



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

Summary

In the first half of 2018 (January-June) advancement of housing units continued at a higher level than in the previous reporting period (July-December 2017). More than 6,000 housing units in the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem were advanced in different stages of the planning and implementation process. This development will, over several years, enable potentially more than 27,000¹ Israeli settlers to move to the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

More than 2,100 housing units (of the 6,000 units) are new plans, i.e. they have not been introduced in the planning circuit in the years before 2018.

An important development during the reporting period was the promotion of two plans that would establish two entirely new settlements (Zayit Ra'anana and Brosh) by authorising illegal outposts and the establishment of a new settlement near Hebron, north of the settlement of Kiryat Arba (based on a plan approved in 1988).

Another worrying development was the continued construction of and the approval of funds for large scale road infrastructure projects in the occupied West Bank that improves the connectivity of settlements to Israel.

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 399,300. This brings the settler population to approximately 600,000 Israeli settlers in 143 locations in the West Bank (132) including East Jerusalem (11)². According to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics 4.6% of the total Israeli population resides today in the Occupied West Bank excluding East Jerusalem.

Through recent settlement activity, Israel continues to reinforce existing settlements and the separation of East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank and is exacerbating the territorial fragmentation of the West Bank.

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

1. TRENDS IN SETTLEMENT PLANS AND TENDERS IN 2018 (January-June)

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).

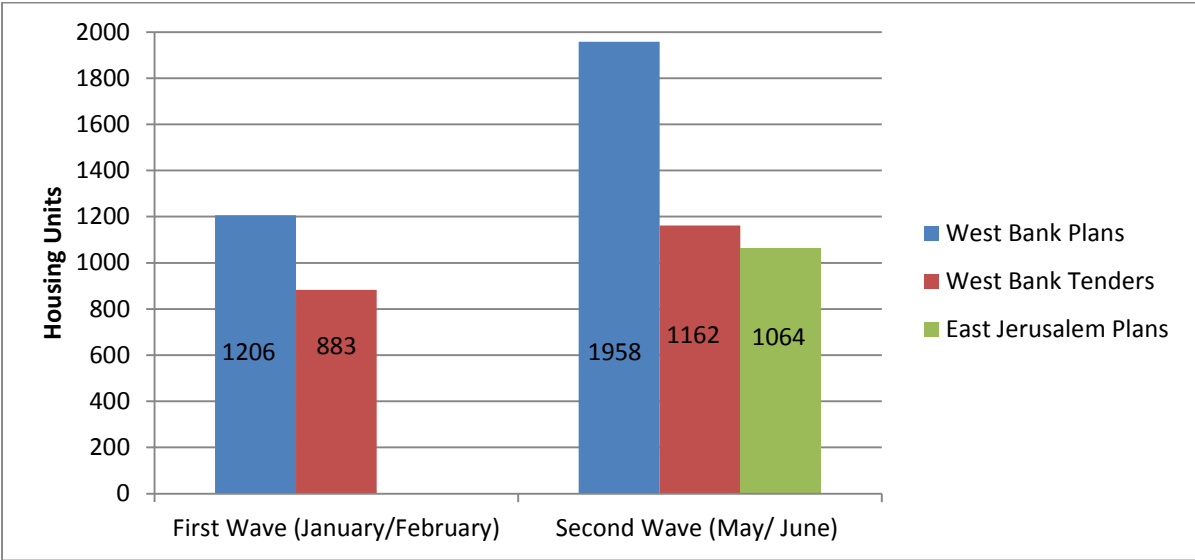
² East Talpiyot, French Hill, Gilo, Har Homa, Jewish Quarter, Maalot Dafna, Neve Ya'akov, Pisgat Ze'ev, Ramat Eshkol, Ramat Shlomo and Ramot.

In the first half of 2018 more than 6,000 housing units were advanced in different stages in the planning and implementation process.³ The expansion of settlement units took place in two waves (see figure 1).

The first wave of plans was advanced by the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) in January and February when a total of plans for 1,206 housing units were issued. The plans included the temporary approval of 7 structures in the Nativ Ha'Avot outpost which is located partially on private Palestinian Land, and the establishment of a "temporary" settlement for 15 families of the Nativ Haavot whose houses were demolished by a court order. In February, the committee approved plans for 68 new housing units in the settlement of Elazar as well as the construction of a hotel with 120 rooms in the Jordan Valley next to a tourism areal and an educational campus in the illegal outpost of Mitzpe Danny. In addition to these plans, the Higher Planning Committee also published tenders for 883 units.

