

**PALESTINIAN NATIONAL AUTHORITY**



**MINISTRY OF PLANNING**

**Reintegration and Development of Evacuated Areas**

**AD-HOC LIASON COMMITTEE (AHLC) MEETING  
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## Executive Summary

In response to Israel's plan for "disengagement" from the Gaza Strip and four northern West Bank colonies, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has developed national policy directives for the reintegration and development of evacuated areas. These directives are based on existing regional plans for the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT), whilst addressing the objectives of the PNA's Medium Term Development Plan, 2005-2007, a three-year strategic plan outlining reconstruction and development for the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip.

Ambiguity surrounding elements of Israeli disengagement, however, undermines the Palestinian development process for evacuated areas. Particular concern surrounds the extent of an Israeli withdrawal – will the PNA obtain control over external crossings in the Gaza Strip and will withdrawal from the West Bank follow? – and whether the areas subject to an Israeli withdrawal remain that way rather than be subject to periodic Israeli military incursions. Additionally, terminology such as "territorial continuity," "evacuated area" and "continuous transport" is not sufficiently defined.

As a planning guide, the PNA has considered two disengagement interpretations; the first – a "conservative approach" – is based around Israel's limited disengagement plan, while a second – a "liberal" approach – considers a more comprehensive Israeli withdrawal at the end of which the Israeli military presence would be completely removed from the Gaza Strip, the Israeli military and settler presence would be removed entirely from the northern West Bank, and border crossings and a safe passage would be reopened for the free movement of goods and people between Gaza and external markets, and Gaza and the West Bank. Development outcomes based on the more liberal Israeli withdrawal reveal the importance of such a move for an improvement in the economic and humanitarian predicament currently facing Palestinians.

The PNA views Israel's disengagement as the first stage of a complete Israeli withdrawal from all territories occupied by Israel in June 1967. Disengagement should clear the way for final status negotiations pertaining to a comprehensive Palestinian-Israeli political settlement. Moreover, the PNA is alarmed by suggestions of monetary compensation for those Israeli structures remaining on Palestinian land after disengagement proceeds. These structures were built in contravention of international law; it is therefore more appropriate to discuss compensation for Palestinian losses and damage suffered as a result of Israel's occupation. Lastly, it is important to stress that should disengagement proceed, Israel would still remain in occupation given its presence on Palestinian territory in the West Bank, and along the Gaza Strip's "Philadelphi" route, and its control over land and sea crossings and airspace.

Approximately 95% of the Israeli colonies throughout the Gaza Strip lie on public land. Three northern West Bank settlements slated for removal – Ganim, Qadim and Sa Nur – are similarly located, for the most part, on public land. Homesh, however, is predominantly located on expropriated private land. Private land will be returned to the original owners, while public land will come under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Land Authority. The PNA will develop the appropriate legal and institutional framework for the transfer of assets in conjunction with the land authority and the PNA's Ministry of Justice. For the most part, however, existing laws and the Palestinian judicial system are sufficiently capable of processing claims.

Based on a liberal interpretation of disengagement, the development options of a full-scale Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank remain uneven. Whereas the Gaza Strip would be free to produce and export goods and services without movement

restrictions of any kind, this would not be the case for the northern West Bank; the area would remain severed from its regional center, Nablus, from the rest of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and from external markets. Nevertheless, a liberal Israeli withdrawal from this area would allow for the commencement of local development and project possibilities already identified in an existing regional plan for the West Bank.

In lieu of a liberal Israeli withdrawal from these areas, development options still remain within the conservative interpretation of disengagement. In the Gaza Strip, colonies are now being viewed in terms of their potential to contribute to sectoral development; the Morag colony for instance is potentially slated for use as an agricultural development facility, in connection with university expansion plans in southern Gaza. Water aquifers are of particular importance. Those that sit beneath the sand dunes of northern and southern Gaza could source the creation of sustainable agriculture. Physical infrastructure is also relevant. Netzarim could serve the urban growth of Gaza city, while electricity, water, wastewater and telecommunications networks throughout the Strip will be utilized, pending inspection and evaluation. Environmental considerations are also uppermost in strategic planning considerations; the Neve Dakalim industrial plant conflicts with the area's environmental considerations and must therefore be removed. Likewise, the contents of all formal and makeshift solid waste dumps will be removed, and the area's natural state restored.

In those areas from which four West Bank colonies will be removed, planning considerations similarly focus on agriculture and use of the remaining infrastructure. The area's potential for local tourism and recreation is also being explored based on ecological considerations. Nevertheless, it must be stated that withdrawal will create a limited number of minor development possibilities. While this constitutes a positive contribution, the impact is nevertheless minor. Any significant improvement of local accessibility and intra-regional movement and development possibilities is instead dependent on the full withdrawal of the Israeli army from the northern West Bank, in its entirety; army bases must be dismantled and the closure regime, especially checkpoints, must be dismantled.

The PNA has accepted disengagement as an opportunity to plan for the end of occupation. From a planning perspective, however, it is imperative that clarity be attained on those remaining questions surrounding Israel's planned withdrawal. This will ensure that a proper planning process is undertaken, in line with the long-term development goals of the PNA.

## 1. Introduction

The Ministry of Planning (MOP) has been working on developing national policy directives to guide the reintegration of the Gaza Strip and parts of northern West Bank into Palestinian spatial development context and priorities. This work was initiated after Israel announced its intention to evacuate or redeploy from these areas. The main objectives of the work are:

- Identification of issues, limitations, challenges and potentials related to the reintegration of the evacuated areas and associated infrastructure into the Palestinian spatial system using the *long term* perspective of sustainable development defined in the Regional Plans for the West Bank and Gaza Governorates (RPWB&G) of 1996-1998 and the Medium Term Development Plan, 2005-2007 (MTDP) as bases;
- Identification of *short and medium term* interventions and projects that would facilitate the reintegration of evacuated areas into the Palestinian fabric, as well as the identification of emerging potentials that could be developed within the framework of the (MTDP).

