."

President George H. W. Bush was more publicly critical of Israel's settlement policies in the city than was Reagan, yet Secretary of State James Baker conceded, "Jews and others can live anywhere, in the western or eastern parts of the city, which will remain undivided." The Bush administration did not revert to the pre-Reagan characterization of Israeli settlement activities as illegal, but Baker characterized settlement as "de facto annexation" and Bush once acknowledged East Jerusalem as "occupied territory." For the first time, however, the United States agreed to the "natural growth" of the settlement population at an August 1992 meeting between President Bush and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

The Clinton Administration

During the Clinton administration, opposition to Israel's land confiscation and settlement activities in East Jerusalem waned to the point of indifference, including a refusal to characterize ongoing settlement construction in East Jerusalem as a "unilateral action" of the kind prohibited by the Oslo accords and that all previous administrations opposed as a matter of principle.

This "green light" to Israel's policy of de facto annexation grew more pronounced in the wake of the Oslo agreement between Israel and the PLO in September 1993. Administration officials argued that settlement construction and associated land expropriation in East Jerusalem should not be addressed by the UN Security Council, but

rather were a bilateral concern of Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The Clinton administration reiterated its defense of the policy supporting the "natural growth" of the settlement population, with the State Department spokesman noting that "In the past, settlement activity has created a great deal of tension and it has been a complicating factor in the Middle East, and in relations between Israel and the Palestinians and others. We certainly believe that to be true. I think it's also true that Israel and the Palestinians have decided to resolve this question, if they can, in the context of the final status talks. . . . So it's up to them now to resolve that problem, but it has been a matter of tension and complication in the past."

The Clinton parameters established during negotiations in 2000 broke with longstanding U.S. support for an open city. The parameters stated, "The general principle is that Arab areas are Palestinian and Jewish ones are Israeli. This would apply to the Old City as well. . . . The Palestinians would have sovereignty over the Haram al-Sharif and Israelis would have sovereignty over the Western Wall and the "space sacred to Judaism of which it is a part."

The George W. Bush Administration

The "road map" issued by the Bush administration in April 2003 defined the administration's guidelines for a final status agreement and the eventual creation of two states. The plan required the Israeli government to halt settlement expansion, including accommodation for natural growth.

In a 14 April 2004 letter to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Bush noted, "In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli populations centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949, and all previous efforts to negotiate a two-state solution have reached the same conclusion."

The importance of these understandings is that they suggest an unprecedented U.S. approval of Israel's policy of settlement expansion, in East Jerusalem and elsewhere. Such intimate involvement and complicity in this policy marks another significant shift in U.S. policy, which until the administration of Jimmy Carter viewed all settlement activity, including that in East Jerusalem, as illegal and a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

SETTLER LEADERSHIP AND ITS CHALLENGERS

WHO LEADS THE SETTLERS?

The excerpts here originally appeared in the 7 July 2006 issue of Americans for Peace Now's publication Settlements in Focus (vol. 2, issue 10). Produced by Dror Etkes of Peace Now (Israel) and Lara Friedman of Americans for Peace Now, it appears in full at www.peacenow.org.

On the local and regional level, Israeli settlements in the West Bank are organized in the same way as communities inside Israel: individual settlements elect representatives to run their local affairs and to represent them in the 24 local and regional settlement councils. These are the only official elections for settlement leadership. Most of these elected officials are focused on the daily lives of their communities and constituents. Others are well-known personalities, long-identified as leaders of the settlements enterprise and the "Greater Israel" ideology.

On the national level, it should be remembered that under Israel's political system, representatives to the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) are elected based on the share of the national vote earned by their party, rather than based on the number of votes coming from a particular geographic area (as is the case in places like the United States). As a result, the settlements as geographic entities are not represented in the Knesset. However, settler voting patterns favor particular parties which are responsive to or reflective of the settlers' ideology.

Where the settlements differ from communities in Israel is in the existence of an additional body, comprised of the elected heads of the 24 settlement councils in the West Bank, plus 5-10 additional visible or influential leaders of the settlement movement. These individuals sit together in the Council of Settlements of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, better known as the YESHA Council ("YESHA" is an acronym for Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, and the word *yesha* also means "salvation" in Hebrew; although all Israeli settlements in Gaza were dismantled in summer 2005, the council has retained the acronym). The YESHA Council operates as a de facto government of the settlers, dealing with both internal affairs of the settlements and external affairs (i.e., relations both with the government of Israel and the international community).

Where Are the Leaders Drawn From?

The YESHA Council was born as the successor body of Gush Emunim ("bloc of the faithful"), itself an outgrowth of the religious-nationalist movement that launched the settlement effort following Israel's capture of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967. By virtue of the way the YESHA Council is organized and run, the religious-nationalist bloc maintains control of the council, and members of that bloc remain the most visible leaders of the settlers today. As leaders, they are drawn mainly from four different groups.

