



Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ)
P.O.Box 860, Caritas St.
Bethlehem, Palestine
Tel: +972-(02)-277-0535
Tel: +972-(02)-274-1889

Infringements in Hebron District

Jennifer Laurin, Nizar Qattoush and Wafa' Safar

Introduction :

Even as peace negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian officials continue, confiscation of Palestinian land, demolition of Palestinian homes, and the expansion of Israeli colonies all continue in the West Bank. While the Israeli authorities insist that colonial expansion and land confiscation occurs randomly, as needed by the natural growth of Jewish colonies across the Green Line, the exceptional amount of confiscation activity in the Hebron District indicates otherwise. Specific areas in the West Bank, the Hebron District in particular, are strategically targeted for land violations by Israel.

This report seeks to illuminate the damage being inflicted on the entirety of the West Bank by describing and explaining colonization and confiscation currently occurring in the Hebron District. Through the use of maps and data assembled from research on the ground, a clear picture of the design and consequences of Israeli land policy in the Hebron District emerges.

The Geography of the Hebron District :

The Hebron District is located in the southernmost portion of the West Bank, 36 km south of Jerusalem City. Since 1967, it has comprised 105,000 hectares, and is bounded by the Bethlehem District from the north and the 1948 cease-fire line (henceforth known as the Green Line) from other directions ([Figure 1](#)). The 1997 population census data estimated the total population of the Hebron District at 389,014; with 119,230 people, or 31% of the district, residing in Hebron City, 35% of the population living in other municipalities, 31% living in rural areas, and 3% of the population living in refugee camps.



Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ)
P.O.Box 860, Caritas St.
Bethlehem, Palestine
Tel: +972-(02)-277-0535
Tel: +972-(02)-274-1889



Figure 1: Map showing location of Hebron District.

The physical and cultural geography of the Hebron District is characterized by a great deal of variation. Elevation varies between the extremes of 1,011 m above sea level in the central northern area of Halhul, to 100 m above sea level in the Eastern Slopes. Most Palestinian built-up areas are located at elevations between 600 and 1,000 m above sea level. Accordingly, climate varies as well, ranging from arid to semi-arid, with the highest aridity toward the Negev desert in the south and the Jordan valley in the east. The



Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ)
P.O.Box 860, Caritas St.
Bethlehem, Palestine
Tel: +972-(02)-277-0535
Tel: +972-(02)-274-1889

average monthly temperature ranges from 7.5 to 10 C in the winter to 22 C in the summer.

Rainfall in the district varies annually, with wet years bringing 1,027 mm and dry years bringing only 200 mm. Rainfall is greatest in the north, decreasing closer to the Negev and along the eastern boundaries of the district. The mean annual rainfall for the period 1972 to 1992 at the Hebron Meteorological Station was 588 mm.

The economy of the Hebron District is based on agricultural marketing as well as manufacturing, and it leads the West Bank in the number and diversity of its industries. The tanning of leather and production of leather products, along with the production of distinctive blue, hand-blown glass, are major manufacturing activities in the district. Dominant industries also includes stone and aggregate quarrying, and stone and marble cutting.

Cultivation is, for the most part, possible only in the western portion of the district, and nearly all agricultural production is rainfed as opposed to irrigated. As throughout the West Bank, fruits dominate the agricultural output, with the Hebron District ranking second among the West Bank districts for total fruit production. Grape vine cultivation comprises the greatest amount of the output, with 68% of total West Bank grape cultivation found in the Hebron District.

Since the signing of the 1995 Hebron Protocol as part of the interim negotiations for the 1993 Oslo Accords, the Hebron District has been divided jurisdictionally into three areas:

- "Area A" means Hebron City, where the Palestinian Authority controls internal security and civil functions;
- "Area B" means populated villages, camps and other Palestinian built-up areas, where the Palestinian Authority controls civil functions only;
- "Area C" means all other areas in the district, where Israel still exercises full authority. ([Figure 2](#))

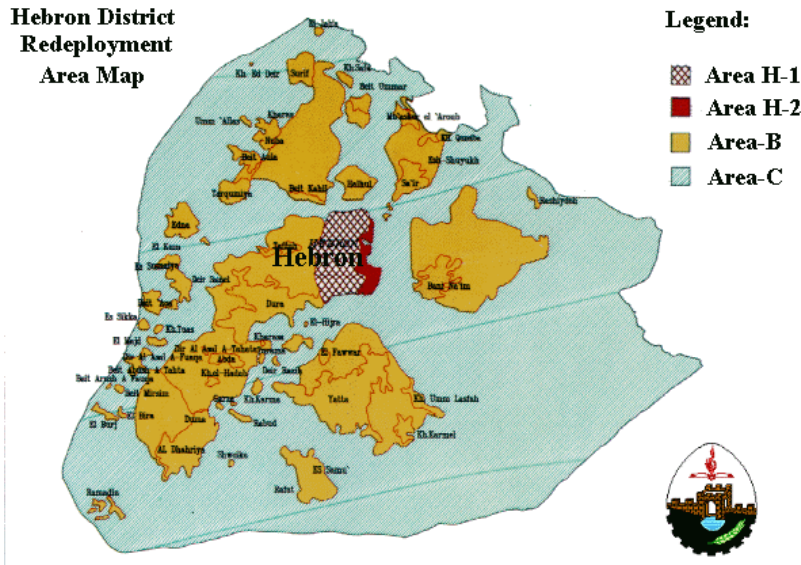


Figure 2: Map illustrating division of Hebron into three areas.

