



Settlement Monitor

16 FEBRUARY–15 MAY 2016

This section covers items—reprinted articles, statistics, and maps—pertaining to Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. They are reproduced as published, including original spelling and stylistic idiosyncrasies.

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Significant developments this quarter: *As the right-wing Knesset continues to collectively punish Palestinians for the surge of resistance (habba) that began in Jerusalem in 9/2015, Israel returns to its pre-Oslo policy of vast land confiscations coupled with accelerated home demolitions in Area C. Similarly, Israel continues confiscating land in the Jerusalem area on the pretext of environmental preservation, with the larger aim being the Judaization of the city. While Palestinians lost homes and agricultural land at ever-increasing rates, Israel’s spending on the settler population grew by 28.4% in 2015. In the first quarter of 2016 alone, the number of settlement units approved by the Israeli government was 250% higher than during the comparable period in 2015.*

SETTLEMENT DATA AND TRENDS

“NEW WAVE OF DEMOLITIONS IN WEST BANK: ANOTHER PHASE IN POLICY OF EXPELLING PALESTINIANS FROM VAST PORTIONS OF WEST BANK”

In this article, the Israeli nongovernmental organization B’Tselem provides an overview of the home demolitions that occurred in Area C of the West Bank—particularly, the South Hebron Hills, Ma’ale Adumim, and Jordan Valley regions—in the first six weeks of 2016. The article provides a brief history of ongoing legal battles, and documents the number and type of structures targeted in each area. B’Tselem contextualizes the surge in demolitions as being a continuation of Israel’s long-standing policy of forcibly removing Palestinians from Area C in order to make way for Jewish settlers. Published on 16 February 2016, the article is available at www.btselem.org.

As of January 2016 Israeli authorities have stepped up efforts to expel Palestinian communities from vast areas in the West Bank, with a focus on the South Hebron Hills, the area around the settlement of Ma’ale Adumim, and the Jordan Valley.

As part of these efforts, as of January 2016 and through 11 February, authorities have demolished 73 dwellings and 51 other structures, leaving 284 people, including 161 minors, without shelter. In many communities these were repeat demolitions of structures that were previously demolished, sometimes just days earlier, or cases in which authorities confiscated or dismantled replacement dwelling tents provided to the families as humanitarian aid. At least 37 of the structures demolished since the beginning of the year had been donated by aid agencies and European countries.

This exceptionally large-scale demolition campaign is reminiscent of the one [waged in August 2015](#), when the authorities demolished 101 structures, including 50 dwellings, and left 228 people, 124 of them minors, without a roof over their heads.

Some of the communities where authorities recently demolished homes have been involved in a lengthy legal battle in Israel’s High Court of Justice (HCJ). The legal proceedings have revealed the state’s premise that the residents have no right to live in their homes and communities, and the state’s position that it has no obligation to provide them with alternative housing. Even in cases in which the proceedings have been going on for years—sometimes due to negotiations or mediation between the parties—state representatives refuse to acknowledge the changes that arise from natural population growth and the communities’ changing needs. Any new construction is met with an immediate threat of demolition, and sometimes actual demolition.

This state policy ignores the impossible reality it leads to for these Palestinian residents, as if Israeli authorities have nothing to do with bringing it about: In the absence of any possibility to build legally, residents have no choice but to build their homes without permits and live in constant fear of their homes and livelihoods being destroyed. Effectively, the state forces people to subsist in inhuman living conditions, without basic amenities and with no hope or chance for improving the situation. The policy, systematically implemented for years, constitutes the forcible transfer of Palestinians—a protected population—inside the occupied territory, whether directly, by demolishing their homes, or indirectly, by creating an untenable reality.

The HCJ has rejected some residents' petitions. In others, it has issued interim injunctions preventing the state from demolishing the homes pending a ruling. Some of these injunctions remained in effect for years, and some are still in effect. Yet, in not one of the scores of petitions filed, did the justices question the state's fundamental presumptions or intervene in the considerations underpinning the authorities' decision. By following this approach, the court allows the authorities to continue implementing the forcible transfer policy.

The large-scale demolitions carried out by Israel since the beginning of the year are part of its longstanding policy in Area C, an area which comprises 60% of the West Bank and remained under full Israeli control under the interim agreements, which were scheduled to expire 15 years ago. The policy is predicated on the concept that this area is primarily meant to serve Israel's needs. Therefore, the authorities have consistently worked toward further entrenching Israel's hold on Area C, pushing out Palestinians living in it, exploiting its natural resources for the benefit of the Israeli population, and creating a permanent reality of thriving settlements and minimal Palestinian presence.

This policy reflects de facto Israeli annexation of Area C. Some Israeli officials also demand a formal annexation of Area C, with or without the Palestinian population, to Israel's sovereign territory.

Yet Area C cannot possibly be considered a stand-alone region, separate and distinct from the rest of the West Bank. The division of the West Bank into Areas A, B and C does not reflect a geographic reality. It is an administrative demarcation, set forth on a temporary basis as part of the Oslo Accords Interim Accords, more than 20 years ago. The effects of Israel's policy are not limited to the people living in Area C. The restrictions Israel imposes there impact all Palestinians in the West Bank. They force Palestinians to live in overcrowded enclaves, without land reserves for housing, infrastructure or agriculture; affect their right to enjoy basic infrastructure such as water and roads; prevent them from receiving adequate education and health services and impact their right to travel freely throughout the West Bank. The illusion Israel has created, that it controls only Area C, is designed to allow it to evade its responsibility for the wellbeing and welfare of all residents of the occupied territory.

The partition of lands in the West Bank, coupled with the Israeli courts' refusal to challenge the methods used by Israel to take over land—lack of outline plans, declaring areas as firing zones—methods presented to the court by the state itself, are what lies at the heart of the dispossession and control strategy Israel has been leading quite successfully in the West Bank in recent years. Despite significant international attention to this reality, to date, no effective measures have been taken to put an end to it, which effectively means the international community is greenlighting continued human rights violations and the forcible transfer of civilians inside the occupied territory.

