



The Israel  
Democracy Institute

# **The Political and Social Ramifications of Evacuating Settlements in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip**

Yair Sheleg

*Position Paper*

Jerusalem, October 2004



**The Israel Democracy Institute** is an independent, non-partisan think tank dedicated to strengthening democracy in Israel. It serves the Knesset and its committees, government offices, public institutions, local government, and political parties by undertaking research and making recommendations for reform and change.

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Printed in Jerusalem by Art Plus, Ltd.  
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ISBN 965-7091-86-1

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The Hebrew version of this position paper was published by the Israel Democracy Institute, 2004.

The views published in this position paper are not necessarily those of the Israel Democracy Institute.

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## Preface

It was only after a great deal of deliberation that The Israel Democracy Institute addressed the issue of the political and social ramifications of evacuating settlements in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip (known by the Hebrew acronym Yesha). The idea of considering the evacuation issue and its implications for Israeli democracy and society had been raised at the Institute a few years previously, as it was clear to us that because of the inevitable political and social traumas resulting from such a step, advance preparation would be necessary. We commissioned journalist Yair Sheleg [who covers Diaspora and religious issues for *Ha'aretz*] to write a position paper on this issue as early as the year 2000. However, when the report was completed in 2002, we decided that it was not the right time to publicize it because the issue was not then high on the public agenda, and we did not want to create the [misleading] impression that the Institute wanted to use the report to advance the idea of evacuating settlements.

Today, however, even the prime minister from the Likud Party speaks openly about the establishment of a Palestinian state and the “painful concessions” that this will entail; the prime minister’s colleague, Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin, speaks even more explicitly about a contingency plan for the evacuation of seventeen settlements in Yesha, and a Likud government (that includes fiercely right-wing parties) adopted the American Road Map entailing significant Israeli withdrawal from Yesha. Therefore, it is difficult today to deny the reality of a possible evacuation scenario, whatever one’s views of such a scenario may be. This is why we decided to publish the report now and to bring its findings to the public for discussion, contentious as that discourse may be.

Yair Sheleg has updated the original position paper. We believe that both the supporters and the most intransigent opponents of the evacuation of settlements must look squarely at the possible consequences of such a move. In addition, both supporters and opponents must closely evaluate the report's recommendations for minimizing the damage and dangers that are likely to ensue from a decision to evacuate settlements, should one be taken.

As with all publications of the Institute, we believe that this position paper will make a valuable contribution to public discourse in Israel and to the ability of Israeli democracy to cope with the problems on its doorstep.

Professor Arye Carmon, President  
The Israel Democracy Institute

## Foreword

This position paper addresses one of the most urgent and disputed issues on the Israeli public agenda. Given the decision of the Israeli government in June 2004 to adopt the “disengagement plan,” which involves dismantling all Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip and four settlements in northern Samaria, it seems appropriate that three of my original points are given added emphasis.

1. In its analysis of the political “danger zones” that an evacuation process could potentially create, the report drew attention to a weakening of the level of commitment to the state and its institutions (as opposed to the level of national commitment, which has remained strong) of many members of the younger generation of settlers, as a result of a weakening of faith in the state and of conflicts with state institutions. It is not anticipated that this attitude will necessarily be expressed in violence, but there is a fear that “civil rebellion” may ensue: refusal to carry out orders or to pay taxes or symbolic actions such as the tearing up of identity cards, etc.

In recent months this concern has intensified. Discussions that I have held, and statements that have been made in the media in recent months, reveal that the “post-state” attitude is becoming increasingly prevalent among many members of the “settler” camp (this expression includes not only the residents of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, but also their supporters inside the Green Line). Occasionally this attitude takes an overtly anti-Zionist tone, as witnessed in the remarks made in the *Hatzofeh* newspaper by Arutz 7 talk-show host Adir Zik: “If the Israeli government does succeed in carrying out expulsion, ‘transfer,’ and uprooting Jews from their homes in the land of their forefathers, then the Zionist

state will lose the right, which it undemocratically appropriated to itself, of representing and speaking for the Jewish people.” The spread of this attitude among highly ideologically motivated young people in particular is liable to lead to a situation in which the main social outcome of the evacuation process is the adoption by these young people of an isolationist stance reminiscent of that of the ultra-Orthodox – perhaps even reaching the level of an active struggle against the Israeli elite, on the model of the “Hasmoneans vs. Hellenizers” struggle during the Second Temple period.

It is important to pay attention to the significance of such an attitude and to its possible implications: a political struggle against the prevailing attitudes of the Israeli elite is of course legitimate, but care must be taken that its methods do not lead to the collapse of the national home. It is particularly important that the settler leadership itself expresses a clear stand against this kind of attitude. The deep trauma, not to be denied or underplayed, occasioned by the uprooting of a person from his home, must not be allowed to result in the destruction of the entire national home; just as those devastated by the deaths of their sons in the territories and who did not believe in the need for us to retain control of the territories have not, up to now, initiated civil rebellion.

2. With regard to the report’s recommendations for the political system, emphasis was placed on the vital need for any decision regarding dismantling of settlements to be made by a clear and unequivocal majority. Unfortunately, this has not been the case up to now. The disengagement plan obtained governmental approval via a process which even the strongest supporters of evacuation could not countenance: firstly, due to the fact that a decision was at first sought only from Likud members; secondly,

due to the fact that this decision itself was ignored, despite the original commitment to comply with it; and thirdly, due to the creation of an artificial governmental majority via the dismissal of several ministers who threatened to oppose the plan.

If the evacuation decision process continues in this manner up to the point of final determination of the future of the settlements in question, then the decision's very legitimacy will be in doubt, while the settler camp will have increased motivation to oppose the evacuation through non-democratic means as well. It is therefore crucial that the final decision regarding the future of the settlements be made by the Israeli public in a clear and unequivocal manner: via national referendum or by the Knesset (not merely via a governmental decision which represents only part of the public), and in any case via a special majority (even if not an overwhelming one), not a majority based on a fraction of a percentage point.

It should also be remembered that the main argument of those opposed to evacuation – and one likely to influence many Likud members not necessarily committed to the sanctity of Gaza and the northern Samaria settlements – is the unilateral nature of the plan. It is not the purpose of this report to deal with the political question of whether an agreement with the Palestinians regarding evacuation is feasible. On the other hand, it is clear that the lack of such an agreement, which would require the Palestinians to be responsible for “security arrangements” in the areas evacuated, is another factor which intensifies public opposition to evacuation in general. Thus, it is logical to re-examine the following possibility: even if there is no Palestinian “partner” for a permanent agreement to include relinquishing the Palestinian “right of return,” might there, nevertheless, be a partner capable of entering into a specific agreement regarding

“evacuation in return for security”? A positive answer to this question and its actualization through an agreement of this kind would certainly be capable of raising the level of public support for evacuation.