Two parallel policy-oriented studies were conducted to address the reintegration of evacuated areas in the Gaza Strip and the northern West Bank.<sup>1</sup> In general terms, the principles, approaches, and methodology followed in the two studies are identical. However, it should be noted that the actual situation differs very much between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. For instance, Israeli “disengagement plan”<sup>2</sup> stipulates the evacuation of *all* colonies in the Gaza Strip and the redeployment of military forces to the internationally-recognized boundary. This would have a major impact on development. In the West Bank, on the other hand, the plan outlines withdrawal/redeployment from *parts* of the northern West Bank including the colonies of Sa Nur, Homesh, Qadim and Ganim. This would have little impact on the situation there.

The two studies focus on analyzing and assessing the implications of a possible Israeli withdrawal or redeployment on the development of Gaza Strip and the Northern Part of the West Bank.<sup>3</sup> More specifically, they address the following key issues:

- the delimitation of the area(s) in question;
- the colonization process and assessment of the existing colonies on the area(s) in question;
- the extent, scope, and implications of the “disengagement plan” in terms of Palestinian control of land and accessibility; and
- identification of policy directions to facilitate the reintegration of the evacuated areas into the Palestinian spatial system.

In addition to providing spatial policy guidelines and interventions needed for the reintegration process of evacuated areas, the two studies, and specifically the study concerned with the Gaza Strip, provide inputs to the upgrading of the PNA Regional Plans that will be submitted to the Higher Planning Council for approval.

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<sup>1</sup>Ministry of Planning *Reintegration and Development of Evacuated Areas in the West Bank and Reintegration and Development of Evacuated Areas in the Gaza Strip*, November 2004.

<sup>2</sup> *The [Israeli] Government Resolution Regarding the Disengagement Plan; Addendum A–A Revised Disengagement Plan*, 6 June 2004.

<sup>3</sup> The northern Part of the West Bank is not to be confused with the northern region of the West Bank, which has Nablus as its regional center. For the definition of northern part, please refer to Section 5.2 below



## 2. The 'Disengagement Plan' and the Palestinian Position

The "disengagement plan" outlines unilateral withdrawal or redeployment by Israel from colonies in the Gaza Strip and in the northern part of the West Bank, together with associated processes, conditions and consequences. The plan is nebulous and ambiguous, and open to a range of interpretations.

One of the main Palestinian concerns is the territorial implications of such a plan in terms of the extent and scope of access to and control of evacuated land. In comparison to the Northern Part of the West Bank, the extent and scope of evacuation/redeployment in the Gaza Strip is more clearly defined. The plan suggests that, with the exception of a military presence in the area adjacent to the border between Gaza and Egypt (the so-called "Philadelphi route"), Israel would withdraw from the Gaza Strip, including all colonies, and will redeploy outside the area. However, Israel will continue to control the borders on land, will have exclusive control of Gaza airspace, and will continue its military activity along the Gaza Strip coastline.

In the West Bank, the geographical delimitation of the area referred to in the "disengagement plan" is not clear. As noted above, several terms for describing the area are applied such as, "an area in Northern Samaria," "parts of Northern Samaria," and "Northern Samaria." Further, important concepts, including "territorial continuity," "evacuated area" and "continuous transport," are not sufficiently defined and are open for various interpretations.

Similarly, the extent of Palestinian mobility and Palestinians' free access to various services is vague. The plan is unclear about the future of the existing closure regime and the restrictions imposed on movement of people and goods in the evacuated areas and between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Although the plan stipulates that there will be "no permanent military presence" in the evacuated areas, it states that Israel would continue to take "preventive measures," and "use [military] force". The IDF would maintain its activities in the cities and continue to employ checkpoints, although there would be a possible reduction in military activities.

In its original "disengagement plan", the GOI "reserved the right to request that the economic value of the assets left in the evacuated areas be taken into consideration." That provision was subsequently deleted from the revised "disengagement plan", but the language of the revised plan suggests that Israel will consider any assets it leaves behind to be improvements upon the land. These, in Israel's view, will "benefit" the Palestinian population. Israel may then call for valuation and eventual compensation.

The PNA rejects Israeli claims for compensation related to structures erected in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in violation of international law. Moreover, it maintains that Palestinians are entitled to compensation for all losses, damages and injury suffered as a result of the unlawful acts carried out by Israel during its belligerent occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, and that those compensation claims must be recognized in the context of the Gaza disengagement.<sup>4</sup>

In response to Sharon's statements<sup>5</sup> and indications,<sup>6</sup> the overall Palestinian position is to maximize the potential benefits of the proposed "disengagement plan," emphasizing that the

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<sup>4</sup> See, PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, *Compensation In The Context Of The Gaza Disengagement* (October 2004).

<sup>5</sup> In an interview with *Yediot Ahranot* on 16 September 2004, Prime Minister Sharon admitted Israel was not following the Road Map and said an Israeli pullout from the Gaza Strip was unlikely to revive it.

plan *must be* considered a reengagement with the peace process and *must be* consistent with the Road Map. The Quartet has reiterated a similar position in the New York meeting of September 22, 2004. According to the Palestinian position, the proposed “disengagement plan” must be linked to political goals, more specifically:<sup>7</sup>

- the withdrawal must be linked to an ultimate withdrawal from all territories occupied in 1967;
- the withdrawal must lead to negotiations on final status issues;
- the withdrawal must signal an end to Israel’s continued policies of:
  - colony expansion (including construction of by-pass roads, infrastructure, and the Wall)
  - house demolition
  - closure and restriction on movement
  - economic isolation
  - destruction of Palestinian institution and infrastructure
  - extra-judicial killings and assassinations.