Demolition Target Areas

Israeli authorities' efforts to edge Palestinian communities out of Area C are focused primarily in three areas: The South Hebron Hills, the Ma'ale Adumim area and the Jordan Valley. Legal proceedings with respect to these areas have been underway for several years. Of late, there have been some significant legal developments:

In the South Hebron Hills, negotiations (regarding Khirbet Susiya) and mediation (regarding the communities of Masafer Yatta [Greater Yatta]–Firing Zone 918), between the residents and the authorities ended unsuccessfully. After no results were achieved in the negotiations conducted in the matter of Khirbet Susiya, authorities now threaten the demolition of dozens of structures in the community. In Masafer Yatta, the parties to the mediation process informed the court that the mediation had failed. The very next day, authorities resumed demolition of homes built after the petition was filed. Demolitions had been on hold ever since after the court issued an interim injunction in the urgent petitions filed by the residents. In the Ma’ale Adumim area, authorities resumed demolition in the area designated as E1. In its response to the petition filed by the local community of Abu a-Nuwar, the state said it was planning to demolish all homes in the community and expel residents to an alternate site.

The legal proceedings, even those which included mediation and negotiations, are conducted amid constant threats by the authorities to demolish buildings built while proceedings were underway. In some cases, threats were made to halt proceedings and demolish the structures that are the subject of the petition—completely ignoring the changes that have taken place in the communities’ needs over the course of the lengthy proceedings.

South Hebron Hills

Masafer Yatta: On 1 February 2016, a two-year mediation process between Israeli authorities and the 12 communities of Masafer Yatta, home to 1,300 people, ended without a resolution. These communities are located in an area Israel defined as “Firing Zone 918” in the early 1980s. In 1999, authorities destroyed many structures in these communities and expelled roughly 700 residents, who were later allowed to return to their communities only with the court’s intervention. With remarkable alacrity, when notice of the end of mediation was issued, Civil Administration officials arrived at some of the communities and began photographing structures in preparation for demolition. The very next day, 2 February 2016, authorities demolished structures in **two of the communities**: in Khirbet Jenbah, 15 dwellings that were home to 60 people, including 32 minors; in Khirbet al-Halawah, seven dwellings that were home to 50 people, including 32 minors. Twenty of these structures had been donated by humanitarian aid agencies. In addition to demolitions, the Civil Administration and the military confiscated three solar panels in Khirbet Jenbah and two in Khirbet al-Halawah, which were also donations by a humanitarian aid agency. With no possibility of hooking up to the power grid, these solar panels were the only source of electricity for local residents. The structures demolished were built over the course of the two years that the mediation process was underway. Following urgent petitions filed by the Society of St. Yves and Rabbis for Human Rights–Israel, the HCJ issued interim injunctions temporarily halting the demolitions. With the mediation concluded, the case returns to the HCJ, which is expected to hold a hearing in March.

Khirbet Susiya: The 250 members of the community continue their fight against ongoing efforts to displace them from their land. During the 1980s and 1990s, community residents were expelled from some of their land, which the state handed over to settlers. On 21 January 2016, as part of proceedings in the residents’ petitions against the demolition of their homes, the state told the HCJ it was interested in negotiating with the residents. However, at some point, the state retracted

its undertaking that so long as negotiations were underway it would not demolish structures it alleges were built after the orders halting both construction and demolition in the area were issued. This brought the state back to the [position it presented in July 2015](#), when it announced its intention to demolish some thirty structures in the community, including homes, livestock pens, storerooms and the village clinic. These structures are home to 74 people, including 35 minors. Twenty-one of the structures the authorities seek to demolish have been donated by humanitarian aid agencies and European countries.

A day earlier, on 20 January 2016, the Civil Administration demolished two residential tents housing a family of eight, including six minors. The tents were erected in 2015, after the petition was filed, and were among the structures that the state refused to undertake not to demolish at this stage. After the demolition, a humanitarian aid organization helped the family erect two new tents, but on 4 February 2016, officials returned to Khirbet Susiya, and dismantled and confiscated the two tents.

Khirbet a-Rahwah: On 13 January 2016, the Civil Administration demolished residential tents and an animal pen in Khirbet a-Rahwah, south of the Palestinian town of a-Dhahiriyah. The structures had been home to a family of nine, including seven minors. The family's tent had already been torn down by the Civil Administration about a year ago, and erected once more since. Civil Administration officials also confiscated a solar panel donated to the family by a humanitarian aid agency.

Ma'ale Adumim Area

Abu a-Nuwar: This community lives in an area that lies between the settlements of Ma'ale Adumim and Qedar, and has been marked by the Israeli authorities as [Area E1](#), slated for an expansion of Ma'ale Adumim resulting in territorial contiguity between the settlement and Jerusalem. The community consists of more than 100 families, with a total population of about 600. On 6 January 2016, the authorities demolished five residential tents of families in the community. The tents were home to 28 people, including 18 minors. After the demolition, humanitarian aid agencies gave the families tents, but on 10 January 2016, the authorities returned to Abu a-Nuwar, dismantled the tents and confiscated them.

In 2015, Abu a-Nuwar residents petitioned the HCJ against the demolition orders issued for their homes, and the court issued interim injunctions. The structures demolished in January were apparently not included in the petition.

On 28 January 2016, in the proceedings held with respect to this petition, the state notified the HCJ that it had imminent plans to carry out the demolition orders and expel all residents of the community to "Jahalin West," an alternate site located in the Abu Dis area. The state said groundwork at the site had recently been completed. The state also said in its court submission that the transfer of the Abu a-Nuwar community to the new site would serve as a test case for the feasibility of future plans to move Bedouin communities to other "permanent sites," and its success would allow advancing these plans. This notice is the first official statement that Israel is planning to expel the entire community from its current location.

The state's response also noted that some members of the community have, at certain times, expressed a willingness to relocate. Even if there is a kernel of truth in this claim, it is highly doubtful that any such consent was given freely, considering the circumstances the Israeli

authorities impose on the residents, namely—issuing demolition orders, threatening all structures in the community, preventing connections to the water and electric infrastructure, and severely restricting residents' ability to make a living by restricting their access to grazing pastures.

Badu al-Baba community: Badu al-Baba community: On 21 January 2016, authorities demolished three residential structures in the community. Badu al-Baba is also located in E1 and it is not far from al-'Eizariyah, southeast of Jerusalem. The structures were home to three families, numbering 14 people, including six minors. Two of the demolished structures were pre-fab homes donated by a humanitarian aid agency.

