

**NEW Peace Now Report – March 2009**  
**Ministry of Housing's Plans for the West Bank**

- **The Ministry of Construction and Housing is planning to construct at least 73,300 housing units in the West Bank.**

An examination of the data available on the Israeli government Website ([www.govmap.gov.il](http://www.govmap.gov.il)) that contains maps and information from the Ministry of Housing, reveals that in plans for the West Bank at least 15,000 housing units have already been approved, and plans for an additional 58,000 housing units are yet to be approved.

This Peace Now report is based on this data published on the official government website. However the plans published are only a small part of the overall housing plans for the Occupied Territories, there are other thousands of housing units in plans of the local authorities, private initiators and other public authorities, all of which we are in the process of collating.

**Main findings:**

- Total number of housing units in the published plans – 73,302, out of which, 5,722 are in East Jerusalem
- Total number of housing units in approved plans – 15,156, approx. 8,950 of which have already been built.
- Total number of housing units in planning stages – 58,146.
- If all the plans are realized, the number of settlers in the Territories will be doubled (an addition of approx. 300,000 persons, based upon an average of 4 persons in each housing unit).
- In Gush Etzion (Bethlehem area) 17,000 housing units are planned in areas outside the existing settlements.
- At least six (6) outposts are included in the Ministry of Housing plans (Magen Dan, Givat Hadagan, Givat Hatamar, Bnei Adam, Bat Ayin West, Hill 26).

- There are plans for huge construction to double the size of some settlements, including: Beitar Illit, Ariel, Givat Ze'ev, Maaleh Adumim, Efrat and Geva Binyamin.
- Approx. 19,000 housing units are planned in settlements that are beyond the constructed path of the Fence (Kiryat Arba, Karnei Shomron, Ariel, Geva Binyamin, Immanuel, Revava).
- The plans in the settlements constitute 22% of the total housing units that are in planning stages in the Ministry of Housing.

The Ministry of Housing plans constitute only a small portion of the total number of plans in the settlements.

### **Number of housing units revealed in the plans of the Ministry of Housing:**

Settlement	Detailed plans		Master plans	Built units (estimated)
	Approved	In preparation	In preparation	
Oranit		400	No number	
Alfei Menashe		1058	1000*	100
Elkana		380		
Efrat	1301		2500	78
Ariel	797	3200	8000	486
Beitar Illit	4723	452		2742
Geva Binyamin (Adam)	388	1500	1380	388
Givat Ze'ev	265	654	4000	0
Gush Etzion – New		3500	13500	
East Jerusalem	3922	1800		3166
Magen Dan		146		
Modi'in Illit/Matityahu		1200	No number	80
Ma'ale Adumim	1708	5700	4000**	1564
Immanuel	1459			100
Kiryat Arba	156	500	2000***	0
Karnei Shomron	341	1276		150
Sha'arei Tikva		No number		
Revava – New	96			96
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15,156</b>	<b>21,766</b>	<b>36,380</b>	<b>8,950</b>

**The total number of planed housing units: 73,302.**

\* Approx. 500 out of 1,000 planned housing units in the master plan of Alfei Menashe have already been built.

\*\* In an updated version of the master plan, which is not on the website, there are approx. 6,000 housing units planned in Ma'ale Adumim in order to expand the city up to 104,000 settlers.

\*\*\* 2,000 units from the Kiryat Arba master plan have already been built.

In addition to these plans there are thousands of other housing units planned in the settlements by other authorities. Such as in the city of Modi'in Illit, the largest settlement in the West Bank, where private companies initiated almost all of the construction.

There are today at least 4,500 housing units built and occupied in Modi'in Illit (approx. 40,000 residences), and another 6,000 units in approved plans, part of them are currently being built. None of these are to be found amongst the plans issued by the Ministry of Housing.

In the master plan for Modi'in Illit area there are overall 27,000 housing units to be constructed there by the year 2020.

### **Sample plans:**

**Geva Binyamin (Adam)** – Plan no. 240/2/14 for 1,380 housing units, east of the peripheral fence of the settlement, is an example of the significance of the very existence of the plans even when they are not approved yet.