3. One of the original report’s main recommendations was that the settler camp be given “ideological compensation,” rather than merely financial compensation. The report recommended that the primary form of this compensation be the possibility of the settlers’ rebuilding their homes within the settlement blocs to remain in Judea and Samaria, thereby giving them the sense that their long struggle was not entirely in vain. Based on discussions that I have held on the issue of “ideological compensation” during the months that have passed since the report’s publication, it appears that the main “ideological compensation” would stem from another source: the trend toward strengthening and ensuring the Jewish character of the state. It appears that a great part of the settler camp’s opposition to evacuation is based not merely on the natural disinclination of the settlers to see their homes and communities destroyed, but also on their fear that the anticipated evacuation would be a stepping-stone, perhaps a decisive one, on the way to a general diminishing of Jewish-Zionist identity in Israel. The trend toward legitimizing civil marriage and the sale of pork, gaining momentum precisely during the period in which the “disengagement plan” is the subject of public debate, considerably heightens this concern.

It is important that the months leading up to the anticipated decision regarding evacuation and its implementation should be used to conduct broad-based national dialogue on the Jewish character of the state – via Basic Law or through discussion and policy decisions which prevent Israel from becoming a

bi-national state or a state devoid of any clear Jewish-national character, within the Green line. Policy should also ensure that Jewish values are respected within Israeli public frameworks. It should be emphasized here that discussion of this kind is necessary irrespective of the evacuation issue; but its importance increases during a period in which evacuation is high on the national agenda.

Consensus regarding the long-term Jewish character of the state is unlikely to entirely prevent conflict over the evacuation dilemma; the forcible removal of people from their homes and the destruction of their communities are bound to meet with opposition. But there is a chance that such consensus would calm the furore engendered by the evacuation process and reduce the settlers' motivation to take dangerous steps and increase the settler leadership's motivation to oppose such steps. Moreover: the principal value of such a course of action would be the opportunity it affords to prevent an isolationist stance from taking hold within the national-religious public after evacuation takes place.

Yair Sheleg

Jerusalem – Sivan 5764, June 2004

## Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank everyone who helped with this position paper. My thanks to Professor Aviezer Ravitzky, a Senior Fellow at The Israel Democracy Institute, for commissioning this position paper and for his guidance throughout the process. My thanks also to Professor Arye Carmon, president of the Israel Democracy Institute, for the guidance he gave me during the various phases of my work and the opportunity to conduct research under the aegis of the Institute. I also extend my thanks to Ms. Lorraine Gastwirt, administrative vice president of the IDI, who guided me faithfully from the administrative standpoint through the entire project. And, finally, my deep thanks to all the interviewees who gave me their time and shared their experience with me.

There is a rather long history to this position paper. Its initial draft was written in December 2001. In the wake of the June 2003 Aqaba Conference, when the issue of possible evacuation of settlements in Yesha became even more relevant, at least partly because of Likud Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's official commitment to the establishment of a Palestinian state through "painful concessions" on the part of Israel, I was asked to update the position paper. I then held discussions with additional people who were not included in the initial interviews. Therefore, among the interviewees are some figures who are not currently involved in the Yesha issue. One important interviewee, the late Professor Ehud Sprinzak, passed away since my interview with him.

I would like to thank all the interviewees, listed below:

Yigal Amitai – spokesperson for the Tekuma Party (one of the factions of the National Union Party); resident of Yitzhar  
Aharon Domb – former director general of the Yesha Council

Uri Elitzur – editor of Nekudah (the settlers' magazine); former head of the prime minister's office under Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu

Shlomo Filber – former director general of the Yesha Council

Yitzchak Findrus – mayor of Betar Elite

Professor Amiram Goldblum – member of the Peace Now Central Committee since 1980 and one of the leading figures of the Peace Now movement; founder and head of the movement's Settlements Watch Committee

Yonah Goodman – former director general of the Bnei Akiva youth movement; an educator in Yesha

Itai Harel – guide of young settlements in the "Amanah" movement (the settlers' settlement movement); former social worker in the Benjamin Regional Council

Yisrael Harel – former editor of Nekudah; served as director general and chairman of the Yesha Council

Dr. Nitza Kalish – psychologist specializing in crisis and stress management in Yesha

Hezi Kalo – former head of the Jewish Division of the Shin Bet (notably during the period of Rabin's assassination)

Professor Nurit Kliot – Department of Geography, Haifa University; researched the social ramifications of the Sinai evacuation and specialized in studying effects of evacuation and uprooting

Dr. Mooli Lahad – expert on crisis management and stress prevention; established the Community Stress Prevention Center at Tel Hai College

Benzi Lieberman – chairman of the Yesha Council

Miriam Shapira – clinical psychologist; established a crisis center at the Samaria Regional Council; resident of Karnei Shomron

Rabbi Danny Shilo – spokesman for the Yesha Rabbis Council; resident of Kedumim

Professor Ehud Sprinzak ז"ל – founding Dean of the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC), Herzliya; expert on Israel's radical right

Special thanks to Dr. Nitza Kalish for calling my attention to a number of studies on the results of evacuating the settlements in Sinai. These studies aided my work considerably.

If there are any errors in this position paper, they are solely my responsibility.

Y. S.

## Introduction

# 1

In the thirty-six years that have passed since the Six Day War (June 1967), some 260,000 Israelis have settled in the territories that Israel captured during that war. Approximately 230,000 settled in the territories of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, and nearly 20,000 settled in the Golan Heights. Another 6,000 people, who settled in the Sinai area, were evacuated from their homes in 1982, in the wake of the peace agreement that was signed with Egypt. In addition, another 180,000 Israelis moved to the neighborhoods built by Israel in the parts of Jerusalem that had been under Jordanian control before the war.

Ostensibly, all these Israeli settlers took the not inconsequential risk of being evacuated in the future, for two reasons. First, the international community never accorded recognition to Israeli control over these areas, let alone to the establishment of settlements there. Even the United States, Israel's greatest ally in the international arena, declined to recognize the neighborhoods that Israel annexed in Jerusalem. Second, Israel itself has refrained from officially annexing most of these territories because of the anticipated reaction of the international community and because of misgivings about the annexation of territories with large Arab populations (mainly in Yesha). In addition, Israel wanted these territories to remain a "bargaining chip" for any future negotiations towards a peace settlement. In effect, the only territories that Israel annexed right after the conclusion of the war were the areas in previously Jordanian Jerusalem. This annexation stemmed from the deep Jewish significance of Jerusalem, and especially its "holy belt" – the Temple Mount and the Western Wall, the Mount of Olives and the slope of the Gihon adjacent to the City of David, which were under Jordanian control before the war. Even the annexation in Jerusalem was

carried out meticulously and along a meandering line so as to include as little of the Palestinian population as possible.

Later on, in 1981, Israel also annexed the Golan Heights in an accelerated process that was meant to prove that although the then-Prime Minister Menachem Begin had relinquished half of the Sinai Peninsula two years previously in a peace treaty with Egypt, his willingness to surrender territories did not extend to the Golan Heights. We learn from this that the annexation of the Heights was meant to counterbalance Israel's much greater surrender of territory in Sinai. And in fact, Israel refrained from annexing not only the Sinai Peninsula but also the territories of Judea, Samaria and Gaza, despite their great significance (especially of Judea and Samaria) in Jewish history. Moreover, even the annexation of the Golan Heights did not prevent several subsequent prime ministers (Rabin, Netanyahu and Barak) from conducting negotiations (some publicly, some secretly) with Syria. These negotiations meant only one thing: relinquishing the Golan within the framework of a peace treaty.

