

# From Territorial to Social Agendas: A Different Look at the Settlements

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Every Israeli government since 1967 has developed Jewish settlements in the territories, prepared to pay the economic costs of building and expanding them and the political costs of international disapproval and damage to Israel's image. The thrust of the settlement enterprise in the West Bank was launched during Menahem Begin's tenure as prime minister. His political successors continued to develop the settlements and their supporting infrastructures, with differences among them stemming less from ideology and more from international pressure and internal political constraints.

However, despite their ongoing development and their support from all the governments, the settlements have fulfilled different national objectives in different eras. Three stages of Israeli settlement in the West Bank can be identified:

- *Establishment*, from 1967 until 1992, when settlements were constructed to shape the country's future border, strengthen Israel's command of the area, and prevent any transfer of the West Bank to a different party. The current settlement map was drafted during the establishment stage.
- *Differentiation*, from 1992 until 2005, when the distinction was cultivated between settlement blocs intended for future annexation to Israel as part of the permanent arrangement, and isolated settlements on the mountain ridge and in the Jordan Valley, intended to serve as bargaining chips in negotiations with the Palestinians. The distinction was a function of the size of the settlements and their distance from the Green Line. The separation fence, built as a

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response to Palestinian suicide terrorism, created a physical barrier between the two types of settlements. The understandings between Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and President George W. Bush reached in connection with the disengagement plan and the evacuation of residents from the Gaza Strip settlements granted political validity to the policy of differentiation.

- *Normalization*, which began when Ehud Olmert assumed office in 2006. Olmert acted as if the settlement blocs were annexed by Israel. During his tenure, construction authorization in the blocs was accelerated and served primarily as a tool for mitigation of social problems, most of all finding housing for the ultra-Orthodox. Based on previous understandings between Sharon and the American administration, whereby construction is limited to west of the separation fence, Olmert and Minister of Defense Ehud Barak prohibited construction beyond the fence, and development of the isolated settlements was limited and occurred by local initiative only.

The settlements, established initially to establish political facts, have achieved their founders' objectives. The West Bank remains under Israeli security control, while Palestinian violence has forced Israel to determine through creation of a physical separation barrier which settlements will remain within its sovereign area and which are destined for future evacuation. The negotiations with the Palestinians are based on the assumption that in return for the evacuation of isolated settlements, Israel will be able to retain control of the ridge line on which the large settlement blocs are built and thereby expand Israel's "narrow waistline" around Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Statistics from the summer of 2008 listed 282,000 Jewish residents in 120 settlements outside of Jerusalem's municipal boundaries. Of these, some 80,000 live in 77 settlements east of the separation fence line, and 202,000 reside in 43 settlements west of the fence.<sup>1</sup> In addition, there are approximately an additional 200,000 Jewish residents of Jerusalem neighborhoods beyond the Green Line.

### Sharon's Vision

The idea that Jewish control of the Land of Israel would be achieved through gradually constructed settlement contiguity was born in

modern Zionism's early waves of immigration to Palestine. Menahem Ussishkin formulated the notion in 1904 at the beginning of the second aliyah in his essay "Our Program," in which he called for coalescing the small Jewish farming villages into contiguous blocs.<sup>2</sup> The philosophy he presented has been at the heart of Zionist settlement since then.

The establishment leading Israel during its early decades, having matured politically during the days of the British Mandate and "Homa U'migdal,"<sup>3</sup> retained the notion of creating a continuum of Jewish settlements as a means of ensuring Israeli sovereignty within the Green Line, even after the establishment of the State of Israel. It was only natural, then, that after the Six Day War settlement would once again be used as a means of establishing facts on the ground that would ultimately lead to changes in the border and expansion of the country's territory.

Labor governments, in power from 1967 until 1977, annexed East Jerusalem and built large Jewish neighborhoods in the greater metropolitan area. They also established 22 settlements in the West Bank, particularly in the Jordan Valley and the Etzion bloc – as a basis for realizing the Allon Plan – as well as Kiryat Arba near Hebron. In addition, various Nahal military outposts that later became civilian settlements were established, and the settlers of Sebastia were allowed to settle permanently in the Kadum army camp near Nablus.