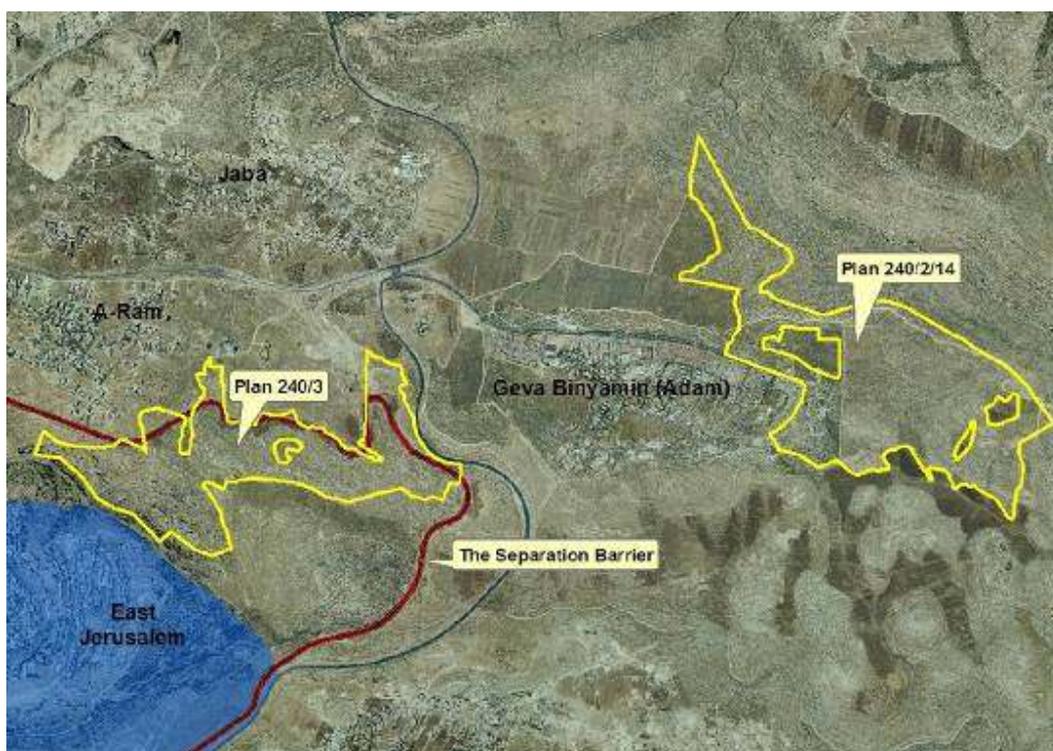
In the negotiations between the Minister of Defense and the settlers regarding the evacuation of the illegal outpost of Migron, this plan was used as a basis for the agreement: the Minister of Defense will promote the approval of the plan and the Ministry of Housing will build for the settlers new homes and in return, the settlers will not resist to the evacuation of the outpost Migron.

The challenge of evacuating 45 families and a few single persons from the illegal outpost of Migron, made the government pull out the plan for 1,380 housing units as a compromise to the settlers.

Another plan in Geva Binyamin (no. 240/3) is to construct 1,500 housing units beyond the separation barrier and the main road, west of the settlement.

It is, in fact, a plan to expand the city of Jerusalem further into the West Bank, even though politically it would be impossible for Israel to annex more territory from the West Bank to Jerusalem.

Thus the Ministry of Housing will instead declare this neighborhood to be officially part of Geva Binyamin and not Jerusalem.



Plan no. 240/2/14 for 1,380 housing units and plan no. 240/3 for 1,500 housing units in Adam

**Kiryat Arba** – A Plan for the construction of 500 housing units north of Kiryat Arba, on land that is outside of the settlement’s perimeter fence, and outside of the fence around the special security zone that was seized for security needs to protect the settlement. Part of the plan is beyond the highway near the settlement (road 60).

Last year the Military Appeals Committee rejected an appeal submitted by Palestinian residents against the declaration of their lands as State lands. Thus, the main obstacle standing in the way of the plan’s approval was removed, and it is feared that the plan will be approved in the future.

Over the past few years, settlers have established an outpost called “Hill 26” on the lands referred to in the plan. This has been evacuated and re-established a number of times.

