



# Settlement Monitor

16 FEBRUARY–15 MAY 2017

This section presents items—articles, statistics, reports, and maps—pertaining to Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. What follows are summaries of the items with links to the originals.

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*Significant developments this quarter: This quarter began less than one month after the inauguration on 20 January 2017 of U.S. president Donald Trump, whose stated positions on settlements and the two-state solution, at times contradicting decades of U.S. policy, had far-reaching implications for Palestinians. Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu was emboldened by the regime change in Washington as well as the new administration’s lack of organization and experience. Within two months of the 20 January inauguration, observers marked a sharp increase in the demolition of Palestinian homes and in announcements of renewed Israeli settlement construction. In fact, just two days after Trump was sworn into office, the Jerusalem municipality approved the construction of 566 new housing units, which had earlier been delayed under pressure from outgoing U.S.*

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president Barack Obama. And on 24 January, the Israeli government announced plans for 2,500 new settlement units in the West Bank. In early February, Israeli lawmakers passed the so-called Regularization Bill, retroactively legalizing the expropriation of private Palestinian land. As settlement plans continued to grow apace, the end of the quarter saw the submission of a measure extending Israeli sovereignty to Ma'ale Adumim before a Knesset committee. Some members of the Knesset were also considering the annexation of the E1 zone into Ma'ale Adumim, which would effectively sever the northern from the southern West Bank and create a zone impassable for Palestinians around East Jerusalem. Bedouin communities inside E1 resisted persistent expulsion threats and demolition orders, while the world's soccer governing body—FIFA—refused to take on the issue of soccer clubs inside settlements.

## JERUSALEM DEVELOPMENTS

### “IMMINENT TENDERS FOR GIVAT HAMATOS”

On 5 May 2017, Terrestrial Jerusalem, an Israeli nongovernmental organization (NGO) devoted to tracking developments in Jerusalem, issued a dire warning about the forthcoming issuance of construction tenders for a strategically placed settlement. The organization, which focuses on developments with the potential to destabilize the city or aggravate the Palestinian-Israeli conflict from the vantage point of final status negotiations, published “Imminent Tenders for Givat Hamatos,” in which it argued that the expansion of the settlement would render a two-state solution all but impossible and would sever a large portion of the Palestinian population from Jerusalem. The warning also preempted an announcement later that month by Prime Minister Netanyahu announcing plans for the construction of 15,000 new housing units in East Jerusalem. Based upon sources within the Ministry of Construction, the breakdown of the announced units is as follows: 10,000 in Atarot, on the site of the Qalandia airport; 3,000 units in Ramat Shlomo; and 2,000 units in Givat Hamatos.

“All of these plans are extremely detrimental, even devastating, but construction in Givat Hamatos is by far the most dangerous because of its potentially fatal impact on the feasibility of a two-state solution and because of the immediacy of this impact,” according to Terrestrial Jerusalem. The NGO called these plans a “game-changer, akin to the danger posed by E-1.”

[Read the full statement.](#)

### “AFTER TRUMP-NETANYAHU MEETING: NEW PUSH TO ANNEX WEST BANK SETTLEMENT”

Following the February 2017 meeting between U.S. president Trump and Israeli prime minister Netanyahu in Washington, Knesset member Yoav Kish (Likud) brought a new measure before that body's Ministerial Legislation Committee on 5 March, calling for the application of Israeli law to the residents of Ma'ale Adumim and thus in effect annexing the settlement to the disputed E1 area. The international community, including U.S. administrations of both political stripes since 2005, has

*opposed the annexation of the 12-square-mile area because it contravenes international law and it would cut off the northern West Bank from its southern end, rendering a two-state solution obsolete. Haaretz reported on this new push on 2 March 2017.*

[Read the full article.](#)

## DISPLACEMENT

### “SHARP RISE IN NUMBER OF ISRAELI DEMOLITIONS IN EAST JERUSALEM SINCE TRUMP’S ELECTION”

*The Israeli daily Haaretz reported (21 February 2017) a sharp rise in Israeli demolitions of Palestinian homes since the inauguration of U.S. president Trump in January 2017. An unnamed source at the Jerusalem city hall confirmed to the newspaper that government restrictions against demolitions had been lifted after Trump assumed office. In the seven and a half weeks between 1 January and 21 February, the Israeli authorities demolished 40 structures in East Jerusalem. In 2016, they had torn down 203 Palestinian buildings, which included 123 residential units, as well as shops, storerooms, and stables. Almost all of the owners impacted by the demolitions had unsuccessfully tried to obtain Israeli building permits.*

[Read the full article.](#)

### “‘WE SHALL REMAIN’: BEDOUIN OF JABAL AL-BABA FACE AN UPHILL BATTLE TO KEEP THEIR LAND”

*Palestinian Bedouin communities living in an area slated for development and possible annexation into Israel were again under threat of expulsion in the Jerusalem area with their homes facing imminent demolition by Israel. The Israeli authorities had already imposed a blockade on Bedouin communities living on Jabal al-Baba, two and a half miles outside the city, encircling it on three sides with the separation wall and only one opening, which the Israeli army closes arbitrarily. Mondoweiss reported on 10 May 2017 that Israeli authorities are seeking to “relocate” the 18 Bedouin communities located within the 18.5 square mile E1 zone, as well as 46 communities in the central West Bank. Currently, 56 families on Jabal al-Baba are facing home demolition orders. Last year, the Israeli military demolished 48 homes there but the residents rebuilt them. The Bedouin communities consider themselves Jerusalem’s “last line of defense” against the city’s complete encirclement with settlements, “blocking any attempts of designating East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.”*

