

Middle East Notes

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

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Please note: Opinions expressed in the following articles do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

This week's Middle East Notes features articles on Israeli settlement activity in the E-1 area of the Occupied Territories, the upcoming Israeli elections, increased availability of the "Palestinian Narrative," the continuing nonviolent Palestinian response to settlement activity and violence, and other issues. [Read recent Middle East Notes here.](#)

- **Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletin, January 11:** This Bulletin focuses on how the upcoming Israeli elections reveal the changing political landscape moving more to the right, the continuing thaw in Hamas Fatah relations and other issues.
- **The apathy that hangs over Palestine:** James Dana writes in the National that, exhausted from the second Intifada and life under military occupation, many Palestinians generally seem more interested in making ends meet than political revolution.
- **Netanyahu receives letters from more than 700 Jewish clergy protesting settlement expansion:** Michael Grumer reports in Ha'aretz that more than 700 letters from Jewish rabbis, cantors, and rabbinical students around the world express fears the E-1 plans will be the "final blow to a peaceful solution" and also voice concern that it "damages the critical relationship between Israel and the United States."
- **Palestinian Authority officially changes name to State of Palestine:** Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas signed a presidential decree officially changing the name of the Palestinian Authority to the State of Palestine. All Palestinian stamps, signs and official letterhead will henceforth be changed to bear the new name.
- **Israel and Palestine, play nice and learn to share:** Dan Goldenblatt writes in Ha'aretz that Israelis and Palestinians must engage in an open-ended process of building and maintaining a shared confederation of two states in one space.
- **Palestine and Israel: A modest suggestion for peace:** Faysal Mikdadi, in the London Progressive Journal, reminds Israelis and Palestinians that war is wrong and that for those calling themselves Christian, Jewish or Muslim – our faith forbids violence and demands mercy, forgiveness and decency in treating each other. Something can be done in the Middle East but only without war.
- **Reclaiming the Palestinian narrative:** Jamil Hilal writes that "whoever writes the story will inherit the land of words, and possess meaning, entirely," and that the Palestinian story is not being heard.
- **An Israeli in awe of a Palestinian act of nonviolence:** Bradley Burston writes in Ha'aretz that when he enters the voting booth next week, he will be taking a small piece of Bab al-Shams with him: his respect and admiration for people who cannot vote in this election, but who each cast an extraordinarily forceful absentee ballot in booths they set up themselves in E1. (Related story: "How 20 tents rocked Israel.")
- **How 20 tents rocked Israel:** On his website, British journalist Jonathan Cook writes about a group of 250 Palestinians who showed how the idea of a "state of Palestine" might be given practical meaning: They set up a tent encampment that they intended to convert into a new Palestinian village called Bab al-Shams, or Gate of the Sun.

1) Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin January 11, 2013

Take action: At the start of his second term President Obama has a fresh opportunity to make meaningful progress in the realization of peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Thirty six Christian leaders sent a letter to President Obama this week calling on him to bring his full energies of his administration to facilitate a just, durable, and final negotiated agreement to end the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict. **Now it is your turn to endorse the message – [click here to add your name.](#)**

Israeli elections approaching: After Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced the January 22 elections, politicians in Israel began moving to solidify or challenge his power. Shortly after the announcement, Netanyahu joined with Avigdor Lieberman and unified their Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu parties to stave off a challenge from the center-left. This challenge has thus far not appeared and with those parties in disarray eleven days before the election, it does not appear that one will materialize. In fact, one new challenge to his power comes from the further right with politician Naftali Bennett's increasing popularity. While polls predict that Netanyahu will easily remain prime minister, the shifting alliances that will keep him in power could further change the Israeli political landscape.

Here is a review of the process:

- * National elections will take place on January 22. Voters pick one party to vote for and every party that gets above two percent can get at least one seat in the Knesset. The proportion of the popular vote determines the number of seats each party receives.
- * The president, Shimon Peres, picks the party leader most likely to create a 61-seat majority in the Knesset. He or she then has 42 days to finalize a coalition. Conventional wisdom indicates this will be Netanyahu again.
- * The selected leader courts other parties to convince them to join and vote for a coalition. This is where the uncertainty truly lays. Will Netanyahu look to the right or to the center-left when courting parties to join his government? It will depend on how many seats each party gets and who will make the most stable coalition for him. He will need at least 61 votes in support of his government in order for it to be official.

