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SETTLEMENT MONITOR

EDITED BY GEOFFREY ARONSON

This section covers items—reprinted articles, statistics, and maps—pertaining to Israeli settlement activities in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. Unless otherwise stated, the items in this section have been written by Geoffrey Aronson directly for this section or drawn from material written by him for Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories (hereinafter Settlement Report), a Washington-based bimonthly newsletter published by the Foundation for Middle East Peace. JPS is grateful to the Foundation for permission to draw on its material. Major documents relating to settlements appear in the Documents and Source Material section.

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PALESTINIAN REVOLT CENTERS ON SETTLEMENTS

From Settlement Report, November–December 2000.

A few days before the September violence that consumed Israel and the occupied territories, a group of analysts specializing in Israeli and Palestinian affairs highlighted the vulnerability of Israel's settlement areas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and wondered aloud why Palestinians had not yet marched en masse on one of the 200 or so outposts that Israel has established in the course of its thirty-three-year occupation.

The widespread confrontations that began on 29 September did not follow precisely this script, but they did relentlessly expose the shortcomings of four related assumptions at the heart of Israel's Oslo strategy.

First, the unrest repudiated the assumption that an Israeli redeployment out of populated Palestinian areas would reduce the potential for violent clashes. The scale of Palestinian casualties, confrontation at scores of points, Israel's deployment and use of helicopter gunships not only for evacuating settlers but for offensive military operations (particularly at the Netzarim Junction in Gaza and at Joseph's Tomb in Nablus but also in major Palestinian towns), and the deployment and use of tanks on the borders of Palestinian-controlled territory (area A) weigh heavily against the long-prevailing view that

redeployment according to the Oslo format means disengagement.

Second, even in a situation where Israel remains in complete control in East Jerusalem, in more than 60 percent of the West Bank, and 20 percent of the Gaza Strip, many settlements—where more than 360,000 Israelis now live—proved to be vulnerable and exposed in times of conflict. Vehicular travel to and from Netzarim, for example, was impossible for two weeks. The evacuation under fire of Joseph's Tomb in Nablus marks the first time since 1967 that Israel has been forced, at point of arms, to evacuate a civilian settlement outpost.

Third, grave doubts have been created about Israel's ability to maintain at acceptable cost defensible transport and communication routes both between some settlements and from settlements to Israel.

Fourth, the placement of fortified military positions at strategic crossroads to protect these settlements itself created flash points, most particularly at Netzarim and the Ayosh Junction north of Ramallah, where the most violent and sustained confrontations occurred. These four elements of the current crisis will no doubt have a profound effect on policies and actions of both Israel and the Palestinians on the issues of roads, settlements, and security.

In recent months, and especially since the Nakba events in May 2000, when settlements were targeted by Palestinian demonstrators,

settlements have been fortified as never before. Arsenals have been created and expanded in each settlement, security perimeters have been strengthened and modernized, and settlers have been given increased responsibility for defending their settlements. Israeli military officers have been emphatic in their assurances to settlers that they would not suffer the same fate as Israel's proxy South Lebanon Army and Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) installations in southern Lebanon.

In a meeting in early July with settlement leaders, IDF chief of staff Shaul Mofaz insisted, "All the statements that the army will leave or abandon the settlers are out of place. I want you to leave this room with the feeling that we are committed to your security and that no one intends to abandon you. The soldiers of the IDF are ready to be killed for the sake of your security. . . . During the events of Nakba Day we put an attack helicopter into the air: That is offensive, and it was a deterrent. We intended to open fire that would endanger lives. I would recommend very strongly that no inferences be made from the events in Lebanon regarding the events that might take place in the [West Bank and Gaza Strip]. . . . In YESHA, the army's supreme mission is to safeguard the Israeli population." Later that month, Mofaz authorized both settlers and IDF officers to take "all necessary measures" to prevent Palestinian demonstrators from penetrating perimeter fences around settlements.

