

**EUROPEAN UNION**

Office of the European Union Representative (West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA)

**Six-Month Report on Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem
Reporting period July-December 2019****Summary**

Advancement of plans for settlement units in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continued on a high level in the second half of 2019 (July-December). 5,627 settlement units were advanced in different stages of the planning and implementation process (only plans, no tenders). 981 of the units pertain to settlements located in occupied East Jerusalem, and 4,646 to settlements located in other parts of the West Bank, including in locations deep in the West Bank.

2019 saw the highest number of settlement units (9,666) advanced through plans in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in the last 5 years. At the same time, the total number of settlement units advanced through plans and tenders in 2019 (11,427), was lower than in both 2017 (12,354) and 2018 (12,857), but significantly higher than in 2015 (4,059) and 2016 (3,944). While plans and tenders indicate expected future construction activity, 1,528 units began actual construction in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem, in 2019, the lowest number since 2012 (1,213). Construction starts in East Jerusalem were also lower in 2019 (315), than in 2018 (837) and 2017 (1,143).

There were other significant developments contributing to settlement expansion in the reporting period, including an approval to build a "bypass" road to the west of Bethlehem that will connect Jerusalem to the Gush Etzion settlements; the advancement of a plan for a cable car project and other settlement activities related to tourism endeavours in and around the Old City in East Jerusalem; the retroactive authorization of outposts; the eviction of a Palestinian single mother and her four children from their home in Wadi al Hilweh in East Jerusalem; as well as the continuation of settler-related violence in the West Bank.

There are approximately 220,000 Israeli settlers living in East Jerusalem¹ while the settler population in Area C of the West Bank is approximately 427,800.² This brings the Israeli settler population in the West Bank to around 647,800 individuals in some 170 settlement locations and some 120 outposts.³

As stated in numerous EU Foreign Affairs Council conclusions, settlements are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible.⁴ The EU has reiterated its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context, such as building the separation barrier beyond the 1967 line, demolitions and confiscation - including of EU funded projects - evictions, forced transfers including of Bedouins, illegal outposts and restrictions of movement and access. The EU has also urged Israel to end all settlement activity and to dismantle the outposts, in line with prior obligations, and maintains that settlement activity in East Jerusalem seriously jeopardizes the possibility of Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States.

¹ Peace Now. There are industrial settlement areas such as Atarot; settlement neighbourhoods such as East Talpiyot, French Hill, Gilo, Giv'at Ha-Matos, Har Homa, the Jewish Quarter, Maalot Dafna, Neve Ya'akov, Pisgat Ze'ev, Ramat Eshkol, Ramat Shlomo, Ramot; settlements inside Palestinian neighbourhoods such as Shimon Hatzadik, Beit Orot, Beit Hachoshen, Ma'ale Zeitim, City of David, Hamfaked 15, Kidmat Zion, Nof Zion, Mosrara East as well as inside the various quarters of the Old City and inside Jabel Mukkaber; and tourism settlements such as Emek Zurim and Hashalom Forest.

² Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018.

³ Peace Now.

⁴ UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016) also reaffirms that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-state solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

1. SETTLEMENT PLANS AND TENDERS IN 2019 (July-December)

In the second half of 2019, 5,627 units were advanced in different stages in the planning and implementation process in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.⁵ Table 1 contains a listing of the plans in question. 981 of those units concerned settlements located in occupied East Jerusalem, and 4,646 settlements located in other parts of the West Bank, including locations deep in the West Bank. The location of these latter settlements are visualised in the map to the right.

