

# BRIEF ON SETTLEMENT ACTIVITIES IN 2016

**Includes Settlement Unit Construction, Demolitions, Land Confiscation and Methods to Retroactively Legalize Colonial Installations.<sup>1</sup>**

The colonial settlement enterprise in Occupied Palestine is an implementation of Israeli colonial policies and plans made public since 1967. Within these plans, Israel identified areas of strategic importance to remain under Israeli control. The Allon Plan of 1967 laid out a series of Israeli military-agrarian settlements in strategic areas along the Jordan River, as well as in and around Jerusalem. The Drobless Plan of 1978 showed a comprehensive plan for the establishment of colonies throughout the West Bank. Quoting Meir Merhav of the Jerusalem Post in 1980 in a Time magazine interview, "[The West Bank] is to be carved up by a grid of roads, settlements and strongholds into a score of little Bantustans so that [the Palestinians] shall never coalesce again into a contiguous area that can support autonomous, let alone independent, existence". Today, the occupying military authority succeeded in implementing these plans and succeeded in maintaining control of about 60% of the area of the West Bank. Tools to implement these plans and to create a facts-on-the-ground settlement enterprise including not only colonial settlements but the area surrounding them, bypass roads, checkpoints, declared military areas, declared state land, confiscated land, settler use of agricultural land for cultivation, demolition of Palestinian homes & the construction of the Annexation Wall that started in 2002, by which 9.4% of the area of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is being isolated from the rest of the West Bank. Today more than 625,000 Israeli settlers are illegally living in the occupied State of Palestine with one third of them living in occupied East Jerusalem.

According to a recent report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights submitted on behalf of the Secretary General to the General Assembly, in 2016, Israel's settlement expansion activities continued unabated while Israel took steps to expand settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Colonial Installations: known as settlement "outposts" that are illegal according to the Israeli law for not obtaining the authorization from the Israeli government/ authorities prior to their construction.

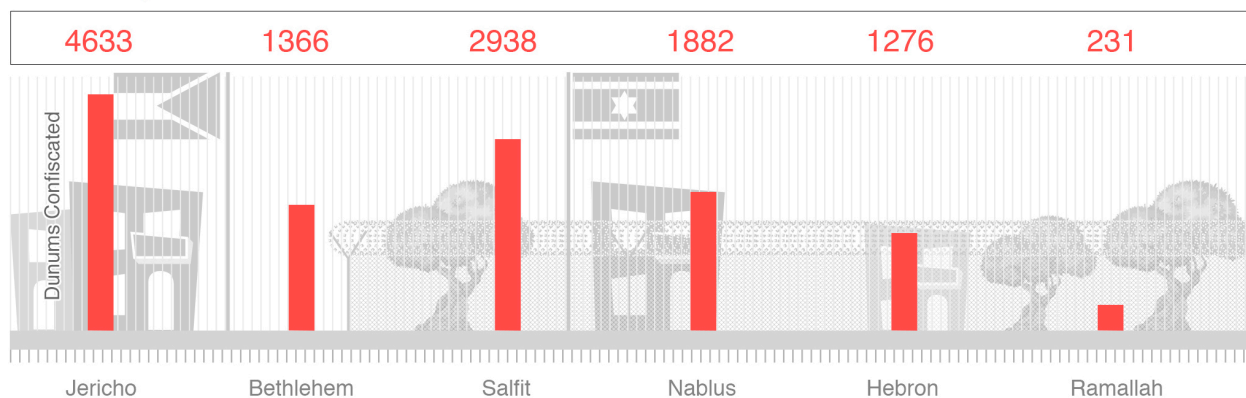
<sup>2</sup> Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Oct 2016, Report of the Secretary General A/71/355.

## ● Land Confiscation:

An increase of **127%** on Israeli land confiscation of Palestinian land orders were recorded in 2016 compared to 2015. This reflects the confiscation of over **12,326** dunums of privately owned Palestinian land or the illegal appropriation of Palestinian land through the designation of “State Land”. The governorates of Jericho in the Jordan Valley and Salfit were faced with the highest numbers of confiscation orders.