In light of these developments, which would leave the status of Yesha and the Golan open to negotiation, the settlers took steps meant to generate an antithetical dynamic. They encouraged Jewish settlement in Yesha in the hope of creating a critical mass of inhabitants that would hamstring future governments if they attempted to evacuate hundreds of thousands of Israelis. The settlers felt that this would prevent the signing of a peace agreement or at least prevent the granting of far-reaching concessions as a prerequisite for such an agreement. In addition, the settlers and the organizations that supported them hoped that time was on their side. They hoped that the creation of a critical mass aggregated during years of settlement would cause Israeli society to develop a natural, deep and basic affinity for

these territories so that it would become unthinkable to give them up. In other words: the combination of two variables – settlers and time – was supposed to prevent leaving these territories open for negotiation and counterbalance the view of the international community, which viewed Israeli control of these areas as only temporary.

In the twenty years between 1967 and 1987, the historical dynamic moved in only one direction: towards annexation and intensification of the Israeli claim to the territories. No Arab nation joined Egypt in signing a peace treaty with Israel, thus the field was left open for action on the part of those advocating annexation. Until the Yom Kippur War, settlement activity was pretty much consensual and it enjoyed widespread support even by many segments of the ruling the Labor Party, which advocated settlements according to the Alon Plan: annexation of the Golan Heights, the Jordan Valley and Gush Etzion. In those years, the kibbutz and moshav movements, affiliated with the Labor Party, established settlements in the Golan and the Jordan Valley, while the religious kibbutz movement renewed settlement in Gush Etzion, which had been lost in the War of Independence in 1948. There was one significant deviation from the Alon Plan: the settlement of some religious youngsters in Kiryat Arba near Hebron. Even this anomaly received the blessing of Yigal Alon himself, the crafter of the Alon Plan.

In contrast, after the Yom Kippur War, restraints on settlement were breached, and in the post-war atmosphere of a general lack of trust in the Establishment and the government, a group called Gush Emunim (the Bloc of the Faithful) also burst onto the public scene. They claimed that their dissent was constructive: they did not protest in order to bring down the government but to “raise the spirits of the nation” through a return to classical

Zionist values and especially that of settlement, but this time in Judea and Samaria. For three years they struggled against the government and succeeded in establishing a few settlements. In 1977, in the wake of the Yom Kippur War crisis, there was a political revolution in Israel and for the first time since the establishment of the state, the Right assumed the reins of power. The new prime minister, Menachem Begin, promised upon his election “many settlements like Elon Moreh” and his agriculture minister, Ariel Sharon, made this a reality. Under Sharon’s leadership, a fruitful cooperation was devised with the “mitnachlim,” the term coined for the settlers in controversial territories. Widespread government support was extended both to the settlers themselves and to enterprises that would provide employment for the settlers, in order to attract people willing to move to Yesha for pragmatic and not ideological reasons. Eventually, by June of 2003, the Jewish population in Yesha numbered approximately 231,000 Israelis.<sup>1</sup>

The change began in 1987. On 9 December of that year the first *intifada* broke out – the first general uprising of the Arabs in the territories against Israeli rule (this is distinguished from the local riots that occasionally erupted even before this). Different theories attempt to explain the reasons why the *intifada* started at this time, but they are not relevant to our issue. What is important is that a new Arab generation had grown up in the territories that was no longer willing to agree with the submissive stance of their parents to post-Six Day War Israeli rule. The beginning of the *intifada* took the form of a popular uprising with mass demonstrations that saw the hurling of rocks and Molotov cocktails. Later on, however, this was supplanted by more sophisticated terrorist acts. More and more Israelis who

1. A breakdown of the number of residents in the various settlements is given in the Appendix.

had previously not been partner to the ideology of the Left began to feel, for the first time, that the price of rule in the territories might be too high and that perhaps there was no choice but to relinquish all or most of the region. Also, as a result of the *intifada*, King Hussein of Jordan announced that he was abdicating all responsibility for the West Bank (Judea and Samaria). Thus, no choice remained for Israel but to carry on a dialogue with an independent Palestinian leadership.

The Madrid Conference was convened in 1991, about four years after the outbreak of the *intifada*. This was the first attempt of its kind to convene an international conference with the avowed purpose of solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The conference was the result of two factors: the *intifada* on one hand, and the American war in Iraq in January 1991 on the other. (Most of the Arab Muslim world had joined the coalition that supported the attack on a sister nation, and they viewed the Madrid Conference as a sort of counterbalance to this coalition.) At the Madrid Conference, Israel tried to safeguard at least a semblance of two of its prohibitions: no dialogue with a separate Palestinian delegation (hence the insistence that the Palestinian delegation appear together with the Jordanians, as if the Jordanians were still responsible for the territories) and no dialogue with the PLO. The Palestinians saw the PLO as their official representative, but Israel saw it as a terrorist organization. All too soon it became clear that the talks about the future of the territories were carried out by Palestinian representatives who received their instructions directly from the PLO. The representatives made sure to flaunt this by flying back and forth from Madrid to Tunis, which was then the base of the PLO leadership.

The 1992 election of the Labor Party, with Yitzhak Rabin serving as prime minister, indicated the increasing despair in the Israeli

street because of the failure to achieve a political arrangement that would put an end to the violence. Israelis were willing to try to achieve some kind of settlement even at the cost of exaggerated territorial concessions. At the same time, it became clear that Rabin was also pushing for a settlement – at least in part because he feared for the fortitude of Israeli society in the face of ongoing conflict. The extent of the sense of discouragement and willingness for a dramatic settlement became clear only a year later, when the Oslo Accords were signed. These Accords were the result of secret negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian representatives and included, for the first time, recognition of the PLO as the official representative of the Palestinians. The Oslo Accords were broad interim territorial agreements and expressed a willingness to reach a permanent agreement within five years. Such an agreement meant – as was clear to everyone – the almost certain Israeli concession of most of the territories in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. In tandem with this agreement, Rabin attempted to achieve a peace settlement with Syria, which would also include substantial territorial withdrawal from the Golan.

The negotiations over a permanent settlement reached their dramatic climax in July 2000, when a conference was convened at Camp David in the United States. The delegations included Israeli representatives (led by Prime Minister Ehud Barak), the Palestinians and the president of the United States, Bill Clinton. The proposals were far-reaching, at least from Israel's point of view: withdrawal from almost all of the territories, evacuation of most of the settlements and an agreement to partition Jerusalem. The refusal of the Palestinians to accept these proposals caused the failure of the summit, and later on torpedoed the negotiations altogether.

Ostensibly, the scenario of evacuating the settlements as an integral part of a peace settlement was dropped, or at least became a distant option. However, about three months later, at the end of September, the second Palestinian *intifada* broke out. This time the terrorist acts in the territories and within the Green Line reached record heights, the likes of which Israel had never seen. Once again the idea of separation from the territories was raised in Israel – this time not within the context of a signed agreement but a unilateral separation that would be difficult to actualize without evacuating settlements. Yet, not all the proponents of the separation idea necessarily tied it to such an evacuation. For example, Israel's President Moshe Katzav proposed a "military separation" consisting of erecting a barrier or wall between Israel and the territories. This kind of separation would make it more difficult for terrorists to infiltrate into the Green Line (the armistice lines set at the end of the War of Independence), but would keep Israeli settlements in the territories under Israeli rule and security.