On 2 October, when clashes were at their most intense, Israel's deputy chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, noted: "Despite the limitations, in most of the settlements life goes on nearly without disruption. Most of the schools opened as usual, and security was provided to whoever needed [to travel outside the settlements]." But for the settlers, these assurances rang hollow. For many days they were virtual prisoners in their communities, if not in their very homes. Mail and public transport were disrupted, and travel in armed convoys was "advised" by the IDF. In Netzarim, for example, visitors had to be evacuated by military helicopters. In the West Bank settlement of Psagot, where settlers can see into the homes of the nearby Palestinian residents of al-Bireh, people were advised not even to venture out of doors due to heavy exchanges of gunfire. One report noted that "residents cowered inside their homes as gunfire was heard outside." At the settlement in Hebron, bullets pene-

trated houses. Hundreds of Palestinians attempting to breach the perimeter of a military outpost guarding the settlement of Sanur near Jinin were repelled. A large-scale confrontation occurred one kilometer from the settlement of Bracha, south of Nablus. Four Palestinians were killed, including the son of the governor of Nablus. Israeli troops battled stone throwers outside the settlement of Elisha near Jericho, killing three. Shots were fired at the southern Jerusalem settlement of Gilo and shots were recorded at Kiryat Arba as well as at Dugit, Neve Dekalim, and Morag in Gaza's Katif Bloc.

Unlike the first intifada, which progressed in incremental stages both in intensity and breadth, this latest revolt descended upon settlements in a bolt of full fury. West Bank settlers, who adjusted to the power of the intifada over time, for example by installing shatterproof glass in vehicles, were initially stunned into paralysis by both the scale and tactics of recent violence.

"I was stoned yesterday," explained one veteran settler at the outset of the violence, "but not as forcefully as during the intifada. The danger today is that you might get shot."

In Gaza, the situation was somewhat different. There, the level of violence and tension had been increasing for many months (see Settlement Chronology in this issue). Palestinian positions near the complex of Israeli outposts at Netzarim were reinforced with sandbags, battle trenches, and weapons. Opposite IDF positions at Netzarim, the junction at the Katif Bloc, and at the brigade command post at the settlement of Nisanit, new high-rise residential construction had moved ahead, with *Ha'Areztz* reporting on 12 July, "If the crunch comes, these multistory buildings overlooking the Israeli outposts from above will be turned into frontline outposts." That in fact is what happened, when Palestinian forces set up firing positions at Netzarim in the buildings, which as a result were destroyed by Israeli fire.

The Netzarim Junction takes its name from a small settlement to its west that has grown by more than 100 percent, to about 400 people, since the Oslo process began. In early summer, a new neighborhood of private homes was dedicated in the settlement in the presence of Housing Minister Yitzhak Levy.

The crossroads is defended by a fortified IDF outpost, which not only acts as a forward defense for the settlement but, more significantly, controls the major north-south

travel axis for the entire Gaza Strip, effectively dividing Gaza City from Rafah and the Egyptian border to the south. The accepted rationale for the presence of the IDF is to defend the settlers nearby. One Israeli commentator, however, noted that if the settlement did not exist, it would have to be invented so as to justify Israeli military control over this critical thoroughfare.

In recent months, electrical warning fences were erected around the settlements in the northern part of the Gaza Strip, following the model in the south. Military positions were established in most settlements. Protective systems in the outposts were improved, and patrol roads were paved. The outpost at the Netzarim Junction was fortified with a new roof to prevent damage from incendiary bombs. At the settlement itself, an advanced observation system was set up.

During the Nakba events in May and subsequently, the junction has been the scene of the most sustained level of confrontation. Two days before Ariel Sharon's controversial visit to the Haram al-Sharif, a roadside bomb near the outpost killed an IDF soldier. Israeli officers were already describing the situation in Gaza as "Lebanonization." Soldiers who were deployed in Gaza after their withdrawal from Lebanon were also struck by the similarities.

The Ayosh Junction, in area C just north of Ramallah's multistory City Hotel and a number of Palestinian Authority (PA) ministries, is another flash point, in the current violence as well as during the May events. Throughout October, Palestinians launched waves of assaults against small units of well-fortified Israeli troops, which, at one stage, occupied the City Hotel. Palestinians succeeded in closing the junction to Israeli traffic, forcing residents of the Beit El settlement to drive through a nearby army camp in order to reach Jerusalem.

The IDF succeeded for the most part in keeping both its troops and settlers out of harm's way, and it has largely prevented the most intense violence from reaching the settlements themselves. Palestinians, too, with isolated exceptions, appear to have focused their attention less on the settlements than on the military outposts meant to defend them. At Joseph's Tomb on the southern outskirts of Nablus, the few seminary students were evacuated at the beginning of hostilities. But a unit of Druze soldiers mounted a thankless defense against persistent Palestin-

ian attack before Prime Minister Ehud Barak heeded the recommendations of his generals and withdrew "temporarily" from the site.