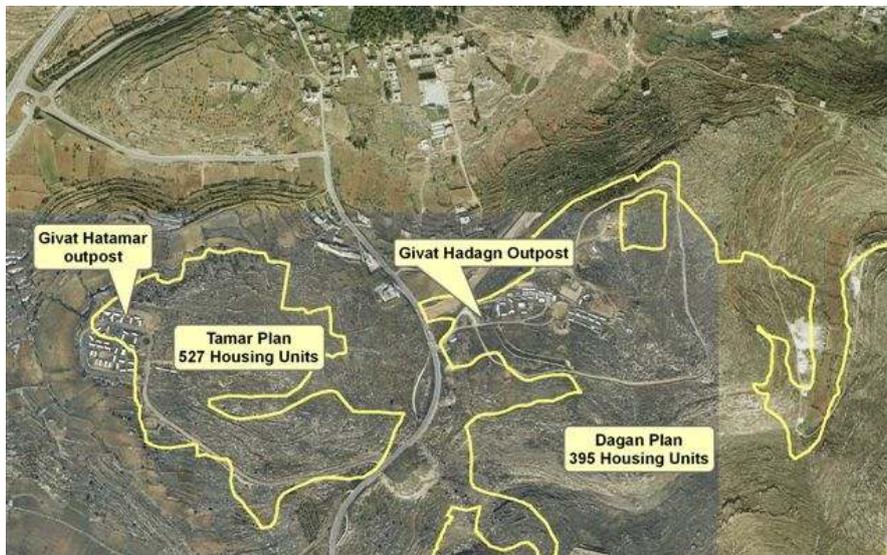
Today settlers continue to visit there and stay there overnight in order to demonstrate their control over the site, despite the fact that it lies outside of the settlement’s perimeter fence.



Plan for 500 housing units near Kiryat Arba – in preparation

**Givat Hadagan and Givat Hatamar Outposts** – the Ministry of Housing is planning the construction of 527 housing units in Givat Hatamar, and another 395 units in Givat Hadagan, both adjacent to the settlement of Efrat.

These plans are approved but we do not know if there is any movement in actually realizing them in the near future. Work on infrastructure and the construction of new caravans recently begun in Givat Hatamar, however this construction is not in accordance with the approved plan.



"Hadagan" plan (395 HU), and "Hatamar" plan (527 HU) – approved



Construction of new caravans in Givat Hatamar outpost, 22/6/08

**Ariel** – a plan for another 8,000 housing units for future expansion of the settlement, is in the status of "pre-preparation". If realized, the plan could bring approx. 32,000 new people to the settlement which today has 17,000 settlers.



A plan for future construction near Ariel, 8,000 housing units is in "pre-preparation"

**E1 Plan** – one of the most famous plans of the ministry of housing is the plan to construct a new neighborhood of 3,250 housing units between Ma'ale Adumim and East Jerusalem. If realized it will split the West Bank into northern and southern parts, and will isolate East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank.

According to an internal report made by the Ministry of Defense and was recently published, a plan for 1,250 housing units was approved for depositing by the planning committee, but the

depositing was yet to be approved by the Defense Minister; another plan for 260 housing units and 10 hotels with 2,152 rooms is in the stage of pre-depositing; and a plan for a regional employment center over an area of 335 acres is already approved and valid.

See more: <http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=62&docid=1294&pos=37>



E1 Plan for 3,250 Housing Units – in preparation

**The “Neve Menachem B” quarter in Karnei Shomron** – plan for 1,200 housing units (in preparation).



**Bitar Illit C** – Approved plan to build 790 HU. Taking over the lands between the settlements and the Palestinian community of Wadi Fukin



## **Methods of Data Collation**

### **A. The difficulty in obtaining data regarding future plans**

Usually reports on construction in settlements are retroactive, relating to plans that have been drawn up and approved for some time, and bulldozers are already working. Attempts to acquire information regarding future plans are very difficult and involve special efforts:

- **There is no organized and complete repository of all the plans which is easily accessible by the public** – the data and the plans is located in the Civil Administration and the Local Councils, but in order to take a look at them, requests have to be submitted for specific plans. This means requesting hundreds of plans, since each settlement has a number of plans: a preliminary plan and updated plans reflecting changes (at times there are small changes related to the location of structures or the number of housing units in each building, and sometimes large changes which significantly increase the number of units planned.) When we manage to get access to a specific plan, it is not always possible to know of following plans that might have changed the original.
- **There is no official access to a plan that has yet to be approved for deposit** – The authorities are obligated to submit plans for public view only from the time they have been deposited for objections. There might be hundreds of additional plans that are in the approval and planning stages that are still not open for public review.
- **There are many old plans which were approved in the 1980's and 90's whose construction could actually begin today** – The Ministry of Housing, the Local Authorities, the Settlement Division in the WZO and other bodies prepared and approved many plans along the years, which could be realized in the future. During the 1980's, under the Likud government, as well as afterwards, great efforts were invested in planning work. Thus today as we attempt to follow up on every new plan that is being published for objections, we are still unable to receive the full picture of the potential for construction planned in the Occupied Territories.