Jericho and the Jordan Valley

A large part of the current wave of demolitions took place in the Jericho area and the Jordan Valley. Since January authorities have demolished 29 dwellings and 47 other structures in small shepherding and farming communities, leaving 91 people, including 48 minors, without a roof over their heads.

Particularly prominent in this region were repeat demolitions in the communities of al-Mukasar and Khirbet 'Ein al-Karzaliyah.

Khirbet 'Ein al-Karzaliyah is a small shepherding community located about five kilometers south-west of the village of al-Jiftlik. Members of the community take their flocks and move to other parts of the Jordan Valley in spring and summer. On 10 February 2016, authorities demolished three tents that were home to 21 people, including ten minors, as well as ten livestock pens and enclosures. The demolitions took place less than a week after the authorities destroyed a tent, which has since been put back up. The military also razed the community's access road, to prevent humanitarian aid from reaching the community, as it did [last March](#). In 2014 and 2015, the Civil Administration [demolished all structures](#) in the community four different times.

On the same day, the military also came to the community of al-Mukasar, located between the Beka'ot military base and the settlement of Ro'i on one side and the al-Hamra checkpoint on the other. The troops once more demolished a tent which serves as a dwelling for a family of ten, including five minors, and a livestock pen. This demolition came less than a week after a previous demolition of the tent, which had since been erected anew. This is [the third time since June 2015](#) that the military has demolished structures belonging to this and other al-Mukasar families. During this demolition, as well as in the previous one on 4 February 2016, authorities demolished and confiscated tents given to the family by humanitarian aid organizations.

In addition, between 9 and 11 February 2016, authorities also carried out demolitions in the communities Khamat Khader [Khillat al-Khader], al-Musafah and Abu al-'Ajaj, located on the outskirts of the village of al-Jiftlik, as well as in [Khirbet Tana](#) and Fasayil al-Wusta, where they demolished once again the homes and livestock enclosure of a family whose structures had [already been demolished in August 2015](#). The total number of demolitions in Jordan Valley communities over these three days stands at 22 dwellings and 35 structures used for storage and livestock. Authorities also demolished five structures in recognized villages in the Jordan Valley, built on village land designated as Area C.

On 21 January 2016, authorities demolished three huts used as a residence by a family in the community of Badu al-Mashru', on the outskirts of the city of Jericho. The huts, donated by a humanitarian aid agency after a demolition in 2013, were used by a family of 13, including eight minors. In addition, on 14 January 2006, the [Civil Administration demolished four structures](#) used for storing farming equipment and grains in Khirbet 'Einun, located about 5 kilometers from the Palestinian city of Tubas. On the same day in Khirbet 'Einun, Civil Administration officials also destroyed a water reservoir which serves the community of Khirbet Yarza (through pipes), located some seven kilometers southeast of Tubas.

Ramallah Area

On 1 February 2016, authorities demolished the homes of three families in the community of 'Ein Ayub in Deir 'Ammar, 3 kilometers east of which the settlement of Na'ale was built. Troops demolished three residential tents which were home to 17 people, including 11 minors, and also a livestock pen belonging to one of the families.

On 14 January 2016, the authorities demolished a hut which was home to seven people, including three minors, and also two livestock pens, belonging to a family from the Ka'abneh tribe in one of the Bedouin communities east of the Palestinian village of a-Taybah, Ramallah District. The settlement of Kochav Hashachar was built near the community. This was also a repeat demolition; authorities had previously demolished the family's home and other structures in the community on 3 September 2015.

"ADVANCEMENT OF PLANS FOR HOUSING UNITS IN THE SETTLEMENTS UP BY 250% IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2016"

On 12 April 2016, Americans for Peace Now released data tracking the number of settlement units approved by the Israeli government in the first quarter of 2016, revealing a 250% increase over the comparable 2015 period. The chart below, which includes new and retroactively approved units, presents the data by settlement bloc. The chart is also available at peacenow.org.

While the government's declared policy in the settlements is that of a "planning freeze," during January–March 2016 plans for 674 housing units in the settlements were advanced (all over the West Bank and particularly in isolated settlements), as opposed to 194 housing units in the same period last year.

During 2015, plans for 1,665 new housing units were promoted (1,044 of them were retroactively legalized after having been built illegally and without a plan). This number constitutes a substantial decrease from 2014, during which 8,606 new housing units had been promoted (801 of which retroactively legalized). The figures of the first quarter of 2016 illustrate an upturn in the approval of plans, and sharply increase the total number of units promoted by the current Netanyahu government. Additionally, as illustrated by the numbers above, while the government states that it currently approves plans for already existing construction only, in reality in 2016 only 26% of the plans advanced constituted retroactive legalizations (compared with 63% in 2015).

A List of Plans Advanced in the First Quarter of 2016

PLAN NO.	SETTLEMENT	DATE	PLANNING PHASE	NEW UNITS	UNITS RETROACTIVELY APPROVED (OUT OF THE UNITS IN THE PLAN, WITHOUT THE CARAVANS)
126/7	Etz Efraim	20/01/2016	Discussion on depositing	34	
171	Rechelim	20/01/2016	Discussion on depositing	97	61
405/6/6/1	Alon Shvut	20/01/2016	Discussion on validation	60	
507/1/1	Carmel	20/01/2016	Discussion on validation	27	27
121/16	Oranit	24/02/2016	Discussion on validation	20	
201/3/12	Ofarim	24/02/2016	Discussion on depositing	30	
216/7	Giv'on Ha'hadasha	24/02/2016	Discussion on validation	22	22
322/κ	Rotem	24/02/2016	Discussion on validation	181	17
115/14	Alfei Menashe	16/03/2016	Discussion on depositing	24	
121/20	Oranit	16/03/2016	Discussion on depositing	4	
235/2/4/κ	Nerya	16/03/2016	Discussion on depositing	98	48
420/1/7/30	Ma'ale Adumim	16/03/2016	Discussion on validation	46	
510/22/1	Kiryat Arba	16/03/2016	Discussion on validation	24	
515/1	Tene	16/03/2016	Discussion on validation	7	

"THE GOVERNMENT DECLARES 2342 DUNAMS SOUTH OF JERICHO AS STATE LAND"

On 15 March 2016, the Israeli advocacy group Peace Now revealed that Israel's Civil Administration had declared 2,342 dunams south of Jericho as state land for the purpose of expanding settlements. In this article, Peace Now notes that the latest measure and another near Bethlehem last year point to the revival of pre-Oslo era confiscation policies. This particular plan is also emblematic of Israel's larger project to annex the area between Jerusalem and Jericho in order to split the West Bank in half and prevent the establishment of a contiguous Palestinian state. The article—along with a map—is available at peacenow.org.il/en/.