Beginning in the second week of violence, settlers began operations outside settlements—clearing blocked roadways, blockading others used by Palestinians, and in some instances mounting reprisals against Palestinians and their property. These actions were comparatively limited, both in scope and in scale, a consequence of settlers' willingness to defer to the IDF. Independent settler/militia actions, however, remain a potential threat, as Barak himself acknowledged.

An undetermined number of Palestinians have been killed by settlers. Two settlers in the West Bank have been killed by Palestinians. Yet the vast majority of settlers have had to confront the unsettling fact that the IDF has been unable to guarantee the safety of the vital transport lifelines linking them to each other and to Israel. The Barak government refused to risk widening the "war" being fought against the Palestinians in order to keep the routes open—a lesson that will not be lost on either side when final status talks resume. Indeed, the recent unrest has demonstrated the shortcomings of the intricate and extensive security protocols in the Oslo II accords, which were meant not only to ensure settlers of a seamless connection with Israel but also to enable the IDF to maintain strategic military superiority over the entire region.

The head of the Etzion Bloc Regional Council south of Jerusalem decried the government's instructions to stay off roads after 6 p.m. "The closing of the Tunnel Road—the connection between the Etzion Bloc and Jerusalem—and the other road closings are a scandal of the first order. The government must wake up and order the army to station tanks facing and threatening Bayt Jala. Guns should cause a major Israeli artery to close down? This brings us back fifty-two years!"

SETTLEMENT CHRONOLOGY

From Settlement Report, September–October and November–December 2000.

20 June

A bomb is detonated on the Qarni–Netzarim road in Gaza as a convoy of Israeli vehicles, escorted by military personnel, travels toward Netzarim settlement. One settler is injured.

21 June

Ha'Aretz reports the IDF in the West Bank and Gaza deploying first-response units in larger settlements and planning to distribute rubber bullets and tear-gas grenades to every settlement. Officers are examining the possibility that unarmed Palestinians will march en masse on the settlements, as was done in the waning days of Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon.

23 June

The date for Israel's third redeployment from occupied territory, most recently outlined in the Sharm al-Shaykh (Wye II) accords of September 1999, passes without any redeployment. In the Oslo II accords, Israel committed to withdraw from all of the occupied territories except for specified military locations, settlements, and Jerusalem.

Qol Ha'ir reports that a Palestinian police station has opened in Azariyya, extending a permanent Palestinian police presence beyond neighboring Abu Dis. Israel, despite assurances to the contrary, has postponed the formal transfer of both neighborhoods to Palestinian security control (area A).

The weekly newspaper also reports that Israeli planning officials have refused to increase the density of construction in the Palestinian neighborhood of Kufr Aqab in East Jerusalem. The area, comparable in size to the Pisgat Ze'ev settlement, has only 1,100 dwelling units, while in Pisgat Ze'ev, 12,000 units are planned.

26 June

Violence erupts between Israeli and Palestinian Authority (PA) forces when the Palestinians attempt to stop an Israeli convoy between the Qarni crossing and the Netzarim Junction in Gaza. At nearby Kefar Darom, Palestinians throw stones at an Israeli motorist. At the Katif Junction another Israeli motorist is attacked with concrete blocks. No injuries are reported.

27 June

IsraelWire reports that the IDF is deploying troops and preparing for confrontations with Palestinians throughout the occupied territories. IDF chief of staff Mofaz affirms that tanks and helicopters will be used if necessary.

Ha'Aretz reports that in recent weeks settlers, for the first time in recent memory, are constructing buildings and building roads on lands that they recognize as private Palestinian property, leading in some cases to clashes between settlers and Palestinians. Ac-

tions of this kind have occurred near the settlements of Brakha, Elkana, Itamar, Neve Daniel, and Revava.

28 June

Barak declares "the agreement that we will sign will win a decisive majority not only among the Israeli public, but also among the settlers in [the West Bank] and Gaza, and there is no greater proof that the agreement represents our interests and achievements."

MK Rechavam Ze'evi tells IsraelWire that PA forces are using mock settlements established by the PA in exercises to practice overrunning settlements.

Yedi'ot Abaronot reports that a building boom on the Golan will add 350 units to settlements—207 in Qatzrin and 10 to 20 units in nine other settlements.

3 July

In an address to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Barak asserts, "We have warned the Palestinians that any unilateral actions will be met with Israel's unilateral actions, which will include placing the Gush Etzion area of [the West Bank] under Israeli law and the establishment of a large security zone in the Jordan Valley."

PA security forces destroy a newly constructed electrical security fence around the industrial area of the northern Gaza settlement of Aley Sinai.