The second wave took place in May and June, when plans for 1,958 housing units and tenders for 1,162 housing units in the West Bank were advanced.⁴ The plans in the second wave also include 92 new housing units for settlers one kilometre away from Khan al-Ahmar, a Palestinian village slated for demolition. In June, plans for 1,064 housing units in the East Jerusalem settlement of Pisgat Ze'ev were promoted.

Figure 1: Overview of the numbers of housing units promoted through plans and tenders during the first half of 2018 (January – June)



Source: Peace Now (Plans and Tenders for the West Bank) / Ir Amim (Plans for East Jerusalem)

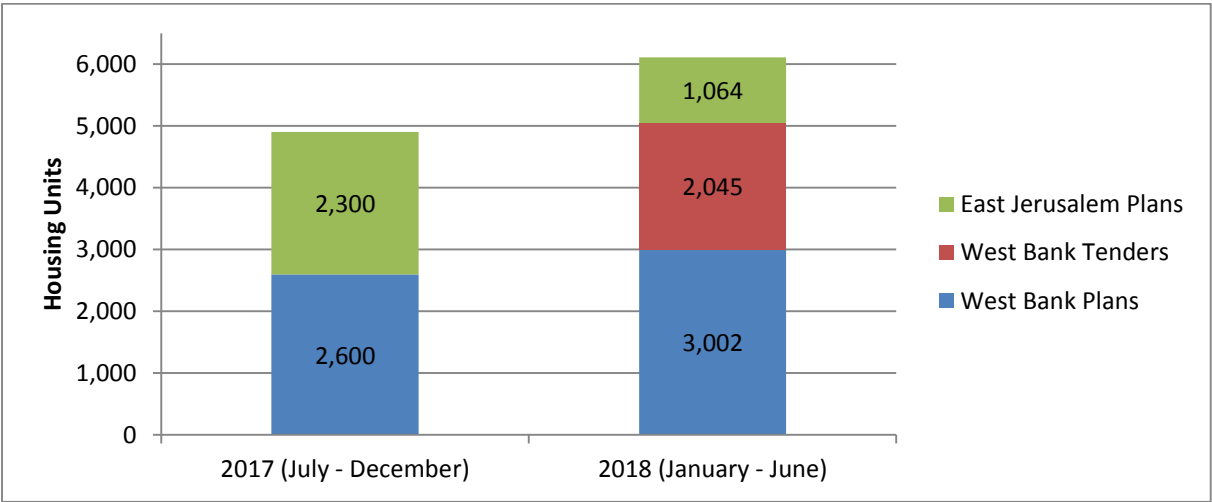
In general, the number of the advancement of housing units in 2018 continued at a higher-level as the previous reporting period (July-December 2017), with 6111⁵ housing units promoted (see Figure 2).

³ 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.

⁴ Source: <http://peacenow.org.il/en/80-1958-housing-units-approved-30-may-2018-isolated-settlements>.

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. The reason for the total number of 6111 units advanced through plans is slightly lower than the sum of the waves (2,089+4,184) is that close to 200 units have been advanced twice at different stages of the process and are counted only once in the total.

Figure 2: Number of housing units promoted through plans and tenders in the occupied West Bank, and East Jerusalem, compared to the last reporting period



Source: Peace Now (Plans and Tenders for the West Bank) / Ir Amim (Plans for East Jerusalem)

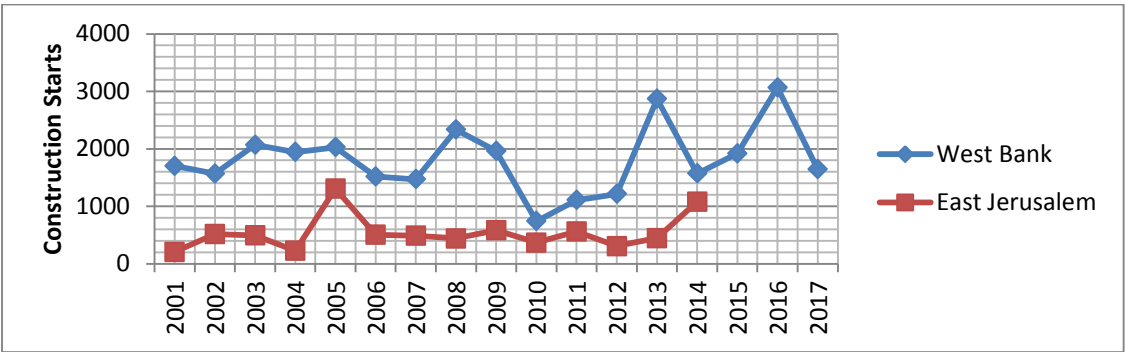
2. TRENDS IN ACTUAL CONSTRUCTION (four quarters of 2017)

