



22 November 2021

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 2020**

Summary

Advancement of plans for settlement units in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem continued in the second half of 2020 (July-December), albeit at a lower rate than in the first half of 2020 (January-July). 8,058 settlement units were advanced in different stages of the planning and implementation process (plans and tenders). 3,010 of the units pertain to settlements located in occupied East Jerusalem, and 4,948 to settlements located in other parts of the West Bank, including in locations deep in the West Bank. The total number of settlement units advanced through plans and tenders recorded in 2020 (22,448) is close to double the number recorded in 2019 (11,427), making 2020 a “record year” in terms of advanced settlements units in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem seen over the past five years.

In East Jerusalem a tender for 1,257 units was announced (an increase from the 1,077 units announced in February) for the previously frozen and very sensitive project, to create an entirely new settlement in Givat Hamatos. In addition, road infrastructure projects were advanced in and around occupied East Jerusalem including in the West Bank that mainly serve to connect the settlements to one another and to Jerusalem.

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.

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.¹ 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 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. INTRODUCTION

There are approximately 227,100 Israeli settlers living in East Jerusalem while the settler population in Area C of the West Bank is approximately 451,700.² This brings the Israeli settler population to around 678,800 individuals in some 170 settlement locations and some 146 outposts.³

In the second half of 2020, 8,148 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. 3,200 units concerned settlements located in occupied East Jerusalem, and 4,948 settlements located in other parts of the West Bank, including locations deep in the West Bank.⁴

2. ADVANCED SETTLEMENTS IN AND AROUND EAST JERUSALEM

Approximately 227,100 Israeli settlers live in East Jerusalem alongside 354,000 Palestinians, in eleven larger settlements and in a growing number of smaller settlements and houses taken over inside Palestinian neighbourhoods. During the reporting period the particularly sensitive project to establish an entirely new settlement in Givat Hamatos moved forward with a tender of 1,257 units advanced on 15 November. Together with the existing settlement of Gilo and Har Homa, Israeli construction in Givat Hamatos and Har Homa E would effectively sever the connection between East Jerusalem and Bethlehem and isolate the Palestinian neighbourhood of Beit Safafa from any adjacent Palestinian territory.

Table 1. Overview of settlement advancements in East Jerusalem 2020 (July-December)

East Jerusalem Tenders		East Jerusalem Plans	
15 Nov	1257 units Givat Hamatos	1 August	Plans for 223 units (French Hill)
1 Jan	461 units in Pisgat Zeev (3 tenders)	1 Oct	Plans for 300 units (Pisgat Zeev)
2 Jan	1 tender for a commercial building in Gilo	19 Oct	Plans for 173 units (Neeve Yakov)
16 Dec	290 HU in Gilo	21 Nov	Plans for 405 units (Neeve Yakov)
Total	2009	Total	1101
Total	Plans and Tenders 3110		

Source: *Ir Amim*

2. SETTLEMENT PLANS, TENDERS, CONSTRUCTION AND TRENDS IN 2020

The expansion in terms of advancement of plans of settlements outside of East Jerusalem during the reporting period (July- December) took place on 14 and 15 October, when the Israeli Higher Planning

² Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019.

³ Peace Now.

⁴ 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.

Committee advanced plans for 4948 units. Out of these some 500 concerned retroactive legalization (according to Israeli law) of illegally built units and two outposts, Tapuah Ma'arav and Pnei Kedem. Together with Mitzpe Dani and Karmeit Doron a total of four illegal outposts were legalised by Israel in 2020.

As noted by the Israeli NGO Peace Now 2,433 housing units began actual construction in 2020, signifying a continued high increase in construction starts (on average 28%) as seen since 2017. Out of these 46% of the construction was in settlements that Peace Now describe as national-religious, 31% in Ultra-Orthodox, 21% in mixed religious-secular, and 2% in secular settlements.⁵

Another trend that continued in 2020 was the establishment of illegal outposts, often described as agricultural farms, with the establishment of 11 new such outposts.⁶ 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).⁷

Table 2. Overview of settlement advancements in the West Bank 2020 (July-December)