It thus seems that at least regarding the settlements in Yesha (as opposed to those in the Golan), the evacuation scenario was becoming more and more realistic, whether or not a peace settlement were negotiated. If a peace settlement is achieved, evacuation would be the most realistic scenario, since after the Israeli-Palestinian conflict of the last few years there are few who believe that Israeli settlements could exist under Palestinian sovereignty. On the other hand, if no settlement is reached, more and more voices will be heard calling for a unilateral withdrawal.

In view of the above, in this position paper I try to examine the political and social ramifications of evacuating settlements in Yesha; in other words, the implications of evacuation for the evacuees themselves and for Israeli society as a whole. I

employ the term “settlements in Yesha” and not “Yesha settlements” because according to all the assessments, an evacuation scenario would not encompass all the settlements of Yesha. Most of the Israeli Left, and even the Palestinians and the international community, recognize that evacuation of approximately 230,000 Yesha residents is not possible. Thus, in all the deliberations, the assumption is that Israeli settlement blocs will remain in Yesha territories, especially the western portions of the area (settlements in Gush Etzion, western Benjamin and western Samaria). Therefore, a prospective evacuation would include at most about 70,000 individuals (this is also, of course, a large number), who comprise about 30% of the Jewish population in Yesha.

The initial reference point of this position paper is that the settlements – and especially the inhabitants of the settlements – are divided into different groupings according to various parameters: cities and communal settlements (grouping by type of settlement); secular, ultra-Orthodox and national-religious settlements, with important subdivisions within the national-religious group itself (grouping by way of life); established veteran settlements and young settlements (grouping according to seniority of the settlement). These classifications have implications mainly in terms of political reaction to evacuation, but also regarding possible social trauma.

In addition, this position paper includes a chapter which attempts to examine the evacuation issue in light of a previous evacuation: the evacuation of the Sinai Peninsula as the result of the peace treaty with Egypt. My purpose is to examine the implications of applying this model to our present-day issue, the differences between the two models, and the differing solutions for each.

I should like to raise three cautionary points at the outset of this paper.

First, examination of the ramifications of an evacuation scenario should not be interpreted as an expression of support for evacuation, but simply an attempt to examine it in the light of two basic assumptions: first, that the evacuation scenario becomes realistic to the point that its most outstanding opponents cannot deny it any longer; second, that the social and political ramifications of a future evacuation are likely to be so far-reaching that it behooves us to anticipate the future events and try to prepare for them, thus reducing possible harmful fallout.

The second point can be summarized by the Hebrew saying, “Ever since the destruction of the Second Temple, prophecy has been given only to fools,” and even previously it was given only to the elect. In other words, it is clear that the evaluations in this paper are not prophecies and do not presume to foresee the future, but are an attempt to weigh future trends according to processes that are presently in effect. Israeli society has, thankfully, not yet experienced a forced evacuation of thousands of its citizens from their homes, and since in any case the reactions to an event such as this are tied to tens of factors of which many will be known only in real-time, it is clear that any assessment should be taken with a grain of salt. Despite these qualifications, the magnitude of the issue justifies giving it thought and preparing in advance for different scenarios.

Third, we must point out the problematics of the very term “evacuation.” I have used it throughout this paper, but I am aware that it can be considered a euphemistic term that attempts to “whitewash” the forced expulsion of thousands of people from their homes and perhaps even the physical destruction of their houses and communities. Thus it behooves all of those who may

deal with evacuation to remember the consequences and import of such an act, including those who support it and those who are required to make policy decisions regarding it.

## The Sinai Evacuation Model

## 2

Twenty-two years ago, between the winter and spring of 1982, the first massive evacuation of settlements took place: the settlements in the Sinai Peninsula were evacuated as part of the peace treaty with Egypt. Eighteen settlements consisting of about 6,000 inhabitants were evacuated during those months. The climax was the evacuation of Yamit in April 1982, just prior to transferring the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt as part of the agreement. (Before that, three settlements were evacuated: the cooperative settlements [*moshavim*] of Di Zahav and Neviyot on the Red Sea coast, and the city of Ophira in the south of the peninsula.)

It is true that during the War of Independence several settlements were evacuated due to the military difficulties involved in their protection (such as Kibbutz Beit Ha'arava near the Dead Sea and the settlements on Gush Etzion), and during the Yom Kippur War many of the settlements on the Golan were also evacuated. However, these evacuations were carried out because of immediate military constraints and not as a result of a collective political and national decision, such as is relevant to our situation. Therefore, it is worthwhile examining the particulars of the Sinai evacuation, despite the differences between the two, in order to learn as much as possible about the problems that may arise during an evacuation from Yesha.

The unprecedented trauma in Israel surrounding the evacuation of thousands of people from their homes by force, because of a political and governmental decision, drew much attention from Israeli media in real-time. In dozens of "color" articles, the press reported on the trauma of the upcoming displacement, mainly from the settlements of the Yamit region. In the years following

the evacuation, the most prominent reports were those that tried to find out what had happened to the evacuees. These articles dealt with everything from divorce and conflict among evacuated families to emigration from Israel, because of anger at Israeli society for “betraying” its compatriots, and even included premature deaths attributed to the evacuation trauma.

But it is clear that journalists lack the professional qualifications to evaluate the real consequences of trauma, certainly the long-term ones. Therefore the professional studies that dealt with the trauma of the evacuation are much more relevant to our issue. It seems that the trauma issue attracted the attention of a number of research teams from various disciplines: psychology, political science and geography. When these research studies were publicized, it became clear that the researchers had identified the basis of the study in time and had set up research staffs to accompany the evacuees even before the actual evacuation, so that their studies covered the months of anticipating evacuation and coping with the actual evacuation, as well as the period following it.

It is interesting to note that all these studies were conducted not among the inhabitants of the city of Yamit, which had been the largest settlement in the region, but in the smaller settlements nearby. It seems that the researchers saw these smaller settlements as more successful “research laboratories” than Yamit, as their size made it more manageable for the researcher to track the structure and composition of the overall social fabric of a community. It is also important to note that the researchers were more interested in the social and psychological effects of the evacuation, and not necessarily the political effects.

One example of such a study was conducted by five psychiatrists from various research institutions and summarized by two of them: Professor Chaim Dasberg and Dr. Gabriel Shefler.<sup>2</sup> The study was conducted in one of the settlements in the region during the months prior to the evacuation; it does not reveal the real name of the *moshav*, evidently for reasons of individual privacy. Instead, the *moshav* is called by the pseudonym “Naveh.” These are the conclusions of the research:

- Many *moshav* inhabitants occupied themselves in nostalgic activities in the months before the evacuation, as they attempted to document and reconstruct their lives in the region, such as photographing the *moshav* and the area. Women, especially, stood out in these ventures.
- Uncertainty and thirst for information, regarding both the political echelon and the character of its considerations and decisions, as well as about the economic situation and market conditions in the context of compensation for evacuation predominated.
- Some of the *moshav* residents, especially the founders, continued to develop plans for the future. In the days preceding the decision of the then-defense minister, Ariel Sharon, to destroy all the settlements in the region, there were those who even tried (unsuccessfully) to establish contact with the Egyptian authorities in order to assure themselves ties with the place even after the evacuation.
- Many residents neglected daily life in the settlements – gardening, communal meetings of the members – and focused instead on life outside the *moshav*.

