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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 the 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.

Settlement Freeze or “Natural Growth” in New Clothes	126
Settlements and the al-Aqsa Intifada	127
Housing Starts in Israel and in the West Bank and Gaza Settlements, 1990–99 (chart)	130
Sharon’s New (Old) Plan	130

SETTLEMENT FREEZE OR “NATURAL GROWTH” IN NEW CLOTHES

From Settlement Report, July–August 2001.

Since the peace initiative promoted earlier this year by the Egyptian and Jordanian governments and especially since the Mitchell Committee report, endorsed by all parties, a settlement freeze has been at the heart of recommendations for stabilizing deteriorating relations between Israel and the Palestinians.

Efforts to win Israel’s endorsement for a freeze in the growth of Israel’s settlements in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem has an impeccable diplomatic pedigree. Every president since Jimmy Carter has endeavored, with varying degrees of commitment, to cajole, convince, or threaten Israeli leaders to undertake a fundamental change in one of the central components of Israel’s security and domestic policy.

These efforts have uniformly failed.

At Camp David in 1979, Carter thought that he had won an Israeli commitment to a five-year freeze. But Begin only agreed to halt construction for three months. And he forgot to tell Carter that the “thickening” of existing settlements, whose population then numbered 50,000, would continue unabated.

George Bush and Yitzhak Rabin agreed in 1992 to another freeze, excepting the “natu-

ral growth” of settlements. Rabin defended himself against right-wing attacks for his concession, noting with some exasperation, “The construction of 11,000 units continues. Is this a freeze? I don’t know whether [Bush] accepts this or not, but he knows that this will happen.” At that time there were 250,000 Israelis living over the 1967 Green Line.

At a 27 June 2001 meeting with President George W. Bush, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon refused to entertain the idea of the complete freeze at the heart of the Mitchell plan, offering instead to restrict expansion to existing settlement areas. Asked for Bush’s reaction, Sharon replied, “I don’t think that he loved it, but this is the Israeli position.”

Today, after thirty-four years of Israeli occupation, more than 400,000 Israelis have been settled in more than 200 purposely built towns, suburbs, and villages in East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank, on lands that at least three million Palestinians see as their patrimony. Palestinians who have witnessed the doubling of Israel’s population in their midst during almost a decade that most observers have described as “peace” might be forgiven for questioning not only Israeli intentions, but those of their own leadership as well.

Israel’s effort literally to transform the landscape has been undertaken in the ser-

vice of ideology and military strategy, a winning combination that has demonstrated its vitality and staying power in times of war and peace. Settlements are the most emotional expression of the century-old Zionist revolution in Palestine, the most practical illustration of the power and the tenacity of Jewish nationalism. In the occupied territories, this ideological imperative has been married to a military strategy intent on assuring Israel's permanent military control west of the Jordan River. Civilian Israeli settlement throughout the territories was essential to the realization of this goal, explained Moshe Dayan, who remains the most important architect of Israeli policy, "not because [settlements] can ensure security better than the army, but because without them we cannot keep the army in those territories. Without them the IDF would be a foreign army ruling a foreign population," rather than an army defending the "right" of its citizens to live in their homeland in peace and security.

Little wonder, then, that Palestinian efforts during the last decade to condition diplomacy on an Israeli agreement to freeze settlements have never been seriously entertained by Israel, which recognizes that such calls are motivated by an intention to force an Israeli evacuation not only from settlements but also of the Israeli army from the occupied territories themselves. Only when PLO leader Yasir Arafat agreed to drop settlements from the agenda in 1993 was the road to the historic Oslo process opened.

The failure of final status talks earlier this year, the defeat of Ehud Barak at the hands of Ariel Sharon, and the rebellion against Israel mounted since last October by Palestinians in the occupied territories have created a diplomatic vacuum that the call for a settlement freeze is meant, in part, to fill. Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres is combing the diplomatic lexicon for a formulation that will satisfy those in favor of the freeze while leaving unfettered Prime Minister Sharon's extensive settlement vision.

But if a working cease-fire is reached that results in serious debate on a settlements freeze, Palestinians need to be reminded of the old adage: Watch what you wish for, because it might come true. They have been surprised by the renewed resonance of the freeze idea in the international diplomatic community, but they are much better prepared to attack Israel's refusal to concede this point than to consider how exactly such a freeze might work, or indeed, if it could

work: What should it include? How is it to be monitored? What penalties would be exacted for transgressions?

