This section covers items—reprinted articles, statistics, and maps—pertaining to Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. Largely drawn from the international press, some items are also obtained from special reports, including Geoffrey Aronson’s invaluable Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories. JPS is grateful to the Foundation for Middle East Peace which publishes the Washington-based bimonthly newsletter, hereinafter referred to as Settlement Report.

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THE KERRY NEGOTIATIONS AND THE SETTLEMENTS

“ABU MAZIN’S OVERLOOKED SURPRISE CONCESSION ON SETTLEMENTS”

This article was published by Al-Monitor on 11 May 2014. It was authored by the director of the Foundation for Middle East Peace, Geoffrey Aronson. The text is available at www.al-monitor.com.

Peace-making between Israel and the Palestinians has ended. In its place, the battle to explain or rationalize failure has begun.

Benjamin Netanyahu and Mahmud Abbas trade accusations. Both blame the Americans. Washington takes an evenhanded approach. It sees culprits everywhere . . . except in the mirror.

All but lost in this noise is real news that many seem to have missed.

An unnamed U.S. official, widely assumed to be lead U.S. negotiator Martin Indyk, told Israeli journalist Nahum Barnea that PLO Chairman Mahmud Abbas “agreed to the border outline so 80% of settlers would continue living in Israeli territory.” (See document D5 in JPS 172.)

In the rarified world of diplomatic code in which much of the official Israeli-Palestine dialogue is conducted, a Palestinian agreement to permit 80% of settlers to remain in settlements that would be annexed to Israel is a bombshell, marking a historic reversal of the PLO’s negotiating demands.
The only map that can be drawn according to that measure must include Israel’s annexation of at least 3% of the West Bank, and perhaps far more. This map would include the settlers and settlements of Ma’ale Adumim, Givat Ze’ev, Har Homa and perhaps even Ariel—all of which the PLO has adamantly refused to formally surrender, at Camp David in 2000, at Annapolis in 2008, until now.

Inclusion of these major settlements, each anchoring an even larger and more populous expanse of “settlement blocs” throughout the West Bank, has long been a non-negotiable Israeli demand. At Camp David, Ehud Barak demanded Palestinians agree to a map enabling Israel to annex 95% of its settlers and almost 20% of the West Bank. The “napkin map” presented by Ehud Olmert to Abbas (who sketched the outline on a napkin) in September 2008 marked out Israel’s demand to annex almost 8% of the West Bank, including 87% of all settlers.

Abu Mazin acknowledged this exchange in a televised 26 April speech.

“Mr. Olmert,” charged Abbas, “did not refuse to discuss final stage issues the way his successor is refusing: the borders, Jerusalem, refugees, security and settlements. There was an exchange of maps, percentages and other things. This means that there was total seriousness about reaching a solution . . .”

While the PLO has consistently rejected the maps presented at Camp David and Annapolis, the PLO position has long acknowledged considerable concessions to Israel’s demands to retain large numbers of settlers and their settlements and annex them to Israel. During the Annapolis talks, the map presented by Abbas would enable Israel to annex almost 2% of the West Bank, including approximately 60% of the 1.5 million settlers living across the 4 June 1967 line. The settlements Abbas is prepared to surrender include all those established by Israel since 1967 in East Jerusalem, recently described by Abbas as Palestine’s “jewel in the crown,” with the prominent exception of Har Homa abutting Bethlehem.

Har Homa (population 10,000) was established by Netanyahu almost 20 years ago. Palestinians have also refused to surrender Ma’ale Adumim, with a population of 40,000 that cuts the West Bank heartland in two, Givat Ze’ev (population 14,000), south of Ramallah, and Ariel (population 20,000), at the end of a salient reaching almost 20 kilometers (12 miles) into the West Bank east of Tel Aviv.

When talks began last summer, the PLO put its 2% map on the table. Netanyahu refused to even table a map outlining the breadth of Israel’s appetite for the West Bank.

The U.S. view supporting the Olmert demand for annexation of approximately 85% of settlers was inartfully noted at the outset of the talks by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry himself. Yedioth Ahronoth reported on 1 August 2013, “According to one congressman, Kerry said he believed 85% of Israel’s biggest settlement blocs will remain under Israeli sovereignty.”

Indyk’s revelations offer the first and most authoritative indication that the PLO position has moved so clearly in Washington’s—and Israel’s—direction. In a speech to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Indyk, amplifying his earlier unsourced remarks, said, “Just during the past nine months of negotiations, tenders for building 4,800 units were announced and planning was advanced for another 8,000 units. It’s true that most of the tendered units are slated to be built in areas that even Palestinian maps in the past have indicated would be part of Israel.”

