

**Forum:** Special Political and Decolonization Committee (GA4)

**Issue:** Discussing the Israeli practices and settlement activities affecting the rights of other ethnic groups of the occupied territories

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**Position:** Main Chair

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## INTRODUCTION

The practice of creating settlements by Jewish communities in the beginning and later on by the State of Israel has been a long-standing, pre-World War 2 practice. The purpose of these settlement plans was always to defy Palestinian rule over their land as well as break the connectivity between the different Palestinian communities and territories.

Under every international treaty and especially the Geneva Convention, Israel's settlement plans have been characterized as illegal and possible crimes against humanity, something that will also be further analyzed in the background information section. These establishments have resulted to violence and the creation of a hostile environment between settlers and Palestinians. The international community has insisted that Israel terminates all types of existence of such settlements because they undermine the two-state solution, whilst also making it more difficult to possibly implement this.

Additionally, we must not forget that these settlements have a tremendous impact on the daily lives of Palestinians. As mentioned below, many Palestinian communities are slowly becoming isolated from the rest making it more difficult for these people to remain connected with the rest of their people. Furthermore, Israel has managed to gain almost complete control over essential needs of Palestinian communities such as water and electricity supplies. This makes it almost impossible for Palestine to become a fully independent state which will not rely on Israel in any aspect.

Throughout the years Israel has introduced many plans and directives with the aim of expanding the settlements in the West Bank. In the past years the settlement division of the Israeli state has managed to make the planning and approval process even easier, something over which the international community has expressed its deep concerns. Since this would mean that no international institution would be able to even check these plans, it means that the two-state solution and overall the peace talks are being undermined.

Nonetheless, Israel has consistently tried to justify its actions claiming that the goal of these settlements is to achieve peace and security in the region. With that in mind, it believes

that all these settlers planted in key areas will act as the first line of defense against possible riots, revolutions and attacks against Israeli land.

## DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

### Gush Emunim movement

The Gush Emunim movement on the West Bank gathered force after the Yom Kippur War and between 1974 and 1987 planted small communities near large Arab populations, greatly complicating Israeli policy and arousing international opposition. The secular Israeli government opposed such efforts but rarely used force to dislodge the settlers, who invoked Zionist rights to the homeland in their defense.<sup>1</sup>

### Occupied Territory

According to the international law a territory is considered “occupied” when it is actually placed under the authority of the hostile army. The definition still in force and commonly used nowadays is the one contained in the Regulations Concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land annexed to the Fourth Hague Convention of 18 August 1907.<sup>2</sup>

### Settlements

Settlements is the social science and planning term for areas of human habitation, irrespective of their legal status, or the ethnic or religious composition of their population.<sup>3</sup>

### Settler Colonies

Settler colony is the term used in reference to wholly illegal settlements of the Occupying Power's population, violating GC4, articles 49 and, under article 147, constituting "war crimes," and forming part of the practice of population transfer, recognized also as a "crime against humanity" under the Rome Statute (1998), Article 7.<sup>4</sup>

### Six-Day War

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<sup>1</sup> Stone, Russell A. , Ochsenwald, William L. , Elath, Eliahu and Sicherman, Harvey. "Israel". Encyclopedia Britannica, 23 Jun. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Israel>. Accessed 23 June 2023.

<sup>2</sup> “Doctors without Borders | the Practical Guide to Humanitarian Law.” *Guide-Humanitarian-Law.org*, [guide-humanitarian-law.org/content/article/3/occupied-territory/#:~:text=In%20international%20law%2C%20a%20territory](https://www.guide-humanitarian-law.org/content/article/3/occupied-territory/#:~:text=In%20international%20law%2C%20a%20territory).

<sup>3</sup> *Key of Terms Pertaining to Israel/Palestine* . ohchr, [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/ngos/jointngo3.pdf](https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/ngos/jointngo3.pdf). Accessed 13 June 2023.

<sup>4</sup> *Key of Terms Pertaining to Israel/Palestine* . ohchr, [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/ngos/jointngo3.pdf](https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/ngos/jointngo3.pdf). Accessed 13 June 2023.