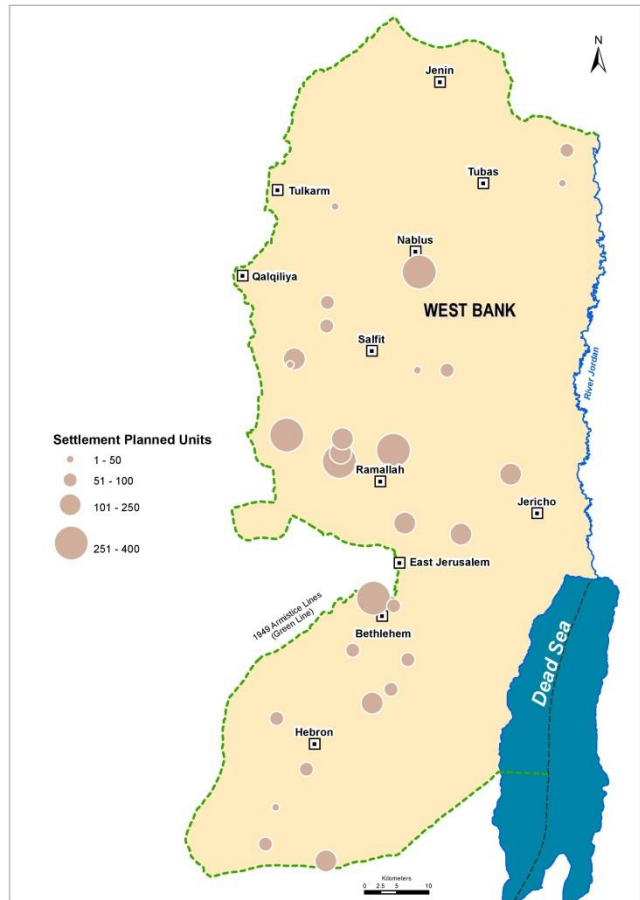
The advancement of settlement plans in East Jerusalem took place throughout the reporting period. For instance, 90 units were advanced in the settlement Har Homa, known to Palestinians Abu Ghneim Mountain, less than two kilometres north of Bethlehem.

The expansion of settlements outside of East Jerusalem took place principally in two stages.

The first stage took place on 5 and 6 August 2019 when the Israeli Higher Planning Committee advanced plans for 2,304 units in various settlements. 838 units were approved for validation (final planning approval), and 1,466 units were approved for deposit.

The advanced plans were intended to add units, to authorize already existing construction in settlements, and to authorize outposts, which thereby became official settlements under Israeli law.⁶ Plans advanced pertain to, for instance, the settlements of Beit El (348 units) close to Ramallah; Kfar Adumim (132 units) in the vicinity of the Bedouin community of Khan al-Ahmar whose population is frequently sited to be at risk of forced transfer; Asfar (200 units), located between Bethlehem and Hebron, which was established in 1983 as a military outpost on privately-owned and cultivated Palestinian land requisitioned under a military order citing "security needs"; Talmon (168 units), northwest of Ramallah, established in 1989 on confiscated land from several surrounding Palestinian villages; and Ganei Modiin (194 units), where a new plan allows for settlement construction up to the separation barrier.⁷

The second stage took place on 10 October 2019 when the Israeli Higher Planning Committee advanced plans for 2,342 units in various settlements. 719 units were approved for validation (final planning approval) and 1,623 units were approved for deposit. The advanced plans intended to add units and to authorize outposts.⁸ Plans advanced pertain to, for instance, the settlements of Dolev (382 units), west of Ramallah, a large expansion in relation to the current population of some 1300 settlers; Bracha (207 units), close to Nablus, which – together with the nearby Yitzhar settlement – has been a longstanding hotspot for settler violence and harassment of residents of surrounding Palestinian villages; Tzofim (206 units), which – together with nearby settlement Alfei Menashe – has contributed to the separation



⁵ All the data on settlements are based on publicly available information from the Civil Administration's High Planning Committee, where Peace Now is present at the meetings. For detailed information about the plans see this link: www.peacenow.org.il.

⁶ For more information on outposts, see chapter 4.3.

⁷ Two weeks before the advancement of these plans Israeli authorities demolished 72 Palestinian units in Wadi Hummus in Areas A and B, east of Jerusalem, citing the proximity to the separation barrier.

⁸ See chapter 4.3.

barrier's looping route to encircle the Palestinian town of Qalqiliya; and Beitar Illit (609 units), southwest of Jerusalem, one of the largest and most rapidly growing settlements.