Regional Council Heads

As elected community leaders, Regional Council heads have in many ways the strongest claim to leadership. Among the most influential of these are Pinchas Wallerstein (Binyamin Regional Council), Bentzi Lieberman (Shomron Regional Council), Shaul Goldstein (Gush Etzion Regional Council), Zviki Bar-Hai (Mt. Hebron Regional Council), and Avner Shimony (former head of the Gaza Shore Regional Council).

Settlers in the Knesset

Settlers who are elected to the Knesset... include Uri Ariel (from Kfar Adumim, representing the joint National Union-National Religious party, a.k.a. NU-NRP), Nisan Slomyansky (from Elkana, representing NU-NRP), Arye Eldad (from Kfar Adumim, representing the NU-NRP), Avigdor Liberman (from Nokdim, representing the Yisrael Beiteinu party), and Benny Elon (from Beit El, representing the NU-NRP).

Popular Leaders and Activists

These are people who for decades have been associated with the leadership of the settlement movement. They include Israel Harel (one of the core group of activists since the earliest days of Elon Moreh and Ofra), Haggai Segal (another longtime activist, convicted, jailed, and pardoned in the 1980s as part of the West Bank Jewish Underground), and Uri Elitzur (former editor of the settler journal *Nekuda*, former bureau chief for then-prime minister Netanyahu, and former head of the settlement arm of Gush Emunim—Amana, discussed below).

Rabbis

Since the earliest days of the settlement movement, religious-nationalist rabbis have exerted strong influence and authority... Important settler rabbis today include—but are by no means limited to—former MK Rabbi Haim Druckman (who

does not live in a settlement but is one of the spiritual leaders of the Bnei Akiva youth movement, which is very closely affiliated with Israel's politically hard-line yeshivas), longtime Gush Emunim spiritual leader Rabbi Eliezer Waldman (Hebron and Kiryat Arba), Rabbi Shlomo Aviner (Beit El), Rabbi Elyakim Levanon (Elon Moreh), Rabbi Dov Lior (Kiryat Arba), and Rabbi Zalman Melamed (Beit El).

How Are Decisions Taken and Policy Made within the YESHA Council?

In theory, the heads of all of the West Bank settlement council come together in the YESHA Council to decide on policy and make decisions. In reality, the council is controlled by a handful of its strongest members, including the Regional Council heads of Shomron, Binyamin, Gush Etzion, and Mt. Hebron. In addition, one of the "extra" members of the council plays a critical role—Zeev "Zambish" Hever, who is the general director of Amana. Amana is the (unelected) settlement arm of the Gush Emunim movement and has played a role in the construction of most settlements in the West Bank.

This core group of leaders, who are all committed to the traditional religious-nationalist ideology of Greater Israel, is the engine driving most of the political positions and tactics adopted by the YESHA Council. In addition, important decisions taken by the YESHA Council are coordinated with the settlers' political allies in the Knesset as well as the religious leadership of the settlers.

How Is the YESHA Council Funded?

... While the settlers have often pursued policies that were at odds with the policies of the government of Israel (or were even illegal), much of the financing for their activities has come, directly and indirectly, from the government itself. This remains true today, with the YESHA Council drawing a substantial portion of the funding for its various activities—including organizing opposition to the policies of the government of Israel—from the budgets of regional settlement councils. These are funds provided by the government of Israel to meet the municipal needs of the settlements, which are then transferred to the YESHA Council by the regional councils.

These transfers raise serious questions about the appropriate uses of Israeli taxpayer funds. For example, the YESHA Council organized and financed a campaign opposing then-prime minister Sharon's disengagement plan. This led to a successful

Peace Now petition against the State of Israel, in which it was argued that it is illegal for the settlements to use Israeli taxpayer funds for such a campaign. In a 21 April 2005 article covering the government investigation that followed, the Israeli daily paper *Ha'Aretz* noted:

From the transcripts of the hearings, which have come into the hands of *Ha'Aretz*, it appears that from the perspective of the [settlement] council heads, in day-to-day life in the territories it is difficult to distinguish between "state" or "security" activity and "municipal" [political] activity... it is hard to ascertain the degree of legitimacy of the monies that are transferred to the YESHA Council for purposes of lobbying the government or public campaigns.

As a result of the Peace Now petition, the High Court ruled in May 2006 that the government of Israel can cut the budgets of municipalities [that] are using municipal funds to pay for protests against government policy, up to the amount the municipalities are spending on the protests...

What Does the YESHA Council Actually Do?