It is important to stress that should “disengagement” proceed as proposed, Israel would remain in belligerent occupation, and hence the Occupying Power, in the whole of the territory.<sup>8</sup>

### **3 General Principles for the Integration Process**

The reintegration of the evacuated areas into the Palestinian system is one of the most critical components for ensuring the political, social, economic, cultural, physical, environmental benefits associated with the return of colonies’ areas into the Palestinian domain. The evacuated areas should not be treated as separate islands, but should be incorporated as parts of the Palestinian environment and accordingly integrated within the overall existing Palestinian infrastructure and spatial patterns.

Any future use of evacuated areas and/or installations should be assessed against the long term developmental vision and objectives, and strategies leading to a viable, contiguous, prosperous independent Palestinian state. In this respect, the Gaza Strip cannot be seen as an isolated or semi-independent territorial or political entity.

The extent to which installations and infrastructure will be left behind once the colonies are dismantled is not clear. The “disengagement plan” states that:

*“In general, houses belonging to the settlers and other sensitive structures such as synagogues will not be left behind. The State of Israel will aspire to transfer other structures, such as industrial and agricultural facilities, to an international third party that will use them*

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<sup>6</sup> In an interview with *Haaretz* on 8 October 2004, Dov Weisglass, Shaon’s Advisor and Ex-Chief of Staff, stated that *“the disengagement [plan] is actually formaldehyde. It supplies the amount of formaldehyde that’s necessary so that there will not be a political process [i.e., return to the Road Map] with the Palestinians.”*

<sup>7</sup> PLO Negotiations Affairs Department *Palestinian Operational Strategies for Gaza Redeployment; Executive Summary* (May 2004).

<sup>8</sup> See e.g., PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, *The Israeli “Disengagement” Plan: Gaza Still Occupied* (Oct. 2004), available at <<http://www.nad-plo.org/gazaplan2.php>>, last checked November 29, 2004.

for the benefit of the Palestinian population. [...] The water, electricity, sewage and communications infrastructures will be left in place.”<sup>9</sup>

It cannot be assumed that structures installed for the purpose of occupation, colonization and annexation of Palestinian land would be of value for independent Palestinian development. From the perspective of the occupied people, one would assume that the opposite is the case. That is, these installations would be detrimental rather than beneficial to Palestinian development. Under international law, it is for the injured state to decide whether to claim restitution in kind or compensation, and the Palestinians, therefore must make the determination as to which structures would be beneficial and which would not.

In their design and implementation, the colonies and their supporting infrastructure never prioritized Palestinian interests. Since their construction, they have severely hindered Palestinian development. In fact, they are a tool, under ‘a security pretext,’ used by Israelis to control the OPT and to prevent the emergence of a viable and contiguous independent Palestinian state. The colonization has resulted *inter alia* in destruction of natural resources, fragmentation and erosion of cultivated and cultivable land, and fragmentation of Palestinian built-up areas and infrastructure. This has been exacerbated by the incomplete implementation of the redeployments stipulated by the Oslo Accords, Israeli control over the ‘yellow area’ and continued fragmentation of the Gaza Strip, and the division of the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C. This has been deepened by the imposed closure system and by the accompanying massive military presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). These both hamper inter- and intra-regional movement of people and goods, and restrict access to basic services. Additionally, the construction of the Annexation Wall adds to the difficulties already faced by Palestinian communities in accessing basic services such as health, education, and social welfare, and restrains agriculture and private sector development.

Generally, the colonies are strategically located to control Palestinian lands and resources (productive zones for water, agriculturally fertile lands, areas of great landscape and/or recreational potential, etc.), limiting natural Palestinian urban expansion, restricting movement and denying access to basic services. In many cases, the colonies are located in areas that, from the Palestinian perspective, should be protected, reserved and not used for urban development. Unrestricted further development and densification would be uninformed by and, in some cases, in conflict with both environmental and urban development goals. In particular, it might conflict with the concept of sustainable development in general.

The reintegration of the evacuated areas and the re-use of any of the associated infrastructure (roads, water supply pipelines and wells, electrical supply installations), and public buildings,<sup>10</sup> should therefore be addressed within the framework of existing Palestinian land-use and developmental plans and needs, based on *long term* sustainable development objectives for Palestine. Only those installations that coincide with or serve Palestinian long-term development needs and priorities can be integrated into the Palestinian system. In this respect, it is of great importance that any discussion of the transfer of ‘assets’ from the evacuated colonies to the Palestinians must be subject to full freedom of inspection by relevant Palestinian authorities, both before and after evacuation.

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<sup>9</sup> The [Israeli] Government Resolution Regarding the Disengagement Plan; Addendum A–A Revised Disengagement Plan, 6 June 2004.

<sup>10</sup> See World Bank *Disengagement, the Palestinian Economy and the Settlements*, Annex 1, 23 June 2004.

## **4 Bases for the Integration of the Evacuated Areas into the Palestinian Spatial System**

Long-term development objectives, which guide *short and medium term objectives* of the Medium Term Development Plan, 2005–2007 (MTDP), provide the developmental framework for the reintegration process. Linked to this are the two *Regional Plans for the West Bank and Gaza Governorates* (RPWB&G), which were prepared by MOPIC in 1996–1998, and which provide the spatial framework and guidelines for the reintegration and land-use priorities of the evacuated areas. Although the *Regional Plans* have not been formally adopted, they are still valid as bases for directing development in the OPT. They provide the main strategies for future physical planning and development such as urban and rural development strategies, sectoral development strategies including transportation, water and wastewater, solid waste, industry, agriculture, public services, housing, and tourism. More specifically, the *RPWB&G* provide the following:

- directions for physical development in a manner that prioritizes future investment programs and projects;
- directions for national or inter-ministerial policy formulations;
- an instrument to promote national political priorities as well as the desired pattern of physical and socio-economic development throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip;
- a plan classifying land for future development and protection throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip areas;
- guidance to local planning authorities for control of land-use in matters of national importance; and
- systems of background data and information to be used in further national and regional planning, and in the negotiations between the PNA and the Israeli government.