Table 1. Overview of settlement advancements in the second half of 2019 (July-December)

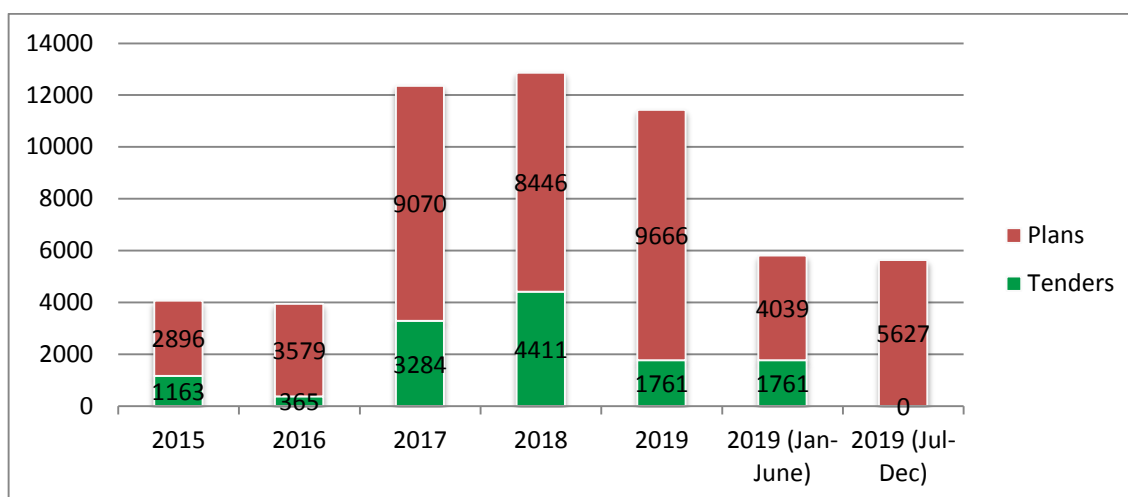
East Jerusalem		Other parts of the West Bank	
3 Jul	Plans for 104 units (Neve Ya'akov)	5 Aug	Plans for 48 units (Bracha)
8 Jul	Plans for 48 units (Gilo)	5 Aug	Plans for 11 units (Einav)
18 Aug	Plans for 69 units (Pisgat Ze'ev)	5 Aug	Plans for 96 units (Kiryat Netafime)
6 Oct	Plans for 205 units (Neve Ya'akov)	5 Aug	Plans for 19 units (Pdual)
9 Oct	Plans for 90 units (Har Homa)	5 Aug	Plans for 74 units (Yakir)
19 Nov	Plans for 290 units (Gilo)	5 Aug	Plans for 24 units (Haroe Ha'ivri)
19 Nov	Plans for 100 units (Ramot)	5 Aug	Plans for 132 units (Kfar Adumin)
31 Dec	Plans for 75 units (Beit Hanina)	5 Aug	Plans for 194 units (Ganei Modiin)
		5 Aug	Plans for 354 units (Nili)
		5 Aug	Plans for 51 units (Shvut Rachel)
		5 Aug	Plans for 168 units (Talmon)
		5 Aug	Plans for 382 units (Beit El)
		6 Aug	Plans for 29 units (Otniel)
		6 Aug	Plans for 84 units (Shimaa)
		6 Aug	Plans for 76 units (Beit Hagai)
		6 Aug	Plans for 94 units (Givat Salit)
		6 Aug	Plans for 27 units (Maskiyot)
		6 Aug	Plans for 200 units (Asfar)
		6 Aug	Plans for 96 units (Ibei Hanachal)
		6 Aug	Plans for 61 units (Gvaot)
		6 Aug	Plans for 18 units (Maale Adumim)
		6 Aug	Plans for 66 units (Efrat)
		10 Oct	Plans for 64 units (Telem)
		10 Oct	Plans for 140 units (Mezadot Yehuda)
		10 Oct	Plans for 182 units (Mevo'ot Yericho)
		10 Oct	Plans for 166 units (AleI Zahav)
		10 Oct	Plans for 206 units (Tzofim)
		10 Oct	Plans for 207 units (Bracha)
		10 Oct	Plans for 140 units (Kerem Reim)
		10 Oct	Plans for 382 units (Dolev)
		10 Oct	Plans for 146 units (Kfar Etzion)
		10 Oct	Plans for 100 units (Nokdim)
		10 Oct	Plans for 609 units (Beitar Illit)
Total	981	Total	4,646

Source: Ir Amim and Peace Now

2. TRENDS IN SETTLEMENT PLANS AND TENDERS SINCE 2015

The total number of settlement units advanced through plans and tenders during the second six-month period of 2019 (5,627) is higher than the levels of settlement advancement seen since 2017, when settlement advancement increased more than three-fold compared to 2015 and 2016 (see table 2). 2019 saw the highest number of advancements (9,666) through plans in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in the last 5 years.