The Palestinian strategy is to rely on the United States and the European Union to negotiate the details of a freeze. Yet the historical record suggests that negotiations to determine the practical meaning of this notion could well result in Palestinian acquiescence in a settlement "freeze" that, like all of its antecedents, leaves intact Israel's settlement prerogatives.

SETTLEMENTS AND THE AL-AQSA INTIFADA

From Settlement Report, September–October 2001.

The idea that the existence and expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories were compatible with the march toward a historic Israeli-Palestinian peace was one of the central assumptions underlying the Oslo process. During the last decade, successive Israeli governments of whatever political stripe have combined a settlement policy of relentlessly "creating facts on the ground" with a strategy of diplomatic engagement with the Palestinian national leadership, Yasir Arafat's PLO. This anomalous combination was embraced by the United States, which dismissed an Israeli policy intended to cripple prospects for Palestinian sovereignty as merely a "complicating factor" in the negotiating process. It was warily tolerated by the PLO leadership itself, which proved unable to fashion a diplomatic framework to constrain Israel's ongoing settlement expansion, let alone roll back the status quo.

In contrast to their representatives, the people of the occupied territories—in Jinin and Nablus, Balata and Dahaysha, Hebron, and Khan Yunis—are forced to confront on a daily basis this contradiction at the heart of the Oslo process. To them, ever-expanding settlements, and the Israeli investments in related infrastructure and military deployment that follow in their wake, *matter*.

The Palestinian rebellion that erupted in September 2000 has been fueled by the popular Palestinian belief that settlements and settlers are both the symbolic expression of Israeli intentions to deny them national self-determination and the practical obstacle to the peaceful and dignified conduct of a viable daily existence.

The instruments of settler existence in the occupied territories—settlements, the roads connecting them with each other and with

Israel, as well as the settlers themselves—are the principle context in which the violence of the past year has taken place. During the course of the intifada, thirty-five settlers have been killed in drive-by shootings and roadside ambushes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Everyday life in settlements, from sending children to school to trying to have a washing machine fixed by a technician who refuses to travel to these areas, has been profoundly changed by concerns for personal security and economic well-being.

“Our lives here have been absolutely transformed,” explained a settler from Homesh in *Ma’ariv*. We know when we leave our homes, but we don’t know when, if ever, we will return.”

In Gilo, reported *Ha’Aretz*, “The bedroom door of Haim and Jeanne Yiflah is now blocked by sandbags. Their house overlooking the slopes of Bayt Jala, resembles a military dugout.”

“We have succeeded in making the lives of the settlers very difficult,” explained Marwan Barghouti, leader of Fatah’s *tanzim* in the West Bank. “Their settlements have become military bunkers rather than homes. Our message is simple: The Israeli people will not feel secure for as long as they continue to occupy our territory.”

The transformation in everyday settler life has been all the more remarkable because of the extraordinary absence of a sense of personal insecurity nurtured in the decades since 1967. With the exception of the 1988–93 uprising, Palestinian violence directed at settlers and settlements had been notable by its scarcity, ineffectiveness, and episodic nature—that is, until last September.

“However secure and eternal the settlers [in Gaza’s Katif bloc] believe themselves to be,” noted an August article in *Ha’Aretz*, “the fences surrounding their homes continue to grow . . . and the perimeters of settlements are now lined with concrete blocks. Visitors to the Katif bloc are greeted with this forbidding sight, which brings to mind the labor camps and army barracks of wartime Europe.”

In February 2001, the IDF published a map offering a vivid visual confirmation of the extent to which Palestinian attacks have forced settlers, and those who are charged with protecting them, to adjust to this new reality. The 1,200 kilometers of roads in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been newly reclassified according to their danger to traveling settlers.

Settlers have long been prohibited from entering the Palestinians’ areas A. New “rules of the road” published in February advise settlers not to enter areas B except when traveling on main roads, to avoid all contact with Palestinian police, to travel in vehicles equipped with a communications device and armored against stones (the cost of outfitting private cars to withstand gunfire is prohibitive; a special \$50 million allocation for this purpose was announced in July), and to travel in convoys of at least two vehicles.

