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EUROPEAN UNION

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

**2021 Report on Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem
Reporting period -January - December 2021**

Summary

In comparison to the previous year, 2021 experienced an even higher rate of settlement units advancements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem (22,030), enforcing the trend of a continuously increasing settlement expansion on occupied Palestinian territories. Adding to the exponentially high figures in 2021 were particularly the advancement of settlement units in occupied East Jerusalem, which more than doubled compared to the previous year, from 6,288 housing units to 14,894.

This trend of deepening settlement projects through plans and tenders occurred despite the announcement by the new Israeli government, which started its tenure on 13 June 2021, that it would be committed to a status quo when it comes to occupation-related matters.

The advancement, in 2021, in particular of three settlements - E1, Atarot and Lower Aqueduct – is a serious cause of concern. The settlements, if constructed, would disconnect East Jerusalemites from major West Bank urban areas, such as Hebron and Ramallah, and would thus have serious implications on Palestinian urban continuity and pose a serious threat to a viable two-state solution.

Other trends and developments contributing to settlement expansion in the reporting period included advancements of infrastructure and road projects as well as the establishment of new illegal so called outpost farms. The rise in settlement expansion plans by the Israeli authorities was also accompanied by a worrisome trend of rising settler violence in the oPt.

As outlined in several statements by the EEAS Spokesperson on new settlements announcements in 2021, the EU has repeatedly called on Israel to end all settlement activity, and to dismantle outposts erected since March 2001. It remains the EU's firm position that settlements are illegal under international law. Israel's decision to advance plans for the approval and construction of almost new settlement units in 2021, i.a. for Givat Hamatos and Har Homa, further undermines the prospects of a viable two-state solution.

1. INTRODUCTION

As of 31 December 2020¹, settlers made up 14% of the entire West Bank population (451,700 out of 3,267,704), housing in 132 settlements around the West Bank. Settlers represent around 5% of the Israeli population (451,700 out of 9,289,800).

According to the Israeli Bureau of Statistics, there are around 230,000 Israelis living in 10 settlements constructed in East Jerusalem. An estimated 3,000 more settlers live in settler compounds inside nine Palestinian neighborhoods of the city.

In 2021, 22,030 units were advanced in different stages in the planning and implementation process in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Table 1 and 2 contains a listing of the plans and tenders in question. 14,894 units concerned settlements located in occupied East Jerusalem, and 7,136 settlements located in other parts of the West Bank, including locations deep in the West Bank.²

2. ADVANCED SETTLEMENTS IN AND AROUND EAST JERUSALEM

Approximately 230,000 Israeli settlers live in East Jerusalem alongside 304,000 Palestinians³, in ten larger settlements and in a growing number of smaller settlements and houses taken over inside Palestinian neighborhoods.

During the reporting period, Israeli authorities i.a. advanced the Atarot settlement plan, the E1 settlement plan in Area C and the Lower Aqueduct Plan. If constructed, these plans would provide more than 14,000 additional housing units in and around occupied East Jerusalem.

Table 1. Overview of settlement advancements in East Jerusalem 2021 (July-December)

East Jerusalem Tenders		East Jerusalem Plans	
18 Jan	210 units in Pisgat Zeev	11 Jan	400 units in Gilo
18 Jan	250 units in Pisgat Zeev	31 Jan	44 units in Beit Hanina
24 Oct	83 units in Givat Hamatos	22 Mar	332 units in Gilo
		17 Mar	230 units in Neve Yaacov
		27 Apr	540 units in Har Homa E

¹ This is the last update made available by the Israeli Bureau of Statistics

² All the data on settlements advanced in the West Bank 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.

³ Source: Peace Now and Ir Amim

		9 Jun	348 units in Gilo
		6 Dec	9,000 units in Atarot
		8 Dec	473 units in Givat HaShaked
Total	543	Total	11,367
Total	Plans and Tenders 11,910		

Source: Ir Amim

2. SETTLEMENT PLANS, TENDERS, CONSTRUCTION AND TRENDS IN 2021

A trend that continued in 2021 was the establishment of illegal outposts, often described as agricultural farms, with the establishment of 13 new such outposts.⁴ The establishment of illegal agricultural farms has a huge negative impact on the Palestinian population as it generally hinders the access for Palestinians to large areas of land and enables the takeover of Palestinian farmland and pastureland (way beyond the perimeters of the illegal outpost). Under the Bennet-Lapid government, within the second half of 2021, six new illegal outposts were founded.