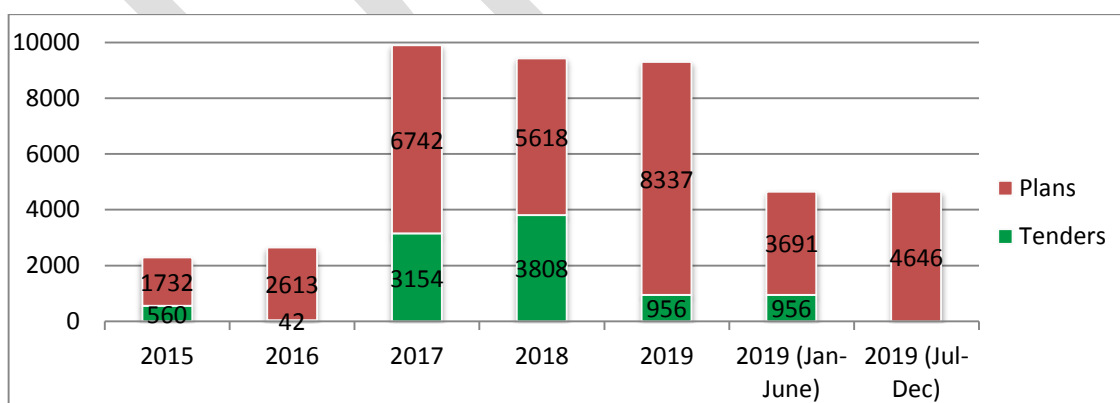
Table 2. Advancement of settlement units in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, 2015-2019



Source: Peace Now and Ir Amim (previous EU Settlement reports have included, extraordinarily, the advancement of 2,992 settlement units in Gilo South in 2018, which were discussed at local committee. In this table, those advancements have been excluded).

As illustrated in table 3, the West Bank (here not including East Jerusalem) experienced a significant up-tick in the advancement of plans and tenders in 2017. 2019 saw the highest number of advanced settlement units through plans (8,337) in the last 5 years.

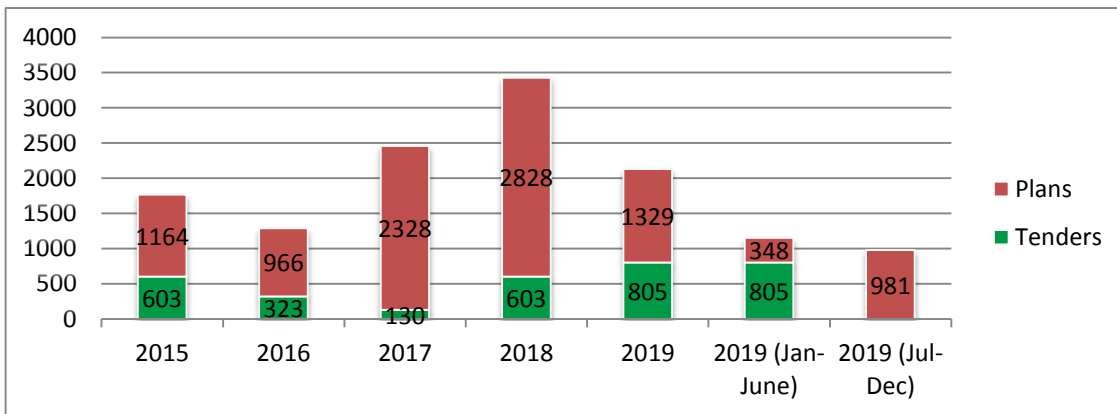
Table 3. Advancement of settlement units in the West Bank, here not including East Jerusalem, 2015-2019



Source: Peace Now

As illustrated in table 4, 2019 saw an overall lower level of settlements advancements in East Jerusalem compared to the two preceding years. Advancements increased in 2017 and 2018, respectively. However, in 2019 more units were advanced through tenders than in any year since 2015.