### Land Confiscation

**12,326** dunums



## ● Declaration of State Land:

The Israeli occupying forces declared approximately **3,882** dunums of the Nabi Mousa village as “State land”. It should be noted that this land was already illegally used by Israeli settlers for cultivation.<sup>3</sup>

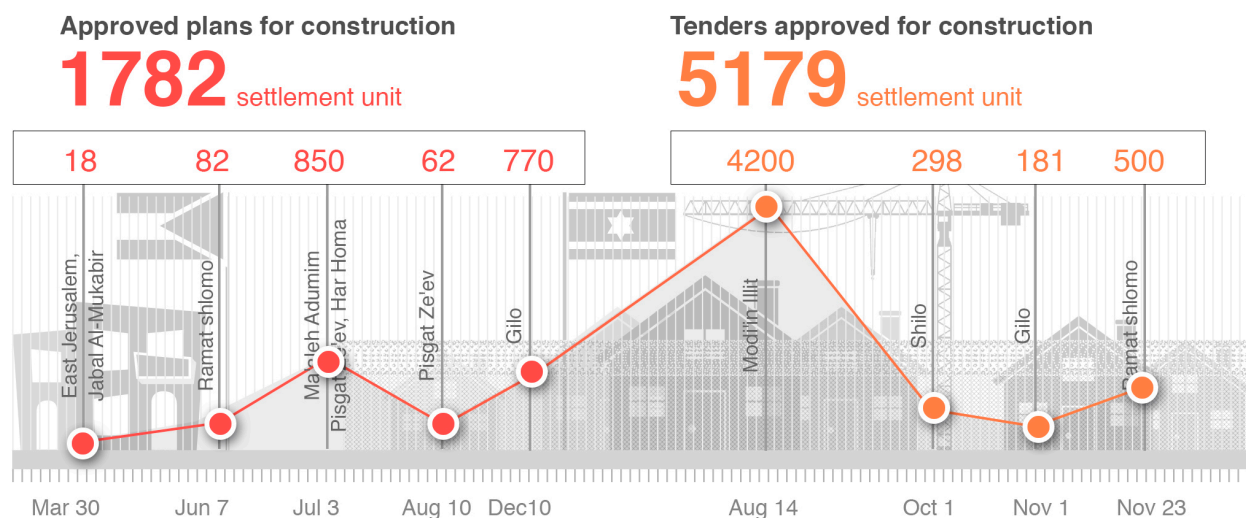
## ● Demolitions of Palestinian Houses and Structures:

In 2016 there was an increase of **114%** of demolition orders compared to 2015. Home and structure demolitions by Israeli occupying authorities is ongoing, continuous, and systematic, and in 2016 over **1,100** acts of demolition were recorded, where approximately 8,666 Palestinians were directly and indirectly affected – one-third of which are children.

<sup>3</sup> Commission of Wall and Settlement, report 2016

## ● Settlement Construction:

During 2016, **115** illegal settlement master plans with preliminary or final approval were documented.<sup>4</sup> The process of implementing master plans includes announcements for settlement units, as well as announcements during each stage of implementation. There were announcements for approved plans for construction of **1782** settlement units and announcement for approved tenders for construction of 5179 settlement units<sup>5</sup>. It should be noted that, there were an overall of **27,335** of documented media announcements made for settlement plans, tenders, and license issuances for settlements in the occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> This number reflects settlement unit announcements in various stages of planning. There has been a sharp increase in such announcements from 2015 to 2016, and was measured by **57%** while **70%** of these announcements were in East Jerusalem and its surroundings.<sup>7</sup>



According to Peace Now, the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS) announced the beginning of construction of **1,723** housing units in the first nine months of 2016 alone, reflecting a 24.8% increase compared to the same period in 2015.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Commission of Wall and Settlement, report 2016; list available for the 115 master plans