Six-Day War, also called June War or Third Arab-Israeli War or Naksah, brief war that took place June 5–10, 1967, and was the third of the Arab-Israeli wars. Israel's decisive victory included the capture of the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, Old City of Jerusalem, and Golan Heights; the status of these territories subsequently became a major point of contention in the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>5</sup>

## Zionism

Jewish nationalist movement that has had as its goal the creation and support of a Jewish national state in Palestine, the ancient homeland of the Jews. Though Zionism originated in eastern and central Europe in the latter part of the 19th century, it is in many ways a continuation of the ancient attachment of the Jews and of the Jewish religion to the historical region of Palestine, where one of the hills of ancient Jerusalem was called Zion.<sup>6</sup>

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Jewish Settlement plans prior to the establishment of the Israeli State

The first Jewish settlements were built before the establishment of the Israeli state by the Zionist movement. One of the first settlements that were built by the Zionists was actually established in the early 20th Century and was Tel Aviv. Nonetheless, since the Jewish immigration from Europe started to increase, Zionists started to acquire more plots to expand their settlements. After the military assaults that occurred between 1948-1950, the Zionist armed forces, the predecessor to the current Israeli army, constructed Jewish settlements over the ruins of the Palestinian towns and villages throughout the 78% of the historic Palestine that they controlled. Finally after the launch of the 6-day war in 1967 by Israel, they captured the remaining 22% of historical Palestine which included the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, where Israel immediately started building Jewish-only settlements.

### Current Settlement Plans

According to the report from the Peace Now Settlement Organization, "The government of unequivocal annexation", multiple settlement plans which have been introduced from multiple governments throughout the years, have been furthered and deepened under the most recent Bennett-Lapid government which started its term on 13 June 2021. These expansions of

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<sup>5</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Six-Day War". Encyclopedia Britannica, 29 May. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Six-Day-War>. Accessed 23 June 2023

<sup>6</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Zionism". Encyclopedia Britannica, 31 Mar. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Zionism>. Accessed 21 June 2023.

the already large Israeli settlements in occupied territories is causing serious implications to the prospect of a two state solution. A characteristic example of the advancement of Israeli settlement plans has been that during the Bennett government, construction starts in settlements has jumped by 62% from 921 new housing units to 1,488. Since the late 20th Century, Israelis have established multiple settlement plans which have advanced during the Bennett administration. The settlement plans presented below show the extent that these plans have and the fact that this policy is implemented throughout the occupied Palestinian territories.

### The Atarot Settlement Plan in East Jerusalem

*“The security barrier dividing the Jewish neighborhood of Pisgat Ze’ev in East Jerusalem from Anata in the West Bank”:<sup>7</sup>*

The ministry of housing, in August 2021 presented a 9,000 housing unit settlement plan with the purpose of expanding the Atarot neighborhood, which is located between the Palestinian neighborhoods of Kfar Aqab, Qalandia and A-Ram south of Ramallah. It was mentioned that this plan would be discussed in a meeting in December 2021 in a meeting held with the Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee. Nonetheless, on 24 November



*Figure 1 The security barrier dividing the Jewish neighborhood of Pisgat Ze’ev in East Jerusalem from Anata in the West Bank*

2021, Jerusalem’s City Council of Planning and Building Committee gave its support towards the

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<sup>7</sup> Koplou, Michael J. “West Bank Settlements Explained.” *Israel Policy Forum*, 20 Mar. 2023, [israelpolicyforum.org/west-bank-settlements-explained/](https://israelpolicyforum.org/west-bank-settlements-explained/). Accessed 24 June 2023.

plan. As a consequence, it drew the attention of the US government and more specifically US Secretary of State Antony Blinken who called Prime Minister Naftali Bennet in December 2021 and expressed his grave concern over the implications of the Atarot settlement plan on the two-state solution. Together with the US, the EU also expressed its concerns surrounding the Atarot settlement plan in East Jerusalem through public diplomacy. The diplomatic pressure had as a result, the halt of issuing the final approval to build the settlement. The biggest consequence though, in the short-term would be that Palestinians between Ramallah and East Jerusalem would be disconnected.

### **The E1 Settlement Plan in Area C**

In the 1990s, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin initiated the E1 which consists of 4,000 housing units. Due to international pressure by the international community, but more notably the UN, US and EU, the plan has been frozen on and off since 2005. Once again, this plan poses a significant threat to the viability and contiguity of a future Palestinian State, whilst also posing a threat to a possible and viable two-state solution. If this plan was to be finished it would transform East Jerusalem into an enclave and as such disconnecting the people of East Jerusalem from other important cities of the West Bank.

