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SETTLEMENT MONITOR

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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 have been written by Geoffrey Aronson 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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## SHARON MOVES AHEAD WITH GAZA EVACUATION

*From Settlement Report, July-August 2004.*

"By the end of 2005, not one Jew will remain in the Gaza Strip," declared Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon three days before the 6 June cabinet endorsement of his plan to evacuate all seven thousand settlers from the Gaza Strip and fewer than one thousand from four settlements in the northern West Bank.

The endorsement came only weeks after Likud activists rejected Sharon's initial evacuation plan. In the wake of this embarrassing setback, minor elements of the plan were modified. The new plan reaffirms Sharon's strategic intention to end Israel's occupation of Gaza, splits the evacuation during 2005 into four stages, calls "in general" for the physical demolition of settlement housing, and states explicitly Israel's intention "not [to] cede the right to a permanent military presence in the territorial area of the Gaza Strip" and the northern West Bank.

One day after the plan's approval, Sharon explained that it "is good for the security of

Israel, its diplomatic status, its economy, and is good for the demography of the Jewish people in Israel."

There is no formal link between the settler evacuation of Gaza and the expansion of settlements in the West Bank. The Sharon government, however, faces a political imperative to appease settler opposition to the Gaza evacuation by expanding construction in the West Bank, a move that received indirect approval from U.S. President George W. Bush in April talks with Sharon.

In mid-June Minister of Defense Shaul Mofaz gave the go-ahead for creation of what *Ma'ariv* described as "massive construction plans for the settlements in the Etzion bloc, as a first stage for settlement expansion in the areas of Ma'ale Adumim and Ariel." Etzion bloc settlers have already submitted to Mofaz a memorandum outlining the construction of 5,300 residential units throughout the bloc's settlements, including 2,300 in the Nokdim area, 56 units in Bet Ayn, and 250 units next to the settlement of Kefar Eldad. Settlers also asked for the annexation of an additional 10,000 dunams [4 dunams = 1 acre] of Palestinian land to their planning area in order to expedite the long-delayed

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establishment of Ir Ganim and its 7,500 units. Settlement expansion of this magnitude in the Bethlehem region will further isolate the Bethlehem-Bayt Jala area, already cut off from Jerusalem, from its southern hinterland.

The approximately 1,500 settler families to be evacuated from Gaza can expect to receive compensation averaging \$330,000 per family—\$550 million in all. Military costs related to the evacuation and redeployment are estimated at \$450 million. Gaza settlers, like other Israelis contemplating a move to a West Bank settlement, are free agents, and there is little the government can do, short of sweeping prohibitions on settlement expansion, which is currently not on the political horizon, to answer demands made by Palestinians and many in the international community to prevent their resettlement in the West Bank. Linking compensation to a commitment not to settle in the West Bank would be impossible to manage effectively and would likely be struck down upon judicial review.

A source in the YESHA Council was reported to have said that “notwithstanding the understanding between the prime minister and the Americans not to settle settlers from Gaza beyond the Green Line, construction in the settlement blocs of Judea and Samaria will result in a substantial increase in the number of settlers.”

Even if Sharon’s plan is not implemented, its approval by a Likud-led government effectively seals the future of the Gaza settlement enterprise. In a stunning reversal of decades of bipartisan support, Mofaz confirmed the fate of Gaza settlements when he declared on 2 May, “Settlements established in the Gaza Strip are an historic mistake. They are not on the map of the State of Israel’s [national] interests.” On another occasion he noted, “The Gaza Strip is not part of the Promised Land. Whether there is a peace agreement or not, the settlers in Gaza will not be there in another five years. I claim that the founding fathers of the ‘Gaza-Jericho First’ agreement made a mistake when they allowed Israeli settlements to remain in the Gaza Strip.”

#### **UNAUTHORIZED OUTPOSTS THRIVE UNDER SHARON**

*From Settlement Report, July–August 2004.*

In recent discussions, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has acknowledged not doing

enough to make good on commitments to the Bush administration to dismantle scores of settlement “outposts” established during his tenure. The Israeli government has presented to the Bush administration a list of 28 outposts established since March 2001; in contrast, the list of illegal West Bank outposts compiled by the U.S. itself is 80 percent longer, and the Bush administration according to one U.S. official “is still waiting for more elaborate maps from Israel,” which provided the U.S. with maps and photos of only 23 illegal outposts. Meanwhile, the Israeli organization Peace Now has declared that approximately 51 outposts established since March 2001 are extant. Altogether, approximately 100 new settlements have been established since 1996 with a population of 1,500.

