



Six-Month Report on Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, (Reporting period July-December 2018)

Summary

In the second half of 2018 (**July-December**) advancement of housing units continued at an unprecedented high level. More than 7,000 housing units in the occupied West Bank (4,350) including East Jerusalem (2,900) were advanced in different stages of the planning and implementation process (tenders and plans).

Several important developments took place during the reporting period. In East Jerusalem, Israeli High Court decisions brought between 600 and 700 Palestinians at risk of being evicted in Batan al Hawa (close to the Old city) and families in Sheikh Jarrah (32 persons) lost their final appeal against eviction. A development that will deepen the Israel control of East Jerusalem and the Old City Basin.

In December, the Israeli government announced that it would allocate land at the Givat Eitam outpost site for the purpose of planning a new settlement in the strategic "E2" area, that potentially will cut off Bethlehem from the southern West Bank, completing the near encirclement of Bethlehem by Israeli settlements.

The many settlement approvals also included plans that will effectively regulate two new settlements (by legalizing the unauthorized outposts of Ibei Hanachal and Gva'ot) and establish two new settlement industrial zones (one near the Beitar Illit settlement and one near the Avnei Hefetz settlement).

The total advancement of settlement units in 2018 (**January-December**) amounted to more than 15,800 units (9,400 units in the West Bank and 6,400 units in East Jerusalem). The figures show a sharp spike in planning for future construction. This development will, over several years, enable potentially more than 60,000¹ Israeli settlers to move to the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

There are currently approximately 215,000 Israelis living in East Jerusalem while the settler population in Area C in the occupied West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem, is some 413,000². This brings the settler population to approximately 630,000 Israeli settlers in 143 settlement locations in the West Bank (132) including East Jerusalem (11)³ and 106 outposts.

Settlements are illegal under international law as reaffirmed by UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016) and the developments on the ground make the prospect of a two-state solution, with Jerusalem as the future capital of both states, increasingly unattainable.

¹ The estimate is based on the average size of a household in the occupied West Bank of 4,66 persons per family (as defined by Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, media release 030/2016, February 7, 2016, p.5).

² Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017

³ East Talpiyot, French Hill, Gilo, Har Homa, Jewish Quarter, Maalot Dafna, Neve Ya'akov, Pisgat Ze'ev, Ramat Eshkol, Ramat Shlomo and Ramot.

1. TRENDS IN SETTLEMENT PLANS AND TENDERS IN 2018 (July-December)

In the second half of 2018 more than 7,000 housing units were advanced in different stages in the planning and implementation process in the West Bank (4,350) including East Jerusalem (2,900).⁴

The expansion of settlement units took place in three waves.

The first wave took place in August when plans for 1,004 housing units in the West Bank and tenders for 511 housing units were advanced.

The second wave was advanced in October/November when a total of 2,500 housing units were promoted through plans in East Jerusalem. This includes a plan for 640 housing units in Ramat Shlomo, along with close to 700 housing units in Ramot and 345 units in Gilo. Furthermore, more than 600 units were promoted in Pizgat Zeev. A plan was also promoted, that would introduce a new settlement in Beit Hanina. If approved the plan would likely introduce about 75 new settler homes into the Palestinian neighbourhood.

The third wave took place in December when a total of 3,200 housing units were promoted through plans in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This includes tenders for 641 housing units in the settlements of Beitar Illit, Ofarim, Ma'aleh Adumim and Karnei Shomron and plans for 2,200 units in settlement across the West Bank. In addition, 384 units were promoted in East Jerusalem (Pizgat Zeev). Two new settlement industrial zones (one near the Beitar Illit settlement and one near the Avnei Hefetz settlement) were promoted as well as a plan, for an educational campus and a gas station, close to the unauthorized outpost of Mitzpeh Danny.

Overview of settlement announcements in the second half of 2018 (July-December)

East Jerusalem		West Bank	
20.9	Plans for 13 units (Sheikh Jarrah)	14.8	Tenders for 511 units (Beit Arie)
18.10	Plans for 100 units (Ramot)	22.8	Plans for 1,004 units (in 10 settlements)
23.10	Plans for 680 units (Pizgat Zeev)	25-26.12	Plans for 2,191 units (22 settlements)
5.11	Plans for 640 units (Ramat Shlomo)	27.12	Plans for 641 units (4 settlements)
5.11	Plans for 416 units (Ramot)		
18.11	Plans for 75 units (Beit Hanina)		
22.11	Plans 263 units (Ramot) & 345 units (Gilo)		
4.12	Plans for 384 units (Pizgat Zeev)		
Total	2,916 units	Total	4,350 units