The economic effects of Palestinian attacks compete with concerns for personal security. The industrial area of Atarot in East Jerusalem has been all but emptied of Israeli businesses, and the nearby airport has been transferred from civilian management to the IDF. Ten percent of the 1,000 small- and medium-sized settlement-based businesses in the region north of Ramallah, which employ 30 percent of settlement residents, have closed permanently in the last year, and another 30 percent have stopped operating. Less than 10 percent have moved their operations to Israel.

Agriculture in Gaza’s Katif bloc is being crushed under a load of debt that even emergency government advances have little hope of reducing. The situation in the Jordan Valley, which has suffered for years from a declining settler population due to economic hardship, has been exacerbated by the intifada. The three state-owned utilities of telephone, water, and electricity have threatened, for example, to disconnect the settlement of Yafit from their respective services if outstanding balances are not paid.

“The policy of the present government,” noted a letter sent in September by representatives of the region’s 3,500 settlers to Knesset members, “is throwing the residents of the valley into a crisis the likes of which they have never known, and is causing departures from the region in numbers that only our honor and yours keep us from specifying in this letter.”

One of the main tasks undertaken by the IDF during the intifada has been to “increase the sense of settlers’ security” and to enable them to live a normal everyday existence. According to MK Ran Cohen of the opposition Meretz party, “Almost half the IDF is invested in defending [settlers] and their roads.” Palestinian actions have made security along the 1,200 kilometers of West Bank roads the number one problem facing the IDF.

"Travel along roads in the territories can be described in one word," began a recent article in *Ma'ariv*, "fear."

In response to this situation, and in an attempt to restore the settlers' evaporating sense of personal security, the IDF has adopted a series of progressively draconian steps that have crippled everyday Palestinian life. In Gaza, for example, the IDF has completely separated the traffic patterns of both communities, to the Palestinian's disadvantage. The Oslo II provision for Israeli control of areas adjacent to roads has been extended from 75 to 300 meters. Palestinian use of more advanced weaponry may be answered by extending the perimeter of "clean" areas denuded of orchards and buildings around roads to almost one kilometer. The system of closures, road closings, checkpoints, and passive security measures, while in some cases improving settlers' sense of security, has severely restricted the movement of 3 million Palestinians cooped up in balkanized islands areas under nominal control of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Increasing IDF incursions into areas A have also been prompted in large part by the Palestinian policy of targeting settlements.

Thus, though Palestinians have succeeded in making the lives of settlers hell, in the last analysis it is a routine, manageable kind of hell punctuated by spasms of anticipated violence. The sense of insecurity has prompted thousands of settlers to return to Israel and has added to the difficulties of attracting new residents to settlements in a national economy plagued by recession and falling housing prices and demand. An investigation by *Ha'Aretz* revealed that 10,000 settlers—5 percent of the total in the West Bank and Gaza Strip—have left the territories this year, five times the typical annual emigration rate. These departures can pose critical social problems, especially in smaller settlements in the Jordan Valley and around Jinin, but after one year of armed Palestinian opposition during the last three decades, they do not in any fashion imperil the settlement enterprise.

Notwithstanding the population loss, the YESHA council announced an increase of 8.5 percent, or 17,000, in the settler population of the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) and Gaza Strip during the last year, up to 227,000. The investigation by *Ha'Aretz* suggests far more modest growth of less than 5 percent.

Fewer than one hundred armed Palestinians have been responsible for the havoc wreaked on settler roads. Hizballah forces in Lebanon were also small in number, but that is where the similarity ends. The activity of Palestinian attacks on settlements and settlers represents not so much a strategy as an opportunistic, uncoordinated, and isolated exploitation of Israeli lines of communication by a small fraction of Palestinians under arms, a tactical instrument aimed at wearing down an enemy that shows no sign of abandoning the settlement enterprise rather than a persistent assault aimed at defeating it.

Although roadside attacks have been concentrated in a few areas, the armed forces associated with the PA have not been engaged in any coherent fashion in coordinated attacks on traveling settlers, let alone settlements. The shooting at settlements in Gaza, Hebron, Psagot, and even Gilo in East Jerusalem has been undertaken, at best, with only short-term tactical considerations in mind. Even on such a tactical level, it is difficult to establish the purpose for such actions beyond simply making life difficult for settlers.