Table 2. Overview of settlement advancements in the West Bank 2021 (January-December)

Date	West Bank	Housing Units
17/01/2021	Oranit	66
17/01/2021	Elkana	0
17/01/2021	Karnei Shomron	24
17/01/2021	Barkan Industrial Area	0
17/01/2021	Shavei Shomron	152
17/01/2021	Itamar	123
17/01/2021	Tal Menashe	107
17/01/2021	Havat Yair	96
17/01/2021	Migdalim	0

⁴ <https://peacenow.org.il/en/settlements-watch/settlements-data/population>

17/01/2021	Nofei Nehemia	118
17/01/2021	Rechelim	94
17/01/2021	Ariel	0
23/06/2021	Alfei Menashe	0
23/06/2021	Elkana	0
23/06/2021	Modiin Illit	0
23/06/2021	Beit Haarava	0
23/06/2021	Ovnat	0
23/06/2021	Elazar	1
23/06/2021	Nokdim	0
23/06/2021	Tzofim	2
23/06/2021	Yizhar	2
23/06/2021	Etz Efraim	0
23/06/2021	Kochav Yaacov	0
23/06/2021	Migron	0
23/06/2021	Kfar Adumim	0
23/06/2021	Kfar Adumim	0
23/06/2021	Karnei Shomron	0
23/06/2021	Karnei Shomron	0
23/06/2021	Karnei Shomron	0
23/06/2021	Ariel	0
23/06/2021	Ariel	0
23/06/2021	Har Shmuel	0
23/06/2021	Givat Zeev	0
23/06/2021	Givat Zeev	N/I
23/06/2021	Givat Zeev	0
23/06/2021	Efrat	0
23/06/2021	Efrat	0

23/06/2021	Mishor Adumim	0
23/06/2021	Mishor Adumim	0
23/06/2021	Maaleh Adumim	0
23/06/2021	Mishor Adumim	0
23/06/2021	Maaleh Adumim	0
23/06/2021	Alon Shvut	0
27/10/2021	Bracha	286
27/10/2021	Barkan	10
27/10/2021	Revava	399
27/10/2021	Elon Moreh	100
27/10/2021	Hermesh	7
27/10/2021	Zofim	0
27/10/2021	Karnei Shomron	27
27/10/2021	Karnei Shomron	82
27/10/2021	Beit El	52
27/10/2021	Agan Haayalot (Givat Zeev)	40
27/10/2021	Givat Zeev	2
27/10/2021	Agan Haayalot (Givat Zeev)	44
27/10/2021	Agan Haayalot (Givat Zeev)	27
27/10/2021	Kfar Etzion	146
27/10/2021	Alon Shvut	110
27/10/2021	Alon Shvut	18
27/10/2021	Tene	68
27/10/2021	Sansana	100
27/10/2021	Vered Yericho	45
27/10/2021	Maaleh Michmash	14
27/10/2021	Efrat	4
27/10/2021	Tal Menashe	8

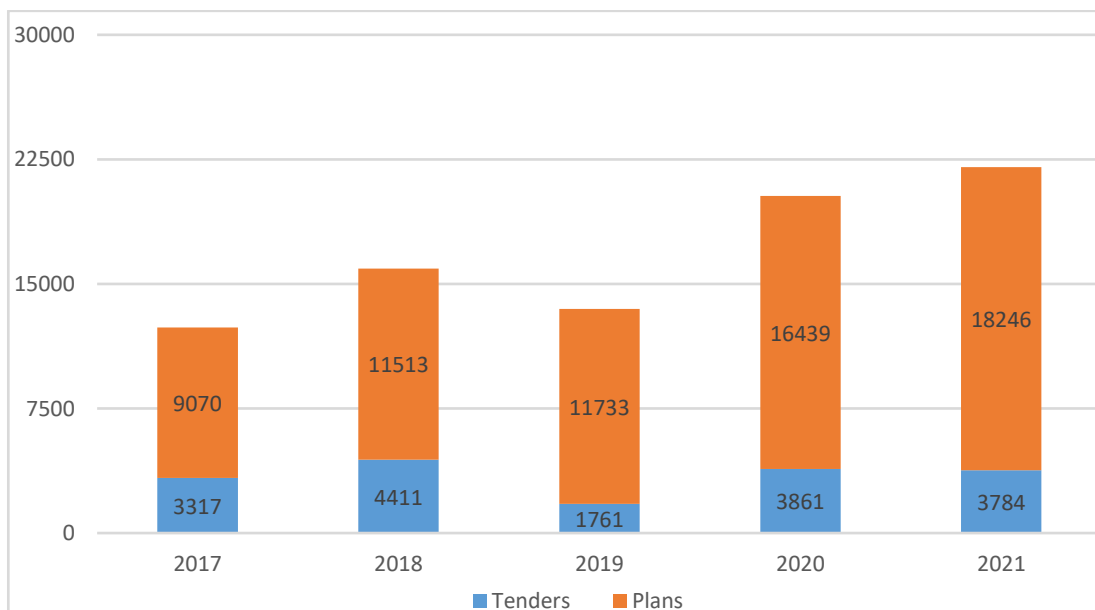
27/10/2021	Alei Zahav	0
27/10/2021	Peduel	7
27/10/2021	Haroeh Haivri	24
27/10/2021	Maaleh Michmash	0
27/10/2021	Eli	628
27/10/2021	Talmon	224
27/10/2021	Shima'a	8
27/10/2021	Kedumim	380