The political upheaval that marked Likud's first ascent to the government was the harbinger of the great leap forward in settlement construction. The Likud sought to perpetuate Israel's control of the West Bank, and settlement seemed like the most auspicious means of doing so. The peace process with Egypt and the concern over Labor's return to government lent the drive particular urgency. Gush Emunim ("Bloc of the Faithful") and the national-religious movement

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were ideological homes of those prepared to settle the mountain ridges. In September 1977, Minister of Agriculture Ariel Sharon brought his plan for the establishment of dozens of settlements in the West Bank before the ministerial committee on settlements. Over the next six

years, Likud governments decided to build 103 settlements (not all of which were ultimately constructed),<sup>4</sup> which sketched the existing map of settlements in the territories.

Sharon presented the ministers with a number of objectives:<sup>5</sup> creating a barrier between the Israeli Arab population in the Triangle and the Palestinians in the West Bank, for fear that a large Arab bloc could threaten Jewish residents on the coastal plain; controlling the area overlooking Israel's population centers on the coastal plain in order "to grant [the population centers of the coastal plain] depth, and strengthen the corridor" and to ensure that no other military force would deploy in the commanding areas; securing the Jordan Valley against a ground attack from the east; and ensuring Jerusalem as "the permanent capital of the Jewish people" by building a band of settlements surrounding the Arab neighborhoods of the city – the Etzion bloc, Efrat, Ma'ale Adumim, Givat Ze'ev, and Beit El. Sharon estimated that building settlements in the area immediately adjacent to the city would ensure a Jewish majority and Jewish control of the city "fifty or a hundred years into the future."

The ministerial committee approved Sharon's plan. "I was still not sure when I presented my plans for settlements that the cabinet believed this was something I was really going to do," he wrote in his memoirs, "but as I told them at one point, I'm the only Mapainik in

Israel's driving principle in negotiations was "most of the settlers on the Israeli side, most of the settlements on the Palestinian side."

this government. I am not talking here so that I can record my voice in the protocol. Consider it carefully. Because once this is approved, I am going to do it."

Sharon acted quickly, before internal and external opposition would stop the project's momentum. Moreover, his assessment was correct: it was enough to establish preliminary facts on the ground for the settlement activity to continue into the future as well. In the coming years, Israel came under heavy international pressure to prevent the establishment of further settlements, and the main effort was turned to strengthening and expanding existing settlements – primarily in areas near the Green Line, where demand was high – and constructing infrastructures, such as roads bypassing Arab communities, which made it easier for

settlement residents to live in relative security near Palestinian towns and cities.

In order to advance the separation of the Israeli Arabs from the Palestinians in the West Bank, Sharon later encouraged the “Star Settlement Plan,” construction of Jewish settlements west of the Green Line to serve as a kind of parallel line to the settlements east of the Line (Kokhav Ya’ir, Tzur Yigal, Sha’ar Ephraim, an expanded Rosh Ha’ayin, Bat Hefer, Katzir, and Harish). Contact between the two populations, however, continued until the second intifada when two decisions taken by the Sharon government in 2002 effected the dissociation: the construction of a separation fence, which prevented physical movement from the Triangle to the West Bank, and the prohibition on naturalization of Palestinians married to Israel citizens. The desire for a demographic separation between Arabs who are citizens of Israel and residents of the Palestinian Authority was unquestionably a factor when these decisions were approved.

### **The Idea of the Blocs**

In the late 1980s, support garnered by the Palestinian intifada prompted heavy pressure on Israel to stop the expansion of the settlements. President George Bush, Sr. clashed over this issue with Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who was determined to continue constructing new settlements, even at the cost of the guarantees Israel requested from the US to finance the absorption of immigrants from the Soviet Union.

In the election campaign of 1992, Labor candidate Yitzhak Rabin presented a distinction between “the security settlements,” which he justified, and “the political settlements,” built adjacent to Palestinian population centers, which he opposed. Rabin favored the separation of the two populations and with the Oslo Accords led the way to the establishment of Palestinian autonomy, but he insisted that all settlements remain in place until the permanent arrangement. He evacuated no settlers from their homes, and even laid the political foundations for continuing expansion of the settlements.

