

FACTSHEET: ISRAELI COLONIES AND ISRAELI COLONIAL EXPANSION



“Settlements” are Jewish colonies built on Israeli-occupied land illegally confiscated from the Palestinians and Syrians. Since 1967, every Israeli government has invested significant resources in establishing and expanding the colonies in the Occupied Territories, both in terms of the area of land they occupy and population levels. The government has spent over \$13.4 billion (CDN) on the colonies since 1967. Israeli military expenditure on colonies is an additional \$268 million per year.

Colonies create illegal “Realities on the Ground”

Colonies were built for either “control” or ideological considerations with the overall aim to create realities on the ground that would pre-empt the outcome of future peace negotiations.

"Everybody has to move, run and grab as many hilltops as they can to enlarge the colonies because everything we take now will stay ours... Everything we don't grab will go to them."
--Ariel Sharon, as Israeli Foreign Minister, Nov. 1998

Colonies are Obstacles to Peace

- Breach international Law: Colonies are strictly illegal. The Fourth Geneva Convention, (Art. 49) prohibits the occupying power to transfer its citizens to the occupied territory.
- Cause despair and frustration: Colonies are one of the most visible aspects of Israeli occupation and are a major source of frustration to Palestinians.
- Infringe on the Palestinians’ rights: to self-determination, equality, property, an adequate standard of living & freedom of movement.
- Discriminate: The Colonization policy has created a system of “legally sanctioned separation based on discrimination” and is often compared to the former apartheid system in South Africa. The colonists live under Israeli law, but their Palestinian neighbours live under military rule.
- Destroy chances of viable and contiguous Palestinian state: Colony Blocs dismember the West Bank into separate cantons with no natural connection between them. East Jerusalem is virtually cut off from the West Bank, making it impossible to be the Palestinian capital

Colony Expansion Continues Unabated

The various peace initiatives, international criticism, UN resolutions and international law have had little impact on slowing down colony expansion, let alone, enforcing a complete halt or dismantling process.

The UN Security Council called on Israel: *"to dismantle the existing colonies and in particular to cease, on an urgent basis, the establishment, construction and planning of colonies in the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem..."*. (UNSCR 465, 1980)

Estimated Number of Israeli Colonists in Occupied Territories

200,000	West Bank
225,000	East Jerusalem
20,000	Syrian Golan
440,000+	Total

Sources: ICAHD and Israeli Interior Ministry

- During the Oslo period between 1993 & 2000 the number of colonists in the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) increased by almost 100 percent (B'tselem, 2002)
- There was a 35% rise in number of new building projects in the colonies in 2003—despite overall drop in apartment building in Israel (Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics March 2004)

- In August 2004, contracts were approved by the Israeli government to build over 1600 houses in the West Bank colonies
- In total, 5,300 houses were built in the latest surge in expansion (2003-2004), which constitutes almost 1 house each for the 7,000 colonists who had lived in the Gaza Strip. (Guardian—Aug 2004)

Although a small number of the 100+ outposts (non government sanctioned colonies) were dismantled in accordance with Roadmap, 60+ new ones have sprung up to replace them since Sharon came to power.

The Natural Growth Myth

Israel maintains that colonies are only expanding to allow for natural population growth. Even this kind of expansion is illegal according to international law. The Roadmap calls for a total freeze, but Israel had a special understanding with the US that natural growth would be tolerated.

However, figures estimate that:

- 8% of the colonies in the West Bank
- The average growth rate of the Jewish population in Israel is 2 % a year compared to an annual growth of 8.5 % in the colonies.

Therefore, over 80 per cent of colony growth is superfluous to the national average growth. Colony expansion cannot be justified on this basis. (FMEP)

Land Grab – Building a Network of Control

Since 1967, Israel has expropriated Palestinian and Syrian land for colonies, for the infrastructure serving them and for the security system to protect them.

41.9% of the West Bank is controlled by the colonies despite built-up colony areas only covering 1.7 percent of the West Bank (B'tselem 2002). 89 % of East Jerusalem is controlled by the colonies. This is done through a network of roads, “sterile zones”, industrial zones, nature reserves and military installations.

Many colonies are built in the heart of Palestinian areas, e.g. in Hebron, where 30,000+ Palestinians live under daily restrictions due to some 400 colonists.

Exploitation of Resources

Israel breaches international law by exploiting natural resources in the Occupied Territories. Colonies are built in locations to maximize access to water.

- 30% of Israel’s water comes from Palestinian aquifers located under the main colony blocs
- A third of Israel’s water comes from the occupied Golan Heights
- 80% of water from the West Bank goes to Israel and its colonies
- Only 20% of West Bank water goes to the 2.5m Palestinians living in the area.
- 1450 cubic meters per year—water allocation per colonist
- 83 cubic meters per year—water allocation per Palestinian