The army radio exposed today that on March 10, 2016, during Vice President Biden's visit to Israel, the Civil Administration's Head of the Government Property signed a declaration according to which 2,342 dunams (580 acres) south of Jericho are now government property. This declaration of state land comes two months after it was reported that [the Minister of Defense approved a declaration of 1,500 dunams](#) as state lands in an area south of Jericho. It appears that

the January approval by the MoD permitted the land declaration which is now being implemented. However, the size of the land declared is larger than what was published in January and includes 2,342 dunams. The declaration, which is in fact a confiscation, was meant for the expansion of nearby settlements as well as for trade and tourism projects operated by the settlers. This is one of the largest declarations in recent years, and it is another illustration of the government's policy of land confiscation, including those far beyond the Green Line and the separation barrier.

Peace Now: This declaration is a de facto confiscation of Palestinian lands for the purpose of settlement. Instead of trying to [calm] the situation, the government is adding fuel to the fire and sending a clear message to Palestinians, as well as to Israelis, that it has no intention to work towards peace and two states. Netanyahu proves yet again, that settler pressure is more important to him than the deteriorating security situation.

Scope of State Land Declarations:

In August 2014, close to 4,000 dunams were declared as state land in the Bethlehem area, something which led to massive international criticism of the Israeli government. In April 2014, another 1,000 dunams in the Bethlehem area were declared as state lands. These two declarations were highly unusual, as in the last several decades Israel's policy was not to take over additional lands for the purpose of settlements. The current declaration illustrates the fact that Israel has changed its policy and returned to the method of land confiscation through large-scale declarations of state lands implemented in the pre-Oslo period during the 1980s.

Purpose of the Declaration:

Peace Now's assumption is that the purpose of the declaration is to maximize land takeover in the Jericho region in order to prevent potential for Palestinian expansion in the area; and to allow for the promotion of several new plans. The existing plans that we know about in the declared include:

1. Plan number 604/3 – for the construction of 358 housing units in the settlement of Almog on 687 dunams. The plan was approved for validation, but was pending until the land ownership issue is resolved.
2. Plan number 600/4 – 5,000 dunams along Route 1 (Jerusalem–Jericho) for trade and tourism. The plan was approved for validation but was pending until the land ownership issue is resolved. Some touristic sites and souvenir shops are already operating in the area.
3. Plan number 600/2 – for trade and roadside services over 21 dunams. This plan is for the gas station “Almog Al HaDerech” which has been operating in the area for many years. It seems that here too, there has been an issue of land ownership.

Location of the Declaration:

The area south of Jericho is located deep in the West Bank and far beyond the Green Line and the separation barrier. In recent years the struggle over control over the corridor between Jerusalem and Jericho has highly intensified. The Israeli government [increased demolitions of Bedouin \[homes\] along route 1](#) (between Jerusalem and Jericho) and at the same time it continues to promote plans

for the expansion of settlements along the road, including in Ma'ale Adumim and in E-1. The declared area is at the eastern edge of this corridor, and control over this area is meant to split the West Bank in half and prevent the possibility to establish a viable and contiguous Palestinian State.

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SETTLEMENTS' ECONOMIC COSTS AND ALTERNATIVE COSTS TO THE STATE OF ISRAEL, 2015

On 24 February 2016, the Macro Center for Political Economics released a report analyzing the cost of settlements in 2015. The report found that the Israeli government's spending on settlers, some 1.41 billion NIS (\$369.1 million), grew by 28.4% in 2015, placing a "heavy burden" on the national economy. The progressive Israeli policy center found that the resulting spike in settler home renovations and rising property values decreased the likelihood of a buyout, the assumed incentive for settlement evacuation in a future peace deal.

Presented below is the report's executive summary. The full report in Hebrew and the English-language executive summary are available at www.macro.org.il/en.

The total value of structures built in West Bank settlements (excluding infrastructures) amounts to 121.2 billion NIS, in 2015 prices. Over the past year, around 300 thousand square meters were added to the constructed area, with a value increase of about 8.9 billion NIS. Current building stock represents more than 100% increase over the past 18 years, from 4.85 million square meters in 1998 to 9.97 million square meters in 2015.

The annual governmental excess support (comparative to other Israeli regions) to local authorities in the West Bank stands at 570.1 million NIS, or 1,540 NIS per capita. The national average share of governmental support of local authority's budget stands at 28.9%, compared to 46.8% in the West Bank. State participation in the budgets of local authorities in the West Bank is 3,904 NIS per capita, compared to 3,431 in the Negev and 3,031 in the Galilee.

In addition, authorities in the West Bank received in 2015 balancing grants of around 360.7 million NIS. An average resident of the West Bank received 1,013.6 NIS, compared to the national average (excluding WB) of 335.0 NIS. Around the same difference is seen in development grants which are 2.8 times larger. A West Bank resident is receiving 99.3 NIS more than residents of the North (11%), 616.1 NIS more than residents of the south (155%) and 895.7 NIS more relative to Jerusalem district residents (760%).

Compared to 2014, the Settlement Division's budget suffered a reduction. In the Central Region the decline is of approximately 25.7% and in the Northern District, around 56%. However, in December 2015 the government decided on a dedicated transfer of excess funds to the division. The dedicated funds will divert some extra 79 million NIS to the division's Central Region's budget. At this point the total budget of the Settlement Division's Central Region stands at 81.03 million NIS.

In 2015 there was a decline of 35% in the budget of the Ministry of Construction and Housing for West Bank settlements, which is now estimated at about 2.1 million NIS. As part of submitted changes to the national budget a supplemental budget for Ma'ale Adumim in the amount of 10.7 million NIS is planned.