The guarantees agreement Rabin reached in August 1992 with President Bush allowed Israel to complete the construction of projects that had already started, and recognized the “natural growth” of existing settlements in the Jerusalem region and the Jordan Valley.<sup>6</sup> This

arrangement ultimately aroused significant controversy and subsequent administrations tried to retreat from it, claiming that Israel abused the loopholes of “natural growth” and “project completion” to undertake massive expansion of construction in all the settlements.<sup>7</sup>

During Rabin’s tenure, the prevailing norm was that as long as there was an active political process with the Palestinians, Israel enjoyed a respite from international pressure to halt its settlement activities. This was also true during the tenures of Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert (after the Annapolis conference). By contrast, in times of a slower or frozen political process, external criticism of Jewish settlement in the territories would increase. In practice, these pressures served the Americans as a means of encouraging Israel to negotiate with the Palestinians. This is also the reason that – ironically – accelerated settlement construction occurred specifically under left leaning governments, and not under right wing governments that identified ideologically with the settlement residents.

A month before he was assassinated, Rabin presented his political legacy to the Knesset for approval in the form of the interim agreements with the Palestinians (Oslo 2). At its center were changes in the border of the West Bank, including: “the security border of the State of Israel [which] will be located in the Jordan Valley, in the broadest meaning of that term; changes which will include the addition of Gush Etzion, Efrat, Beitar and other communities, most of which are in the area east of what was the Green Line, prior to the Six Day War; the establishment of blocs of settlements in Judea and Samaria, like the one in Gush Katif.”<sup>8</sup> The distinction Rabin made both in his election campaign and in his last political speech between two kinds of settlements rested on the manner in which the settlements evolved. Like any residential system, these settlements developed according to their distance to Israel’s economic and employment centers. Settlements established relatively close to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem that afforded residents easy access to places of employment and commerce expanded much more than the settlements on hilltops near Ramallah and Nablus, which provided no ready sources of income.

The stance that Israel would present in negotiations over the permanent arrangement was thus formulated during the Rabin years. At its center was determining a border that would leave the settlement

blocs on the Israeli side, and evacuating the settlements on the other side of the line.<sup>9</sup> The principle was “most of the settlers on the Israeli side, most of the settlements on the Palestinian side,” and the differences between the proposals touched only on the scope of territory to be annexed by Israel, in return for which the Palestinians would receive alternate territories and free access between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

During Barak’s term, two contradictory processes competed with one another: the settlement effort to establish facts on the ground by erecting dozens of outposts around the older settlements, through tacit agreement with the government that supplied them with basic services and defense; and a political effort toward a permanent arrangement with the Palestinians. The outposts had no success in altering the demographic reality, and they remained points embraced by an ideological minority. The political process did not produce an agreement, but embedded the pattern of a future arrangement in international consciousness, an arrangement that would rest on the annexation of settlement blocs to Israel.

The future of the settlements was the focus of internal debate in Israel during Sharon’s tenure and in particular during his second term. In his ministerial functions in the past, Sharon was the promoter and political patron par excellence of Israeli settlement in the territories. As prime minister, he confronted a wave of Palestinian suicide terrorism and was under intense American pressure to contain settlement development as well as growing internal pressure to demonstrate some movement on the political front. In consequence, Sharon made a series of decisions. The most important of them were the construction of the separation fence on the West Bank, following a demarcation line that left the settlement blocs west of the barrier, and the disengagement plan, which called for the evacuation of all the settlements from the Gaza Strip and the demolition of four settlements in northern Samaria. The Palestinians and their supporters in Israel and in the international

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community, who viewed the separation fence as a de facto border, have conducted legal and diplomatic battles to modify the route so that the smallest possible segment of land is included east of the Green Line. The settlement residents and their supporters conducted a fierce public and political struggle against the disengagement that failed to stop the plan but ensured extensive financial compensation for the evacuees.

Sharon strove for an understanding with the American administration that would allow Israel to build as it wished in existing settlement blocs if it undertook to avoid settlement expansion east the fence. He viewed President Bush's letter of April 2004 as American recognition of Israel's annexation of the settlement blocs in any future arrangement. Sharon also promised – though he failed to fulfill the commitment – to evacuate the outposts, i.e., settlements erected without government approval after Sharon became prime minister. The Bush administration turned a blind eye or satisfied itself with mild remonstrations regarding new construction in the settlement blocs. However, the Americans prevented Israel from developing the planned E-1 neighborhood between Ma'ale Adumim and Jerusalem, out of concern that it would threaten the establishment of a Palestinian state with territorial contiguity on the West Bank.