Date	West Bank	Date	West Bank
14 Oct	Plan for 82 units (Karnei Shomron)	15 Oct	Plan for 120 units (Pnei Kedem)
14 Oct	Plan for 35 units (Efrat)	15 Oct	Plan for 286 units (Bracha)
14 Oct	Plans for 75 units (Shimaa)	15 Oct	Plan for 133 units (Tapuah Maarav)
14 Oct	Plan for 382 units (Beit El)	15 Oct	Plan for 148 units (Rimonim)
14 Oct	Plan for 560 units (Har Gilo)		
14 Oct	Plans for 205 units (Kfar Eldad)		
14 Oct	Plan for 200 units (Asfar)		
14 Oct	Plan for 132 units (Kfar Adumim)		
14 Oct	Plan for 140 units (Kerem Reim)		
14 Oct	Plan for 2 units (New Givon)		
14 Oct	Plan for 64 units (Telem)		
15 Oct	Plan for 179 units (Einav)		
15 Oct	Plan for 10 units (Barkan)		

⁵ See Peace Now 2020 Settlement Construction Report "From De Jure to De Facto Annexation" p. 1 <http://peacenow.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Construction-in-Settlements-2020.pdf>

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⁷ For more information see Eyal Hareuveni and Dror Etkes, "This is Ours, And This, Too" https://www.btselem.org/sites/default/files/publications/202103_this_is_ours_and_this_too_eng.pdf

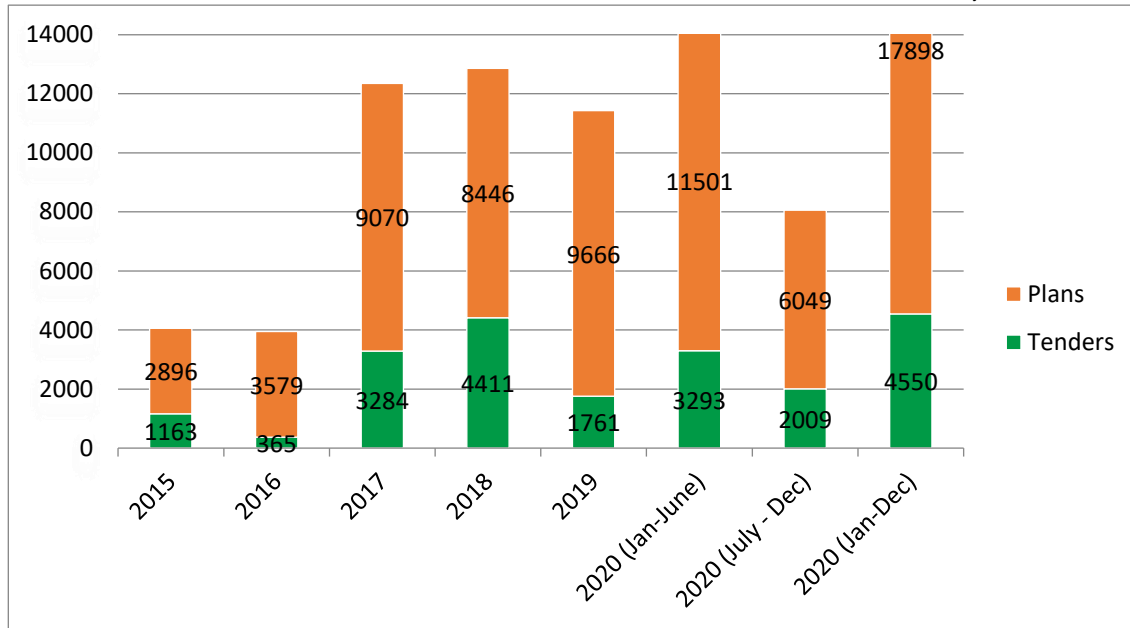
15 Oct	Plan for 7 units (Pduel)		
15 Oct	Plan for 74 units (Yakir)		
15 Oct	Plan for 106 units (Maele Shomron)		
15 Oct	Plan for 211 units (Yizhar)		
15 Oct	Plan for 629 units (Eli)		
15 Oct	Plan for 14 units (Maale Michmash)		
15 Oct	Plan for 52 units (Kfar Adumim)		
15 Oct	Plan for 357 units (va Binyamin)		
15 Oct	Plans for 213 units (Shilo)		
15 Oct	Plan for 354 units (Nili)		
15 Oct	Plan for 18 units (Psagot)		
15 Oct	Yaacov)Plan for 160 units (Kochav		
Total	Plans for 4948 units		

Source: Peace Now

3. TRENDS IN SETTLEMENT PLANS AND TENDERS SINCE 2015

The total number of settlement units advanced through plans and tenders recorded in 2020 (22,448) is close to double the number recorded in 2019 (11,427). This, although the second half of 2020 recorded a lower number of advanced settlement plans and units, compared to the first six months of 2020. Overall, 2020 recorded the highest number of housing units advanced in Tenders (4,550) and Plans (17,898) making 2020 a record year in terms of advanced settlement units in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. Overall, the level of settlement advancement remains at a very high level since 2017, when settlement advancement increased more than three-fold compared to 2015 and 2016 (see table 2). It can also be noted that the pace of settlement advancements did not stop despite Israel, during large parts of 2020 was under strict lockdown due to the Covid 19-pandemic.