Additionally, the Protocol divided Hebron City into areas H-1 and H-2, due to the presence of Israeli settlers within the city boundaries. The Palestinian Authority exercises civil authority over both areas, however Israel retains control over internal security and public order in H-2, which contains all the Jewish settlers as well as 20,000 Palestinians. ([Figure 2](#))

Occupation and Colonization in the Hebron District :

After the 1948 War, the Hebron District was part of the area occupied by Jordan, on the western bank of the Jordan River east of the Green Line. The 1967 War brought Israeli military occupation to the Palestinians of the West Bank, and with it the immediate commencement of a policy of colonization. The Israeli government's move to establish a Jewish presence in the West Bank by settling across the Green Line was in clear violation of international law, specifically the Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 49, item 6: "The occupying power shall not deport or transfer part of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies."

In the Hebron District there are 27 Jewish colonies, surrounding Hebron City on all sides. The first colony in the Hebron District was Kefar 'Ezyon, established in 1967 near the



northern border of the district. The most recently established colonies are Mezad B in the north and Eshkelot in the southwestern portion of the district. Table 1 lists colonies in the Hebron District with their locations, establishment dates and sizes.

Table 1: Israeli colonies in the Hebron District.

Colony Name	Year Established	Government	Location	Area	Population
Bet Iyen	1989	Unity, Yitzhak Shamir	North	97.471	358
Karme Zur	1984	Unity, Shimon Peres	North	170.010	345
Kefar 'Ezyon	1967	Labor, Levi Eshkol	North	No Data	340
Migdal 'Oz	1977	Likud, Menachem Begin	North	271.288	300
Zoref	No Data	No Data	North	34.777	No Data
Doren	No Data	No Data	Northwest	172.076	No Data
Telem	1982	Likud, Menachem Begin	Northwest	62.983	93
Mezad	1984	Unity, Shimon Peres	Northeast	34.826	215
Mezad B	1991	Unity, Yitzhak Shamir	Northeast	116.143	No Data
Beit Yattir	1979	Likud, Menachem Begin	South	106.065	225
Haggai	1984	Unity, Shimon Peres	South	93.626	235
Manoah	1982	Likud, Menachem Begin	South	31.439	No Data
Shani	1982	Likud, Menachem Begin	South	351.013	585
Susia	1983	Likud, Yitzhak Shamir	South	65.722	250
Eshkelot	1991	Unity, Yitzhak Shamir	South	51.810	118
Karmel	1981	Likud, Menachem Begin	South	251.623	225



Ma'al Hever	1983	Likud, Yitzhak Shamir	South	57.662	120
Ma'on	1983	Likud, Yitzhak Shamir	South	136.043	165
Omarim	1984	Unity, Shimon Peres	South	252.583	463
Ofni'el	1983	Likud, Yitzhak Shamir	South	216.427	325
Shima	1988	Unity, Yitzhak Shamir	South	82.338	200
Zoher	1978	Likud, Menachem Begin	South	42.680	No Data
Adora	1982	Likud, Menachem Begin	South	44.031	185
Negohot	1984	Unity, Shimon Peres	South	43.213	No Data
Giv'at Harsima	No Data	No Data	Central	280.183	No Data
Qiryat 'Arba	1971	Labor, Golda Meir	Central	1178.628	4000
Yaqin	No Data	No Data	South	No Data	No Data

Occupation of the land has carried on for 30 years at great cost to Palestinians of the Hebron District. While watching the buildup of Israeli colonies around them, they have experienced the destruction of their homes, the loss of their land, deprivation of water resources, and violence as clashes have inevitably erupted between colonists and Palestinian residents.

House Demolition:

The demolition of Palestinian homes is not a new feature of Israeli policy. By the end of the 1948 war, more than 400 Palestinian villages had been depopulated and destroyed. Following the establishment of the State of Israel, remaining Palestinian homes within the state were declared illegal through the passage of a series of discriminatory zoning and ownership laws. Hundreds of "illegal" homes were demolished under this pretext.