According to Dror Etkes, head of Peace Now’s Settlements Watch project, “At the end of June, Settlements Watch had identified 96 outposts in the West Bank. Forty-four of these sites were established prior to the Israeli elections in February 2001, leaving 52 outposts that were built after those elections, including 51 constructed after March 2001—not 28 as the Sharon government claims. While some of the outposts on the Sharon list exist, many of the sites are unknown, are not really outposts, or have already been evacuated. None of the outposts could have been built without government help or acquiescence.

“In addition, Settlements Watch has just completed a second round of aerial and ground surveys of all settlements in the occupied territories in order to find any changes that have taken place in these communities over the last four months. We found that over 3,100 housing units are in the process of being constructed in the territories today. In the Gaza Strip,” whose 21 settlements are to be evacuated by October 2005, “over 190,000 square meters have been added to built-up settlement areas during the past few months, mostly through increasing the amount of farm land. The Gaza settlement in which the most changes have been noted is Bnei Atzmon (Atzmona), where an area of 113,000 square meters surrounding the settlement is being prepared for agriculture purposes. The Gaza settlement of Katif also has some notable additions to its farm areas. Further, a new residential area is being built in the Gaza settlement of Neve Dekalim, while seven new trailers have been added to Netzarim in Gaza in order to increase the number of settlers in the area.” There

has also been an expansion of settlement housing units in Sanur, one of the small West Bank settlements slated for evacuation, where four new trailers have been added.

West Bank settlers have moved 70 trailers to outposts in the past six months, according to a report compiled by the Civil Administration's department for monitoring infrastructure. During the first half of 2004, the Civil Administration approved the transfer of 220 trailers to West Bank settlements. Toward the middle of the year, the Civil Administration determined that 70 had not arrived at their intended destinations, but rather at illegal settlement outposts.

#### SETTLEMENT EXPANSION CONTINUES

##### MA'ALE ADUMIM EXPANSION SEVERS EAST JERUSALEM FROM WEST BANK

*Daniel Seidemann's editorial in the 26 August 2004 Washington Post (originally titled "Letting Israel Self-Destruct") was prompted by Israel's issuance (2 and 17 August) of tenders for construction of a total of 741 new housing units in an open area of Ma'ale Adumim despite Sharon's 14 April 2004 pledges to Bush to halt all settlement expansion, including natural growth. The United States initially questioned issuance of the tenders, but on 21 August Israeli and U.S. administration officials revealed that after consultations, the White House had agreed not to protest natural growth within the development boundaries of authorized settlements, though it would not officially state a policy change (see New York Times, 21 August 2004). Work on the new neighborhood began on 5 August.*

*The E-1 Plan that Seidemann discusses involved the 1994 expansion of Ma'ale Adumim's boundaries by 12 km<sup>2</sup> in the direction of the Jerusalem municipal boundaries for construction of a new 3,500-unit neighborhood housing 50,000 Jewish settlers. It became part of Israel's Greater Jerusalem Plan, endorsed by the Knesset in 1997.*

Take a run down the four-mile stretch of road that leads from Jerusalem to Ma'ale Adumim, which, with its 31,000 residents, is the West Bank's largest settlement. As you hit the "T" junction at the old road to Jericho, look to your left, up the wooded hill. The few Caterpillar earthmovers cutting into the terrain seem benign in comparison to the frenetic construction taking place

elsewhere in the West Bank. Looks deceive. These earthworks may portend the end of the State of Israel as we know it.

The excavations represent the commencement of work on the plan known as E-1, which will create a continuous built-up area connecting Ma'ale Adumim to Jerusalem. If the Temple Mount in Jerusalem's Old City is the center of a clock face, and with Ma'ale Adumim due east of the city, E-1 seals Jerusalem on its 12 o'clock-3 o'clock quadrant.