As of academic year 2015, 45% of the pupils in the West Bank study under the Ultra-Orthodox education sector and 39% are enrolled in religious state schools. West Bank religious pupils

constitute about 18% of all religious pupils in the country. According to the Ministry of Education 2015 budget (and to coalition agreements) West Bank pupils attending religious institutions will get 651.7 million NIS.

A new tax benefits scheme for preferred localities was approved in November 2015. The new layout includes, for the first time, some 17 thousand people living in West Bank settlements. The annual estimated cost of the new benefit is around 42 million NIS per year.

The total annual cost of the additional expenses for settlements in the West Bank amounted to 1.412 billion NIS in 2015. The additional annual expenditure per capita stands at 3,815 NIS and 18,034 per household. Settlements east of the barrier receive significantly greater additional expenses of 6,075 NIS per capita, compared to 3,145 for settlements west of the barrier. In 2015, the total estimated additional government spending in the West Bank rose by 28.4% or around 312.3 million NIS. The percentage change in direct expenses (intended to persons or households) was 85.8% (an increase of 44.5 million NIS) compared to 25.6% for indirect expenses (intended [for] municipalities or development). The per capita increase in spending was 23.5% (725 NIS) and the per household was 31.7%.

LAND CONFISCATIONS CONTINUE UNDER GUISE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

“PALESTINIAN VILLAGERS TILLED THEIR LAND SO WELL, ISRAEL IS NOW CONFISCATING IT FROM THEM” (EXCERPTS)

In this article, Nir Hasson discusses Israeli land confiscation in the Palestinian village of al-Walaja for the purpose of creating a national park. Al-Walaja is adjacent to the Israeli settlements of Gilo and Har Gilo, and the separation wall has incrementally encroached on village land since its inception. The additional section of the wall planned under the new confiscation will enable Israel to annex the Ein Haniya spring and the agricultural terraces that villagers have tended for decades. The plans are part of a larger project to expand the Gilo settlement in order to connect it to Har Gilo.

In November 2015, a section of the separation wall in the nearby Cremisan Valley was extended to Beit Jala, effectively bringing Har Gilo into the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem. Just southeast of al-Walaja, the confiscated land in the Cremisan Valley is projected to become a settler-only park if the January 2016 plans to expand Gilo are approved. (See Settlement Monitor in JPS 45[2-3] for more on the Cremisan Valley plans.)

Published on 19 February 2016 by Haaretz, Hasson’s article is available in full at www.haaretz.com.

Two weeks ago, soldiers hung posters in the village of Al-Walaja, south of Jerusalem: “Notice of intent to acquire rights to the land and purchase ownership of the land required for public purposes.” In translation to non-legalese, these are orders to confiscate Palestinian land for the purpose of continuing building the West Bank separation barrier near the village.

According to the work plans, the construction of the barrier is scheduled to be concluded by the end of this year. The notice does not explain where exactly the additional land will be confiscated from. A resident who wishes to find out has to go to the Israel Land Authority offices in Jerusalem.

The problem is that the vast majority of the residents of Al-Walaja are unable to enter Jerusalem, because they are residents of the territories without Israeli work permits. That's but one example of the Kafkaesque story that has made up the lives of the village's residents in recent years.

As part of the absurdity, Al-Wajala's terraces were cultivated for many years by the local Palestinian farmers. Now they're one of the reasons for declaring the area around the village a national park—which, along with the separation barrier, threatens to keep the farmers away from the very terraces they nurtured.

The desire to preserve the landscape was one of the considerations for building the separation barrier almost adjacent to the homes of the residents rather than next to the Green Line (the pre-1967 borders of Israel).

In the name of landscape preservation, the barrier's present route separates the villagers' homes from their agricultural land. But the landscape already suffered serious damage when the Defense Ministry drove a wide road through the terraces several years ago. That road became superfluous after the route of the barrier was ordered changed by the Supreme Court.

A few weeks before the notices were posted in the village, the Antiquities Authority, Israel Nature and Parks Authority [INPA] and the Jerusalem Development Authority published a tender for "preservation and development work" in Ein Haniya, north of the village. Ostensibly there is no connection between the notice about the barrier and the tender. In the eyes of the residents of the small farming village, though, there's a very clear connection: They see the barrier, a national park and appropriation of the Ein Haniya spring as a tourist attraction for Israelis as part of a larger plan to expel them from the area.

Home Arrests

The current village of Al-Walaja was founded by refugees of the original Al-Walaja, which until 1948 was located on the other side of the Refaim stream (Nahal Refaim), and was abandoned during the War of Independence. With the expansion of the boundaries of Jerusalem after the Six-Day War, part of the village was also included inside the city. But Israel made sure to annex only the land, without granting the people living on it residence status. That's why residents of Al-Walaja have been arrested several times for illegal residence in their own homes.

Eventually, the settlement of Har Gilo was built south of the village and a high concrete wall built between it and Al-Walaja. Now the security barrier and national park will close in the village from its other three sides (heading southeast to Bethlehem will be the only route out).

Anyone visiting the area these days will easily understand the desire of the Jerusalem Municipality, Jerusalem Development Authority and INPA to turn the land into a national park for city residents. The village is built above Nahal Refaim, and dozens of ancient terraces descend from it to the stream below. The green landscape sparkles and is dotted with blossoming almond trees and anemones; the heavy rains have brought abundant water to the springs and one can find brooks in places.

At the heart of this area lies Ein Haniya, one of the most beautiful springs in the Judean Hills. Two large pools and numerous archaeological remains can be found next to it. The spring is also considered a sacred place for Greek Orthodox Christians. But the spring is important not only for hikers and pilgrims, but also the residents of Al-Walaja. Shepherds used to bring their sheep and

goats to drink from it, and young men from the village would bathe or hang out there, alongside visiting Israelis.

In the past year, large-scale archaeological excavations have been carried out by the Antiquities Authority. The work was done as part of the project for developing the city's ongoing Metropolitan Park—a large park that will eventually surround Jerusalem from the south and the west. According to the plan, Ein Haniya is scheduled to become one of the park's focal points, with a restaurant, visitors' center, paths and lighting.

There are plans for an educational farm next to the spring for organic produce. On the other side of the stream, they are working energetically to restore terraces as part of the park, while above them, the Biblical Zoo's huge new aquarium is being built. Ein Haniya will join many other springs that were used previously by Palestinian residents, but subsequently became attractions for Israelis. [. . .]