5 July

A tender for an additional 522 dwelling units at Har Homa is awarded to seven Israeli contractors. Tenders have been awarded for more than 1,500 units at the site in southeast Jerusalem.

7 July

Yerushalim reports that the PA is stepping up its purchase of properties in Jerusalem's Old City and surrounding neighborhoods. A recent purchase in the Muslim Quarter will be used as a school.

9 July

According to *Ha'Aretz*, Chief Rabbis Elyahu Bakshi-Doron and Yisrael Meir Lau do not object to Israel giving the PA control over the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, Joseph's Tomb in Nablus, and Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem as long as Israelis maintain access to the holy sites. The rabbis oppose relinquishing Israeli control of the Temple Mount but did not rule out the possibility of a trilateral governing body consisting of Jews, Muslims, and Christians.

According to *Qol Ha'ir*, the Construction Ministry reports 6,500 units under construction in urban settlements—1,000 in Adam, Ariel, Ma'ale Adumim, and hundreds each in Emmanuel, Givat Ze'ev, Karnei Shomron, and Ofarim. In smaller village settlements the total is 3,500. The newspaper also reports that “the Ministry of Housing will invest more than \$25 million to subsidize construction and infrastructure in the coming year.” In April, the expenditure of a similar sum for the construction of twenty-five bypass roads was announced.

11 July

Barak and Arafat arrive at Camp David, outside of Washington, for final status talks.

16 July

Ha'Aretz reports a demonstration of more than 200,000 Israelis opposed to Prime Minister Barak's policies toward the Palestinians and Syrians, in particular his readiness for a territorial compromise in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights.

17 July

Voice of Palestine radio reports tensions near Tulkarm and the Israeli settlement of Avnei Hefetz, where local Palestinian farmers oppose Israeli efforts to expand the settlement.

19 July

Protesters in Ramallah demand the dismantling of settlements. At the same time, Fatah members march in Gaza, calling on Arafat to refuse any agreement giving Israel sovereignty over Jerusalem.

Leading Palestinians issue a statement urging that any agreement signed by the PA be ratified in a national referendum. The document declares that “a just and lasting peace in the area will not prevail without full Palestinian sovereignty over all territories within the June 4, 1967, borders, including East Jerusalem, the indisputable capital of the independent Palestinian state; without the return of Palestinian refugees in accordance with UN Resolution 194; without dismantling of all settlements residing on Palestinian land; and without maintaining the future Palestinian state's sovereignty over its borders, water, and natural resources.”

20 July

Following a directive from Barak, a \$1.25 billion, five-year plan is set in motion to “strengthen” Jerusalem. Half the money will come from the state budget and the other half from a campaign abroad by the Jewish

Agency. The money will be invested in all aspects of the city, with special emphasis on the development of East Jerusalem.

21 July

Ma'ariv reports that the ratio of Jews to Arabs in Jerusalem is decreasing. The city's Arab population growth rate is more than double the growth rate of its Jewish residents.

23 July

The YESHA council announces that settlers will not leave their homes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip under any circumstances.

Ha'Aretz reports that organizations that for years have purchased houses and land in East Jerusalem for Jewish settlement are accelerating their efforts to close a number of deals in anticipation of a Camp David II agreement that will freeze all existing purchases, construction, and occupation of buildings.

Ma'ariv reports that Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, Israel's chief Sephardic rabbi, has declared, “Raising the Palestinian flag on the Temple Mount is absolutely forbidden. The holy places must remain under Israeli, Jewish sovereignty.”

25 July

In an address to the Knesset Foreign Affairs Committee, IDF chief of staff Mofaz says that military officers and settlers have been instructed to open fire with live ammunition if necessary to defend themselves from any attempt by Palestinians to overrun their communities.

The Camp David summit between Barak and Arafat ends with no agreement.

28 July

IsraelWire reports that, according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office, Barak does not intend to transfer control of Abu Dis to the Palestinians in implementation of the third and final Israeli redeployment called for in the Oslo II agreement or to release additional Palestinian security prisoners in the near future.

Interior Ministry officials report that in the past year there has been an increase of 13,600 residents living in settlements in the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) and Gaza Strip. According to the ministry, there are almost 20,000 settlers living in Ariel, 14,000 in Beitar Ilit, 14,000 in Mod'in Ilit, and about 6,700 in Gaza settlements and 460 in Hebron.