Table 4. Advancement of settlement units in occupied East Jerusalem 2015-2019



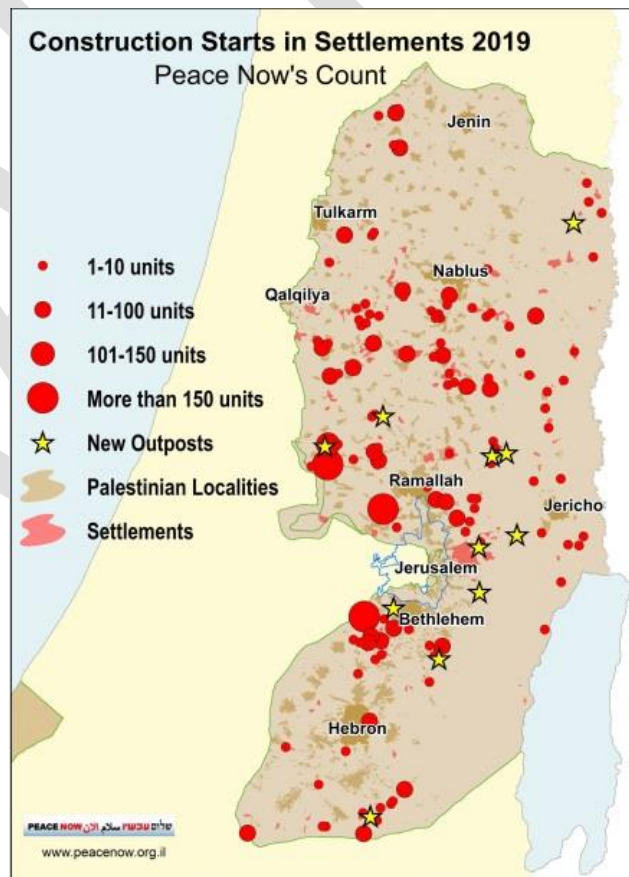
Source: *Ir Amim* (previous EU Settlement reports have included, extraordinarily, the advancement of 2,992 units in Gilo South in 2018, which were discussed at local committee. In this table, those advancements have been excluded).

3. TRENDS IN ACTUAL CONSTRUCTION

While plans and tenders indicate expected future construction activity, data from the Israeli Central Bureau Statistics show that in 2019 actual construction of 1,528 units began in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem, the lowest number since 2012 (1,213). By comparison there were 2,254 such construction starts in 2018; 1,729 in 2017; 3,121 in 2016; and 1,926 in 2015.⁹

The Israeli organisation Peace Now sites a higher number of constructions starts in 2019, 1,917 units, and notes that 1,413 units were completed in the same year.¹⁰ The location of those construction starts are visualised in the map to the right.

According to Peace Now 39% of construction starts in 2019 took place in Ultra-Orthodox settlements (741 units), 56% in national-religious settlements (1,065 units), and 5% in secular settlements. 61 new public buildings (such as schools, synagogues etc.) were started to be built in 2019, alongside 87 structures for industry or agriculture (53% of them in outposts). 110 unit construction starts took place in settlements and outposts in the Jordan Valley.¹¹



Data from the Israeli Central Bureau Statistics shows that in 2019 actual construction of 315 units began in settlements in East Jerusalem. By comparison there were 837 such construction starts in 2018; 1,143 in 2017; and 269 in 2016.

⁹ Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics.

¹⁰ While ICBS relies on data submitted by settlements themselves, Peace Now counts units using a combination of available data, ground surveys and aerial imagery. Furthermore, Peace Now counts also unauthorized construction in settlements and outposts.

¹¹ Peace Now.

4. DEVELOPMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO SETTLEMENT EXPANSION

The following developments in the reporting period are seen as contributing to settlement expansion and the consolidation of Israel's presence in and control of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

4.1. Settlement by infrastructure: the construction of a "bypass" road for settlers

Israel has over the years expanded a road network connecting settlements and outposts to each other and to the road network in Israel. These roads, referred to as "bypass" roads, are often built on confiscated private Palestinian land and are designed to circumvent Palestinian towns and communities in the West Bank under the pretext of guaranteeing the security of the settlement population. "Bypass" roads also permit quicker movement between settlements and Israel, which likely increases the attractiveness of living in settlements. At the same time, numerous roads in Area C are currently prohibited for Palestinians who hold Israeli-issued West Bank ID cards.¹²

Another road system in Area C, intended for Palestinians only, is officially described by Israeli authorities as "fabric of life" roads. This road system often has the short-term effect of mitigating the negative consequences that "bypass" roads have on Palestinian movement, yet also exacerbating the physical separation between the settler population and Palestinians. Moreover, "fabric of life" roads are often both of inferior quality and less accessible than "bypass" roads, thus resulting in detours and delays for Palestinians. "Bypass" and "fabric of life" roads have entrenched the fragmentation of Area C, and led to an increasingly segregated road system in the West Bank.

On 30 October 2019, the Israeli Higher Planning Committee approved a building permit for the construction of a new tunnel road, which bypasses Bethlehem to the west and connects Jerusalem with the Gush Etzion settlements. The road, which will be built on confiscated Palestinian land, is expected to increase the number of settlers in the Bethlehem area. This step by the Israeli Higher Planning Committee ended the bureaucratic procedures, and allowed for construction to begin.

4.2. Expansion of touristic settlements in the occupied East Jerusalem

The reporting period saw a number of settlement activities related to tourism endeavours in and around the Old City in occupied East Jerusalem, in particular in the areas of Gei Ben Hinnom/Wadi Rababe and Silwan.¹³ The Israeli organisation Ir Amim has reported that touristic settlement sites – in concert with settler-initiated evictions of Palestinians, takeovers of Palestinian homes, and the expansion of settler compounds – create a "settlement ring" of tightening Israeli control around the Old City. The organization writes that "ultimately, this use of national parks and tourist sites serves the goal of transforming the Palestinian neighborhoods in and around the Old City – including Silwan, At-Tur, Ras al-Amud and Sheikh Jarrah – from a densely populated Palestinian area into one sprawling tourist site that bolsters Israeli control of the area and access to it."

On 4 November, Israeli authorities advanced¹⁴ a plan for a cable car project that will run from the First Station complex in West Jerusalem, through the areas of Gei Ben Hinnom/Wadi Rababe, and to the planned Kedem settlement compound in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Silwan in East Jerusalem, and possibly transport thousands of tourists on a daily basis. The settlement compound will contain a visitor center for tourists and house the future headquarters of the Elad settler organization.

¹² In certain cases, individual permits to access these roads may be issued by the Israeli authorities on the basis of employment in settlements. According to UN OCHA, approximately 40% of all roads in Area C are restricted in various ways for Palestinians. Impediments include physical barriers inhibiting access to roads on an ad hoc basis, the existence of numerous checkpoints along the roads, or the rerouting of Palestinian traffic into smaller roads during rush hours in favour of the settler population.

¹³ While a small section of Gei Ben Hinnom/Wadi Rababe is situated in West Jerusalem, the remaining part is located in East Jerusalem adjacent to Abu Tur and Silwan.

¹⁴ A final approval by the Israeli government is still required.