It is no secret that Israel, during the course of negotiations, has continued to build and expand settlements everywhere throughout East Jerusalem and the West Bank, where the population now reaches 550,000. But if Indyk’s claim—now public and explicit—is true, Kerry has succeeded in
winning Abbas’ formal support for Israel’s annexation of an expanded list of settlements and the vast majority of settlers residing in the very locations that Abbas has long refused to include.

One usually well-informed Palestinian source was equivocal in his response to Indyk’s comments. “I don’t know. I am not sure,” he commented. A top Palestinian official, however, was adamant, “There is no such agreement like that. It is simply not true.”

Washington’s disputed claim may simply be part of the effort by all parties to the diplomatic fiasco to cast responsibility for failure on anyone but themselves. Yet, one cannot escape a more sobering and lasting conclusion—that the U.S.-led negotiating process continues to increase the burden of territorial concessions on an ever-shrinking Palestine.

**Camp David**

**Israeli Proposal**

- 111 settlements / 374,327 settlers annexed
- 34 settlements / 18,977 settlers evacuated
- West Bank land annexed to Israel: 1,110 square kilometers (428.5 square miles), or 19.6%

**The Olmert Map**

- 69 settlements / 435,626 settlers annexed
- 71 settlements / 65,048 settlers evacuated
- West Bank land annexed to Israel: 444 square kilometers (171 square miles)
- Israeli land annexed to Palestine: 286 square kilometers (110 square miles)

**The PLO 2% Map**

- 35 settlements / 305,473 settlers annexed
- 105 settlements / 195,201 settlers evacuated
- West Bank land annexed to Israel: 86.19 square kilometers (33 square miles)
- Israeli land annexed to Palestine: 96.29 square kilometers (37 square miles)

Source: *Land Swaps—A Guide*, by Geoffrey Aronson (see Settlement Monitor, JPS 169)

“FIGURES SHOW PEACE TALKS AND SETTLEMENT CONSTRUCTION GO HAND IN HAND”

This article was published by +972 Magazine on 7 March 2014. It was authored by +972’s CEO Noam Sheizaf. The text is available at www.972mag.com.

Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) revealed earlier this week that 2013 was a record year in settlement construction, while 2014 has seen the beginning of construction of 2,534 housing projects—a rise of 123 percent from 2013.

Settlement construction took place all over the West Bank—in the so-called settlement blocs, which could be annexed to Israel in a two-state framework; in isolated settlements that are slated to be evacuated under such an agreement; on the western side of Israel’s separation barrier (which was built inside the West Bank, rather than on the internationally-recognized border), as well as on its eastern side.
Those numbers do not include, however, significant “unofficial” construction taking place in “illegal” outposts, or construction in annexed East Jerusalem, which is not measured separately by the CBS.

When last year’s figures were published in Israel, there was considerable pushback from the right, which claimed that the rise in construction projects for Jews in the occupied territories was meant to compensate for an unofficial settlement freeze in 2012. However, the rise in construction last year is just as high when compared to 2011 or 2010. In fact, 2013’s figure is the highest since the CBS started publishing this data in 2001.

Most of the construction (1,710 projects) is government-sponsored, a figure that says a lot [about] the Netanyahu’s government’s effort to change the reality on the ground.

The only other years in which the number of building projects surpassed 2,000 structures were 2003, 2005 and 2008. The interesting thing is that aside from 2003, these were all years in which there was so-called “progress” made between Israel and the Palestinian Authority vis-à-vis peace negotiations. For example, 2005 was the year of the disengagement [in Gaza], while 2008 saw direct negotiations between Mahmud Abbas and Ehud Olmert (the Annapolis summit, which began the process, took place in November 2007).

And while there is no earlier data on construction in the occupied territories, it is worth noting that during the Oslo process (from the signing of the first agreement in 1993 to the Taba summit in 2001) the number of settlers almost doubled—from 116,300 to 208,300, not including the Jewish neighborhoods in annexed East Jerusalem. Just during the short time Ehud Barak spent as prime minister, the number of Jews in the West Bank rose by 35,000, with settlers making up 3.2 percent of the Jewish population, as opposed to 1.7 percent when Oslo kicked off.

Successive Israeli governments have argued for years that settlements are not an obstacle to peace. However, those same prime ministers who directly negotiated with the Palestinians (or, in Sharon’s case, took unilateral action that was presented as an effort to end the occupation) were the ones who, at the very same time, strengthened Israel’s grip over occupied territory and transferred more Jews to what was supposed to be the heart of the future Palestinian State.