### **The Fence as a Border**

Ehud Olmert, who replaced Sharon in January 2006, viewed the division of the land and separation from the Palestinians in order to achieve a Jewish majority as “the lifeline of Zionism.”<sup>10</sup> At the heart of his election campaign lay the convergence plan, the idea of establishing a border on the basis of the separation fence, evacuating the settlements that remained east of the barrier, and expanding and developing the blocs.<sup>11</sup> The escalation of security issues in the Gaza Strip and the Second Lebanon War removed the convergence plan from the public agenda, and the question of the settlements was relegated to the margins of Israel's internal debate. Supporters of the settlements saw the rocket attacks from Gaza and the war with Hizbollah as proof that Israeli withdrawals only aggravate the security situation. In late 2007 the Annapolis process was launched, meant to formulate an agreement of principles between Israel and the Palestinians. However, it aroused



little public interest because of the prevailing assessment that nothing would come of it.

There were several components to the policy conducted by Olmert and Minister of Defense Barak in the settlements:

- The planned demarcation route of the separation fence became the “litmus test” for building permits in the settlements. As a rule, Olmert and Barak allowed tenders and construction plans only west of the fence, and thereby strengthened its status as a de facto border.<sup>12</sup> While the Sharon government averred that the barrier “is solely for defense purposes and does not represent any kind of political border,”<sup>13</sup> the moment it was erected as a physical obstacle on the ground, a clear distinction was created between the two sides.
- Since the Annapolis conference, building plans for thousands of housing units in the settlement blocs have been approved, in particular around Jerusalem and in Jerusalem neighborhoods over the Green Line. These decisions were censured as impediments to the political negotiations, but the criticism was faint and Israel has ignored it. The settlements east of the fence have continued to develop at an insignificant pace and due to local initiative, with the government turning a blind eye.<sup>14</sup> They continue to enjoy all public services, and no decision has been made to abandon or shrink them. The construction of the separation fence has slowed down, apparently due to budgetary considerations, and has been frozen in areas of political controversy such as the “Ariel fingers.”
- The government has almost entirely avoided forced evacuations from outposts and has tried to arrive at understandings with the settlement leaders regarding evacuations of the outposts and the transfer of their residents to established settlements. Israel made a commitment to the American administration to evacuate 26 outposts; by the summer of 2008, three such outposts were evacuated by agreement, and a fourth outpost, Hazon David in Kiryat Arba, was evacuated and reestablished several times. The IDF has also prevented the resettlement of the destroyed settlement of Homesh near Jenin but has allowed visitors there, though they are barred from erecting residential structures.

- In the negotiations with Palestinian Authority president Abu Mazen over the “shelf agreement” that is to determine the principles for a permanent arrangement, Olmert presented the isolated settlements as bargaining chips. He suggested drawing up an agreed-upon border, and then evacuating the settlements to its east in two stages: first, a voluntary evacuation in return for compensation, and later on, once the entire arrangement is implemented, a forced evacuation of the remaining settlements. In return, the Palestinians were required to agree to no limits on Israeli construction west of the border to be determined, even if the execution of the arrangement were postponed.

Olmert proposed annexing 7-8 percent of the West Bank to Israel and compensating the Palestinians with alternate territory of some 5 percent and the passage from Gaza to the West Bank. By the summer of 2008 this proposal was not accepted by Abu Mazen, who has expressed willingness to Israel’s annexing some 2 percent of the West Bank on the basis of land exchanges. Thus Olmert realized his promise to strengthen and support the settlement blocs, but failed in the primary mission he presented when elected, namely, to determine a border for the West Bank, either by agreement or as a unilateral move. During his tenure, mainly through the construction and development policy in the territories, the separation fence became entrenched in Israeli and to an extent in international consciousness as well as the de facto border. Dealing with the outposts and the settlements east of the fence was postponed.

Both Tzipi Livni, who was elected to succeed Olmert as Kadima party leader, and leading rival Shaul Mofaz have espoused similar outlooks. Livni has said that the separation fence is the point of reference for dividing the land,<sup>15</sup> and Mofaz has spoken about including the settlement blocs within Israel.<sup>16</sup> The differences between them concern the pace of negotiations more than the location of the border.