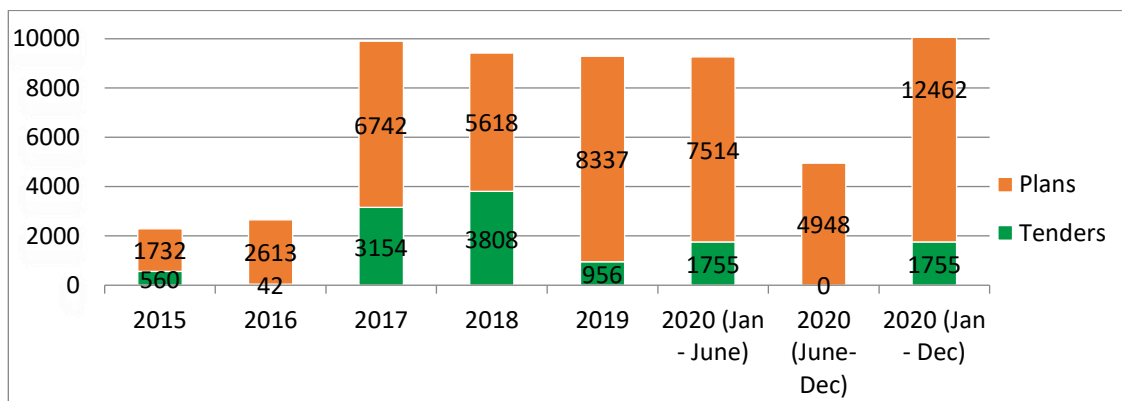
Table 2. Advancement of settlement units in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, 2015-2020



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, also in the West Bank (not including East Jerusalem) the total number of advancements of plans and tenders in 2020 (14 217) are by far the highest recorded number in the past five years.

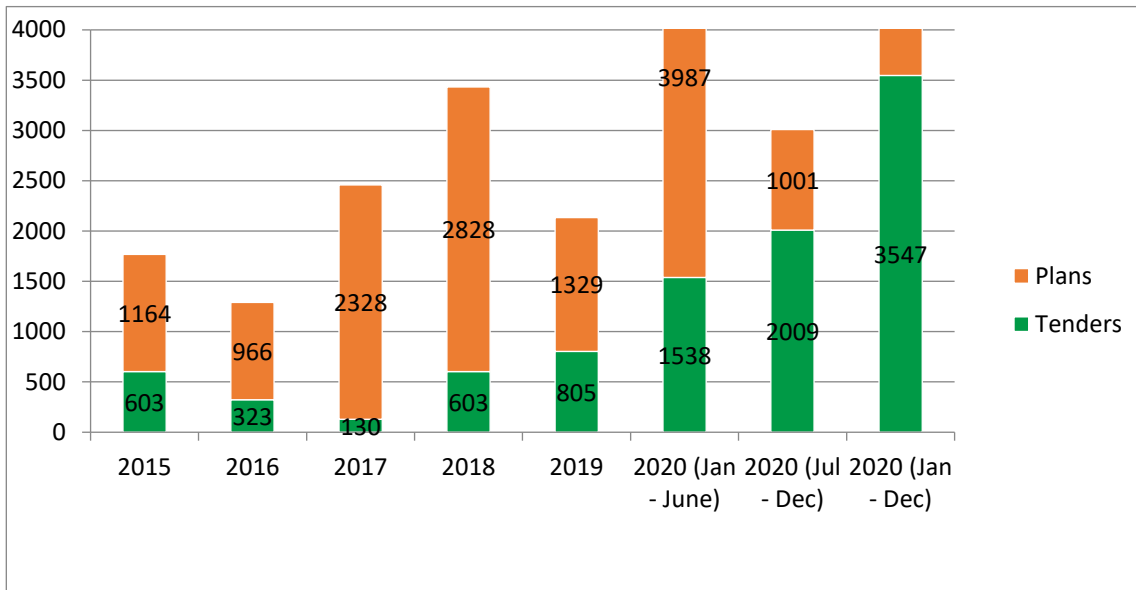
Table 3. Advancement of settlement units in the West Bank, here not including East Jerusalem, 2015-2020



Source: Peace Now

The same can be said for advancements in East Jerusalem where 2020 recorded (8,535) advancements of plans and tenders in 2020.