2. The two presented their research results in an article in the **Journal of Applied Behavioral Science**, vol. 23, pp. 89-101.

- The youths reacted less traumatically than the adults had feared, and many of them were actually full of anticipation for the future.
- Many residents neglected other emotional problems they had and tended to attribute all their problems to the evacuation crisis, even if these were not at all related.
- As time went on, or perhaps because of the tension, some residents developed aggressive fantasies - such as reconquering the area or, conversely, destroying it before the evacuation.
- Some of the inhabitants preferred immediate evacuation as opposed to a "slow death."
- As opposed to images created by the press (which, naturally, focus on the dramatic and the aberrant), the researchers found only two cases of divorce among the *moshav* members a year after the evacuation. In fact, the researchers concluded that most of the evacuees were successful in rehabilitating their lives and conducting both their family lives and economic affairs. The children, also, were rehabilitated.
- The researchers felt that the major reason for this was because the *moshav* population was selective; i.e., candidates for membership in the *moshav* had been selected, or accepted, by the settlement institutions as being suitable to weather the difficult conditions of life prevailing in the region. Thus, the group does not constitute a normal population profile, people who might be expected to encounter greater adjustment difficulties.

Other studies reach similar conclusions regarding the ultimate success of most of the inhabitants in rehabilitating their lives. Some of the researchers, notably Professor Nurit Kliot of Haifa University, even claim that the percentage of divorces among the Yamit evacuees does not deviate from general divorce statistics

of the population as a whole.<sup>3</sup> According to Professor Klot, post-evacuation family crises cropped up among families that were already in distress for reasons not related to the evacuation, although the evacuation may have served to exacerbate the existing tensions thus leading to divorce. But there were few families that functioned normally beforehand and got to divorce or other acute crises only because of the evacuation.

Dasberg and Shefler describe the chronological unfolding of events during the stages of social disintegration of the *moshav*: In June 1981, about ten months before the evacuation, tension cropped up among the members because of disputes regarding the division of property. (This issue is especially relevant for an agricultural settlement and less for a communal settlement, and even less for those in a municipal framework.) Mutual suspicion arose in the *moshav* regarding those who were perceived as attempting to take advantage of the evacuation at the expense of other members. In addition, heightened criticism was directed at the local leadership, which served as the punchbag for all the complaints and the anger. This period was called, *post factum*, an “orgy of aggression.”

In February 1982, about two months before the evacuation, the *moshav* split up into small groups of isolated families or even individuals who confronted each other over clashing interests. Concurrently, people began feeling aimless and apathetic towards the place as they realized that the *moshav* would no longer be their permanent home and they needed some sort of defense mechanism to shield them from the pain of evacuation.

3. In an interview for this paper.

Yet, in August 1983 (more than a year after the evacuation) when the researchers checked back with the evacuees, they found that while arguments over division of property continued to surface, on the whole most of the former inhabitants had succeeded in rehabilitating their lives. The exception were those evacuees who continued in agriculture; they felt exhausted, both emotionally and financially, from the effort to reestablish their lost farmsteads.

In light of their findings, the researchers drafted some recommendations in case of future evacuation of settlements. They are:

- The need for honesty and credibility on the part of the authorities: Inhabitants should be informed as early as possible about their fate, including an evacuation timetable, the compensation package, and the location of the new, replacement settlements.
- A common replacement settlement: It is preferable to move the evacuees from a settlement to a replacement settlement together so as to enable the continued existence of the community. This will facilitate a built-in support group sharing the joint trauma and best provide support for all the individuals in the community.
- A support system: Emotional, not just economic aid should be offered to the evacuees.
- The establishment of new bonds to the replacement settlement: Effort should be invested in creating renewed bonds between the evacuees and the national and local history of the new site. This is because it is important for them to feel that their years in the previous settlement were not in vain and that the entire society (and not just the local community) welcomes and reabsorbs them.

Another study was conducted by a team from the Department of Psychology of Tel Aviv University (Yoseph Tuviana, Noah Milgram and Hertzal Falach).<sup>4</sup> This study made an interesting comparison of two different population groups who lived in Yamit region in those days: the population of the original settlers who were at home in the region, and a group of “new settlers” who streamed into the region throughout the three years between the government’s decision to evacuate and the actual evacuation. It is important to emphasize that the new settlers were not those who came only to demonstrate solidarity, but mainly those who bound their own destiny to that of the region and came to live in it throughout the entire period of struggle against the evacuation. This group was comprised mainly of national-religious settlers – as opposed to the veteran settlers who were mainly secular – and especially prominent were Yesha residents who came to Yamit to implement their world-view regarding their rights to Greater Israel. They believed that it is forbidden to relinquish regions of the national homeland, and also wanted to prevent setting a dangerous evacuation precedent that could negatively affect their own status in Judea and Samaria.

The following conclusions arose from a comparison of the two groups:

- The “new settlers” reported a lower level of distress, compared to their veteran counterparts both during the crisis and subsequently. This was partly because the houses and settlements that were evacuated were not their original homes, even though some of these settlers lived there for a period of several years. In addition, the new settlers had been motivated to come to the region for political reasons, and they felt that

4. Presented in an article in **Megamot** 31 (1988), pp. 65-82.

they had at least succeeded in achieving their political goal, even if they were unsuccessful in preventing the evacuation – because of the assumption that the trauma of the Sinai evacuation would serve to prevent a future, larger evacuation from Judea and Samaria.

- In contrast to the new settlers, the veteran settlers suffered from great emotional distress during the waiting period prior to the evacuation and felt a certain relief afterwards. The greatest distress reported after the evacuation was not because of the evacuation *per se* but because the settlers perceived a negative attitude on the part of Israeli society, which bruited the claim that the evacuees were “blackmailers who made a fortune” from the evacuation.
- The distress was also greater among ideologically-motivated veteran settlers than among those who had come for material reasons. It seemed that the latter, were able to consider the monetary compensation as a fair exchange for evacuation more readily than the former, who felt “betrayed” by the state and society.

The authors of this study proposed recommendations similar to the recommendations of the previous study:

- **Transparency of the government’s intentions:**

If the intention is to evacuate, it is advisable to announce this openly and plenty of time in advance so as not to leave the residents in the dark about their fate.

- **Psychological and community intervention:**

Arrangements for this kind of care should be set up for all the evacuees.