Aviv Tatarsky belongs to the nonprofit Ir Amim, and has been helping the village residents for years. "Today," he explains, "it's clear to anyone who goes there that it's on Palestinian territory. But you can imagine how it will be in a few years from now, with a visitors' center, restaurant and hikers? People's awareness will change and they will relate to it as Israeli territory. If they were to build a new settlement here, the whole world would be up in arms. But they're making the area Israeli by means of the national park and nobody says anything."

Currently, the spring is on the Palestinian side of the barrier. But when the barrier is completed, the residents are convinced the checkpoint will also be moved and their access to the spring will be blocked once and for all. The move is expected to separate the residents from their agricultural land as well.

The notices posted recently herald the resumption of work on the separation barrier. Work had progressed very slowly in the past few years. In 2013, work began on the barrier and the security road around the village: half the barrier was built, but then the work was unexpectedly discontinued. Even so, a large percentage of the farmers have already abandoned the terraces or switched to far less intensive cultivation of the land. Residents believe that closing access to the spring and completing the separation barrier are likely to lead to another stage in the abandonment of the land by those who cultivated it.

According to the plan, two "agricultural gates" are supposed to be built for the use of village residents. But the experience of West Bank villages with agricultural gates does not bode well: Nobody knows where they will be built, who will be allowed to use them, and what the procedures for opening them will be.

Kept in the Dark

[. . .] Although everyone recognizes the contribution of the residents of Al-Walaja to the lands, nobody bothered to inform them of the plans for building the national park or to promise that they would be able to continue working the land.

[INPA regional planner Zeev] Hacothen declares without hesitation that the contribution of Al-Walaja's farmers to preserving the landscape of the national park is important. But, as with the spring at Ein Haniya, he cannot promise them anything. "The defense establishment gave the residents of Al-Walaja agricultural gates. I'm sure that it doesn't satisfy them, but I can't do more than that. I'm really sorry to say that. If the barrier there is built and there are problems with the

agricultural gates, I declare that we will side with the residents of Al-Walaja so the gates will function properly. But I can't force the defense establishment to give [work] permits."

In an affidavit Hacoheh submitted to the Supreme Court several years ago, he expressed the fear that if the terraces remained on the Palestinian side of the separation barrier, they would be destroyed over time. "It's clear to us we won't have any influence or ability to safeguard the park in the areas on the other side of the barrier," he wrote. "The risk is that the areas of ancient agriculture would be damaged and built in an uncontrolled manner."

Meanwhile, the body responsible for tremendous damage to the landscape is the defense establishment, which paved its huge road—with the approval of the INPA—that cut through the terraces in the heart of the national park, and which everyone agrees blights the landscape. The purpose of the road was to create a bypass to the adjacent Cremisan Monastery. However, due to Supreme Court decisions, the route of the separation barrier was changed and the monastery will now remain on the Palestinian side, meaning the road was superfluous. [. . .]

Regarding the construction of the road to the monastery, the Defense Ministry had previously stated, "The route that was constructed was approved in the Court and planned in coordination with the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, in order to minimize damage to the environment and to ensure protection for the residents of the Gilo neighborhood."

"ISRAEL'S 'BIBLE TRAIL': DEMOLISHING PALESTINIAN HOMES TO MAKE NATIONAL PARKS" (EXCERPTS)

In this article, journalist Jonathan Cook discusses Israel's plans to demolish Palestinian homes in the Sawaneh district of East Jerusalem, and declare the area part of a national park. Residents have learned that their homes would be demolished in order to construct a "Bible Trail" for tourists, although there are no historic remains under or near their homes.

Like the case of al-Walaja (see article above), the planned demolitions in Sawaneh exemplify Israel's larger project of confiscating Palestinian land in the Jerusalem area under the guise of environmental and archaeological preservation. This strategy is effective due to a legal loophole that allows the Jerusalem Municipality to transfer land to the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, which then makes way for the eviction of Palestinians from their homes without technically "confiscating" their land. This policy has increasingly targeted land around the Old City. Cook points to the strong ties between the Parks Authority and settler groups who are fighting to "Judaize" the whole of Jerusalem.

Published on 9 April 2016 by Middle East Eye, the article is excerpted below. It is available in full at www.middleeasteye.net.

On the planning map of Jerusalem, the aerial view of Aref Totanji's home is obscured by green ink, part of a swath of colour besieging the walls of the Old City on every side. Over the past decade, these coloured zones have spread over the map of East Jerusalem, creating a patchwork that engulfs ever more Palestinian neighbourhoods close to the Old City.

The green ink may look innocuous on paper, but for 50-year-old Totanji it signals the impending arrival of bulldozers to demolish his one-storey house, leaving the family of 16—including a seven-month-old granddaughter—homeless.

As Israeli authorities declare “national parks” over residential areas, thousands of Palestinians living in overcrowded neighbourhoods close by Jerusalem’s Old City are being trapped in a similar planning nightmare.

Planners and human-rights groups accuse the Israeli authorities of increasingly using such parks as a tool to grab control of Palestinian land and demolish homes, under the guise of archaeological preservation and tourism development.

Enass Masri, a field researcher for Bimkom, a group of planning experts helping Palestinians negotiate Israel’s labyrinthine planning system, said the goal of national parks in Israel was to protect green spaces and heritage sites but that this policy had gone awry. “Uniquely in East Jerusalem, the national parks include residential areas,” she told Middle East Eye [MEE]. “They are a monster making these families’ lives a misery.”

Nowhere to Go

A court order written in Hebrew—a language Totanji does not understand—demands that the family vacate their four-room house by 10 April. He lost an appeal last month. “It’s not just a house that is being destroyed but my whole life,” he told MEE. “When the soldiers came recently to warn me to move my belongings out before they begin work on the demolition, I asked them: ‘Where am I supposed to move them to? We have nowhere else to go.’”

The Jerusalem Municipality, said Bimkom, had been seeking to transfer control over a growing number of Palestinian neighbourhoods to an ostensibly environmental agency called the Israel Nature and Parks Authority. The consequences for Palestinians living in these parks was devastating, said Masri, because this process makes demolitions easier to secure. Such a loss of areas of open land in East Jerusalem to national parks is stripping Palestinians of any hope in future housing for the next generation. [. . .]