Periods in which talks didn’t take place and international attention was aimed at the reality on the ground (rather than diplomacy), were those in which Israel was relatively restrained in its colonization of the West Bank. According to CBS, the year with the lowest figures was 2010 (737 projects)—the year of the confrontation between the Obama administration and Netanyahu’s previous government, and the partial settlement freeze that followed.

“SUMMARY OF THE 9-MONTH TALKS: UNPRECEDEDENTED SETTLEMENT DEVELOPMENT”

This short report was published by Americans for Peace Now on 29 April 2014. The text is available at www.peacenow.org.

During the 9 months of Secretary Kerry’s efforts in the region, the Israeli government promoted plans and tenders for at least 13,851 housing units in the settlements and East Jerusalem—an average of 50 units per day and 1,540 units per month.
The 13,851 units include:

- **Tenders for 4,868 units**—2,248 of them in West Bank settlements and 2,620 units in East Jerusalem. (There were also tenders for another 1,235 units in reissued tenders, where the tenders are calls for bids to buy units that weren’t sold in previous tenders).
- **Promotion of plans for 8,983 units**—6,561 of them in West Bank settlements and 2,422 in East Jerusalem.

**The plans were in all West Bank areas:**

- Plans for 4,793 units in isolated settlements (73%).
- Plans for 1,768 units in settlements closer to the Green Line (27%).

The average yearly number of tenders was **4 times higher** [than under previous governments]:

**Doubling the number of construction Starts:**

According to the Israeli CBS data, in the second half of year 2013, some 828 new units were started to be built in the settlements, while at the equivalent time in 2012, only 484 units started. (The CBS data does not include the first three months of 2014.)

**New Settlements and Outposts:**

- Two new outposts were established—the Brosh outpost at the Jordan Valley and Givat Eitam, south of Bethlehem.
- A new settlement in the heart of the city of Hebron was established for the first time since the 1980s.
- Four outposts were legalized by promoting plans for them: Nahalei Tal and Zayit Ra’anana (near Ramallah), Givat Sal’it (in the Jordan Valley) and Elmatan (near Qalqilya).
- A new settlement was founded, when 60 families moved in to live in the settlement of Leshem near Salfit.
- In East Jerusalem—two big tourist projects in the Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan were promoted (the Kedem compound and the Spring House), and the National Park on the lands of Issawiya was approved.

**Tenders: Yearly Average**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>West Bank settlements</th>
<th>East Jerusalem</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd Sharon Government</td>
<td>1,371</td>
<td>2,084</td>
<td>3,455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olmert Government</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>856</td>
<td>1,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Netanyahu Government</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>1,385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Netanyahu Government</td>
<td>2,258</td>
<td>3,855</td>
<td>6,113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Americans for Peace Now
In addition, the Ministry of Housing published tenders for preparing plans for 24,000 units in several West Bank settlements, including in E1. Following the publication [of this information] by Peace Now, the tenders were cancelled.

...
Israeli police station. One picture showed the renovations being carried out on the interior of the building. Luria wrote that it would be used as an education center, with housing for pre-army yeshiva students.

The email, sent on 11 March with the header “Great news from Ateret Cohanim,” announced a “very recent acquisition . . . as yet unknown [among the] general public or by local Arabs.” It described the property as having been bought “by a generous donor” and requested recipients of the email to keep the news to themselves until the building is ready for occupancy—sometime around Passover, which begins April 14. The email was timed to coincide with Purim, traditionally a time for generosity. It urged supporters to donate toward building the dormitory, *beit midrash* (study hall), kitchen, small apartment for the yeshiva head and “security room furnishings.”

“This is a call for Am Yisrael [the people of Israel] who wish to see Jerusalem remain a united city and who agree that any Jew has a right to learn and live anywhere in Jerusalem—to partake in this new project,” the email reads. “This is a chance of a lifetime to make a difference and strengthen Jewish life in the heart of Jerusalem!”

The message also notes that this is “the first acquisition of its kind, in the area, which is in the heart of the commercial Arab district of Jerusalem—and in the general vicinity of Sultan Suleiman,” the road that runs alongside that part of the Old City. It noted that work is “being done quietly under the radar.”

From the outside, there are no signs of the work going on inside, though it is clear that the busy post office on the first floor and the police station do not account for all the space in the large landmark building.

An Israel Post legal document, a copy of which was obtained by *Haaretz*, indicates that the building is at least partly owned by the Israel Lands Administration, which leases it to the postal service.