After the 1967 war, homes in the West Bank faced a similar fate. For 30 years, Palestinian homes in the West Bank have been demolished for one or more of three reasons: security violation, zoning violation, or the lack of a proper building license. Since the signing of the Oslo Accords in September 1993, the rate of demolition has



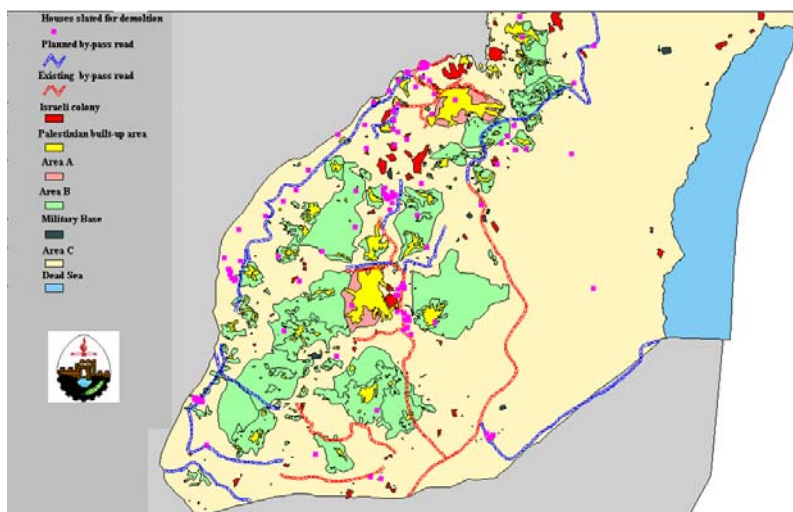
increased dramatically. According to official figures from the Israeli Ministry of Defense, demolition of homes has stepped up drastically since the election of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, with demolitions in 1997 alone surpassing the total number from the signing of Oslo until the defeat of the Labor party in 1996. (Table 2)

Table 2: Breakdown of West Bank house demolitions by year and government.

Government	September 1993 - March 1998	1997	January - March 1998	Total
Labor	197	-	-	197
Likud	338	233	57	628
Total	535	233	57	825

(Data compiled from Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and LAW)

In 1997 and 1998, every home demolished in the West Bank was located within Area C. The fact that there is no known instance of the Israeli government issuing a building permit to a Palestinian living in Area C seriously undermines any Israeli claim to the legal legitimacy of its zoning and demolition policies. Presently, official figures indicate that the list of impending Palestinian houses slated for demolition exceeds 1,000 ([Figure 3](#)).



[Figure 3:](#) Map showing demolished houses in Hebron District.



Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ)
P.O.Box 860, Caritas St.
Bethlehem, Palestine
Tel: +972-(02)-277-0535
Tel: +972-(02)-274-1889

The case study of the 'Atta Jaber family in Eastern Hebron near Qiryat Arba' is illustrative of the hardship and constant terror that the policy of house demolition inflicts on Palestinians. Located not only in space allocated for colonial expansion, but also in the way of new construction of bypass Road 60, 'Atta Jaber's home is a living metaphor for the plight of Palestinians, existing unwittingly in the destructive path of Israeli occupation ([Figure 4](#)).



Figure 4: 'Atta's House after demolition.

'Atta Jaber's house in the Baq'a Valley of Eastern Hebron was bulldozed by Israeli military forces on 19 August 1998. According to accounts collected by ARIJ field workers, before the house was demolished the family was expelled and neighbors were beaten. Most of the furniture was still inside when the house was flattened. Although the Jaber family has deeds proving their ownership of the land dating back to the Ottoman Empire, the Israeli authorities have denied them permits to build on their own land. The Israeli army has threatened for years to demolish their house which consists of three rooms. In order to expand the Israeli colonies of Qiryat Arba' and Kharsina, the Israeli military has recently confiscated tracts of vineyards, orchards, and vegetable farms in the Baq'a valley.

On 20 August 1998, the Jaber family decided to rebuild a two-room structure with no bathroom just north of their demolished home in order to at least give the family some shelter. Less than a month later, on 16 September, the Israeli military destroyed the home of 'Atta Jaber for the second time. This was done in spite of the fact that since the new house was on a different site it could not legally be destroyed without a new demolition order. Meanwhile, on 5 September 1998, 2.5 acres of fruit and olive trees were also uprooted on the Jaber family's land. The most recent demolition of the Jaber home, along with seven other demolitions in the Hebron District that occurred on the same day, left 40 people homeless.



Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ)
P.O.Box 860, Caritas St.
Bethlehem, Palestine
Tel: +972-(02)-277-0535
Tel: +972-(02)-274-1889

Loss of Agricultural Land :

The Israeli government consistently justifies its confiscation of Palestinian land by claiming that it is empty of inhabitants and, therefore, not in use. This does not take into account the fact that much of this land is used for rainfed farming by a large percentage of the Palestinian population. This land is crucial to the livelihood of many Palestinians.

