West Bank
Settlements, Communities, and Facts on the Ground

The Israeli Community of Efrat

The Palestinian City of Nablus

Produced by StandWithUs
The built-up areas of Israeli settlements cover 1.7 percent of West Bank land, according to Palestinian and Israeli sources.¹ The scheduled route of the security fence incorporates between 5 and 8 percent of West Bank land. Israel currently administers 60 percent of the West Bank (known as “Area C”) per the Oslo Agreement.

In 2008, there were 120 Jewish communities in the West Bank, with 289,600 Israeli residents.²
Jews and Arabs have lived in the West Bank for centuries. Today, the Israeli and Palestinian governments are negotiating borders for a possible future Palestinian state.

1. The West Bank, known as Judea and Samaria for thousands of years, is part of the ancient homeland of the Jewish people and of Judaism. It was renamed the West Bank by Jordan in 1950.

2. The only time in over a thousand years that Jews were prohibited from living in the West Bank was when Jordan occupied it between 1949 and 1967.

3. The built up areas of Israeli settlements cover approximately 1.7 percent of all West Bank land.

4. Approximately 75 to 80 percent of Israelis in the West Bank live close to or along the lines that separated Israel and the Jordanian-controlled West Bank before the 1967 War. These areas could be easily included on the Israeli side of a future border with minor land swaps.

5. Ninety-eight percent of Palestinians live under the administration of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in land that covers 40 percent of the West Bank. Israel currently administers 60 percent of the West Bank, known as “Area C,” per the interim steps mutually agreed upon during the Oslo peace process. This virtually vacant area has two percent of all West Bank Palestinians.

6. No internationally recognized border has ever separated Israel and the West Bank. Future borders are to be determined through negotiations.

7. The number of authorized West Bank Israeli communities has remained the same since 1993, when Israel and the Palestinians signed the peace agreement known as the Oslo Accords. However, since 1993, the number of structures and people in many of the settlements has grown.

8. As the Palestinian Authority has begun to improve law and order, the West Bank has experienced renewed prosperity. Notably, the PA is in the process of building its first planned city, Rawabi.

9. No Palestinian Arab state ever existed prior to the one currently being proposed by the United States, Israel, and other nations.

10. One-point-three million Israeli Arab citizens live safely in Israel. With true peace, Jews should be able to safely live in Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, Libya, Yemen, and the proposed Palestinian state.
Though the term “settlement” sometimes refers to makeshift dwellings, most Israeli settlements are fully developed communities where people conduct their daily lives. Some are cities with full urban infrastructures, while others are smaller communities that range from residential suburbs to agricultural kibbutzim (cooperative communities) with only a few hundred people. There are also “outposts,” which are small communities that were never authorized by the Israeli government. The government considers these “outposts” illegal.

Top: Ma’ale Adumim, a 30-year-old residential city three miles northeast of Jerusalem, was built on vacant, unowned land. With its 33,259 residents, it is the second-largest Jewish community in the West Bank.

Left: Kibbutz Almog guest house. Almog, located in the arid Jordan Valley near the Dead Sea, has 24 families that developed cultivation techniques for salty soil and grow crops for export.

Right: Beitar Illit, located a half mile from the Green Line, was established in 1985. It is named after the ancient Jewish city of Betar, originally located half a mile away.
**Israeli Settlements**

**Politically Contentious but not Illegal**

**The West Bank is disputed territory.** No Palestinian-Arab state ever existed in the region. Palestinian-Arab residents currently have claims to the West Bank, where they want to build a state. Israel also has legal, historic, and security claims to this land. Many argue that the West Bank remains an unallocated portion of the Palestine Mandate of 1920 because the international community never recognized a new governing authority.

The Mandate, the last legal authority, stipulated that Jews should settle in the land. The legal rights accorded to Jews by the Mandate led many scholars to argue that the fourth Geneva convention, which sets rules about occupation of a foreign territory, does not apply to Israel and the West Bank. The 1993 Oslo Accords also do not prohibit Israelis or Palestinians from building communities in the West Bank.

Today, Israelis and Palestinian-Arabs both live in the West Bank. Their governments are trying to negotiate the future borders and decide which parts of the area will be under Israeli or PA jurisdiction. Until these negotiations conclude, there is no new sovereign authority that replaces the Mandate or an internationally recognized border.

There are 1.3 million Israeli Arabs living in Israel.

Palestinian Communities

Currently, 98 percent of the Palestinian population lives on 40 percent of West Bank land. The remaining 60 percent of the West Bank is called “Area C,” which is virtually unpopulated and under Israeli administration per the Oslo Accords. Israelis and Palestinians are negotiating how much and which areas of the 60 percent will be added to territory that is governed by the Palestinian Authority.

Nablus, with 140,000 people, is the largest Palestinian city in the West Bank and is surrounded by vacant, undeveloped land.

Sixty percent of the West Bank, called “Area C,” is virtually vacant land and is inhabited by 2 percent of the Palestinian population.
Palestinian Cities

The Palestinians began governing themselves in 1994 when the Palestinian Authority was established. Today, most Palestinians live in cities like Nablus and Tulkarm and in other communities that are governed by the Palestinian Authority.¹

The Palestinian stock exchange is in Nablus.