The urban development model, proposed by the two *Regional Plans* and defined as decentralized, balanced and concentrated polycentric development based on a hierarchy of centers (Maps 1 and 2), aims at setting limitations to the growth of scattered built-up areas and to urban agglomerations. In the event of a meaningful Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and from the Northern Part of the West Bank, the *RPWB&G* would serve as the bases for colony integration and for guiding the spatial distribution of interventions. A meaningful withdrawal can also open the way for interventions, development and project possibilities which are already identified and described in the *RPWB&G* and which could easily be incorporated into the MTDP.

## **5 General Characteristics of the Study Areas**

The following sections include a general description of the existing situation in the study areas, i.e. Gaza Governorates and the Northern Part of West Bank, during the second Intifada contrasted with a 'normal' situation where relevant.

### **5.1 Gaza Strip**

The Gaza Strip, delimited by the 1967 borders, includes five Governorates: Gaza, Khan Yunis, Rafah, Deir al-Balah and North Gaza. The total population is estimated to be around 1,299,400 persons distributed as shown in Table 1 below.

*Table (1): Population Distribution in Gaza Strip*

District	Area* (km <sup>2</sup> )	Built up areas* (km <sup>2</sup> )	Population*	Gross Density (person/km <sup>2</sup> ) **	Net Density (person/km <sup>2</sup> ) ***
North Gaza	61	9.8	244,250	4,004	24,923
Gaza	74	21.2	459,045	6,203	21,653
Deir Al-Balah	58	6.8	18,829	3,246	27,690
Khan Yunis	108	10.1	252,726	2,340	25,027
Rafah	64	5.9	155,093	2,423	26,286.
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>53.8</b>	<b>1,299,403</b>	<b>3,560</b>	<b>24,152</b>

\* Source: PCBS, *Statistical Abstract of Palestine, No.4. November 2003*

\*\* Gross Density = Population/ Total Area

\*\* Net Density = Population/ Built up Area

It is important to note that more than 46% of the population is under the age of 14, with only 3.2% over the age of 65, hence, a relatively young population, suggesting that many amenities and services are required to accommodate and adequately serve such a population. Job opportunities must be created to provide employment in order to stabilize the economy and achieve economic advancements. Even before the second Intifada, unemployment rates were relatively high in the Gaza Governorates. Since the Intifada began, unemployment in these areas grew faster than average and by 2003, the broad rate (the unemployed plus discouraged workers) reached 50 % compared to the overall national average of 38%.<sup>11</sup> Services, agriculture and commerce and hotels are the most important sectors employing approximately 41.5%, 20.9% and 15.3% respectively of the working labor force. About 60% of the population of the Gaza Governorates lived in poverty in 2003 as compared to a national average of about around 47%.

Table 1 above shows that most of the population is concentrated in the northern part of Gaza Strip. In order to ensure balanced urban and rural development, and in order to provide an optimal distribution of, and accessibility to, residential structures, service facilities, and job opportunities across the Gaza Governorates, the *Regional Plan* stipulates a development pattern based on a “two-core-cities” structure—namely, Gaza City in the north and Khan Yunis city in the south. In addition, a functional hierarchy of 14 strong urban centers of different size and importance is promoted. It is envisaged that these centers will be developed as the main concentrations for industrial activities, private and public services and administration. Industrial sites will be developed in these centers, and regional sites for industrial and trade development areas have also been identified outside the main urban areas. Practically, these industrial areas will function as auxiliary centers, easily accessible from the main population concentrations, developed for goods and services production according to national policies, to demands of economic development and according to job creation opportunities.

## 5.2 The Northern Part of the West Bank

The northern *part* of the West Bank as discussed here (Map 3) is the area *north* of Nablus City delimited by the east–west corridor along the Avne Hafetz-Enav-Shave Shomeron colony bloc. To the north and the west, the area is delimited by the Green Line and the Wall, and by the Jordan Valley to the east. In the south and east, the delimitation of the area roughly coincides with the administrative borders of Areas A and B. Quantitative data for this area is also available.

<sup>11</sup> PCBS *Statistical Abstract of Palestine, No.4, November 2003.*



The northern part consists of the Governorate of Jenin, most of the Governorate of Tulkarem, the northern part of the Governorate of Nablus, and the western part of the Governorate of Tubas. For the purpose of this exercise, the northern part of West Bank has been described on the basis of data aggregated at the governorate level.

It is estimated that a total of approximately 450,000 people live in the northern part of the West Bank: about 250,000 in Jenin Governorate, 160,000 in Tulkarem Governorate and 45,000 in Tubas Governorate. Agriculture, commerce and services are the most important sectors employing approximately 29%, 19% and 30%, respectively, of the engaged labor force. It is considered to be the 'bread basket' of the West Bank, endowed with highly productive agricultural areas. It also has landscapes of great natural beauty and a rich cultural heritage with valuable archaeological sites. However, the infrastructure (roads, water, electricity, sanitation, sewage) is generally less developed than in the rest of the West Bank.

Unemployment rates have been higher than West Bank averages with a disproportionate increase during the second Intifada. Even before the Intifada that began in 2000, unemployment was relatively high in this part of the West Bank. In 1998, the broad unemployment rates in Jenin and Tubas (32% and 28.4% respectively) were above the overall average rate for the West Bank of 24.5%. Unemployment in these areas grew faster than average and by 2002 the districts accounted for more than 20% of all the West Bank unemployment while having only about 13% of the working-age population. The unemployment rate in Jenin and Tubas averaged 44% in 2002, compared to 26% for the rest of the West Bank. Between 2000 and 2002, approximately 25% of total job losses in the West Bank were in this region—a proportion greater than their relative population share.<sup>12</sup>

The urban pattern of the northern part of the West Bank is largely characterized by agricultural towns and villages scattered throughout the Semi-Coastal plane, with a somewhat lower concentration of built-up areas in the Western Slopes towards Nablus. Jenin is a part of the main north-south central ridge area which is expected to have the most extensive future development in the West Bank. This development corridor extends from Adh-Dhahiriye in the south, through Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Ramallah/Al-Bireh and Nablus and includes Jenin as its northernmost conurbation. The other large city in this part of the West Bank, Tulkarem, is located west of the ridge, sloping westwards, surrounded by high quality agricultural land. Towards the Jordan Valley, there are only a few towns and villages, of which Tubas is the largest.