Moving to the right: Coalition politics in Israel is all about jockeying for position. Even if a party does not have the most seats, having a sizable number makes it a more attractive ally for presumptive leader Netanyahu to select as part of his coalition. The cabinet positions are allotted proportionally with the make-up of the coalition, so this election is important for many parties even if they have no hopes of unseating Netanyahu and Likud.

After combining with Lieberman to counteract a challenge from the political center-left, it seems that Netanyahu's biggest headache may be from the right, including by members of his own Likud party. In Likud's November primary, many of Netanyahu's typical moderate right allies received few votes and put them low on the party's list of candidates and making their reelections unlikely. In their places are "pro-settlement extremists" that will force Netanyahu to veer further right to keep their support. The centrist Kadima party head, Shaul Mofaz, argues that Likud "has now lost its way and been swayed to the extreme margins of the political map."

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[Read the entire Bulletin on CMEP's website.](#)

2) The apathy that hangs over Palestine

Joseph Dana, The National, December 2012

Amid a sea of green Hamas flags in the centre of Nablus, Abdul Rahim Rabaiya expressed satisfaction that Hamas had returned to the West Bank after a five-year absence. A modest schoolteacher, Rabaiya passionately argued that the Palestinian street needs Hamas to force change on the West Bank. Hamas, forced underground by the Palestinian Authority, sweeps over the past years of political division. The rally marked what some see as an olive branch from Fatah to Hamas in order to kick-start reconciliation efforts.

But despite the passionate chants ringing through the narrow and ancient streets of Nablus, Hamas's first West Bank rally in more than five years failed to attract more than 4,000 people. One shopkeeper dismissed the entire event outright. "We are the products that these politicians sell," he said. "If there is unity, it will be bad for us. The United Nations should run Palestine."

Undoubtedly, the final months of 2012 saw dramatic events unfold in Israel and Palestine. Hamas, long isolated diplomatically, staged a veritable diplomatic coup with unprecedented visits from Arab leaders like the Emir of Qatar, who pledged more than \$400 million (Dh1.46 billion) to the Islamic movement in Gaza. A quick but brutal conflict erupted between Israel and Hamas with all of the trimmings of the last conflict, back in 2009, which turned the Gaza Strip into a battleground.

Demonstrating the changing contours of the Middle East since the Arab revolutions, Egyptian president Mohammad Morsi asserted his country's new position as a regional broker and negotiated a fragile ceasefire between the two sides, which, surprisingly, has held. In a major boast to Hamas - and evidence of Egypt's changing role in the region - Morsi has even pledged to ease border restrictions at the Rafah border crossing, the only crossing into Gaza not controlled by Israel.

The West Bank has not been immune to changes as well. Palestinian Authority president and Fatah chairman Mahmoud Abbas continued his quixotic statehood campaign at the UN and delivered the Palestinians de facto state recognition. More than mere symbolism, the Palestinians may now have access to institutions such as the International Criminal Court, which could be used to prosecute Israel for rights violations and murder.

Yet, these efforts seem to be lost on the Palestinian people.

The ferocious manner in which Fatah and Hamas are fighting for the approval of the Palestinian street is all the more breathtaking given the general sense of apathy that hangs over Palestine. Exhausted from the Second Intifada and life under military occupation, Palestinians generally seem more interested in making ends meet than political revolution.

The apathy is evidence that 2012 might well be remembered as the year Israel's status quo over Palestine took hold of the Palestinian mindset. There is faint hope that reconciliation efforts between Hamas and Fatah could work but they are overshadowed by deep cynicism.

[Read the entire piece on the National's website.](#)

3) Netanyahu receives letters from 700+ Jewish clergy protesting settlement expansion

Michael Grumer, Ha'aretz, January 7, 2013

A group of American rabbinical students studying in Israel delivered a stack of over 700 letters to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office in Jerusalem on Monday morning. Signed by rabbis, cantors, as well as rabbinical and cantorial students from around the world, the letter was written in protest of Israel's recently announced plans to expand construction in the E-1 area of the West Bank.