Clearing a Path for the “Bible Trail”

Some 13 other families live alongside Totanji in the Sawaneh district, next to the Palestinian neighbourhood of Wadi al-Joz. They discovered only two years ago that they were living in the Jerusalem City Walls Park, even though it was officially established four decades ago.

It was the first park to be declared after Israel occupied East Jerusalem, in violation of international law, in 1967. But only in the past year have the residents noticed Israeli officials taking any interest in their neighbourhood. Regular surveys have been carried out and inspectors have issued clean-up orders.

Totanji’s neighbours, Nureddin and Sharif Amro—two brothers who are blind—had parts of their homes demolished last year, including a kitchen, sitting area, garden wall, and chicken coop. Electricity cables and sewage pipes were also damaged. All the families have been warned that they are in the way of a planned “Bible Trail,” running along the eastern edge of the Jerusalem City Walls Park. The land on which the homes is built is privately owned by two Palestinian families.

No suggestion has been made that there are archaeological remains, under either the homes in Sawaneh or in a large green space close by that also falls within the national park. The families suspect that the authorities may be targeting their area now because it includes the last large

parking space within walking distance of the Old City. The space is used by coaches that bring thousands of Palestinians to pray at the al-Aqsa mosque on Fridays.

Nureddin Amro, principal of a school for the blind in Jerusalem, said the Parks Authority appeared to be more interested in developing what he termed “settler tourism” at Sawaneh. “The authorities are preparing to create a network of paths and tourism centres here to connect between the settlements and the Old City,” he said. “The settlers are keen to get this area.” [. . .]

Takeover of Homes

The homes in Sawaneh are located in a valley below the Mount of Olives, at the northern end of the Valley of Gethsemane, where Jesus supposedly prayed with his disciples the night before his crucifixion.

Tourism projects proposed by the residents, including the construction of a hotel at the site, have been summarily rejected, according to the families. “It’s not really about tourism. It’s about the kind of tourism that forces us out of our homes,” said Amro.

The residents live only a short distance from the Palestinian neighbourhood of Silwan, in the same Jerusalem City Walls Park. There settlers have been given licence to take over homes and excavate an archaeological park, called the City of David, under and around the houses.

Silwan has also become a flashpoint, with regular clashes between Palestinian residents, on the one hand, and settler groups and the Israeli police, on the other. Silwan’s residents say the Israeli authorities are keen to take over the area because their homes reach to the walls below the al-Aqsa mosque compound.

Hidden Agenda

The Parks Authority’s goal, according to its website, is “to protect nature and heritage sites and care for them for the benefit of the public.” In a 2012 report, Bimkom noted that the declaration of a national park was “an extreme measure [that] should be applied only in unequivocal cases in which natural heritage considerations take absolute priority.” But Masri said the Jerusalem Municipality had preferred to transfer its green spaces and Palestinian residential areas to the Parks Authority as a way to bypass normal planning rules.

As a national body, the Parks Authority is not required to take into account the welfare of East Jerusalem’s residents in its decisions. It also has the power to evict Palestinians without confiscating their land, thereby avoiding court challenges over ownership and demands for compensation. The use of environmental or touristic justifications for demolishing Palestinian homes or limiting development was also less likely to attract censure from the international community.

Samer Ersheid, a lawyer representing the Sawaneh families, said Palestinian areas of Jerusalem were denied master plans, making it all but impossible to gain building permits. This places families inside the national parks in a particularly difficult situation. “The Parks Authority is

pushing aggressively for these homes to be destroyed and the chance of delaying or reversing the demolition orders is much harder,” Ersheid told MEE.

Ties to Settlers

Close ties between the Parks Authority and leading settler groups are an open secret. Shaul Goldstein, who was formerly the head of the large Gush Etzion settlement bloc in the West Bank, has [been the head of the](#) organisation since 2011. The head of the Park Authority’s Jerusalem office is Evyatar Cohen, who was previously a [senior official](#) in Elad, the main settler organisation active in Silwan.

“Under this arrangement, the settlers become agents of the Parks Authority and that gives them all sorts of extra powers, independently of the government, municipality and police,” said [Jeff Halper of the Israeli Committee against House Demolitions]. He added: “The creation of tourism projects in these national parks is also a very effective way to bring Jews from Israel and from overseas to help legitimate the settlers’ activities.” [. . .]

At a meeting of the National Parks Council in 2003, Jerusalem’s city engineer, Uri Shitrit, admitted that the use of national parks was likely to create “constant confrontation” with local residents. However, he added that they were helpful in areas that were “inhabited by a hostile population, which is continually growing”—a reference to the city’s Palestinians.

When Jerusalem’s outline was agreed a year later, in 2004, Israeli officials observed that “massive governmental intervention” would be needed if planning objectives were to guarantee a strong Jewish majority of 60 percent in the city. According to Bimkom, the national parks are playing a key role in meeting that demographic target.

Encircling the Old City

Areas like Sawaneh, said Halper, were also the final territorial pieces creating a belt of Jewish control encircling the Old City. In a [recent report](#), the International Crisis Group noted that this belt was intended to create a “firewall . . . preventing a withdrawal [by Israel] from the city’s core” in the event of a peace agreement.

East Jerusalem has long been claimed by Palestinians as the capital of a future Palestinian state. But Israel has annexed East Jerusalem and claims it as its “united and eternal capital.” Efrat Cohen-Bar, a planner with Bimkom, said Israel had so far declared two national parks in East Jerusalem, and had another large one awaiting approval on Mount Scopus.

The new park, which is on Palestinian land, would block any future development of the neighbourhoods of Issawiya and A-Tur, she said. But Bimkom has also seen a version of the Jerusalem master plan showing another three national parks close to the Old City that were not included on the officially published map. “From the activities we see on the ground, we strongly suspect that these areas are being prepared for a time in the future when they will be declared national parks,” she told MEE.

Cohen-Bar cited the [destruction](#) last week by the Parks Authority of a privately owned playground in Silwan just outside the existing Jerusalem Walls national park. The original master

plan, she said, indicated that the area where the playground was built would eventually be included in an extension to the park. [. . .]