<sup>5</sup> PMG

<sup>6</sup> Abdallah Al-Hourani Center, P.L.O. Jan 2017

<sup>7</sup> Abdallah Al-Hourani Center, P.L.O. Jan 2017

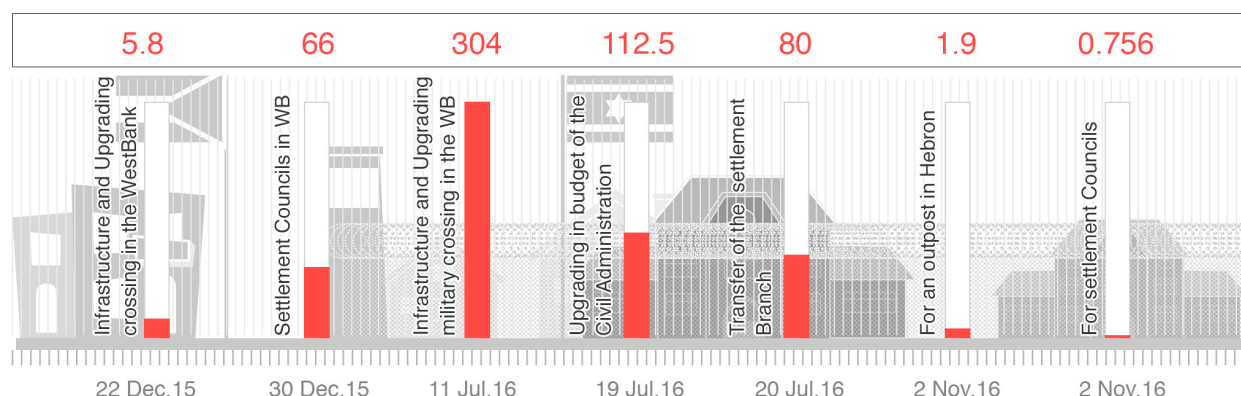
<sup>8</sup> <http://peacenow.org.il/en/25-increase-construction-starts-settlements-q1-3-2016>

## ● Financial support to settlements:

In 2016, Israel, the occupying power took measures with regard to providing approximately 571.456 million NIS in financial support to the settlement enterprise, thus encouraging continued settlement planning, construction, legalization of colonial installations, as well as the establishment of new regional industrial zones.<sup>9</sup> In tandem, Israeli policies of declaration of Palestinian State Land continues for further Israeli confiscation.

### Approval of the Parliamentarian Financial Committee

**571.456** NIS (millions)



## ● Legalization of Colonial Installations (outposts):

On 13 November 2016 an Israeli Ministerial Committee for legislation approved a regulation bill which seeks to retroactively legalize illegal colonial installations built on private Palestinian lands.<sup>10</sup> The bill, if passed, would legalize the government's expropriation of private lands taken for the purpose of Israeli settlement, while Palestinian landowners will receive financial compensation and alternative land but no right to appeal. The regulation law will result in the retroactive legalization of **55** illegal outposts and legalize **3,921** settler housing units by expropriating **8,183** dunums of private Palestinian land in settlements and outposts.<sup>11</sup>

As a result of these actions, it has been noted that the Israeli State Comptroller stated in a report that the ongoing legalization of outposts will further law enforcement mechanisms of the Israeli Civil Administration in regard to unauthorized Israeli construction in the West Bank<sup>12</sup> – in violation of the

<sup>9</sup> Commission of Wall and Settlement, report 2016

<sup>10</sup> <http://peacenow.org.il/en/ministerial-committee-approves-regulation-bill>

<sup>11</sup> <http://peacenow.org.il/en/grand-land-robbery-implications-regulation-bill-reality-ground>

<sup>12</sup> Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Oct 2016, Report of the Secretary General A/71/355.

Oslo Accords and international law. It should also be noted that in 2016, 15 colonial installations were legalized by expanded neighborhood designations and as integral parts of adjacent settlements.

## ● In Focus: Jerusalem

Israeli policies in occupied East Jerusalem extend from two central strategies. The first creates a Jewish majority in the city through establishing "Jewish only" settlements, while the second pursues the same goal by reducing the Palestinian population through policies that either forcefully evict Palestinians from Jerusalem or impede their growth and development as a community. A policy of spatial segregation, reducing the visibility, if not the demographic ratio, of the Palestinian presence in their city.