### **B. The plans in the national geographic portal [www.govmap.gov.il](http://www.govmap.gov.il)**

The official internet website of the Geographic Information System (GIS) Inter-ministerial Committee and of the Israel Mapping Center contains a mapping system with government information. Among the information layers on the website there is also a layer of the

construction plans of the Ministry of Housing and Construction, including a map for each plan and information about it (the name of the plan, the number of housing units planned and whether it is approved or in preparatory stages).

This information refers to plans for buildings whose construction has yet to begin or whose construction is not completed; the website contains almost no plans for construction which has been completed. Therefore, we assume that there are many other plans which were approved and realized in the past but these are no longer relevant to future construction data and do not appear on the website. We do not know if there are any other future plans which are not included in the website.

Some of the plans discovered do not seem practical, an example is the plan for the construction of 2,500 housing units in Givat Eitam, northwest of Efrat.

The Separation Barrier under construction in the region separates the settlement from the planned area (at times demonstrations are held there by objecting settlers). However, the plans indicate that there is an intention to build there, and from past experience, it seems that as soon as the political conditions will make it possible – construction will start. Recently the military appeal committee has rejected most of the objections filed by Palestinians to the declaration of the area of the plan as "State Land" (see more: <http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=66&docid=3555>)



The "Givat Eitam" Plan, for 2,500 HU (in preparation) – beyond the Separation Barrier

### **C. Ministry of Housing plans and their realization on the ground**

The information which appears on the government website does not include a detailed map of the plans, but rather only the “contour” line, the peripheral line of the area within the plan. At times, there is only a schematic line.

Peace Now compared each map with an up-to-date aerial photograph of the settlement and discovered that most of the plans have not been realized yet.

In cases where we discovered construction, we were unable to determine if the work had been carried out in accordance with the Ministry of Housing plan or other plans. However according to the number and size of the structures, and according to other publications (numbers of tenders and sales) we were able to estimate the number of housing units constructed on the ground.

**Master/Overall Plan** – the list of Ministry of Housing plans also includes 10 plans for existing and new settlements, referred to as "Master/Overall Plan". A master plan is a principal document that sets the general intentions for the construction, but it does not have an official status. In order to realize a master plan it should be "translated" into an overall plan, which is an official plan that goes through the procedure of approval by the authorities.

Since the master plan does not go through approval procedure and is never officially published for the objection of the public, the planners can do whatever they want in such plan. For example, they can dedicate land outside of the jurisdiction of the settlement to the use of the settlement (in Modi'in Illit, the master plan allocates lands of the Palestinian village of Na'alim, for the settlement's cemetery). Although there are such master plans also within the Green Line, it is much more significant in the West Bank and they are used as another tool to take over lands.

As far as we know, the majority of the settlements do not have any overall plan, but only detailed plans. However, probably most of them have a master plan that is not for public perusal and it is impossible to object to them through any planning procedure.

Some of the 10 master/overall plans on the governmental website are classified as master plans, and some as overall plans. However, all of them, including the overall plans, are in preparation, and are yet to be approved.

These plans show the intentions of the Ministry of Housing regarding establishment of new settlements or the expansion of existing ones.

In the settlement of Kiryat Arba, the master plan refers to an area on which there is an existing neighborhood. The master plan may indicate that there is a plan to expand the settlement, however, it is possible that the plan was already realized.

Parts of the plans are for the construction of thousands of new housing units in the areas adjacent to the settlements. For example, there is a plan to construct 8,000 housing units in the territory west and south of Ariel, and a plan to establish 4,000 housing units in the area of Ma'ale Adumim. There is another master plan to construct 13,500 housing units on different lands in Gush Etzion Regional Council (Bethlehem Area).