8 August

Ha'Aretz reports that the Israeli police are planning to construct a prison compound in the Shaykh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem. The area covers 29 of the 354 dunams expropriated by the government in 1968.

9 August

In Jerusalem, Israeli President Moshe Katsav says that he cannot imagine a situation in which Jews will not live in Hebron. "It was agreed by the Palestinians that Jews would be able to live there."

10 August

Ha'Aretz reports that in recent weeks Hebron has been the scene of a wave of violent incidents between settlers and Arabs. The IDF notes an atmosphere of growing extremism that to a large extent has been created by the settlers.

13 August

The IDF and YESHA agree that settlers will remove seven illegal structures and trailers—three each at Bruchin and Nof Kana and one at Amuna—on the West Bank. In recent weeks, settlers have moved trailers to various locations, including some evacuated in October 1999, and begun roadwork near some of them. In the future, they must submit requests to expand outposts.

14 August

Two houses in East Jerusalem are demolished by order of the Jerusalem Municipality.

17 August

The Interior Ministry says that 198 Palestinians from East Jerusalem applied for Israeli citizenship in 1999, double the number of applicants in 1998. Only 13 were approved.

18 August

Yedi'ot Abaronot reports that there are 104 Jewish families living in the Old City outside the Jewish Quarter. There are approximately two guards for every family, costing more than \$5 million annually.

Yerushalim reports the budgeting by Israel's Transportation Ministry of more than \$60 million for road construction in Jerusalem, much of it in East Jerusalem, in 2001. The municipality is expected to contribute an additional \$20 million.

20 August

A senior Palestinian official warns that if Israel blockades the West Bank and Gaza after a unilateral declaration of independence, Israeli settlers in those areas will become hostages. He says that if an agreement is not

reached between Israel and the PA, "We will begin implementing our sovereignty and the conflict will reach a new level."

22 August

The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics reports that construction in the occupied territories (excluding East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights) increased by 81 percent, to 1,000 construction starts in the first quarter of the year. In the last quarter of 1999, 550 starts were recorded.

23 August

Jordanian foreign minister 'Abd al-Ilah Khatib says that Jordan supports the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 242, including measures pertaining to East Jerusalem, "which [Jordan] considers the capital of the future Palestinian state." Khatib also says that Jordan "rejects non-Arab sovereignty over Jerusalem's holy sites."

24 August

Ha'Aretz reports that, according to the Golan Regional Council, there has been a significant drop in the number of families moving to the Golan in 2000. Since the beginning of the year, sixty-six families have moved to the area, and nineteen more are expected by the end of the year.

A tender is published for the construction of seventeen dwelling units in the West Bank settlement of Efrat.

28 August

Ateret Cohanin announces the purchase for \$1 million of two Palestinian apartments and four stores in Ras al-Amud in East Jerusalem.

29 August

The Jerusalem Municipality demolishes three Palestinian homes in Ras Khamis, near the Shu'fat refugee camp.

4 September

The Ma'ate Binyamin Regional Council issues a tender for twenty-nine housing units in the settlement of Talmon A.

10 September

Ha'Aretz quotes Israeli Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh, during a tour of Hebron, saying, "To my regret, from what I've learned it is in fact certain elements within the [Jewish] community who have increased the number of violent acts of late."

11 September

Peace Now reports that the Israel Land Authority has issued a tender for eighty

housing units in Har Adar, bringing the number of settlement housing units tendered during the Barak administration to 3,499.

17 September

A demonstration commemorating the Sabra and Shatila massacres escalates into violence at the Netzarim Junction in Gaza.

18 September

Palestinian protesters, burning tires and throwing stones, march toward the gates of Netzarim. IDF troops fire rubber bullets, injuring five demonstrators.

U.S. ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk remarks, "There is no other solution but to share the Holy City. It is not, and cannot be, the exclusive preserve of one religion and the solution cannot come from one side challenging or denying another side's beliefs. Here too, mutual respect is the foundation for any agreement."

21 September

Ha'aretz reports that Arab residents of Sur al-Bahir and Sawahara have received expropriation notices from the Jerusalem Municipality to make way for the construction of the eastern ring road. Residents of Wadi Kadum and Ras al-Amud are expected to receive similar expropriation letters in the coming days.

25 September

Palestinian protesters throw Molotov cocktails at an IDF patrol at the Netzarim Junction following a car accident involving an Israeli settler and four Palestinians.

26 September

The construction of fifty-six housing units begins in the Golan Heights settlement of Qatzrin. Another 100 are already under construction. New housing units are also being built in Qidmat Tzvi, Ma'ale Gamla, and Ramat Magshimim.