The Cable Car project is one of the most dangerous spatial segregation settlement infrastructural projects around the Old City of Jerusalem. A project sponsored by the Israeli government and the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality to construct a cable car that is designed to operate within Jerusalem's discriminatory transportation system designed to serve the Israeli population and in particular Israeli settlers and Israeli hosted tourists in occupied East Jerusalem. The project will link West Jerusalem to the Old City south of Al Aqsa Mosque compound, Mount of Olives and Gethsemane Church. Another spatial segregation settlement infrastructural projects around the Old City of Jerusalem are National Parks. The Israeli Authority had already approved a new "National Park" outside the Old City in occupied East Jerusalem: Mount Scopus Slopes National Park (**738** dunums) located between al-Isawiyah and a-Tur.

This park join two other national parks that have already been declared as national parks: Tzurim Valley Park (**165** dunums), declared in the year 2000 on an area in Mount Scopus adjacent to a-Sawaneh, and Jerusalem Walls Park (**1,100** dunums), declared in 1974 on an area in Silwan village and surrounding the Old City of Jerusalem. This new national park was approved on privately owned Palestinian lands, inside or close to built-up urban areas of Palestinian communities and was not even suggested by the Israeli Nature and Parks Authority (NPA) as a National Park area. Moreover, the Israeli municipality in Jerusalem has plans to declare additional three national parks in East Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives (467 dunums), Shimon HaTzadik Park (**110** dunums) in Sheikh Jarah and Wadi al Joz in the Rockefeller Museum area (**40** dunums). In spite of strong opposition voiced by Palestinians and the Arab and Muslim world, Israel has resolved to continue with excavation works and tunneling, another spatial segregation infrastructural project in the Old City of Jerusalem. Excavation work is continuing on three tunnels adjacent to the Compound in the Old City of Jerusalem. Underneath the newly established Ohel Yitzhak synagogue, a **100**-meter tunnel was completed in the Haman El Ein area of the Muslim Quarter of the Old City towards the Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound. In addition, excavations have been carried out in the existing Buraq Wall "Wailing

Wall” tunnel next to the western wall of the compound. Also, a **600**-meter tunnel is completed, the tunnel is to connect Israeli settlers in Silwan with the Haram compound. The implications of these excavations are grave, to the extent that Israel’s excavations and work is threatening its integrity and that of the Old City, Israel is in breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention’s prohibition against destroying property and of its duty to ensure the protection and conservation of this World Heritage Site. While ring roads around urban areas are a common feature of urban development schemes to facilitate the movement of traffic around population centers, the Israeli Ring Road in Jerusalem is intended to reinforce spatial segregation and consolidate Israeli control over the occupied Palestinian parts of the city. Indeed, much of the Ring Road in East Jerusalem follows the line of the annexation Wall and connects Israeli settlements in and around occupied East Jerusalem with West Jerusalem. All sections of the Ring Road are now completed, with the exception of part of the Eastern Ring Road running from the Palestinian neighborhood of Az-Zaim At-Tor, Ras al-Amud, Al-Eizariya, Abu Dis, As-Sawahira Al-Gharbiya, Al-Qunbar, Sheikh Sa'ad to Sur Bahir. This section of the road is **11.5** kilometers long and,

because it goes through several densely populated Palestinian neighborhoods, will require the construction of three tunnels and five bridges. In order to complete this massive project, Israel intends to confiscate more than **1,237** dunums of privately owned Palestinian land and demolished several Palestinian houses. The Jerusalem Light Rail is an Israeli project designed to link Israeli settlements in occupied East Jerusalem to West Jerusalem through a light rail system without any benefit to the resident Palestinian population. The first stage of the rail system is complete connecting the settlements of Pisgat Ze’ev, Neve Ya’kov and French Hill (total population of approximately **80,000**) to West Jerusalem. As part of the project’s second stage, the Israeli government plans to connect Ramot, Atarot, East Talpiot, and Gilo – all illegal Israeli settlements located in and around East Jerusalem - to West Jerusalem. By creating ties between the Israeli settlements and West Jerusalem, the light rail project plans will create another spatial segregation infrastructural barrier between Palestinian neighborhoods and involves the illegal confiscation of Palestinian land and makes it harder to divide Jerusalem as part of a negotiated final status solution for the city.