Table 4. Advancement of settlement units in occupied East Jerusalem 2015-2020



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 ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE CONTRIBUTING TO SETTLEMENT EXPANSION

There were several road and infrastructure projects that continued during the reporting period. In common for these projects are that they largely aim to facilitate the commute for Israeli settlers to and from Israel proper to the settlements in and around occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank, often without needing to pass by Palestinian towns and population centres. When advancing such projects, Israeli authorities however often present them as benefitting also the Palestinian population, which, while not being 100% factually incorrect, remains an area of discussion.

Examples of projects advanced during 2020 included⁸:

- Work to double the Tunnels Road that bypasses Bethlehem from the west.
- Al-Aroub bypass road, a 7 km road that would enable travel from or to the settlement of Kiryat Arba (next to Hebron) to settlements south west of Bethlehem and into Jerusalem without having to pass the densely populated Palestinian Al-Arrub refugee camp or Beit Ummar.
- A tender was published for the Qalandia underpass, planned to pass under the Qalandia checkpoint and to allow settlers to travel from settlements primarily from north of Ramallah and from the Jordan Valley into Israel without hitting traffic.
- Work begun on the Huwwara bypass road just south of Nablus for which approximately 400 dunams of Palestinian owned land was expropriated from the surrounding Palestinian villages.
- Plans were also deposited for a road known as the “fabric of life road” for Palestinians, which would direct Palestinian traffic going north and south in the West Bank without passing the large Israeli settlement Maale Adumim, and the E1 area. The full scope of Israeli plans for E1 would ultimately serve to connect the Maale Adumim settlement to the Jerusalem municipality borders. The plan for the E1 area puts 3,700 Palestinians at risk of forcible transfer.
- In October plans for two road projects were published for YOSH-938 or the “Al-Walaja bypass road” which would link the Har Gilo settlement to Jerusalem and also serve the settler commute

⁸ For further information on these road projects see Peace Now 2020 Settlement Construction Report “From De Jure to De Facto Annexation” <http://peacenow.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Construction-in-Settlements-2020.pdf>

for settlements in the Bethlehem or Gush Etzion regional council area. Indeed the expansion of this road would be needed to approve plans for what in reality would be an entirely new settlement of 560 units in “Har Gilo West”. The completion of this settlement would complete the encirclement of the Palestinian village Al Walajeh by the separation barrier and the existing Gilo settlement. The residents of Al-Walajeh are also under the threat of several house demolitions, only protected by a temporary freeze in the Israeli Supreme court.⁹

5. EU PUBLIC STATEMENTS DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

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

- On 15 October 2020, the EU HR/VP issued a [statement](#)¹⁰ on the significant Israeli expansion of settlements with close to 5000 housing units, noting how they jeopardise the territorial contiguity of a future Palestinian State. The EU HR/VP said the Government of Israel should reverse these decisions and halt all continued settlement expansion, including in East Jerusalem and sensitive areas such as Har Homa, Givat Hamatos and E1, while EU's long-standing position on Israel's settlement policy was also reiterated.
- On 15 November 2020, the EU HR/VP issued a [statement](#)¹¹ on the Israeli authorities' decision to open the bidding process for the construction of housing units for an entirely new settlement at Givat Hamatos. The statement inter alia pointed out the sensitive location of the new settlement (between Jerusalem and Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank) and the damage any settlement would cause for the prospects of a viable and contiguous Palestinian state and to the possibility of a negotiated two-state solution in line with the internationally agreed parameters and with Jerusalem as the future capital of two states. The statement recalled EU's long standing position on settlements and that continued settlement activity would lead to weakening of efforts to rebuild trust and confidence between the parties.

⁹ For further information see: <https://mailchi.mp/ir-amim/one-week-after-advancement-of-settlement-plans-in-greater-jerusalem-plans-for-road-infrastructure-in-the-area-are-deposited?e=%5bUNIQID%5d>

¹⁰ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/87070/west-bank-statement-high-representative-iosep-borrell-israeli-settlement-expansion_en?fbclid=IwAR1mC09WO1gKrBbToaajoo3vme2Kh1YACw_AKWePEME6uFm3gmA1scbg2F8

¹¹ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/88727/statement-high-representative-iosep-borrell-settlement-expansion-givat-hamatos_en