Source: Peace Now

3. TRENDS IN SETTLEMENT PLANS AND TENDERS SINCE 2017

A stark increase in the advancement of settlement plans (West Bank, including East Jerusalem) can be observed since 2017, with a continuous rise since 2019. While 2020 experienced a 40% increase in the advancement of settlement units compared to 2019 (from 11733 to 16439), 2021 saw a 10% rise (from 16439 to 18246). The advancement of tenders slightly decreased from 2020 to 2021 (from 3841 to 3784), yet remains relatively high when put in contrast and comparison with the years since 2017 (see table 3).

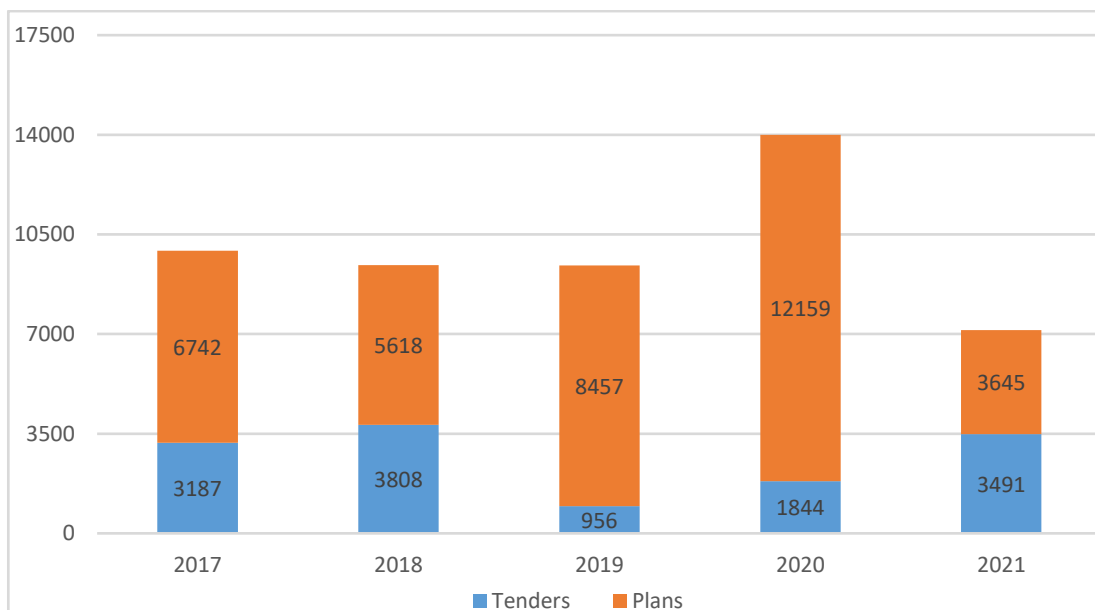
Table 3. Advancement of settlement units in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, 2017 - 2021



Source: Peace Now and Ir Amim

Settlement advancement in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem, experienced a drawback in 2021. Compared to 13,992 units (12,150 plans and 1833 tenders) in 2020, a total of 7136 units (3645 plans and 3491 tenders) got advanced in 2021, representing a high decrease.