The ramifications of this could hardly be starker. E-1 will cut East Jerusalem off from its environs in the West Bank, virtually ruling out the possibility of East Jerusalem ever becoming the national seat of Palestine. Given the topography, it will dismember the West Bank into two cantons, with no natural connection between them. If implemented, the plan will create a critical mass of facts on the ground that will render nearly impossible the creation of a sustainable Palestinian state with any semblance of geographical integrity. And denying the possibility of a sustainable Palestinian state leaves only one default option: the one-state, binational solution that signifies the end of Israel as the home of the Jewish people.

There is nothing new in the E-1 plan; it has been on the planning boards for a decade. Until now, each successive U.S. administration has made it clear that E-1 is the quintessential, unilateral act that predisposes the outcome of final status. As such, implementation will not be tolerated. The fate of E-1 is to be determined around a negotiating table, not by bulldozers.

Until now. The work on E-1's infrastructures has commenced, and the plans for building the neighborhoods proceed apace, only months from execution. And Jerusalem is interpreting the messages it is receiving from Washington, their style and substance, as a green light to proceed.

E-1 may be the most dangerous example of recent trends, but it is hardly alone. Schemes abound—some embryonic, some well advanced—to "line" the security fence being erected around Jerusalem and in its environs with new settlements. On its own, the fence is an eminently reversible defensive measure. Dovetailed with settlement activity, it threatens to create the critical mass of political fact that further undermines the feasibility of the two-state solution.

For the past 13 years, I have gotten up in the morning, scanned the horizon here and asked: "What the hell can go wrong

today?" What can happen that will undermine the stability of this delicate ecosystem in Jerusalem? What facts created today will deprive us, or our children, of the possibility of arriving at a final status agreement in the future? Dealing with the most sensitive, primordial materials of Israel's conflict with the Palestinians has often been lonely work. But I have never been alone.

Throughout, three consecutive U.S. administrations have engaged Israel in "reality-principle diplomacy," closely monitoring these "facts on the ground" and discreetly applying the brakes. Diplomatic pressure? On rare occasions, yes, but more often just a pointed inquiry to the Israeli authorities has sufficed to prevent the more detrimental actions—and at little or no political cost in Israel or in the United States. Discreet, nonpartisan diplomacy has contributed significantly to the stability of Jerusalem and kept the prospect of a political resolution of the conflict alive—however remote that prospect may seem at the moment.

But now all that appears to have changed. It is not only that the current administration has disengaged from micromanagement of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. The Bush administration is turning a blind eye to Israel's disingenuous representations regarding settlement expansion, indicating to Ariel Sharon's government that so long as it proceeds with plans to withdraw from Gaza, Israel is at liberty to consolidate its hegemony over the public domain in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The discreet braking mechanism has all but disappeared—and, silently, trends have been unleashed that will soon make the two-state solution impossible.

All this takes place under the auspices of an administration that professes unprecedented support for Israel. If that is the intent, it is hardly the result. Nothing undermines the feasibility of President Bush's two-state vision more than President Bush's abandonment of reality-principle diplomacy. As such, the president is neither friend nor supporter of the Jewish state—because friends don't let friends drive drunk. And that is precisely what this administration is doing.

The next administration—be it a second-term Bush or a first-term Kerry—will in all likelihood reengage. Too much is at stake. The dynamic that has been created does not signal the emergence of a new equilibrium in the Israel-Palestine conflict, and vital U.S.

interests are jeopardized. Whether this reengagement takes place in time to save the two-state solution remains to be seen.

#### SETTLEMENTS AND THE DESTRUCTION OF HISTORY

*The following article by Ahmad Sub Laban originally appeared in the 1 September 2004 issue of Palestine Report under the title "Destroying History."*

On August 9, Israeli bulldozers sank their jaws into three buildings in the old city of Hebron. The demolitions, to make way for a settler-only road to connect the Kiryat Arba settlement with the Ibrahimi Mosque, caused an outrage.

The three buildings were ancient, dating back some 500 years to the Mamluk period. The alleys in the Jaber and Salaymeh quarters where the houses were situated and the stone arches above them used to form the southern entrance to the old city.

"These three buildings were part of the structural fabric of Hebron's old city and part of the historical environment surrounding the Ibrahimi Mosque," said Imad Hamdan, public relations director for the Hebron Reconstruction Committee, in an interview with the Palestine Report [PR]. "It seems the occupation forces ignored this fact. They tore down these historical buildings in order to build a settler road which they are calling 'Worshippers Road.'"

