

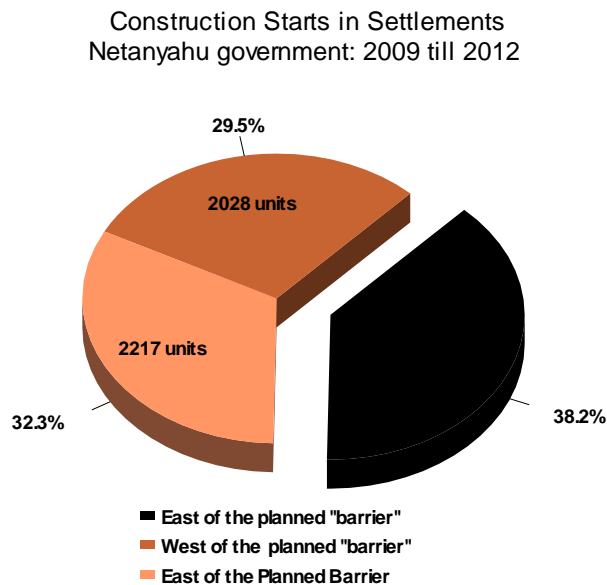
## FACT SHEET

June 2013

### The Israeli Government's Unbreakable Commitment to the Israeli Settlement Enterprise

*"Building in Judea and Samaria<sup>1</sup> will continue. It is continuing even today, but we have to understand what is happening around us. We have to be smart, not only right."* (Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, June Monday 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013<sup>2</sup>).

The Israeli government's commitment to settlement expansion has been fully upheld during the second term of Prime Minister Netanyahu. After having built, on average, 24 settlement housing units per day during his first term (2009 – 2012), measures and actions on the ground by Netanyahu's latest government continue to undermine the efforts to resume negotiations<sup>3</sup>. Israeli policies are systematically destroying the two-state solution that the Israeli Prime Minister claims to be supporting.



<sup>1</sup> Biblical name for the Occupied West Bank.

<sup>2</sup> Abbas aide: "Quiet Settlement freeze will pave the way for talks"

[http://www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter\\_article.php?id=10005](http://www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter_article.php?id=10005)

<sup>3</sup> According to Peace Now, the Netanyahu government policies and actions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem "disclose a clear intention to use settlements to systematically undermine and render impossible a realistic, viable two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

Israeli officials have suggested that there is a “de facto” settlement freeze in Occupied East Jerusalem. While such statements are made to placate Secretary Kerry, the fact remains that settlement activity has continued unabated under successive Netanyahu governments.

During the first quarter of 2013, settlement construction in the West Bank increased by 335% in comparison to the last quarter of 2012, the highest rate in seven years. In March 2013, construction of 835 housing units was approved, many of which are located in the heart of the West Bank and east of the annexation Wall. In June 2013, two plans were submitted for approval, one for the construction of 550 housing units in the Bruchin “illegal” outpost<sup>4</sup>, and the other for 675 housing units in the settlement of Itamar, located deep inside the West Bank (28 kilometers east of the Green Line)<sup>5</sup>.

Settlement activity has also been vigorously advanced in Occupied East Jerusalem. In late May of 2013, 1000 new housing units were approved: 300 homes in Ramot settlement and 797 in Gilo settlement, aimed at further severing Bethlehem from East Jerusalem.

On May 14<sup>th</sup>, The Israeli government also pushed for the “legalization” of the so-called “settlement outposts” of Mitzpe Lachish, Givat Assaf, Maale Rehavam, and Haroe. Though all Israeli settlement activity in the Occupied State of Palestine, which includes East Jerusalem, is illegal under international law, some settlement activity is considered to be illegal even under Israeli law.

The 2003 Road Map, adopted by UNSC Resolution 1515, stated Israel’s obligation to: “immediately dismantle settlement outposts erected since March 2001.”

### **The myth of the “settlement freeze”**

Since the signing of the Oslo Agreement, under which Israel was obliged to stop all activities aimed at changing the status quo of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, several Israeli administrations have used different pretexts in order to justify settlement construction, including “natural growth,” “no new settlements,” or “no issuance of new tenders”.

**“Natural Growth”:** This is the claim that settlement construction is needed to accommodate the natural growth of families living illegally in Occupied Palestine. “Natural Growth” has long been a well-known pretext for continued settlement activity; a fact which is confirmed by the inclusion of an Israeli obligation in the US backed Road Map to “freeze all settlement activity (including the so-called natural growth).”

**“No New Settlements”:** When challenged about ongoing construction during Israel’s supposed “settlement freezes”, Israeli officials have often claimed that they are only building in existing settlements and not building new ones. The fact remains that all settlement

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4 The Netanyahu government has been signaling that it will legalize the Bruchin settlement outpost which is illegal according to the Israeli law. <http://peacenow.org.il/eng/rechelim-bruchin-sansana>

5 This plan would retroactively legalize 137 units that were built illegally by settlers - sending a clear message to settlers that the rule of law does not apply to them.

construction is considered a war crime under international law and is recognized throughout the international community as an obstacle to peace.

**“No issuance of new tenders”:** This policy allows Israel (or other parties) to act upon tenders or building permits already issued by Israeli authorities on the pretext that such activities are carried out by private parties and, therefore, is “out of the hands” of the Israeli government. In fact, under Israeli administrative and contract law, the executive branch has the power to release itself from such contractual agreements when their fulfillment is inconsistent with the public interest.

Using these loopholes, Israel has been able to almost triple the number of settlers living in the Occupied State of Palestine between 1993 and 2013. Furthermore, the use of such pretexts to avoid a genuine cessation of settlement activity demonstrates a complete unwillingness to engage in credible negotiations leading to a clear end goal: the two-state solution.

### **The Israeli Government Position**

The recent statement by the Israeli Deputy Defense Minister Danny Danon confirms the Israeli government's rejection of a Palestinian state: "Look at the government: there was never a government discussion, resolution or vote about the two-state solution," Danon said. "If you will bring it to a vote in the government — nobody will bring it to a vote, it's not smart to do it — but if you bring it to a vote, you will see the majority of Likud ministers, along with the Jewish Home [party], will be against it<sup>6</sup>."

This statement reflects the political platforms of several members of the Israeli government coalition, including the Likud party of PM Netanyahu<sup>7</sup>, and is indicative of where the current Israeli government is heading and of the settlers' significant influence.

The Israeli Prime Minister's failure to take any action against Danon is tantamount to approving his statement. This, coupled with the unwavering political and financial support to settlement activity and the presence of several settlers as Ministers, demonstrates once again this is a government of settlers, by the settlers and for the settlers.

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6 <http://www.timesofisrael.com/deputy-defense-minister-this-government-will-block-any-peace-deal/>

7 See “Platforms of Israeli Political Parties on the Two-State Solution and a peace agreement” available at <http://www.nad-plo.org/userfiles/file/fact%20sheet/Platforms%20for%20Israeli%20Parties.pdf>