The letter, a joint initiative undertaken by Rabbis for Human Rights-North America, J Street, and Americans for Peace Now, is an attempt to inform Netanyahu of concern over settlement expansion among Jewish spiritual leaders outside Israel.

The letter affirmed the leaders' commitment to Israel, stating that "all of us believe that the ultimate safety and security of Israel as a Jewish state will depend on reaching a peace agreement that also allows Palestinians to live safely and securely in their own state," read the letter.

"We fear that building settlements in E1 would be the final blow to a peaceful solution. If Israel builds in E1, it will cut East Jerusalem off from its West Bank surroundings and effectively bifurcate the West Bank. In doing so, E1 will literally represent an obstacle to a two-state solution," continued the petition.

The students, joined by J Street activists in Israel, were met with confusion from the security officials at the Prime Minister's Office, who did not know exactly how to handle the stack of letters. Eventually the letters were accepted, and promises to pass them along were made. The effort to collect signatures from Jewish clergy started about two weeks ago, according to Yael Patir, the director of Israel programs for J Street. "We waited to achieve a critical mass before sending the letter," says Patir, "as every attempt to get a meeting with someone inside the office failed."

Patir pointed out that while the ultimate goal is to reach Netanyahu himself, copies of the letter were simultaneously being delivered to the Israeli embassy in Washington D.C. and the White House, to make the U.S. government aware of the effort as well. The protest letter also mentions the connection between Israel and the U.S. "As American rabbis and cantors, we also fear that construction in E1 damages the critical relationship between Israel and the United States."

The rabbinical students, studying at various institutions in the United States and in Israel - and some of whom are participants in RHR-NA's year-in-Israel program - were enthusiastic about the effort. "These are values I believe in, Jewish values," said Kerry Chaplin, from Los Angeles, when asked why she became involved with Rabbis for Human Rights-North America, and specifically this project. Chaplin is spending the year studying at the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem.

After she delivered the letters, Marisa James, a rabbinical student at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia, said "It makes me happy they accepted the letter. God willing it will get to someone who will read it and pass it along."

4) Palestinian Authority officially changes name to State of Palestine

The Associated Press, January 5, 2013

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas signed a presidential decree on [Jan. 4] officially changing the name of the Palestinian Authority to the “State of Palestine.” All Palestinian stamps, signs and official letterhead will henceforth be changed to bear the new name, according to the official Palestinian news agency Wafa.

The move marked the first concrete, albeit symbolic, step the Palestinians have taken following the November decision by the United Nations to upgrade their status to a non-member observer state. Abbas, who has enjoyed a boost in his status since the successful bid at the United Nations, has hesitated to take more dramatic steps, like filing war crimes indictments against Israel at the International Criminal Court, a tactic that only a recognized state can carry out.

Also on [Jan. 4], tens of thousands of Fatah supporters rallied in the Hamas stronghold of Gaza for the first time since they were routed from power there by the Islamist militants in 2007.

The rally, approved by Gaza’s Hamas rulers, marks a renewed attempt by the rival Palestinian factions to show unity following a fierce Hamas battle with Israel in November and Fatah’s recognition bid at the United Nations.

Hamas gained new support among Palestinians following eight days of fighting with Israel in November, during which Israel pounded the seaside strip from the air and sea, while Palestinians militants lobbed rockets toward Israel, including toward the cities of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv for the first time.

Following the fighting, Fatah allowed Hamas to hold its first rally in the West Bank since the 2007 split. Hamas returned the favor [Jan. 4] by allowing the Fatah rally to take place.

The two sides still have wide differences, chief among them how to deal with Israel. In addition, several rounds of reconciliation talks over recent years centered on finding ways to share power have failed to yield results.

Both sides expressed optimism following [Jan. 4]’s unprecedented Fatah show of strength that included hours of waving their yellow flags, dancing in the streets and chanting party slogans. For years, Fatah loyalists in Gaza faced retribution from the Hamas regime, which banned them from gathering.

“We feel like birds freed from our cage today,” said Fadwa Taleb, 46, who worked as a police officer for Fatah before the Hamas takeover and attended [the Jan. 4] rally with her family. “We are happy and feel powerful again.”

Top Fatah officials arrived in Gaza for the first time since they were violently ousted. Abbas, who rules the West Bank, did not attend the event, but he addressed the crowd on a large screen telling them “there is no substitute for national unity.” ...