### **The Procedure for Planning Approval:**

The procedure for approving construction plans in the settlements includes the involvement and approval of political levels at several stages, but most of them occur without any publicity or public discussion.

The Minister of Defense is meant to approve the allocation of the land for planning, the discussion and the depositing of the plan for objections, the discussion for the final approval and in the end, the publication of the validation of the plan. If the matter involves the establishment of a new settlement, Cabinet approval is also required.

For the most part, none of these steps ever reach the attention of the public, including the Palestinian public, before the stage of depositing the plan for objections, which in itself is already an advanced stage of the planning. As stated above, due to the fact that many plans were already approved many years ago, it is difficult to finalize the scope of construction that is planned in the Occupied Territories today.

**Approved plans** – The Ministry of Housing's list of plans contains over 15,000 housing units in several plans, which have already been validated and received final approval at the political level. **It seems that it is possible to start construction immediately, without the approval of the government,** provided that the local authority gives a construction permit.

From a political standpoint, the government can order that an approved plan not be carried out, and can even put a hold on construction which has already begun (as did Rabin's government in the beginning of the 1990's, where in certain cases, contractors were even compensated).

For example, the plan to construct a new ultra orthodox neighborhood, "Agan Ha'ayalt", next to Givat Ze'ev, had already been approved in 1999, but the project was not realized for lack of

buyers. Recently, and right after the Annapolis summit, when some initiators wanted to renew the project, Prime Minister Olmert prevented the beginning of the construction based on a political decision to freeze the settlement activity. However, in the end, due to political pressure instigated by the settlers and also by the ultra-orthodox parties, Olmert permitted the reissue of construction permits and the construction began.

### **Summary:**

During the meeting of the Ministers' Committee for the implementation of the Sasson Report held on 11 December 2007, the head of the Civil Administration said that there were thousands of housing units in plans that had been approved in the past, and officially, from a legal and planning perspective, could be immediately realized. The members of the committee, which should determine the procedure for approving future construction in the Territories, were surprised to find out that, in fact, it is possible to construct thousands of housing units, which had been approved in the past, without any government involvement.

In addition to 15,000 housing units in the approved plans of the Ministry of Housing, there are plans for another 58,000 housing units which are presently in the approval process and which attest to the intention of the Housing Ministry, over the years, to enlarge the settlements at a great pace.

**The Ministry of Housing plans that are included in this report represent only a small part of the total number of the plans existing in the settlements.** According to data provided by the Israel Bureau of Statistics, public construction in the territories constitutes on average, approx. 51% of all construction in Israel, this in contrast to 22% of all construction allocated to within the Green Line.

Public construction includes all of the plans initiated by the government, the local authorities and the companies they own, and initiatives from national establishments. The Ministry of Housing plans constitute only part of the public construction, that is, only half of the construction being conducted in the territories. Due to the difficulties stated above, we have only partial information regarding the rest of the plans, public as well as private, but we can estimate that there are thousands more housing units planned for the settlements, and some of them are already approved.

### **It is possible to stop construction!**

The question of construction in the settlements is not only one of planning, but it is a first-class political issue. The government must establish priorities and decide whether it is interested in following the path to peace, which promises a lasting future for the State of Israel, a solution of two states for two nations, which will involve withdrawing from the territories and the settlements, or, is it interested in continuing to build and expand the settlements and hold onto the occupied territories, and lead us into continued conflict and violence, which will result in a bi-national state.

It is possible to prevent some of this construction going ahead by stopping their submission for approval, and there are ways to stop the progress of those that have already been approved.

In particular the decision regarding the implementation of a plan and construction is a political one and the government has the power to decide not to carry out plans, or even to halt construction that has begun. Such a step is no simple procedure; many people who relied on the approved plans, invested money, and planned accordingly to these plans will be affected.

In this case the government will have to ensure relative compensation, as did Prime Minister Rabin in 1992.

The approval of new plans, even if they will not be implemented in the coming year, will create a circle of expectations by citizens and companies, and investments will be made, in addition these residents will anyway be entitled to compensation when the government eventually evacuates the settlements. It is preferable to deal with the issue now, when the time, pain and costs are relatively low in comparison to a full-scale evacuation that will eventually be implemented in the years to come.

**Peace Now calls the Israeli government not to approve any new plans and to stop the construction of thousands of housing units already approved to go ahead.**