Approximately 36,000 ha are currently under cultivation in the Hebron District, composing 34% of the total land area. In addition, there are 19,031 ha which are considered cultivable, but currently are not in use. Since the signing of the Oslo agreement in September 1993 until July 1998, 12,950 trees have been uprooted and 216 ha have been confiscated. Of the total confiscated land since 1967, 1,200 ha, or 15%, was considered as agricultural land.

Water Shortages:

The effect the Israeli occupation has had on the water supply of the Hebron District can be seen by the extreme water shortages suffered by residents of the district. Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) officials report that the southern portion of the West Bank is experiencing a water shortage whereby the need for water is three times that which is being provided by Israel. Hebron has been the district hit hardest by the shortage, caused largely by the failure of the Israeli water corporation, Mekerot, to supply water per the amounts agreed to in the Water Annex of the Oslo Accords. According to PWA officials, Israel is pumping to the Hebron District only half the negotiated 17,000 cubic meters (CM) of water per day. Meanwhile, Israeli and Palestinian sources estimate that leakage in water pipes is approximately 30%, due to infrastructural neglect over the last 30 years of occupation. The Palestinian Authority has not, in four years, been able to fix such extensive damage, nor has it been granted by the Israeli government more than six permits, out of forty applications, to drill wells within the West Bank.

A black market in water has developed out of the current shortage, whereby water is stolen from aquifers or trucks and sold to needy families at the exorbitant price of 25 NIS per CM. Palestinian families in Hebron, some of whom now only receive water in trucks once every ten days, are forced out of desperation to pay such prices. The Alia hospital in Hebron has had to turn to black market water, and is currently threatened with closure because of the cost and irregular supply of water.

In stark contrast, Israeli colonies in Hebron and the rest of the West Bank are supplied with water continuously, even in the summer. Average annual per-capita water consumption for West Bank colonists is between 650 and 1,714 CM, as opposed to 107 to 156 CM in Palestinian areas. While Palestinian communities are still largely dependent



Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ)
P.O.Box 860, Caritas St.
Bethlehem, Palestine
Tel: +972-(02)-277-0535
Tel: +972-(02)-274-1889

on water being pumped over the Green Line from Israel, many colonies have groundwater access from wells they have been granted permission to drill.

Israeli colonies are also directly responsible for severe water pollution in the Hebron District. Over the last eight years, the industrial zone of Qiryat 'Arba, notably the wine industry, has been disposing of its wastewater near the Hebron-Bani Na'im road. This has caused extensive damage to neighboring Palestinian vineyards, and has affected several Palestinian homes in Bani Na'im village.

Violence in Hebron City :

The division of jurisdiction in Hebron City, with Israeli authorities responsible for the security of some 20,000 Palestinians and 500 Jews in H-2, has created a uniquely volatile situation. The infamous 1994 massacre at the al-Abrahimi Mosque, where 29 Palestinians worshipping during Ramadan were killed by settler Dr. Baruch Goldstein, is the most publicized example of a continuous state of insecurity that exists in and around Hebron City due to the presence of Israeli colonies. The majority of Palestinians living in Hebron's old city were placed under curfew. However, soldiers did allow a very small number of Palestinians to pass on the street. Meanwhile, several hundred Jewish settlers walked freely. A statement issued by the General Security System- Hebron Command, revealed that 10 residents were killed and 268 wounded in the Hebron District in 1998 by the Israeli occupation army or settlers. The statement stated that most of the casualties took place near the armistice lines that separate areas under Israeli army and settlers' control and areas under Palestinian control.

Why Hebron?

Since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, 21,652 dunums of land have been confiscated in the Hebron District. By this data, the Hebron District has experienced the third highest level of confiscation in the West Bank, behind only the Jerusalem and Nablus districts. Hebron ranks second in the number of uprooted trees in the same period, with nearly 13,000 documented, behind only the Nablus District. (Table 3)

Table 3: Confiscated land and uprooted trees by district from 1993 to July 1998.

District Name	Confiscated Land (Dunums)	Number of Uprooted Trees
Jenin	2,570	6,290
Tulkarm	20,312	995
Nablus	28,121	15,565
Ramallah	13,643	2,300



Jerusalem	73,234	1,220
Jericho	2,211	0
Bethlehem	15,600	12,186
Hebron	21,652	12,950
Total	17,794	51,506

Additionally, a great deal of recent colonization activity has occurred in the Hebron District, especially in the southern portion near the town of Yatta, and in the central portion near Hebron City. Colonial expansion, land confiscation, and house demolition in the Hebron District are not random in location or timing. Through analysis of the locations of tracts of recently confiscated land and demolished houses in the Hebron District, a clear strategy to create facts in the district can be discerned. Violence being propagated against land and homes in the Hebron District serves three basic purposes: the erasing of the Green Line, facilitating the annexation of additional land to Israel; the expansion of bypass roads, which will connect Jewish settlements with Israel while destroying and isolating Palestinian communities; and the bantustanization of the West Bank, which will prevent territorial contiguity for a future Palestinian state and disable its survival ([Figure 5](#))