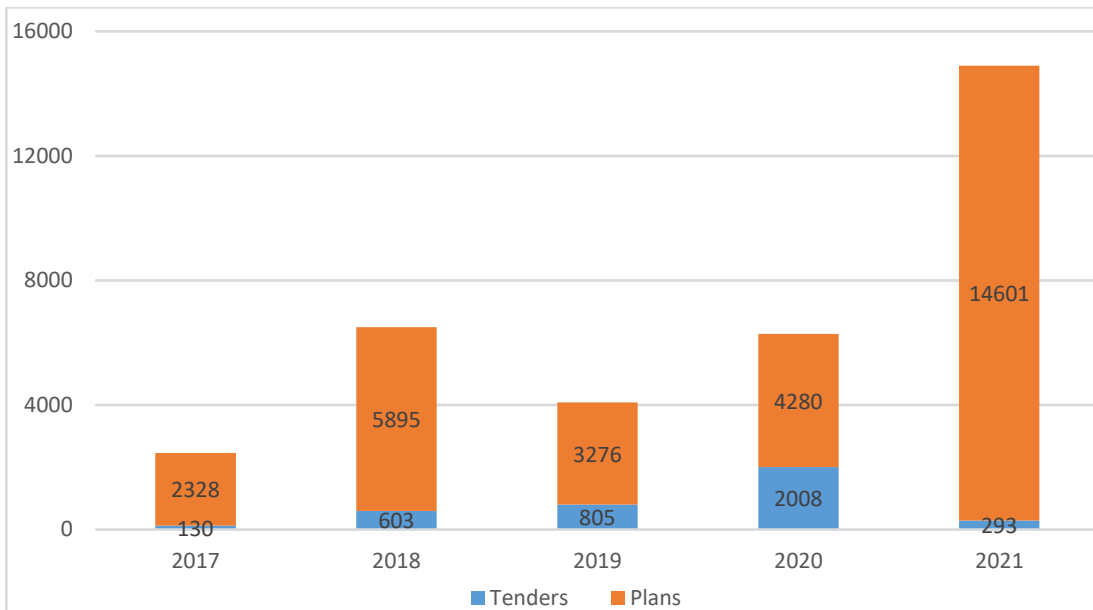
Table 3. Advancement of settlement units in the West Bank, here not including East Jerusalem, 2017-2021



Source: Peace Now

Therefore, it is particularly the advancement of housing units in settlements located in East Jerusalem that is unprecedented, greatly contributing to the overall number of settlement units advanced in 2021. As illustrated in Table 4, a total of 14,601 housing units in outline plans got advanced in Israeli settlements/enclaves over the green line in Jerusalem. According to Ir Amim, the number is so high due to the advancement of the Atarot settlement (9,000 housing units). Yet, even when excluding the Atarot housing units, the number of settlement units advanced in 2021 is the highest since 2018 (5,601).

Table 4. Advancement of settlement units in occupied East Jerusalem 2017-2021



Source: *Ir Amim* (these numbers do not include the settlement plans in Greater Jerusalem, for example in E1 (3,412 HU) and Har Gilo West (560 HU)).

The rise in settlement expansion plans by the Israeli authorities was accompanied by a worrisome trend of rising settler violence in the oPt. This rise in violent acts by settler, according to peace Now, is directly related to the erection and expansion of illegal outposts in the oPt⁵.

According to OCHA, in 2021, Palestinians experienced a total of 182 settler attacks, resulting in 5 fatalities and 177 injuries. The number of attacks in 2021 represent a stark increase compared to the previous year, which experienced a total of 120 settler attacks against Palestinians.⁶

The attacks, taking amongst others the forms of shooting, torching fields and livestock, theft, vandalization of property and intimidation of herders and their families, are primarily conducted against Palestinians in the West Bank, living in proximity to Israeli settlements. In December 2021, for instance, settlers injured three Palestinians on two occasions and damaged Palestinian-owned properties in 20 instances⁷.

Peace now reports a stark rise in settler violence in the second half of 2021 under the new Bennett-Lapid government. In comparison to an average of 20 incidents recorded in previous months, the 6-month period from July to December 2021 saw an average of 29 cases, representing a 45% increase.

Settler Attacks on Palestinians usually remain un-investigated, mainly due to the law enforcement's lack of will to deter or penalize such incidents. As the Yesh Din Rights Group reports, between 2005 and 2019, 91% of police investigations into these attacks were closed without indictments.

4. DEVELOPMENTS OF CONCERN IN THE REPORTING PERIOD

According to the Peace Now Settlement Report *'The government of unequivocal annexation'*, various settlement plans with serious implications to the prospects of the two-state solution and Palestinian continuity have been furthered and deepened under the Bennett-Lapid government, starting its tenure on 13 June 2021. In the absence of decision-making forums, ministers under this government could single handily take far-reaching decisions within their jurisdiction (e.g. advancement of Atarot Plan by Minister

⁵ http://peacenow.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/sattlers_report_eng.pdf

⁶ Source: OCHA

⁷ https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/poc_7-20_dec_2021.pdf

of Housing). As noted by Peace Now, construction starts in settlements with the establishment of the new government jumped by 62%, from 921 new housing units to 1,488. Such worrisome developments, occurring despite the new government's statement it would keep a status quo regarding occupation-related matters, demonstrate the continuity of Israel's settlement advancements.