[**Read entire story on USA Today’s website, headlined “Fatah rally in Gaza looks toward unity with Hamas”**](#)

5) [Israel and Palestine, play nice and learn to share](#)

Dan Goldenblatt, Ha'aretz, January 6, 2013

One thing has become abundantly clear during the current election season: Not a single political party has a plan to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Likud doesn't; it's trying to square Netanyahu's 2009 speech at Bar-Ilan University, in which he expressed support for a two-state solution, with a platform that says the Palestinians want to destroy Israel. Habayit Hayehudi chairman Naftali Bennett doesn't either. He not only said he would refuse orders to evacuate settlements, but revealed himself as a false messiah with a ridiculous, arrogant, and essentially dangerous proposal that includes a prison for the 2.5 million Palestinians living in Areas A and B in the West Bank. The Labor Party is busy spouting slogans without advancing any functional plan, and has given its blessing to the settlement project. Even the proposal from Arab party Balad – for a Palestinian state in the West Bank and a state for all its citizens or all its nations in Israel – is impractical.

At the same time, 45 years after the occupation began and 20 years after the signing of the Oslo Accords, the existing strategy of separating Israel from Palestine appears unattainable. The time has come, mainly for the Zionist left, to admit that a plan that includes a Palestinian national homeland void of Jews and a Jewish homeland in Israel isn't just or fair. A deal between them, looking east, and us, a Western fortified enclave in the "heart of the desert," won't work. A deal that precludes Jewish access to areas that are central to the connection between the Jewish people and its homeland (including Hebron, Shiloh and Beit El) and similarly prevents Palestinian access to large swathes of their native land (from which they were expelled during the Nakba, or Israel's independence) cannot solve the conflict.

Yet, it's impossible to continue with the status quo. The Israeli occupation, its racial separation and revocation of millions of Palestinians' civil and human rights, does not allow for the continued moral, safe and healthy Jewish existence in the Middle East. It would imperil the entire national Jewish project and Israel as a Jewish democratic state. To ensure Zionism's continued existence, we must shift the paradigm – from separation to cooperation, to Jews and Arabs sharing the space between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River.

This doesn't mean a one-state solution. One state requires that Israelis and Palestinians give up their nationhood, and is doomed to fail. The solution still calls for two states. Israel exists on 78 percent of the territory of Mandatory Palestine, and Palestine on 22 percent (not an iota less). Unlike the Oslo Accords, according to this plan, after the creation of Palestine, the two sides would have to engage in an open-ended process of building and maintaining a shared confederation of two states in one space, akin to Europe but with the necessary adjustments.

The great advantage to such a plan is that it addresses the core issues of settlements and refugees from the start. Under such a plan, first-generation Palestinian refugees of the Nakba would get monetary compensation for lost property. The first-generation refugees who are still alive, and second-generation refugees, would have three options to choose from: 1. Citizenship in the countries where they reside; 2. Citizenship in OECD countries willing to take an active part in solving the conflict; 3. Immigration to Israel/Palestine. ...

[Read the entire piece on Ha'aretz's website.](#)

6) [Palestine and Israel: A modest suggestion for peace \(part 1\)](#)

Faysal Mikdadi, London Progressive Journal, November 28, 2012

... I am standing before you as a tired, battered and old Palestinian who has wandered this earth in search of a home. Syria, Lebanon, Switzerland, France and then, finally, Britain. Love it as I do, Dorset is not my home. Palestine is my home. Now my dream. My Diaspora has made me and I have to make do with what I have. I have to make the best that I can make of it. And because Britain is a green and pleasant land, because the British are inherently a decent people, because Britain has a great literature that I love so, I have made do very well indeed. But Palestine is still my dream. And I want to go back before I die. The irony is that, given Israel's behaviour over the last 62 years, if I did go back, I probably would die as "an infiltrator" – on to my own homeland!