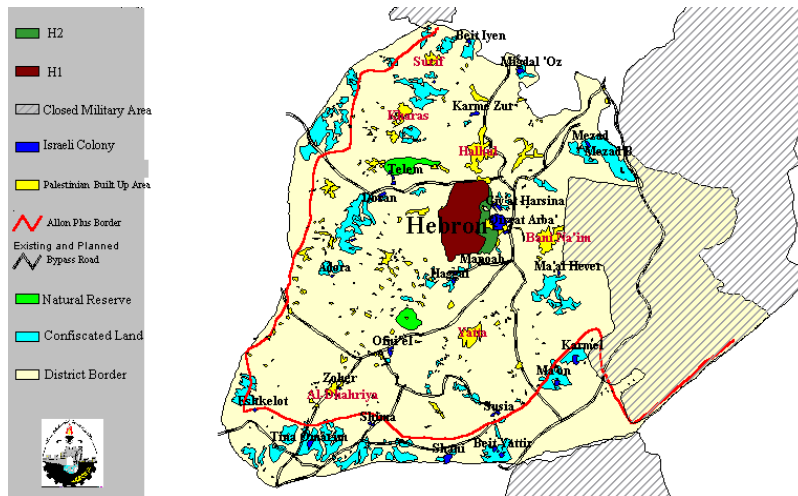


Figure 5: Map showing recently confiscated land in Hebron District.



Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ)
P.O.Box 860, Caritas St.
Bethlehem, Palestine
Tel: +972-(02)-277-0535
Tel: +972-(02)-274-1889

Erasing of the Green Line :

Details of the Allon Plus plan, uncovered by Ha'aretz in 1997, reveal that Israel hopes to expand its jurisdiction one-half to eight kilometers inside the Green Line, absorbing not only Jewish colonies but also dozens of Palestinian villages. Confiscations and demolitions are thus used to create facts that will obfuscate the jurisdictional status of such land and effect Israel's control of it. Tracts of confiscated land and homes slated for demolition in the Hebron District are overwhelmingly concentrated along the southern and western borders, following the Green Line. Clearing this land of a Palestinian presence, and simultaneously expanding Israeli colonies in the area, blurs the geographic and political border between Israel and the West Bank. As all of this land lies in Area C, its jurisdictional fate, and that of the thousands of Palestinians who live there, is yet to be determined by negotiations (6).

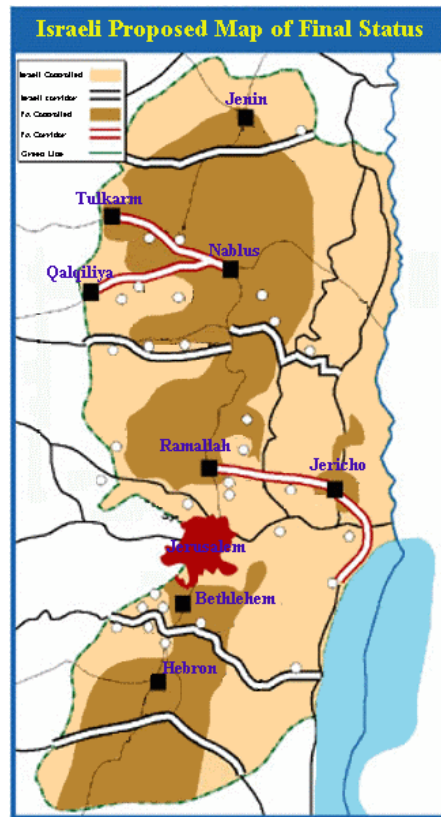


Figure 6: The Allon Plus plan.



In the southern portion of the Hebron District, confiscations follow the belt of Israeli colonies between the Green Line and the Allon Plus line: Eshkelot, Tina Omarim, Shima, Shani, Susia, Beit Yattir, Ma'on and Karmel (Figure 7).

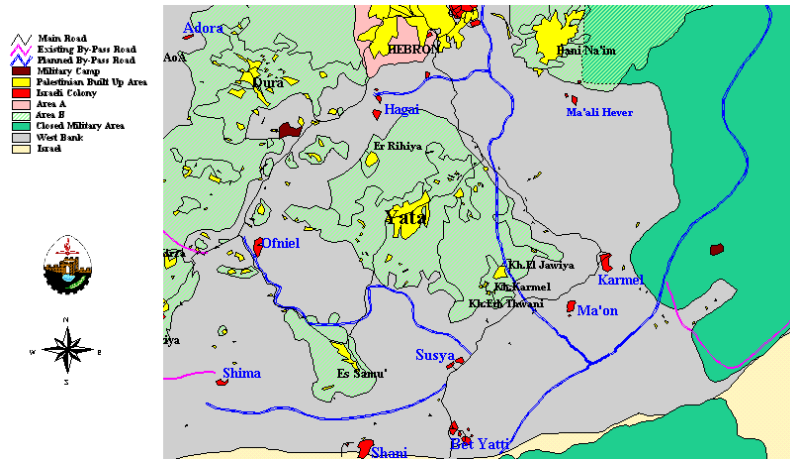


Figure 7: Settlement location map.