Forced Out Again

For East Jerusalem's families, who have resisted waves of Israeli expansion, fears are high that the growth of the national parks could see them lose the battle for good. Nureddin Amro, of Sawaneh, pointed out that it would not be the first time his family—and many of the others—had been displaced. "These homes were built long before Israel came here or the national park was declared," he said. "Israel forced us out of our original homes and we rebuilt our lives here in East Jerusalem. Now Israel is hounding us out of our homes all over again."

PALESTINIANS ORGANIZE AGAINST SETTLER VIOLENCE

"PALESTINIAN NIGHT WATCHMEN STAND GUARD IN PA'S ABSENCE" (EXCERPTS)

In this article, Emily Mulder interviews a group of Palestinian night watchmen in the West Bank village of Qusra, which lies in Area B and falls outside Palestinian Authority (PA) security control. One of an estimated 90 such groups in the West Bank, the watchmen came together to prevent attacks by Israeli settlers from the nearby Esh Kodesh outpost. The rise of such watchmen's groups highlights the limitations of PA control in the West Bank and the impunity the settlers enjoy as Israel routinely fails to investigate or prosecute their violent attacks on Palestinians. The article was published by Ma'an News Agency on 22 February 2016, and it is available at www.maannews.com.

Every night watchman knows there is a chance they could be killed by Israeli soldiers or settlers, Walid said. The remark brought little reaction from the four men sitting on couches next to him: they had been over this before.

They are residents of Qusra, a village in the northern occupied West Bank. The Israeli military, stationed just kilometers away, has for decades facilitated the wishes of the settler movement, whose illegal and often violent presence in the village has removed any sense of security felt by its Palestinian residents.

Walid works in the Palestinian security sector, but the position is rendered useless once he enters his hometown, designated Area B where security affairs lie entirely under Israeli military control.

The lives of Walid and the men in the room with him embody the failure of the Palestinian Authority (PA) to provide security to Palestinians: they are among the watchmen of Qusra's night patrol.

Autonomous from the government and unarmed, the group formed an organized system of self-protection against settler attacks that [Israeli authorities are complicit with](#) and the PA has no jurisdiction to prevent. They mark one of nearly 90 Palestinian villages in the West Bank currently implementing nightly patrols.

The formation of now long-running night guard systems in villages and towns across the West Bank marks the inability of the PA to provide security to Palestinians, that analysts say the PA from its inception was never intended to give.

Addressing the Threat

A village of some 5,000 people, Qusra lies around five kilometers from the town of Duma, whose name gained international fame after Jewish extremists carried out an arson attack on a Palestinian home that killed an 18-month-old and his parents last summer.

Driving into Qusra from the north, Palestinian residents skirt around the illegal settlement of Migdalim. To the south lies the Esh Kodesh outpost. “When they came, they started expanding little by little, closer to the village,” one of the guards, Muataz, explained. Around five years ago farmers began waking up in the morning to find their fields damaged and livestock stolen. “The people of Esh Kodesh, they don’t just steal our land; they attack farmers, attack families, burn land, steel sheep, and cut olive trees,” Muataz said.

Established in 2000 and never officially recognized by the Israeli government, Esh Kodesh is reported to be home to several ultranationalist Israelis who have made a name for themselves through their oft-violent attempts to displace Palestinians living next to them.

A handful of Esh Kodesh residents have been tried and charged in Israeli courts for so-called “[price-tag attacks](#),” but Qusra residents said the settlers carry out attacks freely and without prosecution, often in the presence of armed Israeli forces stationed in the area for the settlers’ protection. Residents told Ma’an that filing complaints following attacks can lead to punitive reprisals from Israeli authorities, including the revocation of work permits into Israel or increased military presence.

Qusra residents eventually proposed organizing a night patrol in 2011, the same year that [settlers set the village mosque on fire](#) following Israel’s demolition of a number of structures in nearby illegal outposts.

Forming Patrols

A small concrete building fortified with metal bars for protection now lies atop a hill overlooking agricultural land and roads skirting across the southern end of the village below Esh Kodesh. Every night of the week, a guard stations himself inside, waiting for calls and observing the village outskirts for activity.

“It’s a connected system,” Samir, one of the younger men of the patrol explained. “One guard stays in the center while others get in their cars and start moving around the [perimeter] of the village.”

“All of this happens with the help of the neighbors. If they see Israeli settlers on the land, they call the guards, who call the central mosque, which alerts residents that settlers are there. Residents then will go out to the land, men and women,” Samir said.

Qusra made international news in 2014 after the patrol alerted the village of settlers attempting an attack in nearby fields, in what was [reported to be a response](#) to the Israeli military’s demolition of an Esh Kodesh agricultural plot earlier in the day. Residents rushed to the area and captured the settlers, holding them in a farmhouse until Israeli forces arrived.

Watchmen by night, farmers and workers by day, the group of men said their system of protection has likely prevented a number of attacks. But residents are still scared, and unable to turn to the PA for support.

PA “Can’t Help”

Ghassan Daghlas, a PA official who monitors settler activity in the northern West Bank, estimates 89 West Bank villages regularly implement self-organized night patrol systems.

According to Daghlas, none of the patrols use arms—Israeli military law that governs the West Bank prohibits Palestinians from owning arms, while Israeli settlers tote them freely—and most function similarly to Qusra, comprised of a communication chain among residents, linking to the loudspeakers of the village mosque in the event of emergency.

Daghlas told Ma’an that Israeli forces occasionally prevent settler attacks, but for the most part Palestinian villagers are left to fend for themselves. “The people of the village probably have more of an effect against the settlers than any authority, Palestinian or Israeli,” Muataz said. “[The PA security forces] have zero effect over what’s happening with the settlers.”

“When clashes happen with settlers,” Walid jumped in, “people might call the [PA] police, but police aren’t allowed to move from village to village unless they call the Israeli office for coordination, which of course isn’t going to give them permission to move to protect Palestinians from settlers.”

“[The PA] can give economic help to the village, but not security. They give trees for free to the farmers, or equipment. This is all they can do,” Walid added. “We really don’t have a full power government,” Said, another member of the night guard, said from the couch, leaning forward. “The PA can’t do what they want to do. . . . It’s not that they don’t want to help. They can’t.” [. . .]