### **The Lower Aqueduct Plan**

On 17 January 2021, the District Planning Committee approved the “Lower Aqueduct Plan” which consisted of 1,465 units. The location of the planned settlement neighborhood is south of Kibbutz Ramat Rachel close to Givat Hamatos and Har Homa, in order to connect the already existing settlement in Givat Hamatos with the one close to Har Homa. The advancement of this plan would mean the completion of the southern settlement ring and a further obstacle for the free movement of Palestinians between East Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

### **The Allon (1967), Sharon (1977) and Drobles (1979) Plan**

Throughout the period of 1977-1984 and under the Likud governments, Israel had worked out a different course regarding its settlements in the West Bank. Envisioned by the influential Likud minister Ariel Sharon and later on adopted by the government in 1977, under the Sharon Plan, the Israeli State expanded its areas open for new Jewish settlements in order to include a strip adjacent to the Green Line (also known as western Samaria and Judea), to encircle the Palestinian population located in the West Bank, alongside separating it from the Israeli Arab communities in the Triangle region and securing the mountain range overlooking Israel’s populous coastal plane.

Based on the Allon Plan, the Sharon Plan continues to emphasize a specific security rationale surrounding the West Bank settlement and called for the avoiding of settling Jews in the more densely populated mountain ridge in central West Bank.

Later on, the head of the World Zionist Organization's (WZO) Settlement Division, Matityahu Drobles, presented the government with an initiative, which was named the Drobles Plan. With this specific plan the settlements in the West Bank were developed a step further with the imagination of creating settlement blocs through the West Bank. The sole purpose of this plan was to disrupt the Palestinian's demographic contiguity and further establish Israel's presence throughout the territory. Finally, the WZO's Settlement Division was one of the leading drivers surrounding settlement construction during this era, mainly due to its major influence in Israeli and Jewish circles.

To sum up, under the Likud governments of 1977-1984 the world saw a significant increase of settlement plans in the West Bank. Interestingly though, the majority of these settlements were built along the West Bank's central ridge and slopes instead of the Jordan Valley. Once again, the purpose of creating these Jewish communities in such heavily populated Palestinian areas was to further prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state. On the other hand, during the Labor governments, the settlements built focused more on the expansion in the Jordan Valley and were largely agricultural communities inhabited by secular Labor Zionists. Many of the residents of the settlements built during the 70's and 80's were supporters of Religious Zionism, convinced by a messianic ideology to settle in the "Land of Israel". The greatest representative of this movement was Gush Emunim ("the bloc of the faithful") which rose to prominence as the leading organization for West Bank settlers.

### **Goals of the Israeli Settlement Policy**

By allowing and encouraging the establishment of Jewish communities in the West Bank, which is a disputed territory over which Israel does not exercise sovereignty, the main priority of the Israeli government is security. They believe that by placing Israeli civilians in certain key areas to solidify Israel's control over these key areas, in order to ensure that the territory's political future would be aligned with the country's understandable security needs. A further way through which the settlers are expected to serve Israel is as the first line of defense against a possible attack or invasion. With this approach, the state of Israel designated certain strategic, less-populated regions of the West Bank for Jewish settlement whilst also forbidding, initially the establishment of civilian communities in more heavily populated areas. Additionally, many of the settlements established by the Zionist religious movement were often placed in regions with a large Palestinian population with the purpose of securing Jewish dominance over the territory, securing the entire West Bank for Israel and finally preventing the creation of a Palestinian State.

## International Law Violations

The main purpose of the establishment of Israeli Settlements is to transfer Israel's civilian population into the occupied territories, something that is considered illegal according to the Fourth Geneva Convention. Furthermore, in 2000, according to the editors of the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Palestine Yearbook of International Law (1998-1999) "the transfer, directly or indirectly, by the Occupying Power of parts of its own civilian population of the occupied territory within or outside this territory amounts to a war crime"<sup>8</sup> something that they believe is realistically applicable to the settlement activities of Israel in the Occupied Territories of Palestine.

Another great example of the action that the international community has taken to investigate the allegations made against Israel is the investigation conducted by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 2004 which reported in an advisory, non-binding opinion that the Security Council (UNSC) had described Israel's practices and policies regarding settlements as a "flagrant violation" of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The Court further concluded that the settlements of Israel in Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, are in breach of international law whilst also reminding all parties in the Geneva Convention that they have the obligation to ensure that Israel abides by international law.