Source: Peace Now and Ir Amim

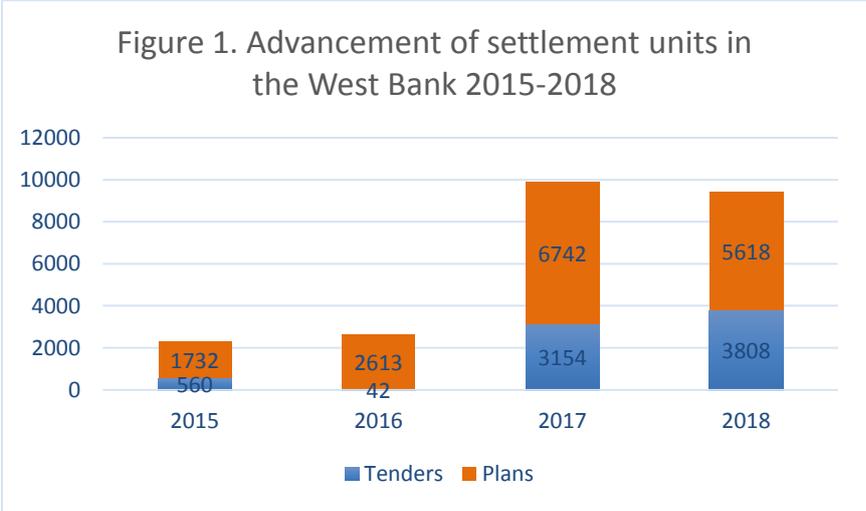
1.1. TRENDS IN SETTLEMENT PLANS AND TENDERS SINCE 2015

The total number of housing units promoted through plans and tenders during the 12 months of 2018 in the West Bank (9,400) including East Jerusalem (6,400) was approximately 15,800 housing units.

This development accounts for an extraordinary three- to four-fold increase in advancement of housing units through plans and the issuance of tenders compared to 2015/2016 (see figure 1 and 2).

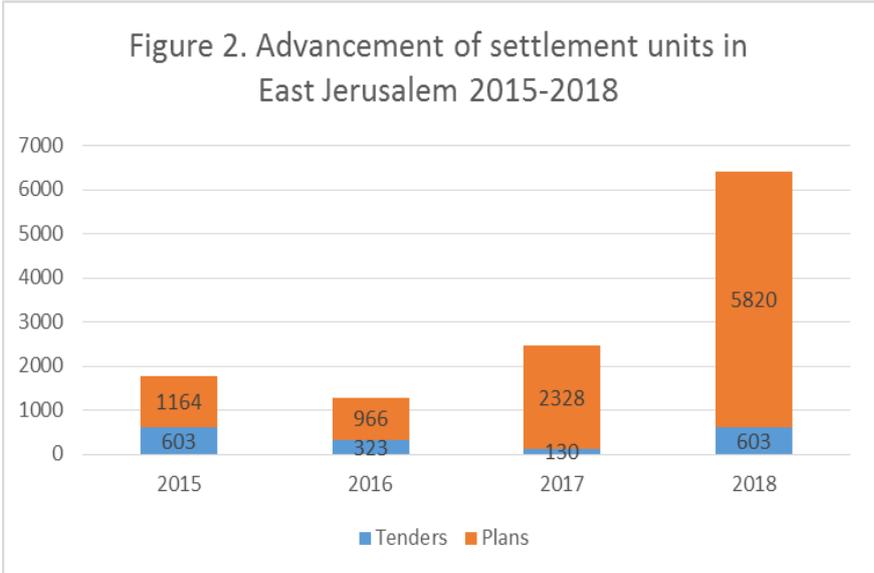
⁴ All the data on settlements are based on publicly available information from the Civil Administration's High Planning Committee, where Peace Now is present at the meetings. For detailed information about the plans see this link: peacenow.org.il

In particular the trend has taken off since 2017. As illustrated in figure 1 the West Bank has experienced a significant acceleration in promotion of plans and tenders in the past two years. 9,400 units were promoted in 2018.



Source: Peace Now

A similar picture of accelerated settlements advancement was seen in East Jerusalem in the past two years. 5,800 units were promoted through plans and 600 through tenders in 2018.



Source: Ir Amim (The 2018 numbers include advancement of 2,992 units in Gilo South which were discussed at local committee).

2. TRENDS IN ACTUAL CONSTRUCTION (first three quarters of 2018)

While plans and tenders indicate expected future construction activity, data from the Israeli Central Bureau Statistics show that from January to September 2018 actual construction of 1,456 housing units began in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem compared to 1,213 construction starts from January to September in 2017 (no data is yet available for quarter 4). This represents an increase of 20% in 2018.