Table 3 gives the details of known colonial expansion currently going on in this area. In some cases, confiscations have occurred where no settlement expansion has yet been documented, as with Beit Yattir, whereas in other cases expansion occurs although no land has been confiscated directly around the settlement, as with Eshkelot, Shima and Susia. At least 13 Palestinian villages would be threatened with annexation to Israel if this process were to continue along its current line.

Table 4: Colonial expansion in southern Hebron District.

Colony Name	Area Confiscated (Dunums)	Expansion
Shani	506.42	14 Buildings, 1 Discotech
Shima	No Data	33 Buildings
Susia	No Data	5 Buildings
Karmel	1723.1	33 Buildings
Ma'on	2879.19	2 Buildings, 9 Caravans
Tina Omarim	3232.14	12 Caravans

(Source: Abdell-Hadi Hantash cartographer of land defense committee)



Land being confiscated in the far western portion of the Hebron District follows a similar pattern, although no Israeli settlements are located near the Green Line in this area. Following north to south along the western border of the district, land has been confiscated within a gap of one-half to three km east of the Green Line. Additionally, at least 19 homes in this area have already received demolition orders. At least six Palestinian villages are threatened with annexation to Israel if the process of absorbing this land continues.

The village of Beit Marsam is a case study illustrating the plight of Palestinians living within these threatened areas. ([Figure 8](#))

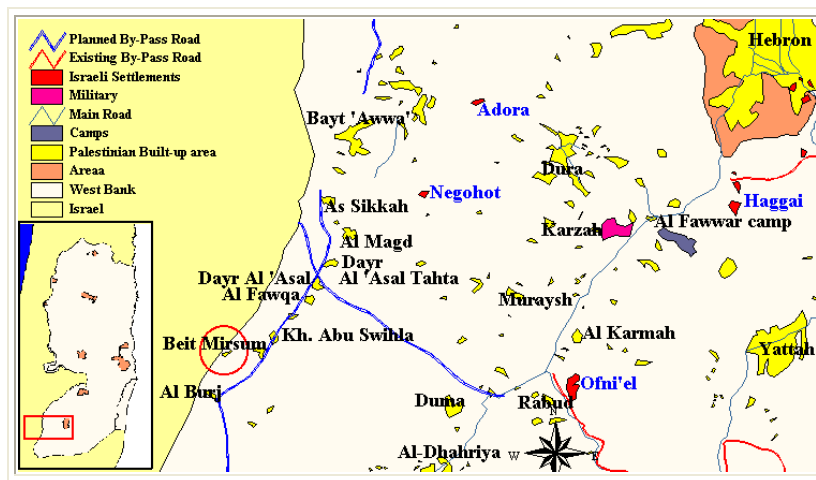


Figure 8: Location of Beit Marsam.

Located in the western portion of the district less than half a kilometer from the Green Line, the village population has been reduced from approximately 1,000 people in 1952 to only 200 today. The depopulation of the village is due to the severe housing shortage caused by strict building regulations in place since Israeli occupation in 1967. After all village homes were destroyed in the 1967 war, the Israeli occupying administration allowed only 33 one-room houses to be rebuilt. Today extreme overcrowding persists, as Beit Marsam is located in Area C where the Israeli government has refused to issue building permits. 12 houses in the village are currently slated for demolition as growing families have been forced to construct "illegal" homes. The overcrowding in the village has also deprived many residents of their livelihoods, as communal plots have been squeezed to the bare minimum and grazing land has been settled or confiscated. Their very survival is threatened. The fate of Beit Marsam threatens to be the fate of dozens of villages along the Green Line in the Hebron District.



Bypass Road Construction :

Lateral or "bypass" roads connect colonies and enjoy a safety buffer of 50 to 100 meters on each side where no Palestinian activity can take place, including building of any kind. The construction of these roads has forged a path of destruction, as dozens of Palestinian homes located along the planned highways have been or are waiting to be demolished.