Ramallah is the Palestinian political and economic center of the West Bank.

West Bank Roads

Israel initially built bypass roads in the West Bank to facilitate rapid travel on roads that went around populated centers. They were used by both Palestinians and Israelis.¹

When Palestinians launched the terrorist war in 2000, they attacked Israeli vehicles, forcing Israel to separate Palestinian drivers from Israeli drivers as a safety precaution, temporarily designating some roads only for Palestinian use and others only for Israeli use.

Restrictions are not based on religion or race. Israelis include Christians, Jews, Muslims, and other ethnic and religious groups. Vehicles are differentiated by whether they have Israeli or Palestinian Authority license plates.

As security concerns decline, Israel will likely relax road restrictions, as it is doing for Route 443 from Modiin to Jerusalem.

Water is a precious commodity in the arid region, but Israel uses the same aquifers for its water today that it used before 1967, when its administration of the West Bank began. The water in the aquifers naturally flows seawards, into Israel. Israeli settlements are connected to Israel’s national water system and do not use the Palestinian Authority’s water system.

Palestinian fresh water consumption grew over 300 percent between 1967 and 2008.* Despite the scarcity of water, Israel agreed in the Oslo Accords to annually give 31 million cubic meters (mcm) of its own water to West Bank Palestinians to supplement their water resources. In fact, Israel has given progressively more each year. In 2008, Israel gave 40 percent more than agreed upon: 51.8 mcm.²

* From 60 million cubic meters (mcm) in 1967 to 180 mcm in 2008, according to the Israel Water Authority.

As the chart below illustrates, Israeli settlements are not an obstacle to peace. The chart correlates progress and setbacks in peace efforts with the number of Israeli settlers and settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.¹

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Israeli Settlements</th>
<th>Events</th>
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| 1949-1967 | Despite 0 settlements in the West Bank and 0 in Gaza... | 465 Israelis were murdered in terrorist attacks.  
1967 War: Arab armies mobilized 250,000 troops and, in an act of war, cut off Israel’s international shipping. |
Israel uprooted all 7,000 Israelis from settlements in Sinai.  
PLO and Israel signed the Oslo Accords (1993).  
| 2000-2004 | Despite 123 settlements in the West Bank and 17 in Gaza (population: 246,000)... | Peace negotiations in progress: Israel offered to uproot most settlements for peace.  
Palestinian response: the second Intifada.  
Over 1,000 Israelis were killed; approximately 3,500 Palestinians were killed. |
| 2005-2008 | Despite 0 settlements in Gaza... | Israel uprooted all Gaza settlements.  
Hamas launched over 8,000 rockets and mortars from Gaza into southern Israeli communities. |

Security concerns play a major role in peace negotiations.

Photographer: Hagai Nativ, courtesy of Dr. Martin Sherman, academic director of the Jerusalem Summit

The Palestinian town of Rantis is 4.3 miles from Ben Gurion Airport. If terrorist groups like Hamas or Islamic Jihad are not controlled, they could attack from Israel’s eastern border along the West Bank. Security officials are very concerned that the heart of Israel’s population centers would be in short rocket range.

Law and Order on Palestinian Streets Lead to Prosperity Despite Israeli Settlements

The West Bank is experiencing renewed prosperity, including a construction boom. During the 1970s, the West Bank and Gaza became the world’s fourth-fastest-growing economy, ahead of Singapore and Hong Kong, and one of the world’s fastest-growing populations.\(^1\) The violent Intifada (2000-2005) brought economic reversals, but as the Palestinian Authority has begun taking measures to control terrorist groups and to cooperate with Israel, prosperity is returning.

Every city in the West Bank has a pool or a recreational complex, and Ramallah has more than 10. New fitness gyms opened up regularly in Ramallah in 2006, and a new five-star hotel will open in Ramallah in 2010.\(^3\)

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Creating the First Arab Palestinian State in History

In 1994, during the Oslo Accords, Israel helped Palestinians set up their first government in history, the Palestinian Authority. Historically, no Palestinian Arab state had ever existed. After the ancient Jewish state fell in the first century, no nation arose in its place. The region was ruled by successive empires. During the 1948 War, Egypt and Jordan invaded and occupied the West Bank and Gaza and did not establish a Palestinian Arab state. Even the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) specifically excluded the West Bank and Gaza from its description of Palestine in its 1964 Covenant.

Today the Palestinian Authority governs 98 percent of the Palestinian Arab population in the West Bank, and Hamas governs the Palestinians living in Gaza.

If Israel agrees to give up parts or most of the West Bank in future negotiations, Israel will be giving up portions of its ancient homeland and holiest sites to create the first sovereign Palestinian nation in history.

Hebron: One of the oldest Jewish holy sites, located in the West Bank.

Cave of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs in Hebron—In one of the oldest extant recorded land deeds, biblical text reports that the Jewish patriarch Abraham bought the cave and surrounding land from a local tribal chief. It is believed that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their wives are buried here. It is one of the holiest sites for Jews who have prayed at the cave for millennia.
Imagine peace in a Middle East where Israel and her neighbors join forces to become a major player on the global stage. With shared technology and resources, the possibilities are endless. But more important is a future filled with peace and prosperity for our children and for generations to come.