Regarding Israel's stances on their settlements and the international law, Israel repeatedly denies that their settlements are in breach of any international laws. Nonetheless, the Israeli Supreme Court has not ruled yet on the settlement legality under the Geneva Convention.

## Impact of Israeli Settlement Plans on Palestinians access to Water

Israel has managed to control most of the Palestinian surface waters with the most significant ones being the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. As a consequence, Palestinians have to heavily rely on groundwater since there is no other alternative. Despite that, Israeli settlements have seized most Palestinian groundwater since around 70 percent of Israeli settlements are located on the eastern reservoir basin in the West Bank and 45 percent of all settlements are located on areas which are sensitive to the recharge of the aquifer basin in the West Bank.

Currently, the numbers of settlers calculated to live in the West Bank and Jerusalem is upwards of 750,000 people with at least 500,000 living in the West Bank. The amount of groundwater that these 500,000 settlers in the West Bank consume is calculated to be around

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<sup>8</sup> Kassim, Anis F. *The Palestine Yearbook of International Law, 1998-1999*. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1 Mar. 2000.

32 percent in comparison to the 18 percent that the 3.7 million Palestinians have access to share amongst themselves. Additionally, as long as the Israeli settlements control the groundwater resources in the West Bank, it is impossible to establish a Palestinian state since it will not have sufficient influence and means to meet the drinking and irrigation needs of its people.

## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

### Egypt

Egypt, Israel's neighbor, has repeatedly condemned Israel's settlement plans throughout the years. Cairo suggests that these actions are "an unacceptable provocative act that coincides with the convening of the Jerusalem Conference in Cairo".<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the north-african nation has demanded for the Israeli government to stop all unilateral measures which include unlawful arrests and raids targeting Palestinians and their property, house demolitions etc. With its stance, Egypt expresses its great belief that a climate must be created that allows "the return to the negotiating table with the aim of reaching a solution to the Palestinian issue based on international legitimacy" and achieving peace and prosperity in a region where both an independent Palestinian state and the Israeli state leave in peace and security.<sup>10</sup>

### Norway

Norway has been involved in the Israeli-Palestinian disputes for years. It is characteristic of Norway's involvement that since the Oslo Accords of 1993 and 1995, Norway has chaired the international donor group for Palestine, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC). Additionally, Norway view's remains that Israeli settlement activity on occupied land is illegal under international law and poses an obstacle to peace whilst simultaneously undermining the prospects for an independent and contiguous Palestinian state. As Permanent Representative Ambassador Mona Juul mentioned in her speech during the Security Council's meeting on 19 December 2022, Norway believes that a negotiated two-state solution which is based on the 1967 borders, relevant UN resolutions and different international parameters is the best way in achieving long-lasting peace, safety, rights and independence for both Palestinians and Israelis.

### United States of America

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<sup>9</sup> "Egypt Condemns Israel's Decision to "Legalize" Settlement Outposts in Occupied Palestinian Territories." *Arab News*, 13 Feb. 2023, [www.arabnews.com/node/2250426/middle-east](http://www.arabnews.com/node/2250426/middle-east). Accessed 13 June 2023.

<sup>10</sup> "Egypt Condemns Israel's Decision to "Legalize" Settlement Outposts in Occupied Palestinian Territories." *Arab News*, 13 Feb. 2023, [www.arabnews.com/node/2250426/middle-east](http://www.arabnews.com/node/2250426/middle-east). Accessed 13 June 2023.

The USA is one of the strongest allies of Israel, protecting it and supplying it with military equipment from the beginning of the establishment of the State of Israel. Throughout the years though, the USA is deeply troubled over Israel's goals of expanding its settlement plans in the West Bank.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the United States have expressed their concern over reported changes to Israel's settlement administration system since it has significantly expedited the planning first, and then approval of settlements. Any unilateral action that creates further obstacles to the possibility of the implementation of the two-state solution and are obstacles to peace are opposed by the USA, which has also been one of the US's longest-standing policies. Furthermore, its Government called for Israel to fulfill the commitments that it made in Jordan and Egypt, with the continuance of dialogue and the de-escalation of the situation.<sup>12</sup>