The demolitions were denounced by the highest official circles. Prime Minister Ahmad Qurai', in a statement released by his government on 10 August, called it a "true crime by the occupation against the Palestinian people." Israel, he said, demolished these historical sites with no regard to humanity or civilization.

Hamdan believes Israel is waging a war on the heritage of Hebron's old city, pointing to the fact that there are tens of other houses slated for demolition, some of which date back to the Mamluk and Ottoman eras and others that were built during the British Mandate. It is a clear indication to Hamdan of an Israeli attempt to Judaize the old city and the area around the Ibrahimi Mosque.

"This new settler road will pass through the Wadi Nasara, Jabaer, and Salaymeh quarters and the neighborhoods east of the Ibrahimi Mosque," explained Hamdan, but pointed to an existing road, also off-limits to Palestinian motorists, which runs a similar route and is only 150 meters longer. "The difference is only 15 seconds in any car," he

said. "Their 'security concerns' are already being addressed by the existing road."

### *A Loss of Centuries*

"These violations are aimed at imposing facts on the ground through settlement expansion at the expense of the property of residents in the old city and its surroundings," said Areef Jabari, Hebron governor. "What happened is a disaster that can never be rectified. We can never bring back the ancient houses that were torn down. With them, almost six centuries have been lost."

Since the end of 2000, an as yet uncounted number of Palestinian heritage sites, from Rafah in the south to Jenin in the north, have been damaged or destroyed during Israeli military operations. Most famously, the siege of the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem in 2002 saw one of the most important sites in Christianity damaged by Israeli gunfire. The damage there, however, pales in comparison to that in Nablus, which has been one of the hardest hit Palestinian cities during the Aqsa Intifada.

The old city of Nablus dates back to Canaanite times. It was described as Shechem in the Tal al-Amarna letters 1,400 B.C. Some 2,600 buildings in the old city can be dated back to Ottoman times, and some go as far back as the Mamluk and even Byzantine eras.

Over a period of three weeks in December 2003 to January 2004, repeated Israeli incursions into the old city of Nablus left several historic houses and buildings as well as archaeological sites destroyed or damaged. Most notable was the damage to the 'Abd al-Hadi Palace and the Kakhn, Sadeq, and Shabi homes in the Qaryoun neighborhood. Israeli forces also destroyed the eastern wall of the Salah Mosque, which was previously a Byzantine church, and the Khadra' Mosque, previously a Crusader church.

"The destruction in Nablus has been concentrated mostly on buildings in the old city," Naseer Arafat, president of the Association to Protect Nablus Old Town, told PR. He said the destruction included shops and homes inside the old city, which were either partially or fully destroyed. "Nearly 60 buildings were completely destroyed and an additional 250 were partially demolished. This is in addition to the massive damage done to the old city's infrastructure. That is our identity they are destroying. Our cultural heritage is our identity."

The 'Abd al-Hadi Palace dates back some 250 years. It covers an area of over

3,000 square meters and belongs to the well-established 'Abd al-Hadi clan. During the invasion, the Israeli army claimed resistance fighters were hiding inside the houses or in the tunnels that run under the old city, and went house-to-house in search of them.

Their claim was dismissed by Ali Touqan, director of the Nablus library, who said the targeting of the 'Abd al-Hadi Palace was intentional and direct. "They put holes in the walls, a meter thick. They just wanted to destroy it."

Touqan said Israeli claims of underground tunnels used by resistance fighters were also completely baseless. The tunnels are there, they have been around since the Byzantine era when they were used as water canals, but "under no circumstances could they be used by resistance fighters. These tunnels are a cultural legacy that the occupation has destroyed."

### *Targeting Identity*

"The main goal behind these assaults," Hamdan Taha, director general of the antiquities department of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities told PR, "is to cause political harm to Palestinians' cultural identity. This has always been a source of intimidation for the Zionist movement and the Israeli occupation. And the intentional targeting of historical sites over the years is also designed to destroy a component of future cultural, economic development and tourism."