Can anyone imagine what it feels like for me as a Palestinian to stand in Ben Gurion airport awaiting a visa to be granted to me so that I could visit my own homeland? Does anyone know what it feels like to be told "Welcome to Israel, sir" as I step onto my own land? Is it possible for any of you to conceive what it feels like to stand on my father's land and be asked what I was doing there? And when I explained, to be told how sorry the current occupier was and be offered a cup of coffee? I wondered if the cups came out of my mother's kitchen. If the coffee were left in the cupboard as my family escaped the murderous Stern Gang and Haganah terrorist movements. If the cupboard that I kept staring at still contained my brother's wooden horse with black spots on it. Or my sister's favourite doll with its pretty Palestinian dress. Or my father's library of agricultural books with a smattering of French and British classics that he speaks of in his diaries of the time.

These are human stories. And they apply to both sides. The blood that flows in my veins is no different to the blood that flows in the vein of every other human being. Yet, I have been selected to live in a Diaspora whilst others have a homeland. Often, they have a homeland that is also stolen from those whom they have defeated by armed force.

And there are millions now living in refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and other Arab countries. They carry a yellow card to indicate their stateless status. The fact that the card is yellow is a terrifying irony. They have no personal rights. In Lebanon they are not allowed to work in any profession without a permit which is very hard to come by. They are trapped in grinding poverty and utterly reliant on United Nations handouts and have been for the last 65 years. In Syria, they live under a rigid and cruel regime. In Jordan they live under an autocratic regime where their presence is at best tolerated by a benign monarch. In the Gulf states, they are given relatively well paid jobs but regarded as pariahs. When I was in Dubai, I was horrified by the common attitude to Palestinians as parasites, scroungers and less than human creatures. The parallels with Jews in Central Europe for hundreds of years was terrifying.

History's lessons have not been learnt. And, for the unfortunate many, poverty, persecution and deprivation of human rights were exacerbated by endless periodic massacres committed by Israel and by citizens of the so-called host countries. ...

[Read the entire piece on the London Progressive Journal website.](#)

7) Reclaiming the Palestinian narrative

Jamil Hilal, January 2013

This paper was presented on October 4, 2012 in a seminar at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Milan. [This paper is unedited/as presented in English.]

Where does the dominant discourse on the Palestine question stand today and what does it communicate? This is a crucial question – indeed an urgent matter of national interest – because the Palestinian people do not fully control the discourse, which is stacked against them and their rights.

Worse, some Palestinians have become the most ardent followers of this dangerous discourse. The need for critical awareness of who narrates history and to what end is obvious. Nothing illustrates this more clearly than the fact that Israel celebrates its establishment as Independence Day whereas in the Palestinian collective memory it is their Nakba (catastrophe).

The Palestinian story of dispossession, exile, occupation, and discrimination faces a systematic and concerted effort to empty it of significance and to “normalize” the situation. The dominant political literature on the Palestinian question is permeated by misrepresentations of the history, geography and identity of the Palestinian people. These misrepresentations are taken for granted in the language used by international organizations, including those of the United Nations, political leaders, and the mass media both globally as well as some official Arab media. More disturbing is the fact that they have crept into the discourse of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the major political organizations. With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to identify five major misrepresentations and the dangers they carry, and to suggest the kind of action that can and must be taken to reframe the narrative.

The first misrepresentation involves a reduction of Palestine to a fragment of its original territory by transforming it into the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.... Israel has been further shrinking “Palestine” since it occupied these territories in 1967, through colonization and land annexation in East Jerusalem and the West Bank while maintaining Gaza under a stringent siege, all in violation of international law. The later political program of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) contributed to this misrepresentation by raising the possibility of accepting a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza in 1974 and formally adopting this position in 1988.

The second misrepresentation, closely tied to the first, involves an assault on Palestinian history, by setting its starting point at 1967 in much of the political and media discourse. This, wittingly or not, removed from discussion the responsibility for the historic injustice that was inflicted on the Palestinian people during the British Mandate and in 1948 and that continues to this day. It was also an attempt to expunge from the record the long history of Palestinian resistance against British colonialism and Zionist settler colonialism and for self-determination. Palestinian history began long before the Nakba of 1948. ...

[Read the entire piece at the Institute for Palestine Studies website.](#)

8) An Israeli in awe of a Palestinian act of nonviolence

Bradley Burston, Ha'aretz, January 15, 2013

An act of nonviolence is a fuse playing the role of a bomb. If the act of nonviolence is creative enough, appropriate and resonant and shocking, and, therefore, dangerous enough, it will do what no bomb can: Change things for the better. Persuade. Put the lie to the liar. And cause a man like Benjamin Netanyahu to panic.