### World Zionist Organization

The World Zionist Organization is committed to promoting Zionism & the Zionist idea and the Zionist enterprise through Israel Education as vital and positive elements of contemporary Jewish life, in accordance with the principles articulated in the Jerusalem Program. This manifesto is dedicated to instilling the centrality of Israel and Jerusalem as its capital deep within Jewish consciousness, encouraging the return to Zion, fashioning an exemplary society in the Jewish state, expanding Zionist education including Hebrew language instruction, settling the land, and combating Anti-Semitism. The WZO strives to enhance the impact of Zionist ideology and activity in Jewish communities around the world, including Israel, both by working through messengers of the Zionist Federations and their constituent bodies and by influencing the agenda of the organized Jewish community, particularly through its involvement with the Jewish Agency for Israel.<sup>13</sup>

### TIMELINE OF EVENTS

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<sup>11</sup> "Technical Difficulties." *Www.state.gov*, [www.state.gov/the-united-states-is-deeply-troubled-with-israeli-settlement-announcement/](http://www.state.gov/the-united-states-is-deeply-troubled-with-israeli-settlement-announcement/). Accessed 12 July 2023.

<sup>12</sup> "Technical Difficulties." *Www.state.gov*, [www.state.gov/the-united-states-is-deeply-troubled-with-israeli-settlement-announcement/](http://www.state.gov/the-united-states-is-deeply-troubled-with-israeli-settlement-announcement/). Accessed 12 July 2023.

<sup>13</sup> "Mission Statement." *Www.wzo.org.il*, [www.wzo.org.il/department/about/mission-statement/en](http://www.wzo.org.il/department/about/mission-statement/en). Accessed 23 June 2023.

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
2 October 1977	The Sharon Plan was adopted by the Israeli Government paving the way for a major expansion of Israel's Settlement Plans <sup>14</sup>
15 August 2005	Israel's government executes the "Israeli unilateral disengagement plan" with the forced evacuation of all 21 settlements in the Gaza Strip and four in the northern West Bank
27 November 2007	The Annapolis Conference is held though Palestinians demand a settlement freeze as a precondition for talks, nonetheless, Israel stood behind its decision and continued with building new settlements in East Jerusalem.
13 June 2021	The Bennet-Lapid government started its first term in office
21 August 2021	The ministry of housing, in August 2021 presented a 9,000 housing unit settlement plan with the purpose of expanding the Atarot neighborhood
24 November 2021	Jerusalem's City Council of Planning and Building Committee gave its support towards the plan

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<sup>14</sup> Database, E. C. F. "Sharon Plan (1977)." *Ecf.org.il*, [ecf.org.il/issues/issue/245](https://ecf.org.il/issues/issue/245). Accessed 10 July 2023.