... As a quasi-government, the YESHA Council assumes the functions of various ministries, including (but not limited to):

Planning and Construction

The council works with regional councils to initiate, gain approval for, and obtain government financing for the construction of housing and infrastructure.

Defense

The council finances security programs for settlements and on the roads, including the provision of security guards, coordination with the IDF to provide security, and establishing "civil defense plans" for settlements; financing bullet-proofing for security vehicles, emergency vehicles, and buses; and overseeing the installation of security equipment in and around settlements. The council works to obtain government financing for such projects and liaises with IDF officials working inside the West Bank.

Foreign Affairs

The council undertakes outreach, including fundraising and public relations, in the international community.

National Security

In addition, the YESHA Council functions as a sort of settlers' National Security Council, deliberating on the important policy questions facing the settlements and developing policy responses. . . .

How Is It that the YESHA Council Has So Much Power?

YESHA Council members have always had extremely close ties with politicians and officials across the political echelons and within the Israeli military—ties that continue through the present day. Commenting in the context of the investigation into the YESHA Council's funding of anti-government activities, Samaria Regional Council Bentzi Lieberman bragged that the settlers have even better access than elected officials from areas inside Israel, telling investigators that "often our colleagues from other municipal councils within the Green Line (pre-Six Day War borders) ask us to set up a meeting with one minister or another for them."

. . . Insofar as day-to-day activities within the West Bank are concerned, both the government and IDF have been largely coopted to serve the interests of the settlers. This cooption extends from the arena of construction and settlement expansion—where the Sasson Report formally confirmed that for years elements of the Israeli government have turned a blind eye to settler transgressions and, worse yet, actively colluded in them; to the daily activities of the IDF, whose mission to defend the security of Israeli citizens has been abused by the settlers, forcing the IDF to divert vital resources and endanger soldiers in order to protect extremists who may undertake deliberately provocative and illegal activities. . . .

In a recent study conducted by researcher Anat Roth of the Israel Democracy Institute, entitled "The Secret of its Strength: The YESHA Council and Its Campaign against the Security Fence and the Disengagement Plan," Roth enumerated some of the main factors that have helped the YESHA Council solidify its political strength. . . .

- As holders of official offices recognized by the government (i.e., heads of the local or regional councils) and responsible for relations with the government, YESHA Council members have direct access to the levers of power and decision-making at virtually every level in the Israeli government.
- YESHA Council members control large sums of money (mainly diverted from

funds provided by the government to local and regional settlement councils).

- The YESHA Council has an ability to mobilize and organize mass numbers of activists that is unparalleled in any other sector or by any other group in Israel.
- The settlers in general enjoy the sympathy of a large part of the Jewish Israeli public, reflecting the settlers' success at defining themselves as representing "genuine Zionism," both in the sense of settling the land and confronting the Palestinians.
- The government of Israel has (until the summer 2005 disengagement) consistently failed to seriously rein in the settlers, lacking the unity, strength, and political will necessary to take any sort of meaningful action against them (even in the face of the most provocative actions; for example, during the early days of the Madrid process, when the settlers greeted each visit of then-U.S. secretary of state Baker to Israel with the establishment of a new settlement, much to the chagrin of the government of Israel).

In addition, it is also clear that the YESHA Council enjoyed, for many of the reasons enumerated by Roth, a clear asymmetry of strength relative to its opponents. While enjoying the veneer of respectability that comes from official positions and access to official power and privilege, settlers and their supporters have portrayed those who oppose them as, among other things, naïve, foolish, suicidal, anti-Zionist, and pro-Palestinian. They have also made it clear that a high cost will be extracted from any political leader who attempts to hurt them (which is perhaps why the first Israeli leader to successfully confront the settlers came not from the Left, but from the pro-settler Right). The single-minded focus, ruthlessness, and relative wealth of the movement, coupled with the built-in political privileges and public sympathy they enjoy, have put competing ideologies at a distinct disadvantage in virtually every arena in which they have tried to confront the settlers.

CHALLENGES TO THE SETTLER LEADERSHIP

The excerpts here originally appeared in the 21 July 2006 issue of Americans for Peace Now's publication Settlements in Focus (vol. 2, issue 11). Produced by Dror Etkes of Peace Now (Israel) and Lara

Friedman of Americans for Peace Now, it appears in full at www.peacenow.org.

As the sole quasi-elected body of the entire settler population, the YESHA Council presents itself as the legitimate leadership and voice of the settlers. However, while this depiction may have been generally accurate in the early days of the council's existence, it can no longer be viewed as accurate today. This is due mainly to the demographic shifts within the settler populations—shifts that have not been mirrored in the political orientation or membership of the YESHA Council. . . .

How Has the YESHA Council Dealt with the Issue of the Security Barrier?