Palestinians claim that four Israeli military bases constructed outside the settlements in Gaza are illegal and built on area A land.

27 September

Barak announces, "If a peace agreement is signed, it will include Jerusalem and al-Quds as two capitals." The *Jerusalem Post* reports "one government official [noting] this is the first time Barak has spoken publicly of Jerusalem and al-Quds as separate entities, and of al-Quds as the capital of a future Palestinian entity."

Barak also says, "If there is an agreement, it will include an end to the conflict, perma-

nent borders for Israel recognized by the world, 80 percent of the settlers in [the West Bank] under Israeli sovereignty in settlement blocks, security arrangements, principally along the eastern border and Jerusalem bigger than ever since King David, with a solid Jewish majority for generations united, under our sovereignty and recognized by the world as the capital of Israel."

Three roadside bombs explode as two IDF vehicles escorting three settler vehicles reach the Netzarim Junction in Gaza. One IDF soldier dies and another is wounded in the attack.

28 September

The Shomron Regional Council issues a tender for the infrastructure of fourteen housing units in Rachelim.

One thousand Israeli police escort Likud leader Ariel Sharon into the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount) compound.

29 September

Barak reiterates his promise to settlers in the Jordan Valley that "under any agreement, if one emerges, Israel will maintain control over the Jordan Valley as well as its settlements and security."

Violence erupts at the Haram al-Sharif at the conclusion of Friday prayers. Worshipers throwing stones at police at the Mugrabi Gate and at the Western Wall plaza are met with paramilitary border police firing rubber bullets. At least six Palestinians are killed and more than 100 wounded in the clash.

FROM THE ISRAELI PRESS

DANIEL BEN SIMON, "WITH A SONG IN THEIR HEARTS," HA'ARETZ, 20 OCTOBER 2000 (EXCERPTS).

In the beginning, Israelis and Palestinians used the same roads in the land of strife, entered into conflict, and provoked one another. Then the Oslo agreements were signed, which begat bypass roads, so that the Jews could travel undisturbed, far from hostile Palestinian neighborhoods. In the fullness of days, the Palestinians saw that it was good and began to travel the bypass roads that were intended for Jews, as these roads were open, fast, and free of obstacles. Of late, with the waxing of the riots, the bypass roads became a preferred location for Palestinian ambushes. In the blink of an eye, new roads were paved to bypass the bypass roads, so that the residents of the besieged Jewish settlements beyond the 1967 borders might

travel in safety. On Rosh Hashanah—the Jewish New Year—the Ayosh Junction, which links Ramallah and Beit El, was closed to Israeli vehicles. The junction became a death trap, where Israel Defense Forces soldiers daily faced off with hordes of Palestinians from Ramallah and its environs who fell upon them. The road to Beit El was closed, and its residents found themselves cut off. Last Friday, the army paved a new bypass road to the settlement that runs through the base of the Benjamin Brigade. Travelers to the settlement must stop at the gates of the base, show identity papers, and cross through the camp in order to reach the gate to Beit El.

Another nonroutine week in the land of strife. The Jewish settlements on the outskirts of Ramallah were encircled by military forces, and the Palestinian settlements were encircled by tanks. The roads are nearly desolate, and only few dare to travel them. Every time a car with Palestinian plates is seen, the feeling of danger sharpens among Israeli travelers. Veteran settlers cannot recall such a tense atmosphere since the beginnings of settlement in the territories. . . .

Since the outbreak of the riots, information sheets have been handed out to residents. In Information Sheet 5, which was distributed on 5 October, the residents were required to follow the orders of soldiers and police. "It might not be possible to collect the garbage," it said. "If the bins are full, garbage must not be thrown outside but must be kept indoors. We will do our best to see that the day nurseries operate as usual.

"Tomorrow there is no organized transportation to Jerusalem. It is important to purchase whatever possible in the settlement (food, restaurants, fuel). The social services department will be open for questions from parents and children about dealing with the security situation."

The depressed atmosphere that spread throughout the land left no traces in Beit El. Despite their proximity to the major flash points and the fact that they were exposed to clear and present danger, the settlers insisted upon celebrating the holiday of Sukkot as if they had cut themselves off from the grave reality around them.

When the speeches were over, the celebrations began. In the background could be heard the echoes of shots coming from that nearby junction where soldiers and Palestinians were fighting. This did not bother the celebrants. They were so absorbed in singing

and dancing that it seemed as though they were living in a bubble.