4.3. Outposts

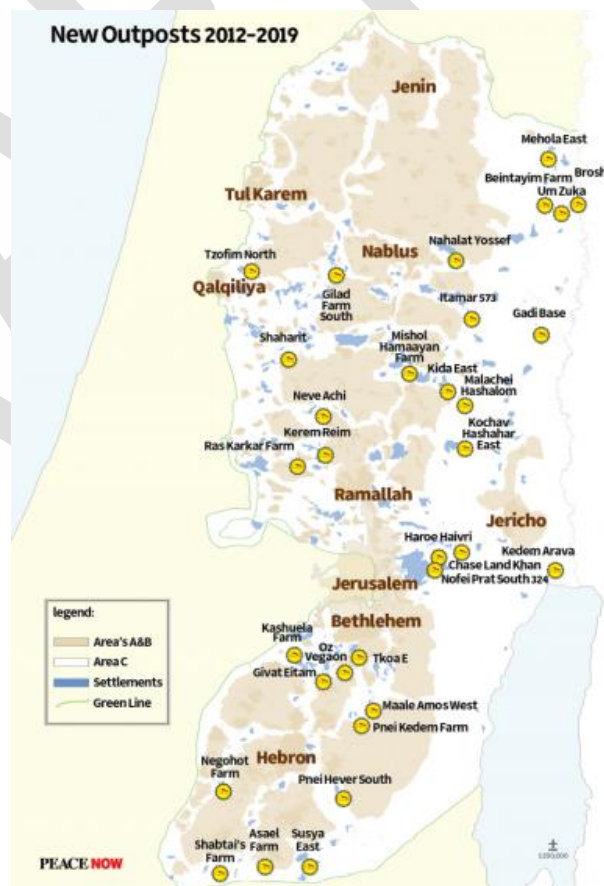
There are approximately 123 outposts in the West Bank.¹⁵ Outposts are illegal under international law. They are also illegal under Israeli law as they were established without formal approval by Israeli authorities. There are, however, examples of outposts receiving official support in various ways through the provision of security, infrastructure, electricity, water etc. There are also examples of outposts being retroactively "authorized" through decision by the Israeli government, and thus turned into new settlements or neighbourhoods of existing settlements that are then "lawful" under Israeli law.¹⁶ Such authorization – or "legalisation" – of outposts does not, however, alter their status as illegal under international law.

Six outposts were retroactively authorized in the reporting period. These were Mevo'ot Yericho, north of Jericho, which was authorized on the eve of the September 2019 Knesset election (in the reporting period the Israeli authorities also advanced plans for 182 units in the new settlement); Givat Salit in the northern parts of the Jordan Valley (94 units also advanced in the reporting period); Ibei Hanahal southeast of Bethlehem (98 units also advanced in the reporting period); Haroeh Haivri in the vicinity of Khan al-Ahmar east of Jerusalem, where an educational institution, erected without prior Israeli approval, was authorised; Brosh, in the northeast of the West Bank, which serves as an educational institution that includes hundreds of students, staff members and their families; and Kerem Reim north of Ramallah (140 units also advanced in the reporting period).

94 outposts were established from 1991 until 2005. While no outposts were established between 2006 and 2011, Peace Now reports that outposts have since 2012, and especially since 2017, become "a method of choice for settlers to establish facts on the ground by building unauthorized settlements knowing fully well that the [Israeli] government will allow them to remain and to try to retroactively legalize them while tacitly encouraging their growth." The location of the outposts established from 2012-2019 are visualised in the map to the right.

At least 5 new outposts were established in the reporting period, for instance the Makhroul outpost near the Bethlehem-area town of Beit Jala, and in the vicinity of the al-Makhroul restaurant, which was demolished by Israel in August 2019.

In 2019, 13 new outposts were established throughout the West Bank, in locations in the north of the West Bank; in the northern Jordan Valley; in the vicinity of Ramallah; east of Jerusalem in the vicinity of Khan al-Ahmar; in the Bethlehem area; and in the southern Hebron region.¹⁷ Furthermore, Peace Now reports that the new outposts established in 2019 are agricultural farms, which "allow settlers to take over vast areas (pasture



¹⁵ Peace Now.

¹⁶ According to Peace Now, 2 outposts (Migron and Amona) have been evacuated by Israeli authorities (in addition parts of outposts have been evacuated, as well as unauthorized buildings in settlements, and various structures in Hebron), while 18 have been retroactively authorized (3 as independent settlements and 15 as neighbourhoods of existing settlements); and at least 35 outposts are currently in the process of being authorized.

¹⁷ Peace Now.

and agricultural cultivation) with only a small group of people" and that "this control often involves [...] driving off Palestinian farmers from the area".

The so-called Regularization Law, approved by the Israeli Knesset in February 2017, with the aim of retroactively authorizing the status of Israeli homes built on Palestinian private land, remained frozen in the reporting period pending a decision by the Israeli High Court.¹⁸

4.4. Evictions in occupied East Jerusalem

UN OCHA estimates that some 199 Palestinian households in East Jerusalem have eviction orders against them, most of which were initiated by settler organisations, placing some 877 people, including 391 children, at risk of displacement. Evictions can have a grave physical, social, economic and emotional impact on the affected families.

