

Are Communities in Judea and Samaria An Obstacle To Peace?

Communities in Judea and Samaria (“West Bank settlements”) are often seen as “barriers to peace” by members of the international community. However, by further examining the issues on the ground, one can see that the **communities in Judea and Samaria in fact do not hinder peace.**

There is currently a 20 percent Arab minority that lives with full and equal rights in Israel.ⁱ A minority community of Jews living in Judea and Samaria should be allowed to continue to live there as well.

- If the creation of a new Palestinian-Arab state in Judea and Samaria happens - according to what the international community calls for - roughly 60,000 Jews will reside in “Palestine”
 - Roughly 2.5 million Palestinian-Arabs reside in the Palestinian Authority (PA), according to the CIA World Fact Book. A future Palestinian-Arab state would contain a roughly **2 percent minority of Jews.**ⁱⁱ
 - If Israel can thrive with a 20 percent Arab minority, why can’t “Palestine” thrive with a 2 percent Jewish minority? How is ethnically cleansing Jews from their homeland the solution?
 - **“In a final resolution, we would not see the presence of a single Israeli — civilian or soldier — on our lands.”** ⁱⁱⁱ - Mahmoud Abbas, PA President- This is the real barrier to peace.

If communities in Judea and Samaria are truly obstacles to peace, then the Palestinian Authority would have accepted the two major “land for peace” offers Israel has made since 2000.

- Accepting Israel’s offers for peace would have led to complete PA control over nearly all the land where “settlements” exist. However, the PA rejected both offers and instead responded with more terrorism and incitement against Israel.
- The following are the two major “land for peace” offers since 2000:
 - **Camp David II:**
 - Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered 97% of Judea and Samaria and full control of the Gaza Strip to the Palestinian-Arabs in 2000.^{iv} Yasser Arafat declined the offer and ignited the Second Intifada, in which Palestinian-Arab terrorists murdered nearly **900 Israeli civilians.**^v
 - **Ehud Olmert’s Peace Plan:**
 - Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert offered PA President Abbas nearly 100% of Judea and Samaria in 2008. Abbas rejected this proposal, and continued to incite his people to commit terror attacks against Israeli civilians.^{vi}

If “settlements” were truly the obstacle to peace, there would be peace in Gaza, since Israel withdrew all “settlements” from Gaza in 2005.

- Israel withdrew all 8,500 of its citizens from Gaza in 2005,^{vii} in an unprecedented effort towards peace. In return, Israel **received more terrorism and wars** with Hamas, the terrorist organization that took over Gaza after Israel left.^{viii ix}
 - Since Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, Hamas has fired more than **11,000 rockets into Israeli civilian areas.**^x
 - This example is representative of Israel's history of removing its citizens and withdrawing from land in an effort to achieve peace, but receiving more violence instead.

Palestinian-Arab leaders waged war on the Jewish state long before “settlements” existed. If these communities were in fact the “obstacle to peace,” there would be no examples of war and terror prior to their existence.

- Palestinian-Arabs committed **828 terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians** between 1948 and 1966. Israel did not gain control of Judea/Samaria until 1967.^{xi} If “settlements” were truly the barrier to peace, terror would have been absent prior to Israeli control of the territory.
- Israel's Arab neighbors waged war on Israel in 1948, 1956, and 1967,^{xii} well before “settlements” existed. The Arab leaders clearly stated that the goal of these wars was to **wipe Israel off the map.**
 - Jordan controlled Judea and Samaria between 1948 and 1967. Palestinian-Arab leaders never called for a state during this time.^{xiii}

If the Arab countries had not invaded Israel, “settlements” would not exist, since Israel would not have gained control over Judea and Samaria. Asserting that “settlements” are the cause of conflict is reversing the order of events.

- “Settlements” did not exist until the Arab nations invaded Israel in 1967 with the intent of wiping it off the map, meaning that the existence of “settlements” are an effect of Arab aggression against Israel.
 - In other words, had the Arab countries not invaded, Israel never would have gained control of the territories where “settlements” currently exist.

PA leaders themselves do not differentiate between the “settlement” of Ariel and the “settlement” of Tel Aviv; they view all of Israel as a “settlement.” The PA admits it does not want to gain control of just Judea and Samaria and live peacefully next to Israel. Rather, it calls for the violent destruction of *all* of Israel.^{xiv} The following are just a few examples of PA leaders proclaiming that *all* of Israel (not just Judea and Samaria) is occupied and therefore a “settlement”:

- “We have been under occupation for 67 or 68 years (i.e., since Israel's establishment in 1948). Others would have sunk into despair and frustration. However, we are determined to reach our goal because our people stands behind us.” - PA President Mahmoud Abbas^{xv}
- Abbas also said, “For how long will this protracted Israeli occupation of our land last? After 67 years (i.e., Israel's creation), how long? Do you think it can last, and that it benefits the Palestinian people?”
- “All our holy places are still under occupation, and so far we have not liberated one inch of Palestinian land. All Palestinian land is occupied – Gaza is occupied, the West Bank is occupied, the 1948 lands (i.e., Israel) are occupied and Jerusalem is occupied.” - Dr. Jamal Muhaisen on behalf of Abbas.

-
- ⁱ "Vital Statistics: Latest Population Statistics for Israel," *Jewish Virtual Library*, May 2016.
- ⁱⁱ "Middle East: West Bank," *The World Factbook*, July 12, 2016.
- ⁱⁱⁱ "Abbas pledges: There will be no Israelis in Palestine," *The Times of Israel*, July 30, 2013.
- ^{iv} "2000 Camp David Summit: Background & Overview," *Jewish Virtual Library*.
- ^v "Short summary page with "Breakdown of Fatalities: September 27, 2000 through January 1, 2005," *ICT Middleeastern Conflict Statistics Project*.
- ^{vi} "Abbas admits he rejected 2008 peace offer from Olmert," *The Times of Israel*, November 19, 2015.
- ^{vii} "Shadow of Israel's pullout from Gaza hangs heavy 10 years on," *Reuters*, August 10, 2015.
- ^{viii} "A year since the Hamas takeover of Gaza," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, June 18, 2008.
- ^{ix} "The Gaza Strip: History of Jewish Settlement," *The Jewish Virtual Library*.
- ^x "Rocket Attacks on Israel From Gaza," *Israel Defense Forces*.
- ^{xi} "Terrorism deaths in Israel-1920-1999," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, January 1, 200.
- ^{xii} "Arab-Israeli wars," *Encyclopedia Britannica*.
- ^{xiii} "West Bank," *Encyclopedia Britannica*.
- ^{xiv} "Children & Youth," *Palestinian Media Watch*, October 11, 2015.
- ^{xv} "Non-recognition of Israel," *Palestinian Media Watch*.