- **A more empathetic and less judgmental press:**

The evacuees should not be referred to as “blackmailers” and empathy for their plight should be shown. The researchers indicated that the media had taken a “blame the victim”

approach towards the Sinai evacuees. It was only years after the evacuation, when newspaper articles focused on the plight of the evacuees and not their compensation packages, that these accusations were dispelled.<sup>5</sup>

Another interesting study was conducted in 1982 by Dr. Shifra Sagy, a clinical psychologist in the Department of Education at Ben-Gurion University. She examined a group of youths from Yamit, a short time before the evacuation, and discovered that all suffered from high levels of anger and anxiety, irrespective of personality type or political views. In 1993, when the government started to plan advanced negotiations with Syria, the settlers of the Golan Heights sensed that they were possible candidates for a future evacuation. Dr. Sagy then examined the youth of the Golan and discovered much lower levels of anxiety and anger than among the Yamit group. In addition, the levels of anxiety within the Golan group were strongly influenced by differences in personality and political views. Dr. Sagy concluded that adolescents are significantly affected by the behavior of their parents. The more openly anxious and angry the parents, the greater their children's anger and anxiety.<sup>6</sup>

However, we must emphasize that there are some significant differences between the circumstances of the evacuation of the Sinai Peninsula and those of a possible evacuation in Yesha, thus making it difficult to consider the "Yamit episode" as an unequivocal model for the present reality. Some of the differences seem to indicate that an evacuation today would be much

5. It seems that the researchers exaggerated somewhat on this point, because articles documenting the plight of the evacuees appeared in real-time alongside articles that dwelled on the compensation money.

6. The results of the double study were presented in Aryeh Kaspi's article, "Ovrin Dira [Moving Day]," **Ha'aretz** Supplement, 7/10/1994, p. 14.

harder, while others indicate that the decision to evacuate would sit easier with Israeli public opinion today than it did in the case of Sinai. Below are the differences in the circumstances:

- **Size of evacuee population:** This is the most outstanding difference. The Sinai evacuees totaled only about 6,000, while today more than 230,000 people reside in Yesha (i.e., “potential evacuees”). Moreover, the Yesha population includes an especially great number of ideological settlers who went there out of a political belief in the Greater Land of Israel, much like the “new settlers” of the Yamit region. And like them, these settlers will not consider generous economic compensation as an appropriate exchange for the dissolution of their ideological vision. Moreover, broad segments of Israeli society feel a great ideological and spiritual connection with Judea and Samaria particularly.
- **Duration of settlement:** Yamit was evacuated fifteen years after the region fell under Israeli control and only a few years after Israeli settlement was established there. Yesha, on the other hand, has been under Israeli control for thirty-six years, and the first settlements there were established thirty-five years ago. Many young people have spent their entire lives in Yesha and know no other home. Many segments of the Israeli public who do not live in Yesha are deeply connected to these areas and see them as an integral part of sovereign Israel.
- **Public consensus:** The evacuation of Sinai was carried out under widespread public consensus. It was decided on and carried out by a Likud government with the support of most of the members of the Labor Party; the only opponents were politically to the right of the Likud. It is not clear under what political circumstances a decision would be made (if indeed one were) to evacuate Yesha. In the present circumstances it seems that this decision would also be the initiative of a Likud prime minister with the support of many members of

his party and certainly a large majority (if not all) of the Labor representatives.

- **The Israeli state of mind:** Israeli society is far more exhausted from the war and ongoing conflict today than it was in 1982. The evacuation of the Sinai Peninsula was carried out when the border was quiet. It was the result of an ideological decision that was not dictated by any immediate existential peril. Today, on the other hand, Israel is experiencing an extensive period of terrorism perpetrated by Palestinian terrorist organizations. Any decision about evacuating settlements in Yesha will be influenced, first and foremost, by this existential threat. Terrorism could have the effect of strengthening the position of those who oppose evacuation, as it would seem to indicate the warlike intentions of the Palestinians. However, findings of all the polls conducted since the beginning of the present conflict (the end of September 2000) show that alongside an increased willingness to employ strong military reactions, there exists increasing support by the Israeli public for concessions within the framework of a political settlement, and even for unilateral withdrawal. So it seems that terrorism can cause both an effect and its opposite: it strengthens broad public support for evacuation of settlements even in the absence of a peace agreement, while it also seems to strengthen the emotional recalcitrance of those who oppose evacuation and who consider it unacceptable ideological capitulation as well as submission to terrorism.



## Evacuation of Settlements in Yesha The Political Perspective

3

There are several different kinds of settlement in Yesha, as noted in the Introduction. The most obvious distinction is by type of settlement, i.e., town or community settlement. There are four settlements that have earned the title “city”: two of these are secular and two are ultra-Orthodox. The two secular cities are Ma’aleh Adumim (28,120 inhabitants)<sup>7</sup> and Ariel (17,464 inhabitants). The two ultra-Orthodox cities are Modi’in Elite, known as Kiryat Sefer (22,927 inhabitants) and Betar Elite (21,554 inhabitants). One other settlement exceeds the 10,000 mark – Givat Ze’ev adjacent to Jerusalem, whose population reached 10,946 in June 2003. The rest of the settlements in Yesha have four-figure populations at most, numbering in the thousands and not tens of thousands.

Yet, the distinction between cities and community settlements is more notable for the social implications of the trauma of evacuation, as elucidated in chapter three. The distinction between cities and community settlements is less relevant to the intensity of political opposition to evacuation, except for the fact that community settlements are by nature more homogenous and possess more highly developed community organizations, thus making it easier to organize a political struggle than in the cities. But the distinction that is most relevant to the nature of political reaction has to do not with the type of settlement but with the nature of the settlers, and especially their motivation for settling and staying in their communities.

7. All data on the cities is current as of June 2003, according to information supplied by the Ministry of the Interior.

In this context, one can find three main types of settlement: quality of life settlements, moderate ideological settlements and extremist ideological settlements. (Later on, other “special” kinds of settlement will be noted.)

**Quality of life** settlements are those whose residents came to live in Yesha because of the material benefits accompanying settlement there, mainly generous grants that allowed an urban family from central Israel to buy a spacious house, often with a garden, for the price of an average apartment in a crowded apartment building in an Israeli city. Most of these settlements are secular and are usually adjacent to the Green Line, since their residents wanted to continue working inside Israel proper.

These settlements include:

- Ganim and Kadim in the Afula area
- Tal-Menashe, Hinanit, Shaked, Reihan and Hermesh, which are close to Wadi Ara and are part of the buffer settlement plan separating the Arab villages in Wadi Ara from the Arab villages in Samaria
- Alfei Menashe, Nofim, Barkan and Oranit that are so close to Kfar Saba that in the past they were marketed to potential buyers as “settlements five minutes from Kfar Saba”
- Ofarim and Alei Zahav, close to Petach Tikva
- Givon and Har Adar, just northwest of Jerusalem, and Adam and Anatot, just to the northeast of Jerusalem
- Shima’a, Tene, Eshkolot, Naguhot, Telem and Adora in the southern Hebron hills, just south of the Green Line and Be’er Sheva
- Dugit, Nissanit and Elei Sinai in the north of the Gaza Strip and relatively close to Ashkelon.

A total of 25,000 inhabitants live in these settlements. In addition are the three secular urban settlements in Judea and Samaria –

Ma'aleh Adumin, Ariel and Givat Ze'ev – whose total number of inhabitants reaches 54,000. Most of the people living in these three towns are secular Israelis who were motivated to move there for economic reasons, although some went to live there for ideological reasons.

In contrast, the **moderate ideological** settlements were established to fulfill the ideal of settling the Land of Israel and not for reasons of material gain (though these people also received the bonuses). Most of these are religious settlements, though there are a few mixed religious-secular communities. One of their distinctive characteristics is that the founders got together on their own to found the settlement and then sought the appropriate authorities to validate their initiative. This differs from the usual pattern whereby the national institutions in charge of settlement organize the placement and population of new settlements. While in the later stages quite a few settlers came for quality-of-life reasons such as housing benefits, these people also identified with the ideological basis of the settlement.