Since its founding in 1978, Ateret Cohanim has sought to buy properties in East Jerusalem, primarily in the Old City’s Muslim Quarter, in which to house its students as well as other followers in a campaign to create a “Jewish presence” throughout the city, including the parts Israel occupied in 1967. But neither Ateret Cohanim nor a competing organization, Elad, have managed to settle Jews in the exclusively Palestinian neighborhoods and commercial district close to Damascus Gate.

In a related development, last month the Jerusalem Planning and Building Committee approved the construction of a 12-story building in nearby Sheikh Jarrah for Ohr Somayach, an Israeli yeshiva geared to English speakers from abroad. As reported in *Haaretz*, the city put the plan for the yeshiva on the agenda despite objections from city council members and its own planning policy department.

The Palestinian Authority-appointed governor of Jerusalem, Adnan al-Husseini, said he was deeply dismayed to hear of the plan to put an Ateret Cohanim yeshiva in the heart of East Jerusalem’s commercial district.

“This is a main street in East Jerusalem, and I don’t see any logic in that. Our response is that this is something that is not fair. They should put a yeshiva in West Jerusalem, in a place where it serves the Jewish community,” Husseini told *Haaretz*. “Moreover, to try to settle Jews in these
neighborhoods is just a waste of their time. East Jerusalem is the capital of the state of Palestine. We are all talking about a two-state solution, and it’s on the borders of 1967,” he added. “The Palestinians are insisting on that and it’s not going to change.”

Various nongovernmental organizations that track settlement activity in East Jerusalem said they were unaware of the acquisition. Daniel Seidemann, a lawyer and Jerusalem expert who runs the organization Terrestrial Jerusalem, says that yet another acquisition in an East Jerusalem neighborhood points to a trend that threatens peace talks. “We are witnessing an uptick in government-backed attempts to create settlement enclaves in existing Palestinian neighborhoods. These undermine the stability of Jerusalem, they threaten to Hebronize Jerusalem, and it is another obstacle on the path to any kind of permanent status agreement. It’s not surprising but it’s very distressing.”

Aviv Tatarsky, a field researcher for Ir Amim, said Ateret Cohanim has been trying, so far without success, to obtain building permits for a one-acre plot it purchased on a side street not far from the building on Salah al-Din Street.

“Many times these groups manage to get some small points and then it makes it easier for them to connect the dots, but in this case, they haven’t managed to advance it,” says Tatarsky of the nearby parcel of land.

“Settlement in a Palestinian area, and the security contingent that inevitably comes with it, does not bring anything good to the area,” Tatarsky said of the plans to use the newly acquired space as a yeshiva. “There’s no reason to have a yeshiva next to Herod’s Gate,” he said.

THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY AND THE SETTLEMENTS

“PALESTINIAN VILLAGERS ON THE FRONT LINES,” AN INTERVIEW WITH GHASSAN DAGHLASS

From Settlement Report March–April 2014.

Ghassan Daghllass is an official of the Palestinian Authority in the northern West Bank, responsible for tracking settler activity. This interview was conducted by Geoffrey Aronson on 12 March 2014 in Ramallah.

What has changed in the seven years that you have been following settlement activity?

Every day there are developments on the ground. It is true that the settlement project is expanding all the time. What is worse, however, are the “price tag” groups operating in the West Bank.

We have a continuing expansion of settlements. And added to this are the often-violent acts that settler groups are undertaking, and these are expanding as well. Our statistics show that the aggressive acts of settlers are increasing. The protests of settlers have gone from protesting inside their settlements to protests outside of the settlements, then into the mosques and to our orchards and lands. Today there are more than 632,000 settlers in the West Bank and [East] Jerusalem.
What is the relationship between the settlers and the IDF [Israel Defense Forces]?

Israel is a settler state—100 percent. We are fieldworkers, so whenever there are settler actions we see them with our own eyes. Whenever settlers uproot trees and undertake other actions, we always notice that the [Israeli] army is standing on the side of the settlers, who feel that they are above the law. The punishment imposed on a settler who burns a mosque is simply banishment to Israel for three months. The settler who killed Ibn Qadus in Burin was fined only 30 shekels [$8.00]. We feel that the army’s actions are simply a theatrical performance between the settlers and the army.

If the Israeli authorities were truly interested in stopping settler violence, they could do it easily. For example, we presented the Israeli authorities with tapes and testimony that show the uprooting of trees and other actions against us. It is ironic that when the Israeli military and legal authorities are presented with such material, they do not give those [Palestinians] who wish to testify a permit to travel to the judicial proceedings.