For many settlers who are critical of the YESHA Council, the failure of the council to come up with a strategy to successfully confront and stop the construction of the barrier is emblematic of the increasing impotence of the council when it comes to the sort of existential threats facing the settlements today.

From the outset the YESHA Council was very worried about the barrier, recognizing what it meant both practically (in terms of harm to settlements left outside the route) and politically (in terms of undermining the unity of the settlers and complicating their effort to gain support for their cause from the larger Israeli public). While their preference was to oppose any barrier, they quickly realized that it would be politically suicidal for the settlers to seek to block an initiative that enjoyed such broad support among Israelis.

As a result, the council tried to find a middle ground—seeking to negotiate the route of the barrier to cause the least “damage” to settlements, while insisting publicly that any barrier must only be for security needs and must not have any political significance (in terms of indicating Israeli willingness to relinquish settlements left on the “wrong” side). Along the way, the YESHA Council suggested to Israeli planners alternative routes—routes that were rejected (and which, not surprisingly, protected the maximum number of settlements at the expense of any meaningful Palestinian contiguity). In the end, the approved route of the barrier represents, more or less, an effort to accommodate settlements that are close to the Green Line, while improving the security position of Israel along the new “border” with the Palestinians. Ironically, the settle-

ments left on the east side (i.e., the “wrong side”) of the barrier include nearly all of the West Bank heartland settlements—meaning that the real losers in this battle were the settlements that are home to the traditional supporters of the YESHA Council.

How Has the YESHA Council Dealt with the Threat of Dismantling Settlements and Outposts?

Tensions between the YESHA Council and its critics came to a head during the year-long struggle against then-prime minister Ariel Sharon's plan to dismantle all settlements in the Gaza Strip and four settlements in the West Bank. The YESHA Council's inability to stop the plan—something they had promised settlers they would manage to do—contributed to the growing perception among young settlers that the council is irrelevant. When the plan was eventually carried out in the summer of 2005, some activists went so far as to accuse the council of betraying the Gaza settlers and collaborating in the evacuations. A 30 August 2005 report in the settlers' media outlet, Arutz Sheva (channel 7), entitled “Anti-Expulsion Leaders Calling for YESHA Council's Resignation,” quoted high-profile settler activists blaming the YESHA Council for the current situation. Kedumim mayor Daniela Weiss is quoted, saying “Of all the factors in the country that were in play, those who brought about the present failure were the YESHA leadership. . . .”

Serious tensions resurfaced and strengthened in early 2006, when the YESHA Council was seen as negotiating with the government over the fate of the illegal outpost of Amona, where nine buildings were eventually demolished amidst a chaotic and violent protest. . . . The fact that the YESHA Council again failed to effectively confront and block what was seen as an existential threat to the settlers led to strong recriminations against the YESHA Council from extremist settlers. With most of the protests on the ground organized by extremist leaders (as opposed to the council), Amona also contributed to the growing perception of the council's irrelevance.

What Is the Relationship between the YESHA Council and the Olmert Government?

[. . .]

With respect to access in the Olmert government, the YESHA Council remains a major player. Relatively early in his campaign to be the next prime minister of Israel,

then-acting prime minister Olmert convinced Otniel Schneller, a former head of the YESHA Council, to join Kadima. With Schneller considered a close advisor to Olmert on issues related to settlements, the YESHA Council retains a direct line of access to the decision making process and can be assured that it will be consulted over decisions that will impact its constituents. An example of this occurred in June 2006, when the Olmert government, as part of its process to decide how best to deal with illegal settlement outposts, invited the YESHA Council to meet with the committee examining the issue (along with Peace Now, which has closely tracked and documented the phenomenon).

At the same time, Schneller's decision to join Kadima underscored a growing rift among settlers. Most of the YESHA Council's leadership support (reluctantly, in all probability) a pragmatic approach in which

the settlers work with the government of Israel—playing on popular sympathy for the settlers and guilt over any suffering they may be caused—and seek to extract the best possible deal in terms of who gets to stay and compensation. On the other hand, a small but growing part of the settler population views this pragmatism as appeasement and treason. The fact that a former head of the YESHA Council would join a party whose leader supported disengagement—and who is publicly committed to further disengagement—only expands the rift.

Today, with tensions rising again in the context of the Olmert government's commitment to evacuate illegal outposts, YESHA Council leaders like Pinchas Wallerstein have had to repeatedly defend themselves against charges of collaborating with the government in plans to “give up” some outposts in order to keep others.



Israeli earthmovers cut a broad swath through a Palestinian olive grove on the outskirts of Jerusalem to make way for Israel's separation wall, 29 May 2006. (Joe Raedle/Getty Images)