([Figure 9](#))

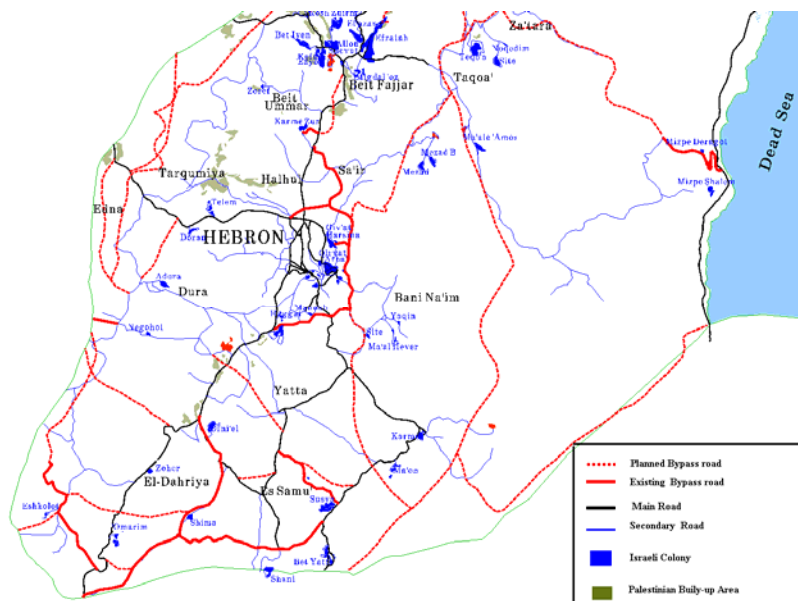


Figure 9: Labyrinth of Israeli Bypass Roads in the West Bank.

In the Hebron District it is Road 60 that cuts through and encircles Palestinian built-up areas, threatening to cut off communities from each other and gobbling up tracts of land. Some 20 homes that sit along existing or planned bypass roads in the district are already slated for demolition. ([Figure 3](#)) shows that near the colony Haggai in particular, the existing branch of Road 60 is truncated in such a way as to suggest that it will continue along the belt of land confiscation between there and Ofniel. More than 20 Palestinian villages lie in that potential construction zone. ([Figure 5](#))

The status of the major rural community of Yatta is an illustration of the impact of these bypass roads on Palestinian areas. The town has been almost completely encircled by Road 60, with only northwestern and southeastern gaps keeping the town from being totally isolated. Working in tandem with the road are the colonies that it connects, Susia, Ma'on and Karmel, which surround Yatta triangularly. Lands seized for colonial



Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ)
P.O.Box 860, Caritas St.
Bethlehem, Palestine
Tel: +972-(02)-277-0535
Tel: +972-(02)-274-1889

expansion and road construction have created a wall preventing the growth of Yatta, and have consumed vital rangelands for Palestinian livestock.

Bantustanization of the West Bank :

Another component of the Allon Plus plan is the fragmentation of the West Bank into nine disconnected blocks of land, with only 45% of the entire West Bank ultimately being handed over to Palestinian control. A future Palestinian state established on such conditions would lack territorial contiguity as well as being constricted to an unsustainably small area. ([Figure 6](#))

This vision is being actualized in the Hebron District through the confiscation of land and expansion of colonies directly to the west and south of Hebron City. Confiscation here is taking place around the settlements of Zoref, Telem, Doran, Adora and Haggai, not all of which are currently undergoing build-up. The confiscated land forms a wall of Israeli control that runs along several major Palestinian built-up areas such as Surif, Kharas and Dura; if completed, this belt of Israeli control would cut off outlying Palestinian built-up areas from Hebron City, as well as prevent their expansion eastward. Already, the confiscations prevent built-up areas from expanding to the east and in some cases to the north. At least eight homes located in Area B are now slated for demolition in this area. ([Figure 3](#))

The eastern portion of the Hebron District is also seeing heavy land confiscation near areas of Palestinian build-up, such that expansion of Palestinian towns and villages is stopped (Table 5). Confiscation here is occurring primarily around the settlements of Mezaad and its expansion settlement Mezaad B, and Ma'al Hever. This span of confiscated land brings the *de facto* borders of these settlements up to the closed military area, which consumes the easternmost portion of the district. ([Figure 5](#)) Additionally, one Palestinian village, Arab er Rashiydeh, has been enveloped by the confiscation around Mezaad; its existence is certainly now threatened. Further confiscation in the eastern portion of the district is taking place adjacent to Hebron City, contiguous to the Jewish settlement Giv'at Harsina.

Table 5: Colonial Expansion in Central and Eastern Hebron District.

Colony Name	Area Confiscated (Dunums)	Expansion
Haggai	549.67	33 Buildings
Ofni'el	99.13	3 Buildings, 9 Caravans
Adora	No Data	22 Buildings, 1 Water Reserve
Telem	No Data	12 Buildings, Feed Factory



Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ)
P.O.Box 860, Caritas St.
Bethlehem, Palestine
Tel: +972-(02)-277-0535
Tel: +972-(02)-274-1889

		and Chicken Farm
Ma'al Hever	3819.03	14 Buildings, 2 Factories
Mezad	1481.41	42 Caravans
Karmel	1723.1	Cow Farm

(Source: Abdell-Hadi Hantash)

After the Wye Memorandum :

In the Wye Memorandum, signed 23 October 1998 by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yassir Arafat, the two sides agreed to refrain from any step that would change the status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Article V of the Wye Agreement on Unilateral Activities states:

"Recognizing the necessity to create a positive environment for the negotiations, neither side shall initiate or take any steps that will change the status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in accordance with the Interim Agreement".

