

**UNITED NATIONS  
LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN MEETING  
IN SUPPORT OF ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE**

*The urgency of realizing a two-State solution*

Montevideo, 29 and 30 March 2011

---

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**PLENARY I**

**Advancing peace between Israelis and Palestinians –  
Obstacles and opportunities**

Paper presented by

**Mr. Yariv Oppenheimer**  
Director General, Peace Now  
Tel Aviv

### **The Settlements and the Peace Process**

The settlements are the towns and communities in Israel that Israel unilaterally established in the West Bank.

Today in the west bank there are 140 settlements, approximately 300,000 settlers

There were/are three main motives for establishing settlements:

- 1) Political ideology - an attempt to prevent the establishment of Palestinian state
- 2) Religion - the right of Jews to live in the Holy Land
- 3) Real Estate – a housing solution to overcrowding in particular in the Jerusalem area and in Israeli cities along the Green Line

Israeli's attitude towards settlements is rather ambivalent, on one hand the settlers are presented as pioneers, the forefront of the conflict with the Palestinians and are protecting the state's borders. On the other hand the settlers are viewed as extremists endanger peace.

Recent disappointments have strengthened the status of settlers in the Israelis eyes, such as the rise of Hamas after the disengagement from Gaza and the settlement freeze during which the Palestinians were unwilling to begin negotiations.

### **The Current Policy**

The Israeli government is under pressure from local politicians to build settlements and this is countered with pressure exists from international and domestic sources trying to prevent the expansion of Israeli construction

Many in the political center agree with building only in places like to remain forever under Israeli control, even after an agreement - the settlement blocs

Today the government allows settlers to build on the basis of previous approvals, mainly in small isolated settlements. The government has refrained from issuing any new tenders, except in extraordinary cases.

The situation has become more complicated over the years and more difficult to resolve, but still the situation is not irreversible.

Israel's disengagement proved that when there is public support settlers can be evacuated and the country does not fall into civil war.

\*\*\*\*\*