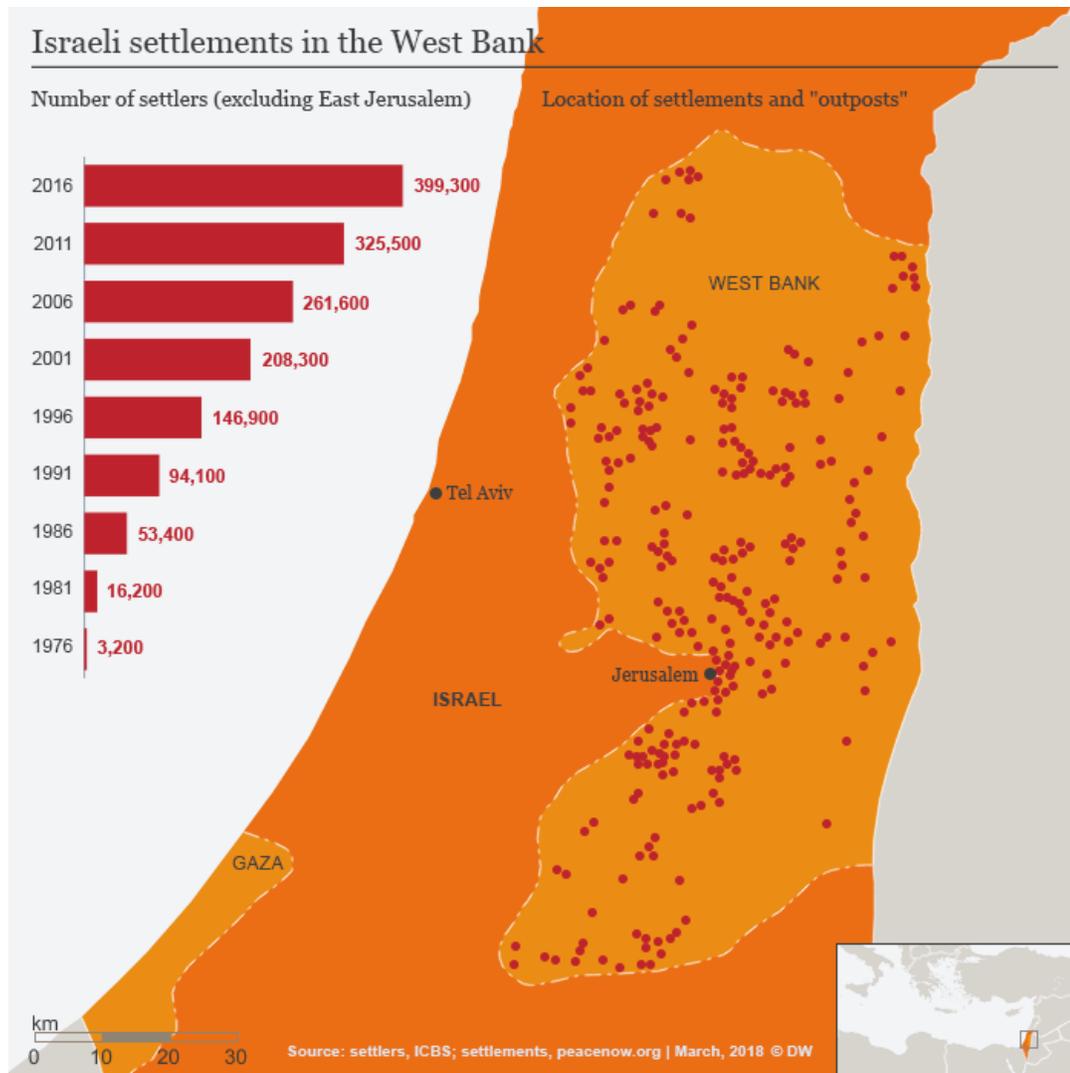


Figure 2 The expansion of Israeli Settlement Plans in the West Bank from 1976-2016<sup>15</sup>

## RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

### UN Resolution A/RES/77/126<sup>16</sup>

The above-mentioned resolution was adopted by the General Assembly on 12 December 2022. The specific resolution is one of the most recently adopted resolutions by a UN organ on the topic of the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory including East Jerusalem

<sup>15</sup> Welle (www.dw.com), Deutsche. "EU Slams Israeli Settlement Plans | DW | 27.12.2018." *DW.COM*, www.dw.com/en/eu-slams-israeli-settlement-plans/a-46878761.

<sup>16</sup> UN. "Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem, and the Occupied Syrian Golan." *Un*, 15 Dec. 2022, www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/A.RES\_.77.126\_121222.pdf. Accessed 5 July 2023.

and the Syrian Golan. With this resolution the UN General Assembly reaffirmed its position that the further development of these settlements has to be terminated immediately due to the fact that they are illegal under any treaty or UN resolution and more importantly under the Geneva Convention. Additionally, with this resolution it expressed its grave concern over the impact that the construction of new settlements as well as the existence of the current settlements in the future would have on the peace-talkings between relevant parties and the possible solutions to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

### Report A/HRC/22/63<sup>17</sup>

On 22 March 2012 the Human Rights Council (HRC) decided to create the International Fact-Finding Mission on Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory<sup>18</sup> with the mandate to “investigate the implications of the Israeli settlements on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem”.<sup>19</sup>This is still considered one of the most important actions taken by UN organs to address the issue of the Israeli settlements in Occupied Palestinian Territory since it confirmed that these settlements were illegal under any international treaty and that it could face a case at the International Criminal Court (ICC). This case is further strengthened by the fact that in September 2012, Palestine was admitted to the UN as a non-member, which may potentially lead to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) having its complaint heard. It is important to mention as well that after the conduction of this mission, Israel responded by ceasing its cooperation with the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights whilst also boycotting the UN Human Rights Commission.

## PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

### Israeli disengagement plan from Gaza

The Israeli disengagement plan from Gaza, was set in motion in 2005 and included the dismantling of the 21 Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip whilst simultaneously evacuating Israeli settlers and army from the Gaza Strip. Although the above-mentioned plan was executed in 2005,

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<sup>17</sup> Human Rights Council Twenty-Second Session Agenda Item 7 Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission to Investigate the Implications of the Israeli Settlements on the Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the Palestinian People throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem\* Summary.