Table 2 below describes the population distribution in northern part of the West Bank. As shown, 36.2% of the population is concentrated in eight localities, whereas 32.1% of the population is scattered in 125 localities, which depicts the agricultural/rural nature of the area.

*Table (2): Population Distribution in Northern part of the West BANK*

<b>Population Categories</b>	<b>Number of Localities</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Population</b>
<b>&lt;100</b>	31	1,578	0.35%
<b>101-500</b>	30	8,225	1.82%
<b>501-1000</b>	17	13,510	2.98%
<b>1001-2000</b>	14	20,386	4.5%
<b>2001-5000</b>	33	102,048	22.52%
<b>5001-10,000</b>	16	149,180	31.60%
<b>&gt;10,000</b>	8	164,147	36.23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>459,074</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>12</sup> Humanitarian and Emergency Policy Group of the Local Aid Coordination Committee *The Impact of Israel's Separation Barrier on Affected West Bank Communities; A Follow up Report*, 31 July, 2003.



According to the *Regional Plan for West Bank Governorates*, Nablus is the regional center of the northern West Bank. As a result of the current closure regime, Nablus is separated from nearby areas. At present, smaller towns and villages have to rely on the sub-regional centers of Jenin and Tulkarem for facilities and services. Villages in the vicinity of Nablus that were once dependent on Nablus are now seeking support from Tulkarem and Jenin, although these are geographically distanced from these localities. Moreover, the facilities in Jenin and Tulkarem are not of the same level as those in the Nablus regional center, as the hierarchy of centers were denoted according to levels of public services provision in that area.

This part of the West Bank had a high degree of territorial continuity: after the last Israeli redeployment in March 2000, around 75% of its area was designated as Area A or B. Today, however, the area is practically cut-off from the rest of the West Bank. The Israeli-imposed closure regime is severe in this area, and prevents free intra-regional movement. In addition, the recent incursions have resulted in a great deal of destruction of agricultural land, houses and infrastructure.

## **6 Colonization in the Study Areas**

### **6.1 Colonies' Characteristics**

The colonies and the associated infrastructure comprise a spatial system that is antagonistic to and in competition with the Palestinian one, resulting in grave fragmentation of Palestinian land and in territorial discontinuity and disjointedness.

Colony construction fluctuates between 2,000 and 5,000 housing units per year. By 1992, the number of the settlers stood at approximately 251,000 in the OPT, including East Jerusalem. In 2001 the settler population in OPT was at 384,500. In 2004, the settler population is estimated to be around 402,000 in the West Bank alone (including East Jerusalem) and around 7,500 in Gaza Strip.

### **6.2 Colonies in the Gaza Strip**

The colony areas constitute some 13% of the Gaza Strip, and nearly 50% of its total coastline (the total occupied areas are about 20% of the Gaza Strip). There are altogether nineteen colonies with an estimated total settler population ranging from 6,500 to 7,500. Ten of these colonies are considered to be agricultural, six are residential, two are military, and one is considered to be industrial. They are low-density and low-rise, and the residential areas in them are sub-urban in character. Spatially, they can be grouped in three main categories (see Map 4):

1. The Northern bloc including Alei Sinai, Nisanit, Dugit, and Erez
2. The Katif Bloc (Gush Katif) in the south including Netzer Hazani, Shirat Yam, Katif, Ganei Tal, Neveh Dekalim, Gan Or, Bedolach, Bnei Atzmon, Pe'at Sadeh, Rafiah Yam, Kfar Yam, and Gadid
3. The three non-bloc colonies of Netzarim, Kfar Darom, and Morag.

The location and spatial distribution of the colonies reveal the Israeli intentions and strategies to control the OPT and its resources. The two colony blocs on the sand dunes in the north and south occupy and make use of Palestinian resources of crucial importance: water, landscape and nature and recreational beach areas.

The three separate colonies are located strategically in the Strip. Nezarim is located between Gaza City and Wadi Gaza; Kfar Darom lies east of Deir el Balah in the middle; and Morag is located between the southern cities of Khan Younis and Rafah. Kfar Darom and Morag both lie along the main regional artery Route 4 (Salah ed-Din Road). All three have access roads to the eastern border and are dispersed in a manner that enables the Israeli military to effectively cut the Gaza Strip into three isolated segments, restricting and controlling all movement between them.

It is estimated that a total of 3,500 dunums is being farmed by the settlers. Colony agriculture is mainly irrigated, where green houses are widespread. Some farming is probably potted directly on wellheads. Colony farming is not necessarily in conflict with Palestinian long-term needs. The Israeli farming infrastructure can, if taken over, be easily adjusted to environmentally sound methods by shifting to low-intensity agriculture.

The total Israeli water extraction in the colonies amounts to 6.5 MCM/year of very high quality water. Based on the estimates of the Palestinian Water Authority, the annual extraction is well balanced with the annual recharge from rainfall. There is no sea water intrusion in the aquifers under the colonies. Hence, the present amount extracted should be maintained and integrated into Palestinian water networks.

Other than agricultural production, the colonies have minor industrial and/or manufacturing significance. Industrial activities are limited to two locations: Erez in the north and Neve Dekalim in the south. The industrial zone in Erez, with an area of 740 dunums and housing around 200 establishments, coincides well with Palestinian criteria for regional industry locations. Erez is outside urban concentrations and is easy to link to the outside world. At present, Erez is mostly idle, due to restrictions on movement and incursions.