The advancements of the following settlement plans in 2021 are of particular concern as they harm Palestinian development and further deepen occupation of lands in the occupied territories:

- **The Atarot Settlement Plan in East Jerusalem:** In August 2021, the ministry of housing came forward with a 9,000-housing-unit settlement plan to expand the Atarot neighborhood, between the Palestinian neighborhoods of Kfar Aqab, Qalandia and A-Ram south to Ramallah. The plan was set to be discussed in a meeting with the Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee in December 2021. On 24 November 2021, the Jerusalem City Council's Planning and Building Committee gave its backing to the plan, sparking the attention of the US government and following which US Secretary of State Antony Blinken gave Prime Minister Naftali Bennett a call on 3 December 2021 in which the former expressed his concern over the plan and its implication on the two-state solution⁸. The EU has also been vocal on the plan through means of public diplomacy⁹. Diplomatic pressure pushed Israeli authorities to halt issuing a final approval to build the settlement¹⁰. As noted by Peace Now, the construction of the Atarot housing units is a dangerous plan that, if advanced, would have a serious blow to the two-state solution as it would further disconnect Palestinians between Ramallah and East Jerusalem.¹¹
- **The E1 settlement plan in Area C:** E1 was initiated by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in the 1990s. The plan consists of 4,000 housing units¹². Since 2005, the plan was however frozen on and off due to pressure by the international community, including the EU, US, and the UN. The E1 settlement plan poses a serious threat to the viability and the territorial contiguity of a future Palestinian state and thus a threat to a viable two-state solution. If advanced, the plan would transform East Jerusalem into an enclave, disconnecting East Jerusalemites from other important cities in the West Bank.¹³
- **The Lower Aqueduct Plan:** On 17 January 2021, the District Planning Committee approved for depositing the "Lower Aqueduct Plan" for 1,465 units. The planned settlement neighborhood, south of Kibbutz Ramat Rachel near Givat Hamatos and Har Homa, intends to connect the Givat Hamatos settlement with the Har Homa one¹⁴. The advancement of the Lower Aqueduct Plan would complete the southern settlement ring and consequently be an additional obstacle to the freedom of movement for Palestinians between East Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Similar to the Atarot Plan which, if advanced, would limit the urban continuity between Ramallah and East Jerusalem, the construction of the Lower Aqueduct settlement would present a drawback to a sustainable and long-term two-state solution.

5. EU PUBLIC STATEMENTS DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

⁸ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/blinken-initiated-call-with-pm-amid-doubts-israel-actually-called-off-atarot-plan/>

⁹ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/heads-mission-1_en

¹⁰ <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-jerusalem-airport-settlements-halt-amid-us-pressure>

¹¹ <https://peacenow.org.il/en/the-plan-for-9000-units-in-atarot-south-of-ramallah-is-promoted>

¹² <https://imeu.org/article/fact-sheet-israels-e1-settlement>

¹³ <https://peacenow.org.il/en/despite-its-promise-the-government-is-promoting-the-e1-plan-which-is-considered-deadly-for-the-future-of-two-states>

¹⁴ <https://peacenow.org.il/en/plans-for-3700-units-in-east-jerusalem-will-be-discussed-at-the-local-committee-on-january-5>

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

- On 25 October 2021, the EEAS Spokesperson issued a [statement¹⁵](#) on further settlement expansion, following the announcement of tenders published for the construction of more than 1,300 housing units in Israeli settlements.
- On 5 May 2021, the EEAS Spokesperson issued a [statement¹⁶](#) on settlement expansion and the situation in East Jerusalem, following the announcement by Israeli authorities of their intention to construct 540 new housing units in Har Homa E.
- On 17 January 2021, the EEAS Spokesperson issued a [statement¹⁷](#) on new settlements announcements. The statement was issued as a response to Israel's latest decision to advance plans for the approval and construction of almost 800 new settlement units in the West Bank.

¹⁵ https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/106425/israel-statement-spokesperson-further-settlement-expansion_en

¹⁶ https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/97845/israelpalestine-statement-spokesperson-settlement-expansion-and-situation-east-jerusalem_en

¹⁷ https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/91503/israelopt-statement-spokesperson-new-settlements-announcements_en