To the terrible price Israel has exacted on Palestinians as a consequence of this effort must be added the rehabilitation of the settler community, which had been on the defensive since the beginning of the Oslo process, in Israel's domestic arena. Palestinian attacks on Gilo, which is viewed by Israelis as an unremarkable part of Jerusalem, and terror bombings throughout Israel proper have mobilized Israel's entire Jewish population on both sides of the Green Line, adding to the sense that "We're all in this together."

In the Palestinian community, few voices have been raised against shooting at settlers. "Israeli society is paying a heavy price as a result of the continuation of the Intifada and the unraveling of [Israeli] security and stability," observed Jamal Abu Samhadana, one of the founders of the popular resistance committees in Rafah. "This encourages the Palestinian public to carry on and support the struggle against the Israeli occupation." Yet the option of armed attacks of any sort appears to be under increasing critical scrutiny. "Only by political means shall we achieve our goals, by the use of rocks to fight the Israelis, on the roadblocks and in the settlements, not inside Israel, and not using firearms," noted a 2 August editorial by the Palestinian news agency Wafa. Photographs

of Muslim worshippers throwing their shoes at Israeli soldiers during protests at Jerusalem's al-Aqsa Mosque, continued the editorial, "was more effective than mortar shells fired at Israeli settlements. The stone and the shoe are doing the job, and not the mortar shells."

HOUSING STARTS IN ISRAEL AND IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA SETTLEMENTS, 1990-99

From Settlement Report, July-August 2001.

CONSTRUCTION STARTS IN ISRAEL AND SETTLEMENTS (UNITS)

Year	Public	Private	Total
1990	19,380	23,030	42,410
1991	61,730	21,780	83,510
1992	22,700	23,330	46,030
1993	6,820	30,160	36,980
1994	10,460	32,860	43,320
1995	27,460	41,440	68,900
1996	19,440	37,000	56,440
1997	15,700	36,330	52,030
1998	9,970	33,730	43,700
1999	9,120	28,090	37,210

CONSTRUCTION STARTS IN SETTLEMENTS ONLY[†] (UNITS)

Year	Public	Private	Total
1990	830	980	1,810
1991	7,040	1,070	8,110
1992	5,000	1,210	6,210
1993	400	1,830	2,230
1994	550	740	1,290
1995	1,870	660	2,530
1996	1,000	670	1,670
1997	1,000	900	1,900
1998	1,740	2,160	3,900
1999	1,550	960	2,510

SETTLEMENTS' SHARE OF CONSTRUCTION STARTS[‡] (PERCENTAGE)

Year	Public	Private	Total
1990	4.3	4.3	4.2
1991	11.4	4.9	9.7
1992	22.0	5.2	13.5
1993	5.9	6.1	6.0
1994	5.3	2.3	3.0
1995	6.8	1.6	3.7
1996	5.1	1.8	3.0
1997	6.4	2.5	3.7
1998	17.5	6.4	8.9
1999	17.0	3.4	6.7

[†]Including East Jerusalem settlement areas.

[‡]Excluding East Jerusalem (data unavailable).

[‡]The population of Israel and the settlements is 6.3 million. The settler population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is approximately 200,000, or 3.2 percent of the total (2000, Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel). Sources: Statistical Abstracts of Israel, 2000 (Table 16.5), 1999 (16.5), 1998 (Table 16.5), 1997 (16.5), 1995 (Table 16.4), 1994 (16.4), 1992 (Table 16.5, pp. 472-73).

SHARON'S NEW (OLD) PLAN

This June 2001 study by the Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem (ARIJ) was taken from the group's joint Web site with the Land Research Center at www.poica.org.

After a number of attacks in Israel, the Israeli government is reexamining the previously suggested strategy of unilateral separation between Israel proper and the West Bank. . . .

Plans for unilateral separation between Israel proper and the West Bank have been raised before. In December 2000, former deputy defense minister Efraim Sneh proposed a plan under the premiership of Benjamin Netanyahu, but the plan went nowhere because of the change in government. Sneh's plan involved a 74-kilometer-long security fence of concrete walls, iron rails, and concrete blocks. Most recently, in June 2000, Israeli MK Roman Bronfman of the Democratic Choice party proposed a similar plan (*Jerusalem Post*, 3 June 2001).