The small industrial plant in Neve Dekalim in the southern bloc has eighteen units, one high-tech and the rest dedicated to food production, carpentry and metal shops. In contrast to Erez, its location is in conflict with environmental protection priorities and requirements, since it lies in an area of high agricultural potential and significant natural and landscape resources that need to be protected.

### **6.3 Colonies in the Northern Part of the West Bank**

As shown in Map 5, the colonies in the northern part are relatively few compared to other parts of the West Bank. The Um Rihan colonies, namely Shaqed, Hinnanit and Rehan, are already isolated from the rest of the West Bank by the Annexation Wall.

The colonies of Avne Hefets, Enav, Shave Shomeron, Elon More and Hamra form an east – west corridor that separates the northern part from the rest of the West Bank. In particular, Shave Shomeron and Elon More are critical for north–south inter-regional movement and mobility. They control, and many times prevent, all movement of people and goods between the northern part and other parts of the West Bank, particularly the city of Nablus, the West Bank's largest commercial center.

In addition, there are six scattered colonies in this area that are of small size with a settler population of some hundreds of people. These colonies are located in Area C and prohibit the Palestinians from having territorial contiguity. Of these, four are mentioned in Sharon's "disengagement plan." According to the plan, Ganim, Qadim, Homesh and Sa Nur will be evacuated, while Mevo Dotan and Hermesh will apparently remain under Israeli control.

The four colonies in question (Ganim, Qadim, Homesh and Sa Nur), with a combined total population of about 460 Israeli settlers, serve as “bedroom communities” with no economic significance. Together with the other obstacles to movement (gates, blocks, checkpoints, earth mounds and trenches), they limit the urban expansion of Palestinian localities in the area and further fragment Palestinian built-up areas. Access between the localities is restricted on most of the road networks due to checkpoints and the closure regime. In the Jenin area, the colonies Ganim and Kadim form a block that separates the city from the eastern villages and makes it difficult to reach Jenin using the existing road networks and forcing travelers to use long and difficult routes to reach their destinations.

The south-west block of Homesh and Sanur separates the western localities from the eastern ones and limits Palestinian urban expansion in that area. They also restrict the use of the main road connecting Jenin with Nablus and, hence, hinder economic development in the whole northern part of the West Bank, leading to an increase in unemployment and poverty. Furthermore, the NRPW holds many cultural heritage sites that have high potential for development as tourist attractions. However, any development of these sites is impossible due to the existence of the colonies and the prevailing closure regime.

## **7 Limitations and Potentials of the “Disengagement Plan”**

### **7.1 Alternative Interpretations of the “Disengagement Plan”**

As described in Section 2 above, the declared “disengagement plan” is vague and open to various interpretations, especially regarding the northern part of the West Bank. The main Palestinian concern is the territorial implications of the plan in terms of the extent and scope of, as well as access to and control of, evacuated areas.

In order to shed light on different implications of any Israeli withdrawal/redeployment from the Gaza Strip and northern part of the West Bank, and to facilitate the reintegration of evacuated areas into the Palestinian spatial development context, various possible alternative interpretations/scenarios have been developed and analyzed. On a continuum of possible interpretations/scenarios, two extremes were identified for both the Gaza Strip and the northern part of the West Bank. They range from a relatively ‘conservative’ interpretation based on a unilateral Israeli redeployment of forces and colonisers, as described in the “disengagement plan”, to the most “liberal” interpretation based on the assumption of a full Israeli withdrawal from the specified areas. Although in principal the two identified extremes are the same for the two regions of interest, the details differ in each. Likewise, the possible implications of the “disengagement” and the required actions from the Palestinian side vary according to each location.

#### **7.1.1 Alternative Interpretations of the “Disengagement Plan” in the Gaza Strip**

##### **A. Redeployment**

This corresponds largely to the 6 June 2004 Israeli Cabinet decision on “disengagement.”<sup>13</sup> It includes Israeli redeployment (military and settler population) from the Gaza Strip to the outer perimeter, except from the Egyptian-Palestinian border (“Philadelphi Route”), which may be widened; dismantlement of residential houses; and exclusive Israeli control of outer perimeter (land, sea, and air). Incursions by Israeli forces into Palestinian territory is kept as an option (“preventive measures”). This scenario would also entail controlled movement of goods between Gaza and the West Bank (convoys), to Israel, and to other foreign countries;

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<sup>13</sup> See World Bank *Disengagement, the Palestinian Economy and the Settlements*, Annex 1, 23 June 2004.

restricted/controlled movement of people in and out of Gaza; Israeli control over the provision of public services; gradual decrease of Palestinian labor in Israel; no reopening of the airport; and continued Israeli military activity along the Gaza Strip's coastline.

A more substantial, though perhaps less likely, variant of this scenario was also considered, which does not necessarily correspond to the Israeli Cabinet decision on "disengagement". The variant would involve, in addition to the above, the dismantlement and removal of all structures associated with the colonies including buildings and infrastructure, the destruction of wells, and the disruption of soil and natural resources.

### ***B. Withdrawal***

This option assumes Israeli willingness to re-engage in the political process (Road Map) and a return to the implementation of all signed agreements since Oslo. It includes full Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip; the reopening of the safe passage for people and goods between the West Bank and Gaza Strip; and the opening of borders for free movement of people and goods (land, sea, air) to third countries.

### **7.1.2 Alternative Interpretations of the "Disengagement Plan" in Northern Part of the West Bank**

**A. *Redeployment*** of Israeli military and evacuation of settlers is confined to the four colonies mentioned in the "disengagement plan"—Qadim, Ganim, Sa Nur and Homesh—and free Palestinian access to the evacuated areas, but with continued Israeli control of the northern West Bank. Specifically, this would involve Palestinian control of the colony areas including buffer zones. Redevelopment of the areas would, in this case, be possible. The road links serving as access roads to the colonies would be opened for Palestinian use. However, the occupation and closure regime in the northern part of the West Bank, with its checkpoints, incursions, curfews, etc. would continue indefinitely.