*Within days of the U.S. president Trump’s inauguration on 20 January, Israeli authorities announced new settlement construction in East Jerusalem and in the West Bank. In February, the Knesset approved the so-called Regularization Bill “that would retroactively legalize the expropriation of private Palestinian land.” Israeli authorities demolished 24 Bedouin structures in the E1 area in the first two months of 2017 compared with*

*85 structures in all of 2016. Known for their resilience in the face of Israeli aggression, the Bedouins repeatedly rebuilt their homes, even rebuilding entire villages, as in the case of al-‘Araqib in the Negev, which the Israeli military has destroyed nearly 120 times.*

[Read the full article.](#)

## TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

### “TRUMP’S ISRAEL ENVOY PICK GAVE FUNDS TO SETTLE JEWS IN MUSLIM QUARTER OF JERUSALEM’S OLD CITY”

*When U.S. president Trump nominated his bankruptcy lawyer David Friedman as ambassador to Israel, controversy erupted over the attorney’s pro-Israel political stance and his deep ties to Israeli settlements. While it was widely known that Friedman was the president of the U.S. organization Friends of Beit El, an investigation by the Israeli daily Haaretz revealed that he also gave money to Ateret Cohanim, a far-right settler organization that “buys land in the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem’s Old City and Arab East Jerusalem for creating a Jewish presence there” [sic].*

*Upon news of Friedman’s nomination, the American Friends of Ateret Cohanim issued a congratulatory statement. “Mr. Friedman has been a long and generous supporter of American Friends of Ateret Cohanim and we thank him for his past support and friendship,” the statement said, according to Haaretz. The organization is the U.S. fundraising arm of Ateret Cohanim, which has settled 1,100 Jews in the Muslim Quarter and East Jerusalem since 1987 by evicting Palestinian residents. The organization has raised \$25 million during the past 20 years, according to its tax filings, Haaretz reported on 7 March 2017.*

[Read the full article.](#)

### “U.S. ENVOY’S MEETING WITH ISRAELI SETTLER LEADERS RAISES POLICY CONCERNS”

*For the first time, members of a U.S. administration held an “official” meeting with leaders of the far-right settler movement, according to the United Kingdom’s Guardian on 16 March 2017. While former U.S. secretary of state John Kerry had also met with settlers in the past, those meetings were informal and not “official.” The meeting between Donald Trump’s chief negotiator, Jason Greenblatt, and the Yesha Council, Israel’s main settler organization, was confirmed by the U.S. Embassy. The Yesha Council, an umbrella organization comprised of several settlement groups, described it as possibly the “highest-level official meeting ever for the organization with a U.S. administration.”*

*Greenblatt’s visit to Israel came soon after Trump called decades of U.S. policy into question when he told Israeli prime minister Netanyahu in February 2017 that he was “not bound to a two-state solution.”*

[Read the full article.](#)

## ACADEMIC AND CULTURAL BOYCOTT OF ISRAEL

“WILL FIFA EVER STAND UP TO ISRAELI TEAMS IN ILLEGAL SETTLEMENTS?”

*Despite its bylaws, which state that member organizations “cannot compete within the national borders of another territory without permission,” the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the international body overseeing global soccer, refused this quarter to deal with the issue of soccer clubs in illegal Israeli settlements. The teams in Ma’ale Adumim, Ariel, Kiryat Arba, Givat Ze’ev, Oranit, and settlements in the Jordan Valley comprise “a violation of international law” and conflict with FIFA bylaws, The Nation reported on 9 March 2017.*

*Initially, FIFA’s Monitoring Committee on Israel-Palestine was to have ruled on the issue in October 2016, but president Gianni “Johnny Baby” Infantino pushed the date back to May 2017. Several NGOs and the UN special advisor on sport for development and peace have mobilized to pressure the international soccer body to address the issue and disallow the teams. Israel’s prime minister, Netanyahu, views the issue as larger than just soccer, however, and he has been on a “full-scale offensive” to keep the teams in the settlements, according to the Nation.*

*The fact that Infantino has been dragging his feet on the issue is frustrating to Palestinians and their supporters because he had banned teams in the annexed Crimea region from competing in Russian tournaments in 2014 when he was president of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA). Infantino expressed support for “constructive engagement,” a tactic used heavily in apartheid-era South Africa, which helped prolong and perpetuate the racist and segregationist policies of the apartheid government.*

*“South Africans know too well how ‘constructive engagement’ helped perpetuate apartheid and the suffering of black South Africans,” Kwara Kekana of BDS South Africa said. “Similarly, the false premise of the FIFA Monitoring Committee Israel-Palestine is that the parties can talk the issues out, but there is no middle ground when it comes to international law and FIFA’s own rules.”*

[Read the full article.](#)