On 10 July 2019, a Palestinian family, consisting of a single mother and her four children, was evicted from its home in Wadi al Hilweh (Silwan) after 25 years of protracted legal processes against the Elad settler organisation. Settlers have since moved into the apartment, while the family has moved in with other family members in what remains of the family property. In addition to its own legal representation, the family now has to pay hundreds of thousands of shekels for court costs, the cost for the eviction, and financial compensation to the Elad settler organisation.

4.5. Settler violence

Settler violence has over the years become a systematic occurrence in the West Bank with a significant economic and psychological impact on the local population. Settler violence threatens several fundamental rights of the Palestinians, including the rights to freedom of movement and security of person.¹⁹ Settler violence encompasses a range of acts, including throwing stones at cars and houses, graffiti and vandalism, burning fields and olive groves, physical assault, and, in some extreme incidents, killing. Attacks perpetrated by settlers frequently occur in Palestinian agricultural lands between Palestinian built up areas and settlement boundaries. This violence contributes to a coercive environment causing Palestinians to leave their homes, in addition to ongoing practices of home demolitions and forced evictions.

While accountability and law enforcement are crucial to deter settler violence and avoid an atmosphere of impunity, the vast majority of incidents go unaddressed despite the heavy military and policing presence of Israeli authorities in the West Bank. By contrast, the majority of crimes committed against settlers receive a much stronger investigative response. In some cases, Israeli forces have been seen standing idly by or protecting settlers during their attacks.

UN OCHA has reported 366 incidents of settler-related violence in the reporting period, which represents a slight decrease compared with the same period in 2018 (388 incidents), but a large increase compared with the same period in 2017 (257 incidents).²⁰ 82 of the reported incidents in the reporting period took place in Jerusalem's Old City, and 77 in Hebron. 29 of the reported incidents resulted in casualty, 133 in property damage, and 6 in casualty and property damage. A total of 3,518 trees and 490 vehicles were damaged by settlers in the reporting period.

¹⁸ The law was annulled by the Israeli High Court in June 2020, details to be provided in the next settlements report, covering the first half of 2020.

¹⁹ Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 30 January 2019 (A/HRC/40/42).

²⁰ Data available at <https://www.ochaopt.org/page/settler-related-violence>.

5. EU PUBLIC STATEMENTS DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

The EU issued the following statements related to settlements during the reporting period.

- On 22 July 2019, the EU HR/VP Spokesperson issued a [statement](#)²¹ on the demolition of Palestinian buildings in Wadi Hummus, in which EU's long-standing position on Israel's settlement policy was reiterated.
- On 6 August 2019, the EU HR/VP Spokesperson issued a [statement](#)²² on the advancement of well over 2,000 units in illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank.
- On 19 September 2019, the EU HR/VP Spokesperson issued a [statement](#)²³ on the decision by the Israeli government to establish a new settlement by authorizing the outpost Mevo'ot Yeriho in the Jordan Valley. The statement also mentioned recent announcements about the possible annexation of the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea area. The statement followed an announcement by the Prime Minister of Israel – in the run up to the Knesset election of September 2019 – to annex parts of the West Bank.
- On 4 November 2019, the EU HR/VP Spokesperson issued a [statement](#)²⁴ on the advancement of well over 2,000 units in illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank. The statement also mentioned that Israeli authorities had approved a building permit for the construction of a new tunnel road.
- On 18 November 2019, the EU High Representative/Vice-President issued a [statement](#)²⁵ on Israel's settlement policy. The statement followed an announcement earlier in November by the US Secretary of State in which he informed that the US Administration had changed its position on settlements, now holding that "the establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in the West Bank is not per se inconsistent with international law".

²¹ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/65699/node/65699_en

²² https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/66238/node/66238_en

²³ https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/mauritania/67466/node/67466_en

²⁴ https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/israel/69856/node/69856_en

²⁵ https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/israel/70610/node/70610_en