

Taking Palestinian land and building Israeli settlements

In 1967, the whole of the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem (Palestinian land) was occupied by Israel. The first thing that happened to the land was the annexation of Jerusalem. Then from the 1970s, Israel began to take land over to build new towns for Israeli settlers along with areas for Israeli industry and agriculture on occupied land. This is in direct contradiction to international law but despite international resolutions calling for the movement to stop, it has escalated constantly.

After the Camp David peace agreement between Israel and Egypt in 1979, there was an organised policy of confiscation of Palestinian lands in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The number of Israeli settlers in the West Bank grew constantly between 1975 and 1993, and then after the Oslo agreement in 1993 escalated. By 2000, more than fifty percent of the West Bank land had been confiscated.



By now (2009), Israel has taken over about 60% of the West Bank from the Palestinians. Between East Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, approximately 80% of the land has been taken for military closed areas.

This map gives an impression of the number of settlements in the West Bank but does not show that these have created big new towns. For more detailed maps from the UN, see www.ochaopt.org

Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association

works to promote human rights and respect for international humanitarian law in Abu Dis + Palestine generally.

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The Israeli settlements around Jerusalem



Top left, refugee camp; top right, Israeli settlement on Palestinian land. Note how the Israeli Separation Wall runs close to the Palestinian villages and cuts agricultural land off on the side of the settlements so they can expand

"In 2008 we increased our settlement building by 60% over the previous year" (Israeli Defence Ministry, Jan 2009)

These moves push the Palestinians into ghettos, take away their livelihood and violate Palestinian human rights.



A new type of apartheid

The settlements and even the new roads that connect them are being built for Israelis only. Settlers are treated as Israeli citizens and given full rights. Palestinians are being confined in smaller and smaller areas on their own land and ruled under separate and harsh military laws.

Settler violence. Settlers are protected by the Israeli army but they are themselves armed and they are often violent and dangerous to local Palestinians.

In 2009 there are an estimated 280 000 settlers in the West Bank PLUS 205 000 in East Jerusalem -

This is against international law but the Israeli government subsidises, encourages, guards and arms them.

Judaisation of Jerusalem

Since 1967, the Israeli government has been making huge moves to push out Palestinians and bring in Jewish settlers through every sort of method including: bullying individuals, issuing military orders, changing laws, using a discriminatory town planning system, refusing to allow Palestinians to build on their lands, building the Separation Wall to cut off the Palestinian suburbs, instituting a system of pass laws for Palestinians and making it increasingly difficult for people even to visit the city, knocking down Palestinian housing (currently threatening the houses of 1500 people in Silwan).

The Israeli authorities take high Jerusalem taxes from Palestinians living there but provide them with poor and unequal services.



Maale Adumim settlement (front) and land belonging to Aizariyeh in the Jerusalem suburb. Its owners can no longer go there but the settlement can extend.

Breaking international law

- ◇ According to The Hague agreement, 1907, occupation forces must not confiscate lands or properties from the people under occupation
- ◇ The Fourth Geneva Convention, 1949 outlaws the re-settlement by an occupying power of its own civilians on territory under its military control.
- ◇ The United Nations security council has often told Israel to return the Palestinian land,
- ◇ The International Court of Justice in 2004 was very clear that the settlements breach international human rights law.

This constant onslaught on the human rights of Palestinians continues to escalate.

Joining West Bank settlements to Jerusalem

The Israeli authorities have been working to cut Jerusalem off from its historic Palestinian suburb and to create links instead to massive new Israeli settlements on the West Bank. They are building new highways (including a ring road around Jerusalem) to be used by Israelis only, and a new tramway out of the city to the suburb, which will make the settlements seem as if they are part of Jerusalem.



Stealing resources and polluting the land

Israeli settlements have systematically taken control of the water sources in the West Bank, stolen stone, sand and trees. They have created rubbish dumps and rivers of sewage running through Palestinian land. The dirtiest industries have been relocated from Israel into industrial settlements on Palestinian land which are causing plants and animals to die and creating cancer hotspots.

Abu Dis area

Around Abu Dis, land confiscation is continuing all the time. Land has been taken for the Maale Adumim, Qidar, Mishor Adumim settlements which together have become one of the giant settlement blocs of the West Bank.

Land within Abu Dis itself and much agricultural land has been taken for roads, a rubbish area, a new village for Bedouin that Israel wants to move from elsewhere, and for many military areas and for two military camps to control the area.

Israel is working to build up the area between Maale Adumim and Jerusalem completely, while the huge Separation Wall and the racist pass system prevent most Palestinians from getting into Jerusalem.

There is more information about settlements, their history and how they fit into the whole question of Palestine in our new book **"Voices from Abu Dis"** www.camdenabudis.net

And on our website