### **A Socioeconomic Apparatus**

Assuming that the large settlement blocs – around Jerusalem, Ma’ale Adumim, the Etzion bloc, Modi’in Illit, and western Samaria – have absorbed a critical population mass to ensure their future annexation to Israel, it can be argued that Israel has already succeeded in moving its

border east of the Green Line in any future political arrangement. The effect of a larger population in these blocs on the political arrangement is negligible, if at all existent. Accordingly, expanding construction in the blocs at this time is meant to realize other national goals, first and foremost the easing of a social problem: providing housing for middle class and poorer populations outside the areas of high demand in the Dan region (greater Tel Aviv) and Jerusalem. Above all, this policy is meant to assist the ultra-Orthodox.

The government channels ultra-Orthodox populations to settlements near the Green Line. Two of the largest settlements in the territories are the ultra-Orthodox towns of Modi'in Illit and Beitar Illit; their growth rate is also the highest. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics,<sup>17</sup> the population of Modi'in Illit numbered 37,800 at the end of 2007, while the population of Upper Beitar was 31,900, representing a 9.6 percent increase over the preceding year. The third ultra-Orthodox community in the territories, Immanuel, has failed to attract residents to the extent of the settlements closer to the Green Line. In late 2007, its population was only 2,700. In total, the three ultra-Orthodox towns represent one quarter of all Jewish residents in the West Bank. The ultra-Orthodox segment of the total settlement population is likely to grow because of the accelerated pace of expansion of the ultra-Orthodox communities in comparison with the other settlements. For example, the population of Ma'ale Adumim was 33,000, and grew at a rate of 3.8 percent in 2007. In Ariel, the population numbered 16,600, having grown by only 1.2 percent.

The Ministry of Construction and Housing, in charge of developing public construction, has placed the provision of housing solutions for the ultra-Orthodox sector high on its list of priorities. Based on Ministry statistics,<sup>18</sup> there are 600,000 ultra-Orthodox in Israel, and this sector grows at an annual rate of 6 percent. Aside from in Jerusalem and Bnei Brak, ultra-Orthodox have found housing in Modi'in Illit and Beitar Illit, and within the Green Line in the ultra-Orthodox town of Elad and in the ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods of Beit Shemesh and Ashdod. According to the Ministry, "in most of the ultra-Orthodox communities, with the exception of Modi'in Illit and Beitar Illit, almost all potential housing options have already been realized." In addition,

there are plans for construction for the ultra-Orthodox within the Green Line, for example, in Harish.

The policy of directing the ultra-Orthodox to the settlement blocs was reflected in two construction tenders published by the Housing Ministry in recent months: to build 286 housing units in Beitar Illit, and 350 apartments in Agan Ha'ayalot in Givat Ze'ev. The tenders were explained as "a response to the urgent needs of Jerusalem's natural growth, given the lack of solutions within the city for young couples of the ultra-Orthodox community."<sup>19</sup>

Settling ultra-Orthodox communities beyond the Green Line provides a response for the needs of a particular self-isolating population, willing to live at a relative distance from the employment, commerce, and entertainment centers of Greater Tel Aviv. The State of Israel is thus fulfilling the goals of dispersing the population and taking advantage of barren lands on the slopes of the Judean hills, without adding to the density and demand for housing in the Tel Aviv and Sharon regions where the secular population of the country is concentrated. This arrangement is convenient for both the ultra-Orthodox and the secular, two groups preferring to live apart from one another.

Construction in the settlement blocs also allows the state to give new housing to the poor (in this case, ultra-Orthodox) population, or to middle class secular and traditional families who would find it difficult to buy an apartment in areas of high demand. This is amply evident from the socioeconomic survey undertaken by the Central Bureau of Statistics,<sup>20</sup> which divides the settlements into three groups based on the settlement's socioeconomic status. The ultra-Orthodox towns are poorer: Beitar Illit is ranked in cluster 1 (the only Jewish settlement in the lower cluster), and Modi'in Illit and Immanuel are ranked in cluster 2. Ma'ale Adumin, Ariel, and Efrat, where there was extensive public construction, are ranked in the middle class (clusters 5-6). The mid to high scale (clusters 7-8) include Givat Ze'ev, Elkana, Oranit, and Alfei Menashe.

People close to Olmert have presented another argument for the large scale building plans approved in recent months in the settlement blocs. According to them, the new apartments are intended to supply housing for some of the residents of settlements from the east side of the fence who will be evacuated in the future under the voluntary

evacuation compensation plan. In this way, the government achieves the concentration of settlement residents within the existing settlement blocs, but not far from the places they will be leaving.