We have one example where the Israeli authorities succeeded in arresting settlers during the olive harvest. Undercover police were sent to the area and arrested the troublemakers. I saw this with my own eyes. This shows the ability of the Israeli authorities and soldiers to prevent settler attacks. It seems, however, that Israel rushes to punish a young boy or farmer who defends his land, but is keen on defending settlers.

Last week in the village of Luban, I caught a settler with my own hands. We made sure that no one hit him or hurt him. I sat with him until the army arrived on the scene. He admitted that he had stolen a horse and that he was from the nearby outpost. I asked him why he attacked the farmers. He said, “I saw the mare, I wanted to take it.” I asked him why he attacked us, and he answered, “I want to kick you out of this land and take it.” I informed the PA coordination office, and Israel came with a military force. I told the settler that he must present this evidence and acknowledge what he had done, so he told the Israeli officer exactly what he told me.

What is your area of responsibility?

My area reaches from the north of Ramallah to Salfit and the Jordan Valley. In every village in a conflict situation, I have a team. In my phone, I have 2,500 telephone numbers. I am in every locality. I built this system. The PA offers no financial support for this effort other than my salary. We are more a popular movement of volunteers than PA representatives.

People feel safer when I am around. We call [ourselves] the Guard Committees. Groups stay up late in the evening, and if they see a settler attack, they call me, and they go to the mosque and announce it to everyone. People wake up and confront the settlers.

How many Guard Committees are there?

There are a number of Guard Committees. We have a crisis, so there are many. They work in a shift system, 24 hours a day. They cooperate with the village council or locality without any financial assistance from the PA. The volunteers come from many walks of life. Whoever offers is taken. Most are farmers. It is a communal organization that is self-generated. We have no arms, and no radios, other than our cell phones. We only look at Area C where settlers are active.
Where are you most active?

Kusra is very active. There we have a great village council leader. Also in the villages of Boreen, Hourif, Haris, Salfit, and Brukhin, where today, for example, settlers appropriated 100 dunams of land. In the Salfit area, there are 23 settlements and 21 Palestinian villages.

Are the Guard Committees effective?

At the end of the day, the most important achievement is that settlers are aware that people are awake and observing. As a consequence, the nature of settler actions has changed. Direct attacks against villages have decreased while attacks have moved to the land and roads. In Dayr Istiya, for example, settlers burned the mosque because there was no guard team of observers in the village. When such groups are present, settlers select areas where they see that no committees are active.

Is there more that the PA could do?

At this point, the PA cannot do anything. Only popular committees on the ground can affect the situation. We give all our information to the PA, and we update them on all developments. We help to organize popular protests, and if trees are uprooted, we replace them. The Palestinian liaison officer comes himself and submits a report on every event and also files a complaint [with the civil administration] even though we know that the complaint is meaningless. After we were told that the settlers were complaining about our activities, we decided to make our own complaints as well.

The cost for Palestinians who confront settlers on their own is high. Settlers often will make a complaint, and someone can be fined NIS 5,000 [$1,400] and a year in jail. The cost of confronting settlers is very high.

Is the diplomacy having any effect on the situation on the ground?

Recently 28 [European] consuls recommended all kinds of things, but Israel does not respond in any way and does not take such suggestions into consideration. Had there been any positive change in settler behavior, the international community would not be calling for a boycott of settlement products.

How often are you able to protect villagers from settler actions?

Many times. In Koostra, Talfit, Luban . . . many times. We tell settlers that we are not keen on violence. We want peace, but not at any price. We do not want to see the army or settlers. All we want is to be left alone. I am 42 years old. I [first] saw the sea when I was 39. I do not want to see my children denied such pleasures. The presence of settlers and the occupation will not give any hope for peace.

How explosive is the current situation on the ground?

The olive harvest [that occurs in the fall] marks the peak of confrontations between settlers and the people. The “outposts” will become full-fledged settlements. All the numbers indicate that Israel is not keen on establishing peace.
It is worrying that things might develop into an explosion. It is worrying that settlers enter into the hearts of villages. The stalemate on the political level contributes to this feeling. When I see Israelis marching with huge numbers of Knesset members, we are demoralized.

An Israeli bulldozer destroys a house in the Ma’ale Rehavam outpost near Bethlehem. Israeli security forces demolished ten houses in the illegal outpost after Israel’s High Court rejected residents’ claims to have purchased the land legally from Palestinians. (14 May, Menahem Kahana/AFP/Getty Images)