While plans and tenders indicate expected future construction activity, data from the Israeli Central Bureau Statistics show that from January to December 2017 actual construction of 1,643 housing units began in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem compared to 3,066 construction starts in 2016.

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 (see figure 3).

In 2016, 1,826 units were completed compared to 1,759 completed constructions in 2017.

Figure 3: Overview of construction starts in the period 2001-2017



Source: ICBS. Note: Data on construction starts in East Jerusalem for 2015, 2016 and 2017 is not available.

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:

Expansion of roads and infrastructure projects

The construction of the northern section of the Eastern Ring Road was completed in the first half of 2018. According to Ir Amim, a checkpoint has been installed but still lacks the security budget to start operations. Once opened, the road will facilitate access to Jerusalem for settlers northeast of the city while carrying Palestinians from Ramallah to Bethlehem without entry into Jerusalem⁶.

The construction of the new light rail line (green line) has begun in 2018. The line will run from Gilo on the southern side of the city, via the Hebrew University Givat Ram campus, French Hill and will terminate on Mount Scopus in East Jerusalem. The cost of the project is estimated at 2.4 billion € and the line is expected to open in 2024. In addition, the Israeli Minister of Transportation, Israel Katz, announced plans for an additional light rail line that will connect the Israeli settlement of Ariel in West Bank to the center of Israel and is expected open in 2025.

Touristic settlement expansion

The Settlement Subcommittee of the Higher Planning Committee of the Civil Administration approved the construction of a hotel in the Jordan Valley with 120 rooms next to a motor park and a Tourist Area.

Planning continued for the cable car project that is intended to run from West Jerusalem, over the East Jerusalem neighbourhoods of Abu Tur and Silwan, to the not yet constructed settler-promoted Kedem Compound in Silwan. The Kedem Center in Silwan is expected to become the final station of the cable-car line.

Hebron settlements

Four caravans were established (based on a plan issued in 1988) in a new settlement site north of the settlement of Kiryat Arba to advance the construction of a new industrial site called "Mevaser."⁷

On 27 March, settlers illegally occupied two houses owned by the Palestinian Zaatari family. The settlers have since received a transactional permit by Israeli authorities which only allows for the beginning of their registration process. Another house with a similar legal status, owned by the Abu Rajab family was evacuated by the settlers on March 22nd, following a court ruling.

East Jerusalem⁸

On 21 February, the Local Planning and Building Committee of Jerusalem discussed a detailed outline plan for 2,992 new housing units known as Gilo Southeast that would, if built, consume an additional 268,000 square meter of land along the southern perimeter of East Jerusalem. Gilo Southeast would be another step towards separating the southern perimeter of East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank.

As of May 2018, approximately 120 Palestinian families are under threat of eviction in East Jerusalem after eviction suits have been filed by Israeli settlers and authorities.

On 9 April members of the Elad settler organization illegally occupied three apartments in Silwan. They remain in the buildings and receive police protection.

⁶ Source: Ir Amim

⁷ Source: Peace Now

⁸ Source Ir Amin

In April the District Planning and Building Committee promoted a plan for a 6-story commercial building in Sheik Jarrah, East Jerusalem despite the area being zoned for public buildings for a Palestinian neighbourhood lacking in social services.

3. EU PUBLIC STATEMENTS DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

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

- On 11 January 2018, an EU Spokesperson's statement was issued on a settlement announcement by Israeli authorities. The statement addresses promoted plans for over a thousand settlement units and published tenders for over 800 units throughout the West Bank.
- On 31 May 2018, an EU Spokesperson's statement was issued on the latest settlement announcement by Israeli authorities as well as the intended demolition of the Khan Al-Ahmar community.