**B. *Withdrawal*** from the entire northern part of the West Bank. This assumes re-engagement in the political process and a negotiated agreement concerning the withdrawal from the northern part is reached. Withdrawal includes dismantlement of all army bases, checkpoints and other closure measures, in addition to the evacuation of all colonies in the area, specifically (but not exclusively) the following (refer to Map 6):

- The evacuation of the four colonies mentioned in the "disengagement plan" – Qadim, Ganim, Sa Nur and Homesh;
- In addition, the evacuation of the two colonies in the west (2E) – Hermesh and Mevo Dotan—and all area C (2B, 2C), which is necessary for securing territorial contiguity and reestablishing functional links between different Palestinian communities in the area;
- Palestinian access and control of areas in the Jordan Valley to the east (2D), which is necessary for agricultural purposes, such as grazing, etc.

In addition, this alternative assumes a return to the pre-Intifada situation, which includes free Palestinian movement and land control within the area, but restrictions on inter-regional and international movement of goods and people would prevail. Moreover, it is assumed that there would be no Israeli restrictions on Palestinian development and intra-regional movement, but the occupation as such would continue (i.e. northern part of West Bank would remain isolated and under the effective Israeli control, and the threat of incursions would always be present).

## 7.2 Reintegration of Evacuated Areas

To be able to develop policy directions for the reintegration of evacuated areas, the implications of the "disengagement plan," its limitations and challenges were analyzed and assessed against the assumptions, goals and objectives of both the *Regional Plans for West Bank and Gaza* and the MTDP. The implications of such a plan are more significant for the Gaza Strip than for the West Bank, where scope for development is largely dependent on the scope of the withdrawal/redeployment. However, the basic framework for sustainable and environmentally sound reintegration of any evacuated area into the Palestinian system is to protect natural resources of significant value, and direct spatial development to areas that do not have such resources.

### 7.2.1 Reintegration of Evacuated Areas in the Gaza Strip

The following conclusions are based on the various analyses and assessments of the "disengagement plan" conducted by the PNA. They relate to the reintegration of evacuated colonies and their associated assets and infrastructure within the Gaza Strip's spatial and developmental framework:

- (1) The sand dunes areas in the north and south, where the two major colony blocs are located, contain the best water aquifers, represent landscapes and natural features of very high value, and constitute an important potential for environmentally sound, sustainable agriculture. According to the *Regional Plan for Gaza Governorates*, it is of the utmost importance that these areas are protected against unplanned development. As a rule, the sand dune areas will be reintegrated as areas under environmental protection against urban development. The assets in the urban built up areas of the colonies must therefore be removed, because they endanger Palestinian long-term sustainability requirements. This would also include service buildings such as fire stations, clinics and schools.
- (2) **Netzarim** can be a part of the urban growth strategy of Gaza City and would serve as a core for low density development.
- (3) **Morag** is situated on the main road between Khan Yunis and Rafah. The location does not coincide with the growth strategy for these two cities; however Morag is interesting because of its function as an agricultural colony. It could serve as a research and development facility in agriculture, in connection with university expansion plans in the south. Because of such a unit's dependency on agricultural lands, it would prevent rather than induce further urban development. Morag's future use requires further analysis. One option could be to develop it into a research facility connected to university plans in the southern twin cities of Khan Yunis and Rafah.
- (4) **Kfar Darom** does not coincide with growth strategies for Deir el Balah, but neither does the location contradict them. The problem of Kfar Darom is its location on Route 4, the main artery. If integrated, Kfar Darom could form a kind of an attraction point for services and informal markets on the main north-south artery. This would cause some congestion and traffic problems. Kfar Darom is also close to one regional and one local industrial area, which ultimately might cause conflicts in terms of noise, heavy traffic, pollution and other factors. These considerations point to the conclusion that Kfar Darom is better suited for agricultural purposes than for urban functions.
- (5) **Erez** will retain its significance after the withdrawal of Israeli forces and should be integrated and strengthened as an industrial zone when transferred to Palestinian control.



- (6) The **Neve Dekalim** industrial plant does not coincide with any Palestinian needs & interests for development. It contradicts the environmental considerations and, therefore, must be removed and the soil restored.
- (7) Some of the sand dune colonies have a typical sub-urban residential quality that could be utilized as tourist villages/resorts. They contain residential and recreational structures such as the hotel and pool in the south and restaurants, playgrounds, sports facilities in other areas that could be reintegrated within a Palestinian tourism and recreation concept. Further investigation is required in order to ensure their compliance with the relevant environmental considerations. These units, if reintegrated, must not be allowed to form clusters for random densification based on pure speculation.
- (8) Areas used for agriculture can be easily reintegrated as such, with an emphasis on changing cropping patterns and irrigation methods etc. to minimize water use such as horticulture and production of value crops, e.g., vegetables, strawberry and flowers. This concerns all colony areas.
- (9) The road network in the colony areas coincides with the configuration of the regional road network in the Gaza Strip. Hence, the main road network of the colonies should be kept intact. The utility of local roads will be decided upon after inspection.
- (10) Infrastructure such as electricity, water, wastewater and telecommunication networks and facilities can largely be taken over and reused, pending inspection and evaluation. Any redundant infrastructure should be removed and the area restored to its original condition.
- (11) All formal and informal solid waste dumps must be removed. Toxic and otherwise harmful waste completely removed, and the natural state restored.

### **7.2.2 Reintegration of Evacuated Areas in the Northern Part of the West Bank**

In comparison to those in the Gaza Strip, the colonies in the northern part of the West Bank that are considered for possible evacuation by the Israeli Cabinet are relatively small and insignificant, totaling approximately 1,058 dunums, and their benefits to Palestinian society in terms of land control are extremely limited. In contrast to the Gaza Strip, the withdrawal/redeployment from the northern part of the West Bank involves more variant options. The withdrawal/redeployment alternatives might be simply restricted to the four colonies or could be expanded to the whole northern part, including any possible alternative in between. Whatever the range of the withdrawal/redeployment, areas to be considered for reintegration in all cases would be the four colonies and the associated infrastructure, namely their access roads, water, electricity, and telecommunication networks.