<sup>18</sup> “International Fact-Finding Mission on Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.” *OHCHR*, [www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session19/israeli-settlements-in-the-opt](http://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session19/israeli-settlements-in-the-opt). Accessed 10 July 2023.

<sup>19</sup> “International Fact-Finding Mission on Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.” *OHCHR*, [www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session19/israeli-settlements-in-the-opt](http://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session19/israeli-settlements-in-the-opt). Accessed 10 July 2023.

it had first been proposed by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in 2003. Nonetheless, it was adopted by the government in June of 2004 and in February of 2005 by the Knesset known as the Disengagement Plan Implementation Law. With it being implemented and finalized between August and September 2005. Though there were settlers who refused to accept the government's compensation packages and voluntarily vacate their homes before 15 August 2–5 they were evicted by Israeli security forces over a period of multiple days. More specifically, regarding the execution of the plan, the eviction of all residents, the demolition of the residential buildings and the evacuation of the relevant security personnel from the Gaza Strip were all completed by 12 September 2005. International Human Rights Organizations, the United Nations and many countries consider the Gaza Strip to be still under military occupation by Israel. Following the withdrawal, Israel continues to be the sole controller of Gaza's maritime and air space, the majority of the land crossing's of Gaza, Gaza's water, electricity and telecommunications supplies etc.

### **Two-State Solution**

Although this solution is normally considered as one of the solutions for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict overall, it is closely relevant to the topic of the Israeli Settlement Plans. The vision of the two-state solution is to create an independent State of Palestine, west of the Jordan River along the already existing State of Israel. Throughout the years the boundary between the two states has been subjected to multiple disputes and negotiations. More importantly, Palestinians alongside Arab countries demanded that Israel withdraw all of its forces from the territories it occupied in 1967, something that Israel has rejected. Where this plan to be implemented it would mean that the borders between the two states, Israeli and Palestine, would be decided upon and defined meaning that it would be clear which land belongs to which State, leading to the dismantlement of all illegal settlement plans.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

### **Issue being resolved by the International Court Justice (ICJ)**

One of the most reasonable ways to decide what the future of the illegal Israeli settlements would be is if a case was created and went to trial in the ICJ. Since Palestine has been recognized as an observer member of the UN it means that it also has access to the ICJ, with it having the option of examining Palestine's case. This would also mean that the ICJ's ruling on the case would be the final decision and something that both Israel and Palestine would have to base their future policies upon. Additionally, its outcome would define what the future of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian would be, due to the fact there would be a definite, negative reaction from the Israeli government. Another aspect of this solution that must be mentioned is

whether Israel would actually apply the court's ruling and who would be overseeing its implementation.

### **Implementation of a disengagement plan from the West Bank**

As previously mentioned in the Background Information section, in the early 2000s the government of Israel implemented a disengagement plan from Gaza with its focal point being the returning of settlers to Israeli territory and the dismantlement of Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip. If something similar was implemented in the West Bank, it would not only promote the two-state solution and Palestine's ability to be independent but would also show Israel's willingness to cooperate to resolve the issue. On the other hand, there would be a negative impact for Israel since it would lose any control over the people and the communities of the West Bank raising more concerns over the security and safety surrounding their border. This step would also mean the "social, cultural and ideological separation" between Israeli and Palestinians, empowering a two-state solution since there would be a clear division between where Palestinians and Israelis live.

### **Settlements in the West Bank being incorporated into Palestine**

One of the most ground-breaking and logical solutions to the issue would be the settlements and all of the infrastructure that they are being accompanied by becoming a part of the Palestinian part of East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Nonetheless, the settlers are going to have the option of whether they want to remain in their homes in the settlements or if they would like to be housed somewhere in Israel, costs which the Israeli government would have to cover. We must never forget the opportunity that these settlements would give to the Palestinians since there would be more housing units for them to use, solving multiple issues that they are facing whilst simultaneously lowering the levels of poverty and violence. Although this solution would not be easily accepted by Israel, it would show its will to help Palestinians (with providing thousands of housing units to Palestinians) whilst also resolving one of the biggest issues around the Israeli-Palestinians problem which are the settlement plans of Israel.

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