But such plans are full of political controversy within Israel. The political Right vehemently opposes them because such attempts at separation clash squarely with the goal of expansion into as much of the West Bank as possible. Israel is the only country in the world that does not officially declare its borders, thus leaving open-ended the territorial extent of its colonial enterprise. For rightists, a security fence along the 1949 Armistice line would come too close to establishing fixed borders, isolating many colonies (settlements) or even requiring the removal of some of them. It may also fence off land Israel intends to lay claim to in the Jordan Valley, among other places. Other members of the Israeli government object mainly on practical grounds, claiming that, given the present demographic realities, it is impossible to construct a barrier that effectively separates Israel and the colonies from the Palestinian population.

But most of the high-profile talks currently taking place in the Israeli government do not include a border-like fence, which both Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Foreign

Minister Shimon Peres object to. The proposed alternative is a 3–8 kilometer closed military zone along the east of the 1949 Armistice Line, to the north of Jerusalem; see map 1. Such a plan would include the closing or destruction of most of the roads in this “buffer zone,” a massive increase in the military presence there, and heavy surveillance of the Palestinian population. The Israeli army would control this area east of the armistice line while the Israeli police would monitor the area on its western side, where the army does not have a mandate to operate. Steps have already been taken to establish the military zone. The army has already begun operating a brigade headquarters in the Zufin military camp east of Qalqilya. The new brigade assigned to the area will be called the “seamline brigade.” The headquarters has thus far been allotted two companies from the Golan Heights, special units from the Armor Corps command, and several dozen military police (*Ha'aretz*, 7 June 2001). This massive military presence would have grave repercussions for the Palestinian people, in particular those who live in villages that would be absorbed into the military zone (the blue area in the map). The proposed security area (stretching to some 140 square kilometers) would include at least twenty Palestinian villages, of which fourteen are within area B (the area that is supposedly under joint Palestinian-Israeli control). The total population of those villages is around 40,000 people, and they work mainly in agriculture. These Palestinians would find their freedom of movement severely restricted. Those farmers in the area who would be able to reach their fields may be permitted to work them during the day. But they and all other Palestinians would be required to remain closed up in their villages after dark or any other time the Israeli forces choose to confine them.

Moreover, the proposed security area encompasses some twenty-three Palestinian irrigation wells that supply around 2,147,100 cubic meters of water every year. Hence, one can conceive that the Israeli plan is to tap into that vital source and deprive the Palestinians of their basic means of survival. Surely the attempt is to strangle the Palestinians into submission.

Israelis continue to debate proposals of unilateral separation. Much of the public argument for establishing a buffer zone east of the armistice line is to provide for the security of Israel. But in essence the debate within

**TABLE OF PALESTINIAN LOCALITIES
INCORPORATED INTO THE ISRAELI-PROPOSED
SECURITY ZONE**

Locality Name	Population	Location
Arab al-Ramadin al-Shamali	51	Area C
A'zoun al-A'tma	1,187	Area B
Bayt Lakia	5,709	Area B
Bayt Sira	2,010	Area B
Budrus	1,070	Area B
Dayr Ballut	2,680	Area B
Falame	502	Area C
Habla	4,371	Area B
'Izbat Salman	457	Area C
Khirbet Jabara	244	Area C
Khirbet al-Misbah	3,711	Area B
Khirbet Ras A'tiya	1,136	Area B
Mahattat Tahseen Mansur	19	Area C
Marj A'malyra (Bay Nuba)	207	Area C
al-Midya	923	Area B
Ni'lin	3,361	Area B
Qibya	3,487	Area B
Rantis	2,047	Area B
Shuqba	3,067	Area B
Zawiya	3,695	Area B
Total	39,934	