Among the celebrants circulated Hillel Horowitz, the administrator of the Jewish settlement in Hebron. He had come to Beit El to rub shoulders with the American donors whose generous contributions had helped to expand the Jewish settlement in Hebron. The army had ordered him to cancel the celebrations that had been planned for the intermediate days of Sukkot, in the wake of the escalation of the riots. "It's too bad," he sighed. "This year we were expecting 100,000 people to come to encourage Jewish settlement." . . .

It is hard to exaggerate the fear that accompanies travel on those roads. It seems as though only the settlers who live in the area are continuing to act as if nothing were out of the ordinary, demonstratively ignoring the sounds of war echoing on all sides. On Sunday night, many of them took their children and drove in a protected convoy to visit their besieged friends in Psagot at the top of the hill. They were greeted with singing and dancing, and the rejoicing continued into the wee hours. At the same time deathly silence prevailed in Ramallah, and its busy streets had emptied of people, as if the earth had swallowed them up.

INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL TAWFIQ TIRAWI, HEAD OF PALESTINIAN GENERAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE WEST BANK, ON THE VIOLENCE FOLLOWING THE SETTLERS' HIKE NEAR NABLUS, HA'ARETZ, 27 OCTOBER 2000 (EXCERPTS).

On 19 October, some forty settlers under IDF escort went on a hike near the Askar refugee camp in Nablus, among other things to inspect the damage at Joseph's Tomb. In the clashes that followed, one settler and one Palestinian were killed, and many others were injured. Ha'Aretz interviewed General Tawfiq Tirawi, head of Palestinian General Intelligence in the West Bank, in the wake of those clashes.

Ha'Aretz: What happened at the Askar refugee camp last week during the settlers' hike on Mount Ebal?

Tirawi: Yitzhak Eitan [head of the IDF's Central Command] himself said that those people should not have been there. They came to a place where they were not supposed to be, carrying weapons. They were 100 meters from the homes in Askar. The Palestinian residents called the [Israeli-Palestinian] coordination and liaison office, and

the Palestinian side tried to contact the Israeli liaison people to get them out of there. For forty-five minutes there was no reply, the settlers were not removed, and the Israeli liaison people did not intervene. That was when the confrontation developed.

The residents threw stones, the settlers began firing. Then the whole village arrived, and the Palestinians began shooting back at the soldiers who were firing. You know, the army was above them, on the top of the hill. Helicopters started firing. The *shabid* [martyr] Ziad al-Arda was an innocent civilian, a passerby, who was shot to death there. If the Israelis had stopped shooting, everything would have ended far more quickly. They should have contacted the liaison unit and dealt with the crisis by means of dialogue. I am talking here about the arrogance of the army. When the army has helicopters and tanks, it prefers a military decision above all else. Arrogance overrides logic.

Ha'Aretz: How do we put an end to the situation?

Tirawi: The Palestinian people wants its rights. It is not anxious for death, but it can no longer remain without rights. True, this people has been struggling for dozens of years, but it is a people like any other. It too wants a state with secure borders and personal security for its inhabitants.

Ha'Aretz: Many Israelis do not understand why all this is happening now, at a time when there is a prime minister who offered so much.

Tirawi: What did he give? Barak did not implement any agreement that was signed. He made a decision to withdraw from Azariyya and Abu Dis but did not implement it. He did not execute the third redeployment. On the contrary, he always takes pride that in contrast to his predecessors, he has not withdrawn from any territory. He knows that Netanyahu fell because of his rejection of the peace process, but he has not learned the lesson.

Ha'Aretz: What have the Palestinians gained from the confrontation?

Tirawi: It is not a matter of immediate profit or loss. For seven years, we have experienced the failure to honor agreements, arrests, the failure to release prisoners, settlements, expansion of settlements, settlements everywhere, contempt for our values and for our holy places—they have no consideration for anything. That is pressure, and

every form of continuous pressure generates an explosion.

YOSSI SARID, "SETTLEMENTS WORTH DYING FOR?" *YEDI'OT AHARONOT*, 10 NOVEMBER 2000.

The following article was translated in Middle East Mirror on 24 November.

Most if not all Israelis would agree that Yasir Arafat is a difficult man to deal with. But could we equally agree on what we are like to deal with? Objectivity here is in short supply.

Our original sin was the settlement project. It should always have been clear that there was no justification for striking roots in occupied territory. It was also obvious that the settlements would obstruct all future attempts to reach an agreement with the Palestinians that could meet Israel's real security needs. Yet the sin of establishing settlements has been committed by every Israeli government for two generations. There is almost no politician in Israel who was not involved.