On Friday, nearly a hundred men women and children pitched tents on a Palestinian-owned plot of land in the patch of the West Bank called E1, a political and diplomatic minefield which Netanyahu has vowed to build on, and Washington has warned him not to. The place was given a new name: Bab al-Shams, the Gate of the Sun.

The Palestinians who staked down the tents were explicit in calling their rocky hilltop encampment a village. But the manner of its founding made it all too clear to Israelis what it was as well - a ma'ahaz, a settlement outpost, no less and no more illegal than the scores and scores of rogue farms, tent camps, rude shacks and proto-suburbs which Israeli settlers have staked across the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

We know it in our bones, Israelis and Palestinians as one. This is how the settlement movement began. This is how it grows. This is the very engine of occupation. This is the heart and the hand of the beast.

The founding of Bab al-Shams was genius. And no one knew that better than Benjamin Netanyahu. The encampment sent a message that was clear, piercing, and entirely nonviolent. The proof: Netanyahu said it had to be destroyed at once.

It needed to be destroyed despite a High Court order that appeared to give the new villagers six days to remain on the site. But in a peculiarly contemporary reinterpretation of the Naqba, the police announced that the injunction only applied to the tents. The people could be taken out. In the dead of night.

So desperate was the need to destroy it quickly, that the head of the Justice Ministry's High Court division was pressed into service at midnight Saturday, to sign a statement to the court declaring "there is an urgent security need to evacuate the area of the people and tents."

The government also sent a sealed note to the court, containing further "security information" – classified Secret, as was the reason for its being kept from the public – as to why it was necessary to give the order immediately for 500 police to move in.

But everyone here already knew the secret: Bab al-Shams needed to be destroyed because it was fighting facts on the ground with facts on the ground. ...

Read the entire piece [here](#). The following article, "How 20 tents rocked Israel," also reports on the Bab al-Shams village.

9) How 20 tents rocked Israel

Jonathan Cook, January 14, 2013

When the Palestinian leadership won their upgrade to non-member observer status at the United Nations in November, plenty of sceptics on both sides of the divide questioned what practical benefits would accrue to the Palestinians. The doubters have not been silenced yet.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has done little to capitalise on his diplomatic success. There have been vague threats to “isolate” Israel, hesitant talk of “not ruling out” a referral to the International Criminal Court, and a low-key declaration by the Palestinian Authority of the new “state of Palestine.”

At a time when Palestinians hoped for a watershed moment in their struggle for national liberation, the Fatah and Hamas leaderships look as mutually self-absorbed as ever. Last week they were again directing their energies into a new round of reconciliation talks, this time in Cairo, rather than keeping the spotlight on Israeli intransigence.

So instead, it was left to a group of 250 ordinary Palestinians to show how the idea of a “state of Palestine” might be given practical meaning. On Friday, they set up a tent encampment that they intended to convert into a new Palestinian village called Bab al-Shams, or Gate of the Sun.

On Sunday, in a sign of how disturbed Israel is by such acts of popular Palestinian resistance, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had the occupants removed in a dawn raid – despite the fact that his own courts had issued a six-day injunction against the government’s “evacuation” order.

Intriguingly, the Palestinian activists not only rejected their own leaders’ softly-softly approach but also chose to mirror the tactics of the hardcore settlers.

First, they declared they were creating “facts on the ground,” having understood, it seems, that this is the only language Israel speaks or understands. Then, they selected the most contentious spot imaginable for Israel: the centre of the so-called E-1 corridor, 13 square-kilometres of undeveloped land between East Jerusalem and Israel’s strategic city-settlement of Maale Adumim in the West Bank.

For more than a decade, Israel has been planning to build its own settlement in E-1, though on a vastly bigger scale, to finish the encirclement of East Jerusalem, cutting off the future capital of a Palestinian state from the West Bank.

The U.S. had stayed Israel’s hand, understanding that completion in E-1 would signal to the world and the Palestinians the end of a two-state solution. But following the UN vote, Netanyahu announced plans to build an additional 4,000 settler homes there as punishment for the Palestinians’ impertinence. ...

[Read the entire piece on Jonathan Cook’s website.](#) Cook is a British journalist based in Nazareth.