### The Crux of the Matter

At the heart of the traditional debate over Israeli settlement in the West Bank lies the claim that continued settlement represents an obstacle to dividing the land between two states, Israel and the Palestinian state. The opponents of the settlements caution about undermining the legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish state and are concerned about the future of the Zionist endeavor should the mixing of the populations in the territories continue. The Israeli left is also critical of the immorality of occupation, although this argument has almost disappeared from the Israeli public debate in recent years. Residents of the settlements and their supporters view settlement beyond the Green Line as the ultimate expression of living Zionism and the basis for Israel's security in the long run, and warn that dividing the land will destroy Zionism.

Today, however, this argument seems anachronistic and misses the mark. In practice, Israel conducts itself as if the settlements west of the separation fence have already been annexed to its territory, develops them freely, and uses them to solve social problems under the aegis of broad political consensus. Settlements beyond the separation fence are being left in place as bargaining chips for the political arrangement, or until a government arises that is not afraid to assume the risk of an internal confrontation over dismantlement of settlements and compensation for the evacuees.

### Notes

1. Ministry of Defense data.
2. Menahem Ussishkin, "Our Program," cited in Shalom Reichman, *From Outpost to Settled Land* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi Press, 1979), p. 124.
3. Literally, "Tower and Stockade," collective settlements built overnight during the British mandate.
4. State Comptroller Report No. 34, "Construction and Development Activities in Judea and Samaria," pp. 81-104. The report lists in detail all government decisions on establishing settlements until 1983.
5. Ariel Sharon with David Chanoff, *Warrior: An Autobiography*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), pp. 356-71.
6. *New York Times*, July 21, 1992.

7. The 2001 Mitchell report and the 2003 Roadmap require a freeze on construction in the settlements, "including natural growth."
8. "Ratification of the Israel-Palestinian Interim Agreement," October 5, 1995, [http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1990\\_1999/1995/10/PM%20Rabin%20in%20Knesset-%20Ratification%20of%20Interim%20Agree](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1990_1999/1995/10/PM%20Rabin%20in%20Knesset-%20Ratification%20of%20Interim%20Agree).
9. The first plan to determine a demographic border that would leave Israel with 11 percent of the West Bank, and include all the large settlements, was the proposal by Yossi Alpher in 1994, "Settlements and Borders: Paper No. 3 on Issues Concerning the Permanent Arrangement," published by the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies. The map drawn by Alpher is very similar to the outline of the separation fence approved about a decade later.
10. Olmert's speech as he presented his government to the Knesset, May 4, 2006.
11. Olmert presented the convergence plan in interviews with the three major daily newspapers, *Haaretz*, *Yediot Ahronot*, and *Maariv*, March 10, 2006. He also told the leaders of the United States, Britain, and France about it. However, the plan never went beyond general principles and was never translated into a detailed program.
12. The outstanding exception is the approval for twenty homes in Maskiyot, in the Jordan Valley Regional Council, *Ynet*, July 24, 2008.
13. Government decision of October 1, 2003, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2003/Cabinet+Communique+-+1-Oct-2003.htm>.
14. According to a report by the Foundation for Middle East Peace, based on data from Peace Now and the Ministry of Construction and Housing, there were 44 homes under construction east of the fence and 560 to its west from January until July 2008. The large gap between the two sides of the fence is obvious even in publications of left wing organizations that have an interest in emphasizing overall settlements growth and expansion.
15. *Haaretz* supplement, December 29, 2006.
16. *Yediot Ahronot*, August 8, 2008.
17. Population in settlements with 1,000 or more residents, temporary data of December 31, 2007.
18. Press release about the establishment of the ultra-Orthodox town of Harish, August 5, 2008, <http://www.moch.gov.il/NR/exeres/6CAED619-3D14-4914-B9A9-C2E9EDFAD1D0.htm>.
19. Press release, May 21, 2008.
20. The Central Bureau of Statistics, "Characterizing Local Authorities and Categorizing them on the Basis of the Population's Socioeconomic Status, 2003," published in 2006. The Central Bureau of Statistics survey, which categorizes all authorities on a scale of ten socioeconomic clusters, serves as the basis for allocation of social services.