The Right used to complain that the Oslo accords had more holes than Swiss cheese. But how could it be otherwise? The maps for the agreements had not been drawn up on the basis of security considerations. Instead, each settlement was judged on its own merits, no matter how distant or isolated. Nobody cared how much of an irritant it was, how much it obstructed territorial continuity. The settlers were turning the Zionist project into a pathetic patchwork quilt.

This is how we got stuck in the Palestinians' throats and they in ours. By regarding the occupied territories not as something to be left to their fate but as ours forever, we landed ourselves with the current unrest. Even worse, we weren't happy till we'd also squeezed in 6,000 settlers amongst the million Palestinians in the wretched refugee camps of the Gaza Strip, the most densely populated place on earth.

Some of Israel's governments were not so keen on the settlements. They fully understood their harmful effect and even tried to oppose their establishment. In the end, though, they always gave in to the aggressive settlers, to the very people now crying wolf. The settlers knew full well that they were coveting occupied territory and they went to live there open-eyed.

Then came the era of agreements. One might have hoped reality would change the trend, but it didn't. In fact, the opposite happened. While Israel's left hand was signing

agreements with the Palestinians, its right hand was building more and more settlements.

Israel always argued that it would not accept any preconditions for talks; but were there ever more decisive preconditions than the settlements, popping up like poisonous mushrooms during the talks? The term "pre-conditions" usually refers to verbal ones, which can be changed, while the settlements were physical preconditions, set in stone for all to see. They had been put there to determine the outcome of the talks on the ground, rather than at the conference table.

Arafat, as already said, is a difficult and suspect client, because we doubt his good faith in the talks. But what about our good faith?

When the era of peace began in 1977, the number of settlers in the territories was 20,000. Today, it is around 100,000. If only we had at least stopped then, a generation ago, on the basis of the belief that the peace treaty with Egypt would be followed by others.

When Yitzhak Rabin was elected prime minister in 1992, the number of settlers was 96,000. By the time we signed the Oslo accords, it had risen to 110,000. If only we had stopped then, when it was already clear that we and the Palestinians were on the way to peace. But no, it was as if a *dybbuk* was driving us: in the first year of the Barak government, we added another 14,000 settlers and invited tenders for 4,000 approved housing units in the settlements. (Compare this to the 3,000 housing units built during Netanyahu's reign.)

This year saw a 96 percent rise in housing start-ups in the settlements compared to 1999. In the first quarter of 2000, housing start-ups in the settlements made up 22 percent of all public building work in Israel. In the second quarter of this year, too, construction continued at a similar pace. And, as if that was not enough, building continued in Jerusalem, the world's capital of political and religious sensitivity.

We in Israel might not notice the riotous progress of settlement, but any Palestinian

can see it going on from his window, day and night. He will also notice the bypass roads, and the roads built, in turn, to bypass those roads, as we concrete over his homeland.

And, after all that, the Palestinian Authority has to explain to every Palestinian who can see what is going on outside his window how it can go on negotiating, when there is soon not going to be anything to negotiate over. And it has to justify its trust in Israel and the good faith of the Israeli settlers.

Palestinians, of course, can hear, too. They can hear the Israeli prime minister, who keeps laying cornerstones, repeat again and again that, unlike his predecessors, he has not handed over a single stone to the Palestinians. And our prime minister is telling the truth: he really hasn't handed over anything. During the terms of both Netanyahu and Barak, Israel signed repeat agreements for a redeployment of forces involving partial withdrawals. None of these has been implemented, except for one tiny withdrawal amounting to 2 percent. And, yes, we rearranged our forces on the streets of Hebron.

These are only the signed agreements. We have not yet mentioned the verbal security understandings. Abu Dis, however, just like the Temple Mount, is still in our hands.

Even now, when we are supposedly willing to evacuate most of the territories, we keep giving the impression of withdrawing for the purpose of entrenchment. We must end the occupation, but when one ends an occupation, one leaves, and when one leaves, one does not stay on.

Perhaps one good thing has come from the great evil of the recent weeks: more Israelis are beginning to understand that the settlements cannot stay there, because the Bosnia scenario is coming true in *Eretz Yisrael*. And that scenario is a destroyer of life, not a way of life. I wonder whether even the settlers would say that it is worth dying for the settlements. Perhaps some would; if so, they have few partners amongst us.