For reference, according to data from the Israeli Bureau of Statistics the average number of construction starts in the West Bank, over the past 15 years has been above 2,000 units per year with a slowly rising trend.

3. TRENDS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SETTLEMENT EXPANSION

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

Allocation of land south of Bethlehem to the Ministry of Housing

On December 26, the State informed the High Court of Justice that the government had allocated to the Ministry of Housing an area of 1,182 dunams (1,28 km²) south of Bethlehem, near the village of a-Nahla, for the purpose of planning a new settlement, building on the Givat Eitam outpost site, potentially allowing up to 2,500 housing units, the so-called E2 plan (presently only a preliminary skeleton plan exists which has not been implemented). Like the E1 plan east of Jerusalem, which is designed to create a corridor from west to east that will sever Palestinian contiguity in the heart of the West Bank, the E2 plan also aims potentially to create a corridor from west to east—from the settlements of Gush Etzion, through the settlement of Efrat and eastward. The E2 plan will prevent the development of Bethlehem in the only direction that remains unblocked by Israeli settlements bypass roads or the West Bank separation barrier.

Expansion of roads and infrastructure projects

Infrastructure and transport projects strengthen Israeli control over East Jerusalem. In the second half of 2018 work continued on a new second line ("Green Line") of the light rail that will double the length of the existing rail, further connecting settlements with West Jerusalem. The construction of this line advanced rapidly throughout 2018. It will consist of 19.6km of track, running from Mount Scopus in the northeast of Jerusalem to the Gilo settlement in the south of the city. Branch lines will connect the Mount Scopus campus of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem to the Givat Ram campus in West Jerusalem. Moreover, the planning process for a third line ("Blue Line") is underway.

Touristic settlement expansion

On 19 November 2018, an amendment to Israel's National Parks, Nature Reserves, National Sites and Memorial Sites Law, was approved in the Knesset. The law allows the expansion of the number of settler homes around the Old City by building in the City of David national park in East Jerusalem.

Legalisation of outposts

In the reporting period two outposts were regulated. Plans were approved for the outpost of Ibei Hanahal as a "neighborhood" of the Ma'ale Amos settlement, enabling the government to avoid having to formally declare the establishment of a new settlement. In addition, the Gva'ot Settlement (established in the 1990s without plans) was approved by a plan.

Evictions

On November 21, Israel's High Court of Justice (HCJ) rejected a petition filed by over 100 Palestinian residents of Silwan to stop efforts by an Israeli settler organisation to evict them from their homes. The organisation had gained control of the properties by invoking an Israeli discriminatory law by which Israelis, but not Palestinians, may claim lands they owned prior to 1948. As a result of this decision, between 600 and 700 Palestinians are at risk of being evicted in Batan al Hawa. Some 17 families have already been displaced. If evictions continue, Batan al Hawa is anticipated to become the largest settlement compound in a Palestinian neighbourhood in the Old City Basin.

On November 15 Israel's Supreme Court dismissed a final appeal against the eviction of the Palestinian Sabbagh family in Sheikh Jarrah consisting of 32 members including 6 children. In 1956 the family was resettled (by UNRWA and the government of Jordan) in Sheikh Jarrah. Sheikh Jarrah is

one in a ring of Palestinian neighbourhoods where displacement activities are increased in order to deepen Israeli control.

House take overs in East Jerusalem

On 3 October, settlers moved into a house in Silwan after buying it from its Palestinian owners. According to Ir Amim the site includes an empty lot that could be used to facilitate tours to the future underground tunnel that will run between the Siloam Pools and the Kedem Compound, the future headquarter of Elad (a settler organisation).

On 4 October, settlers moved into a house in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City, 100 meters away from Al Haram al-Sharif/ The Temple Mount.

3. EU PUBLIC STATEMENTS DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

During the reporting period the EU issued the following statement related to settlement expansion:

- On 23 August 2018, EU Spokesperson's statement was issued on plans and tenders announced by Israel. The statement denounces the advancement of over two thousand settlement units in the West Bank including East Jerusalem. The statement reaffirms that if implemented, these plans would further jeopardise the prospect of a contiguous and viable future Palestinian state.
- On 24 November 2018, EU Spokesperson's statement was issued on a settlement announcement by Israeli authorities. The statement addresses promoted plans for close to 800 new housing units in the Israeli settlements of Ramat Shlomo and Ramot in East Jerusalem.
- On 28 December 2018, EU Spokesperson's statement was issued on a settlement announcement by Israeli authorities. The statement addresses the over two thousand settlement units across the West Bank.