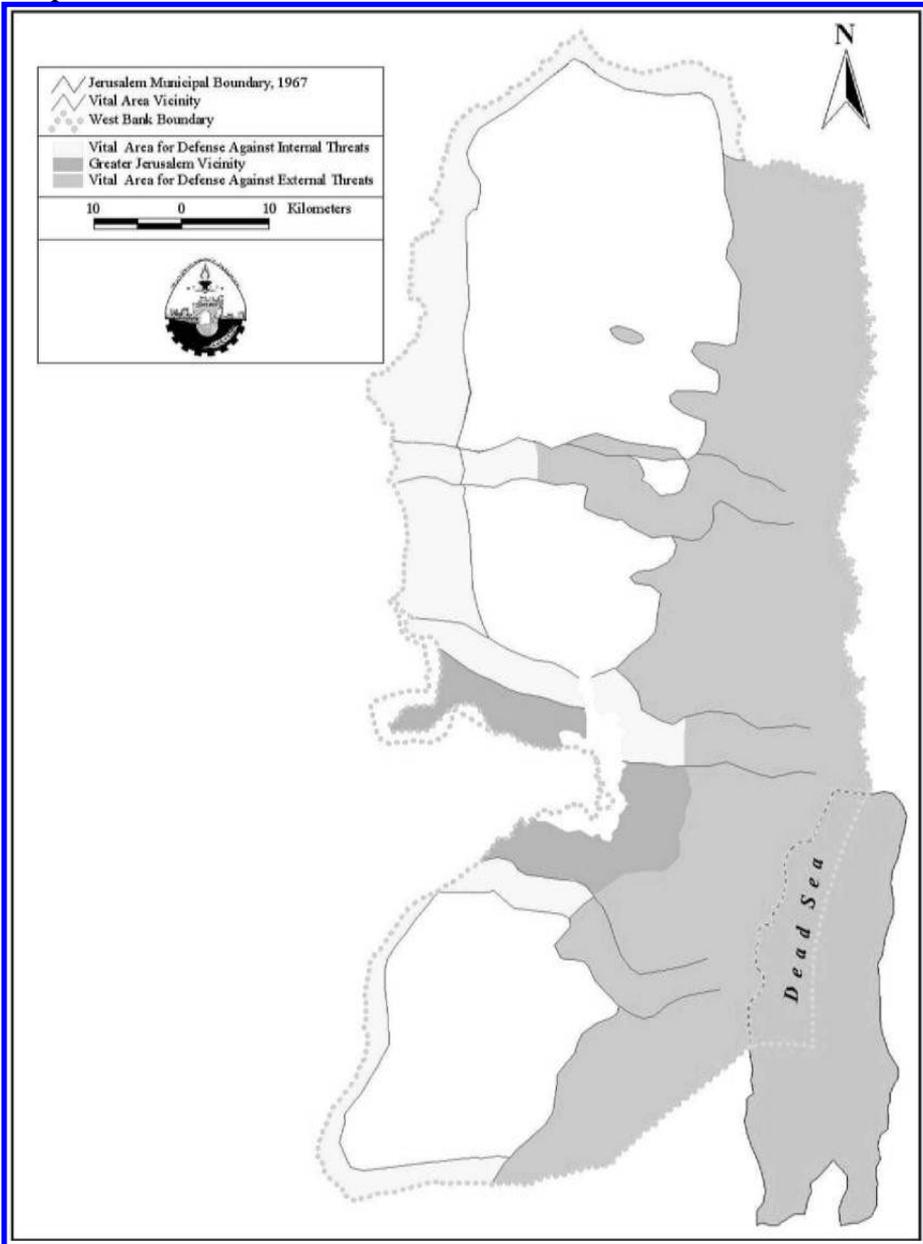
the Israeli government is about how best to colonize the West Bank. Though not all in the Israeli government will be pleased with the proposed military zone, it will attempt to satisfy both the goal of separation and of expansion. That the military zone will attempt to separate West Bank Palestinians from Israel proper is obvious. It is also apparent that the military zone will establish a stronger hold on an area the Israelis have long hoped would be annexed to Israel, thus serving Israel's expansion. Almost all Israeli plans for future borders include the fertile area east of the armistice line. A plan developed by . . . Sharon in 1997 is no different; see map 2. The establishment of the military zone will amount to yet one more step in a list of many over the years to secure control of the area.

Map 1: The Sharon Plan 2001



(Courtesy of ARIJ)

Map 2: The Sharon Plan 1997



(Courtesy of ARIJ)