Taha believes the demolitions in Hebron are just one link in a chain of a deliberate campaign to target symbols of Palestinian cultural heritage. He pointed to over 450 villages that have been destroyed and erased from existence in an attempt to change the historical character of certain places with historical and archeological significance.

If Israel continues this "path of destruction," said Taha, "Palestinians will have no other choice than to teach future generations about their heritage through pictures and books." In fact, he continued, his department is preparing for the eventuality. The antiquities department is documenting the damages incurred by these archeological sites, he said, "in order to ensure that this precious legacy is passed down even if Israel succeeds in wiping it from existence."

Direct damage incurred during military operations is only part of the story, however. According to a March 2004 study released by the Palestinian Institute for Cultural Landscape Studies and prepared by researchers Jamal Barghouth and Mohammed Jaradat, the

separation wall being erected by Israel in the West Bank is set to undermine the cultural link between archeological sites in the West Bank and surrounding archeological areas.

The West Bank is one of the richest areas in the world from an archeological perspective. From Canaanite times up, the ancient Greek, Mesopotamian, Persian, Roman, Byzantine and Arab Islamic civilizations have all left traces in the ground. . . .

Barghouth and Jaradat's study finds that Jewish settlements in the West Bank have directly annexed over 924 archeological sites either now or through future expansion plans. This number will rise, however, to 4,264 sites and archeological landmarks, 466 of them major archeological sites, once the wall is completed. This figure equals 47 percent of all known major sites in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, from a total of 1,084 sites according to 1944 British maps that surveyed archeological sites in the West Bank.

The ideological and historical premise behind plotting the course of the barrier in such a way, said both Barghouth and Jaradat, is that the West Bank is considered the historical and geographical site on which the Israelite tribes settled during the Iron Age around 1000 B.C. and thus where Judea and Samaria was created.

Between 1967 and 2000, the two researchers said, the northern and central areas and even the Jerusalem area were exhaustively surveyed, enabling Israel to determine the exact sites Jewish tradition deemed important and that should remain under Israeli rule. Thus, added the researchers, it is unsurprising that one of the standards used to define the course of the wall would be archeological sites.

"The wall constitutes a disaster to Palestinian cultural heritage," said Taha. "In addition to the fact that it will isolate approximately 50 percent of archeological sites from Palestinian territories, it will affect religious tourist activity for which Palestine is famous. The main religious tourist sites are already isolated. Look at Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Travel between these two cities, which for thousands of years has been unin-

dered, has now become almost impossible for Palestinians."

#### INS AND OUTS OF SETTLER POPULATION GROWTH

*From Settlement Report, July-August 2004.*

The settler population in the West Bank and Gaza grew by 12,306 in the last year, an increase of 5.32 percent, similar to the growth rate during the other years of the intifada but well below the 8 percent growth rate that occurred before the current outbreak of violence. In Gaza's Gush Katif area, where settlements are supposed to be evacuated, there was an average increase of 5.95 percent, slightly more than the average birth rate. The three religious-ideological settlements there grew by a much larger percentage: Kefar Darom (21.5 percent); Netzarim (13 percent); and Morag (12.3 percent). Two-thirds of the overall growth from June 2003 to June 2004 (some 8,100) can be attributed to the high 3.5 percent annual fertility rate among settlers. Only one-third (4,206 people) actually moved to the settlements in the past year, according to Interior Ministry figures. Most of the growth (51.3 percent) occurred in three ultra-Orthodox or religious settlements: Beitar Ilit (2,409 people); Mod'in Ilit (3,431 people); and Kochav Ya'acov (473). The secular urban areas in the West Bank had far lower growth rates: Ma'ale Adumim grew just 5.1 percent, and Ariel registered only a 0.5 percent rise. Kiryat Arba barely grew, with just a 0.5 percent increase, as did Givat Ze'ev, which registered 0.3 percent growth. Of the 146 settlements considered legal under Israeli law, 129 grew in size, but only 64 of these beyond the natural birth increase. Most of those that increased were areas with a strong ideological core, like Shavei Shomron, Pdu'el, Mevo Horon, Elazar, and Neve Daniel. Among the settlements with less than natural growth increases were Alfe Menashe, Elkana, and Karnei Shomron. At Ma'ale Efraim, it was minus 11 percent, and at Adura, it was minus 10.4 percent. It appears that in some of these settlements, people are leaving.