Just three days later, in an act violating the letter and the spirit of the Wye Memorandum, ultra-Orthodox Jews continued their efforts to construct a new colony in Um-Akhouas, in the southern portion of the Hebron District near the town of Yatta. Nearly 4,500 dunums of land are under threat of confiscation, in addition to the 100 dunums of confiscated land where the first three caravans of the colony have been installed ([Figure 10](#)) .



Figure 10: Photo showing the new colony.



Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ)
P.O.Box 860, Caritas St.
Bethlehem, Palestine
Tel: +972-(02)-277-0535
Tel: +972-(02)-274-1889

The battle between colonists and indigenous residents over Um-Akhouas is long-standing, however this time official action such as the construction of water reservoirs and electric lines may signal defeat for local Palestinians.

In another incident that threatens to undermine the land-for-security agreement, on Monday, November 2nd, the day the Wye Memorandum went into effect, the Israeli government started work on a project two years in the making to expand the Jewish colony of Qiryat Arba, adjacent to Hebron City. Qiryat Arba plans to establish three economic projects and a new neighborhood of 200 housing units. Spokesman for the Prime Minister David Bar-Illan said that the expansion of existing colonies does not violate interim peace agreements with the Palestinians, and that the expansion was undertaken merely to meet the demand of natural population growth. The Netanyahu government maintains such a position even as the "natural growth" of Palestinian towns in the Hebron District is being squeezed by surrounding colonies.

In addition, a month before signing the agreement, the Israeli government budgeted three million dollars to construct permanent houses in [Tel Rumeida](#), a Hebron Jewish enclave located in "Area H-2". Tel Rumeida compound is comprised of mobile caravans housing seven families, belonging to one of the most extreme groups of Jewish colonists, protected by heavy military forces. It was expanded in 1990 to absorb more ultra-orthodox Jews immigrating to Israel. Plans also include building fences around some 20 colonies and adding patrols.

The Israeli government confirmed that the defense establishment is adamant about constructing permanent structures and a fence around Tel Rumeida, and assured that this fence will not prevent future expansion of the colony.

In sum, the aftermath of the Wye Plantation talks has brought not the cessation of provocative colonial activity by the Israeli government, but the intensification of efforts to expand the Jewish presence in the West Bank, and the Hebron District in particular.

Conclusion :

Despite the continuing negotiations in the peace process, Palestinians of the Hebron District continue to face the confiscation of their land and the loss of their homes, as the number of homes and industries expands in Israeli colonies surrounding them. It is clear from observing facts on the ground that confiscation and demolition in the Hebron District, as well as the placement and expansion of colonies, are not occurring randomly.

The district's position at the southernmost point of the West Bank, bordered by the Green Line to the south and west, makes it strategically valuable to the Israeli vision of shrinking the West Bank by erasing the Green Line. This process is facilitated by the fact that nearly all of this border land remains in Area C, entirely under Israeli control. Maps



Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ)
P.O.Box 860, Caritas St.
Bethlehem, Palestine
Tel: +972-(02)-277-0535
Tel: +972-(02)-274-1889

of confiscations and demolitions along the Green Line, compared with the Allon Plus map, support the realistic nature of such a strategy.

Additionally, the Hebron District and the 27 Israeli colonies it contains are crucial links in the network of bypass roads being constructed in the West Bank. Zigzagging across the southern West Bank, the Road 60 is the lifeblood of otherwise isolated colonies, and the deathblow to Palestinian homes and villages in its path.

Finally, the Hebron District, and the major population center of Hebron City, must be an integral part of the effort to divide and disable the West Bank. The process of bantustanization envisioned in the Allon Plus plan is being realized through the elimination of a Palestinian presence in corridors across the heart of the district, and expanding Israeli colonies or roads to fill the gaps. The end effect, which we see emerging now, will be the isolation of Palestinian build-up areas, and the dislocation of indigenous residents from their homes.

Even as the era of occupation seems to be coming to a close, the Hebron District continues to be victimized by Israel's land policies. As the campaigns of confiscation and demolition continue, and colonies are expanded with impunity, the viability of a Palestinian state becomes ever slimmer. Perhaps more tragically, the Palestinian residents of the district continue to suffer loss of land and livelihood at the hands of Israel's continuing territorial aggression.

Acknowledgment: Special Thanks to Mr. Abed El- Hadi Hantash for his assistance.