These settlements include:

- Shavei Shomron, Kedumim, Karnei Shomron and Tzofim, all on the road that leads from Kfar Saba to Shechem
- Elon Moreh and Bracha, close to Shechem
- Avnei Hefetz and Einav, close to Tul Karm; Elkana and Pedu'el, close to Petah Tikva
- Neveh Tzuf, Ateret, Talmon, Ma'aleh Levonah, Mikhmash, Ofra, Beit El, Psagot, Kokhav Hashahar, Dolev, Eli, Shiloh, Rehelim and Shvut Rachel in the Binyamin region
- Efrata, Alon Shvut, Kfar Etzion, Rosh Tzurim, Geva'ot, Neveh Daniel, Elazar, Bat Ayin, Karnei Tzur and Tekoa in Gush Etzion
- Beit Hagai, P'nei Hever, Otniel, Carmel, Maon, Yatir and Sussiyah in the southern section of the Hebron hills

- Most of the settlements in the Gaza Strip: Neveh D'kalim, Netzarim, Kfar Darom, Ganei Tal, Katif, Netzer Hazani and Atzmona (Bnei Atzmon).

A total of 60,000 inhabitants live in these settlements.

The third type of settlement belongs to the **extremist ideological** camp, and most of their inhabitants belong to the national-religious camp. What is the nature of this extremism? The main difference between them and the moderates is their attitude towards the state, i.e., the principle of the supremacy of the state. The religious settlements in Yesha arose from a Zionist ideology that attached great importance and even religious significance to the establishment of the State of Israel; settling the Land of Israel was just a tool in the service of the state. But among some groups of settlers over the years, the means towards the end – the goal of settling the Land of Israel, and especially Yesha – became a value in its own right, to the point where it eclipsed the value of the supremacy of the state that it was supposed to serve. Most of the religious settlers today try to influence the state to adopt their point of view through restrained demonstrations and sometimes, in their bitterness, even through violent demonstrations, as do other Israeli pressure groups that perceive their situation to be dire (such as the unemployed). But ultimately, the settlers know that the justification for settlement is acceptable only if they are depicted as acting in the national interest (as they interpret it). Therefore they are careful to avoid treading on the authority of the state and its institutions on their way to accomplishing their goals.

Yet, there is a minority among them who have deviated from this principle – either because they always really believed that settling the land (and especially Judea and Samaria) takes precedence over the value of the state or because the drawn-out

confrontations with governmental authorities over the last thirty years caused them to adopt the bitter viewpoint that the State of Israel had betrayed Zionism. There are even some among them who have adopted a post-Zionist outlook, according to which Zionism was nothing but an entity that contained the seeds of calamity. In their perspective, Zionism is not the realization of the “authentic Jewish redemption” but merely the Jewish return to the Land of Israel as a political haven.

People who share this world outlook are found all over Yesha and even within Israel proper, but the greatest concentration is in five specific Yesha settlements: Yitzhar and Itamar in northern Samaria, where students of the “Joseph Still Lives” *yeshivah*<sup>8</sup> live (which previously met in the shrine containing the grave of Joseph, in Nablus), and the followers of Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburg of Kfar Habad, the nominal head of the “Joseph” *yeshivah*.

In addition, in Tapuah, Kiryat Arba and the Jewish neighborhoods of Hebron there are settlers who uphold the ideology of Rabbi Meir Kahane and the Kach movement. Due to their disillusionment with what they perceive to be the hostility directed against them by the state and Israeli society, some other settlers who are not identified with the ideologies of Ginsburg and Kahane have also joined these anti-state settlements and join in challenging the state.

A total of 9,000 people live in these settlements (Kiryat Arba alone is home to 6,000), but the hard-core anti-state group does not number more than a few hundred people.

Over the last few years, the anti-state faction has received reinforcement from two different directions: Israel’s “hilltop

8. A secondary and high school where students learn sacred texts.

youth” on one side, and rabbis and youths who are generally committed to the state and the nation on the other.

The more well known are the hilltop youth, although this group might actually be the less important of the two. It is made up mainly of youths, not all originally from Yesha, who left their homes and joined different outposts throughout Yesha. In some cases, these are disaffected religious youths who have severed ties with their families and schools and often abandoned religious practice. But instead of turning to a life of crime or idleness in the cities, as is common with other alienated youth, they found a haven on the hilltops of Judea and Samaria. Some of Yesha’s educational mentors actually prefer the hilltop option to the inner-city option, since the hilltop youths are at least part of some sort of communal framework and are occupied productively. On the other hand, the basic rebellious and anarchistic approach of these youths who have cut themselves off from their families and schools and often even from rabbinic authority, presages their willingness to rebel against the authority of the state as well. There are also youths living in the outposts who cannot be defined as “alienated” since they maintain relationships with their families and schools, yet flock to the outposts for ideological reasons. They are inclined to rebel against the authority of the state and they criticize their “bourgeois” parents, teachers and rabbis who, they claim, have compromised their principles.

The anarchistic behavior of the hilltop youth came to light when they slashed the car tyres of Adi Mintz, the secretary-general of the Yesha Council during the evacuation of the Havat Gilad outpost in October 2002, and when they interrupted the eulogy of Rabbi Avi Ronski, the rabbi of Itamar, during the funeral of the Shabo family members who were murdered by a terrorist

in June 2002. This behavior found pointed “literary” expression in a poem sent to Adi Mintz’s office in October 2002, during the Havat Gilad confrontation. It expresses the credo of the anonymous sender in these words:

Mother, I am going. I am going to the hilltops, don’t try to stop me; I’ve made up my mind. I refuse to live under the yoke of tyranny. I am suffering, Mother. I suffer in school, and it’s not good for me at home, either. Don’t try to stop me. There, on the hilltops, they say there’s freedom, Mother. A life of truth, of worshiping God. Not the pathetic God of the rabbis, of you and Father and of the religious high school . . . but a living God. I remember, Mother, the silence of the rabbis after the terrible assassination [Y.S.: of Rabin] when we were afraid to wear our kipah (religious head covering) on the street . . . I remember and I will not forgive or forget; I won’t listen to rabbis like these. . . If I have to, I’ll defend my home with clenched fists and bent back against my enemies, whether Israeli or Arab, because I will be a free man. I will no longer bear quietly the tyranny of the secularists, like you and Father.<sup>9</sup>

It is important to emphasize that there is a clear distinction (not usually made by the press) between these youths – who should really be called “the outpost youths,” who live in the outposts on a permanent basis, who are anti-state, and who number in the tens – and a second, larger group of youths who live at home, attend school on a regular basis and rally to the outposts when these are faced with evacuation. This larger group numbers many more than the hard-core outpost group, reaching the hundreds and sometimes even the thousands. Some of these youths come from cities within the Green Line and are not

9. **Ha’aretz**, 27/10/2002, p. 1-B.

necessarily from Yesha. They generally have a more “statist” viewpoint and oppose violence in the political struggle for the outposts.