The *Regional Plan for West Bank Governorates* provides the guidelines for the reintegration and use of the evacuated colonies in the northern part of the West Bank. Accordingly, the following conclusions are presented:

- (1) Israeli withdrawal from the four colonies with maintenance of the existing closure system would not bring any benefits to the Palestinian community. It would provide only marginal benefits for Palestinian development. In political and humanitarian terms, mere withdrawal will not contribute to any significant improvement.



- (2) Improvement of local accessibility and intra-regional movement and development possibilities depend on the full withdrawal of the Israeli army from the entire northern part of the West Bank, including dismantling army bases, removing checkpoints and other closure measures, in addition to evacuating all colonies in the area.
- (3) **Ganim** and **Qadim** are located within a Nature Protection Area. There are two alternative uses of the area, which to varying degrees, could be combined:
  - Rehabilitate the area as a natural reserve, reestablish lost vegetation and reintegrate it into the Nature Protection Area.
  - Explore the area's potential for local tourism and recreation based on ecological principles and sustainable use. This could include a visitor center, development of pathways, fences, etc. in order to ensure controlled use, e.g. picnic and toilet facilities, garbage collection containers, etc.
- (4) **Sa Nur** is located within a valuable agricultural area. However, the site was used for military/administrative purposes during the British Mandate period and has a certain cultural heritage value. During the Israeli occupation, it has been used to house around 100 settlers. The site has potential use primarily in military/administrative uses.
- (5) **Homesh** is a hilltop settlement. Because of topographical conditions, according to the *Regional Plan for the West Bank Governorates*, it has no potential for urban development. Before colonization, it was used for agricultural purposes, primarily horticulture and grazing. It should thus be rehabilitated as an agricultural area, where fruit trees could be replanted, etc.
- (6) The northern part of West Bank is neither an independently functional territory nor a political entity in itself, particularly if existing restrictions on movement of goods, services, people, and capital persist. Full withdrawal would still leave the area isolated from its regional center, Nablus; from the rest of the West Bank and Gaza; and from neighboring countries.
- (7) Mere withdrawal from the four colonies would create a limited number of minor project possibilities—at a local level—which would represent a very marginal but positive contribution.
- (8) Full-scale withdrawal from the northern part, on the other hand, opens the way for several local development and project possibilities already identified and described in the *Regional Plan for West Bank* and that could easily be incorporated into the MTDP. In line with the declared objectives of the MTDP, a whole range of potential interventions and projects are proposed.

### **7.3 Transfer Process**

Around 95% of the Israeli colonies in the Gaza Strip lie on public land. In the northern part of the West Bank, Qadim, Ganim and Sa Nur colonies are located mainly on public land, while Homesh is located on expropriated private land except for a small part which is public. Private lands should be returned to their original owners, while public land would come under the auspices of the Palestinian Land Authority, which is mandated by law to manage all public lands.

The PNA will use/develop the appropriate legal and institutional set-up for handling the transfer and the disposal of lands and assets, according to which the Palestinian Land Authority, together with the Ministry of Justice, would oversee the land transfer process. Existing laws and the judicial system are capable of processing claims in this respect.

Authority over the various infrastructural assets, such as roads, water, electricity, and telecommunication networks will be transferred to the relevant Palestinian institutions. An appropriate mechanism for temporary control, protection, maintenance and management is being developed by the relevant Palestinian institutions.

#### **7.4 Action Plan**

In addition to the possibilities mentioned in sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2, full scale Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the northern part of the West Bank allows for several development and project possibilities that were identified and described in the *Regional Plans*. These could be easily incorporated into the MTDP.

The potential projects and interventions can be briefly summarized under the relevant MTDP objectives as follows:

- *Investment in public infrastructure as a job creation tool*  
Re-paving and upgrading of roads; construction of new road links; rehabilitating and developing water systems including wells, pumping stations, and water networks; construction of sewage networks and treatment plants; rehabilitating solid waste collection systems and the development of the associated regional and local landfills, reconstruction of the airport and harbor, construction of the coastal parkway.
- *Priority private sector activities: agriculture, housing, manufacturing, tourism and ICT*
  - Agricultural development, including replanting of trees that were destroyed in recent Israeli incursions or settler raids; land reclamation and rehabilitation; development of grazing areas, terracing, cleaning agricultural lands from plastic agricultural wastes.
  - Reconstruction of damaged houses; urban expansion and development of new housing projects in line with the Regional Plans for West Bank and Gaza Governorates.
  - Use of the Erez Industrial Zone for the further development of priority manufacturing activities (e.g. pharmaceuticals, textiles and garments, food products) as well as ICT.
  - Development of recreation sites and enhancement of local tourism including strengthening of tourism infrastructure and facilities; development of tourist destinations, including for example the "sites of special significance and beauty" identified in the *Landscape Assessment Study*; excavation of archeological sites and developing them as potential tourist attractions.
- *Job stimulation and creation in the private sector; poverty alleviation and social protection*  
All of the above would support this objective. But more specifically, the withdrawal would open opportunities for the development of regional industrial areas designated in the *Regional Plans*, which would contribute to enhancing the private sector, creating new jobs, and reducing poverty.
- *Strengthening the education and the health care system*  
Withdrawal would provide an opportunity to establish a more effective distribution of, and better access to, services. It would provide the possibility for developing more functional service delivery systems corresponding to the center hierarchy proposed in the *RPWB&G*.

# **Annex**

## **MAPS**

- Map 1: Northern Part of the West Bank
- Map 2: Center Hierarchy, West Bank
- Map 3: Center Hierarchy, Gaza
- Map 4: Gaza Built-Up Areas and Israeli Colonies
- Map 5: The Closure Regime
- Map 6: Land Control and Full Redeployment