The second factor – and possibly the more significant in terms of evacuation of settlements in Yesha – reinforcing the anti-state trend consists of elements not usually associated with this outlook: rabbis and youths who normally uphold the supremacy of the state. These are rabbis who have preached all their lives that the state and its supremacy were sacrosanct, and these are youths who have actively demonstrated their willingness to volunteer to undertake national missions such as serving in elite army units or working in development towns.

Even if there has been no about-face in their basic outlook, it seems that these rabbis and youths are prepared to challenge the authority of the state and its representatives, unlike the previous generation of Religious Zionists. Some of these rabbis hold the view that settling the Land of Israel is a strictly religious matter governed by *halakhah* (religious law) and that infringing it is equivalent to violating the supremacy of *halakhah* over state law. Their willingness to defy the state’s authority stems from this view, just as they would defy any attempt by the state to coerce them to desecrate the Sabbath, for instance.

The increasing willingness of the youth to challenge the state, however, stems from generational sociological differences. The parents of these youngsters, founders of the settlement movement in Yesha, revered the supremacy of the state not only as an ideology, but also as the basis of their spiritual identity. They saw settlement as a ticket to membership in Israel’s elite, which during their own youth had been the exclusive domain of the secular public. Undermining the ideal of the supremacy of the

state would also undermine the legitimacy of their position in Israeli society, and had therefore been unacceptable to them. Their children, on the other hand – the second and even third generation in Yesha – are in a completely different situation. First, they live at a time when the status of the state and its supremacy have been undermined in all strata of Israeli society. Second, they have greater self-confidence concerning their place in society than their parents: they feel they have already “arrived” in the Israeli elite. They have no need for anyone’s stamp of approval and do not look up to their secular counterparts with admiration or self-deprecation, as many of their parents did in their time. In fact, if they don’t look down on them, they at least see them as equals. Third, many of the second- and third- generation youths simply take their lives in Yesha for granted. While their parents came to the settlements from other places in the country (and thus can at least conceive of returning to those places), these children are as much at home in their birthplaces as are natives of Tel Aviv or Givat Brenner.

After speaking with some of these youngsters, it seems that for all the above reasons they have a much greater potential than their parents for employing extreme means in confrontations ensuing from evacuation. They would do this without abandoning their basic Zionist view that the state is valuable.

Fourth, many of these youths report having developed a negative attitude towards the “political function” of the arbiters of law and order: the police and the armed forces. To the police they ascribe excessive use of force against peaceful demonstrators during right-wing demonstrations and evacuation of outposts. They also have lost their faith in the army because they claim that the army has not respected the agreements made between them

(for example, the promise not to damage outpost equipment or even to return some of it). They feel that the army never intended to carry out these promises, but intended to use them in order to ensure as quick an evacuation as possible. These credibility crises and the development of negative attitudes on the part of the younger generation towards the armed forces in Yesha influence the willingness of these youths to escalate the methods of their struggle in the future, and certainly affect their willingness to reach compromises with the evacuation forces.

### **Anticipated Reactions to Evacuation**

The following picture regarding the anticipated reaction of three different groups of settlers to evacuation emerged from discussion with various key people in the settlement movement and outside observers.

**The quality-of-life settlers** are expected to ultimately accept the verdict, even if many of them initially join the demonstrations and the political struggle of the settlement movement as a whole. They became settlers for personal reasons and not because of nationalistic considerations, and this is likely to determine their reaction to evacuation. Two central factors will determine their reaction: the first is the security context in which evacuation is carried out, and the second is the degree of fairness the government demonstrates with regard to their future in an alternative location.

Regarding the security context: the quality-of-life settlers will more easily accept evacuation if it is seen as a consequence of the deteriorating security situation, as now seems likely. It seems that not a few of these settlers would like to leave already. There have been press reports, for example, that residents have been

leaving the two settlements of Ganim and Kadim in northern Samaria because of the dire security situation, isolated as they are and located close to Jenin, the “terrorism capital.” Other residents remaining in these and other settlements declare that they would also like to leave if it were economically possible, but in the current situation they cannot sell or rent their dwellings in the settlement and cannot afford to rent (to say nothing of purchasing) an additional apartment within the Green Line. Moreover, people knowledgeable about what goes on in Yesha have said that at least at the beginning of the current war of terror there was a steep rise in rental prices (and a dearth of apartments for sale) in cities close to Yesha, such as Kfar Saba and Jerusalem. That is because many people from the territories tried to rent an alternate apartment, at least temporarily, near their permanent residence in Yesha. (This was also true for the residents of Gush Etzion, who are identified with the ideological settlement movement.)

No one, not even quality-of-life settlers, wants to leave a home s/he has built up over many years and certainly not because of coercion, political edicts or security pressures. But as long as the state offers fair compensation, these settlers will find it easier to accept the bitter decree. In this context, it is important to mention that they are likely to find themselves in a Catch-22 situation. They are likely to enter into negotiations over what constitutes “fair compensation” and demand a maximum amount, especially if lawyers get involved and goad them to do this. Yet, the more that they haggle, the more they are likely to be the object of scathing criticism on the part of the public and the media.

As opposed to the quality-of-life group, **the ideological camp** is likely to wage a strenuous political struggle against evacuation,

even if it is offered generous compensation packages. The key question is, of course, how far to carry this struggle. Clearly it will be at least as tough as that waged by the settlers against the evacuation from Sinai. The bottom line is that Yesha is not a disputed zone that people flocked to in order to carry on a strictly political struggle. People have lived in Yesha for many years; it is in the very heart of the Land of Israel, includes many biblical sites identified with the nation's forefathers and is the cradle of the ancient Jewish homeland. Therefore, any decision to evacuate this area will almost certainly be preceded by a vigorous political struggle, possibly unprecedented in Israel, to prevent the acceptance of such a decision and if accepted, to prevent its implementation.

Some of the Yesha personalities interviewed for this study estimated that the planned political struggle would torpedo the possibility of an evacuation. Thus, Uri Elitzur says:

Evacuation is a theoretical scenario. No one will succeed in convincing me, and tens of thousands of others like me, to leave my house for financial inducements. Once the leaders realize this, they will come off their collective high horse. Evacuation of a few isolated settlements is insignificant from a political viewpoint, and the cruel step of uprooting a hundred settlements would require a national consensus so wide that I cannot imagine it ever happening.

Elitzur compares today's demand to evacuate the Yesha settlements to a demand to kill a thirty-year-old man only because someone thought that when he was a fetus, his mother should perform an abortion. Shlomo Filber, former director general of the Yesha Council, feels that even if a political decision in favor of evacuation is taken, "No government could possibly

withstand the legitimate public pressure that we will bring to bear, from giant demonstrations to a siege on Government Center.” Such a scenario echoes the failure of Israeli governments in the 1990s to implement political plans that were considerably more modest than the evacuation of settlements in Yesha: Shamir’s government fell in 1992 as a result of participation in the Madrid Conference, and Netanyahu’s government fell in 1999 in the wake of signing the Wye Agreement. In any case, it is clear that the decision and implementation of evacuation depends on the ability of the two large parties to cooperate (either in a national unity government or with the support of the Labor Party from the opposition), as was the case during the evacuation from Sinai. And of course, it must receive the unequivocal support of the Israeli constituency.

Special attention should be paid to the case of evacuation in the teeth of a difficult security situation. Ostensibly, this would be a moderating factor since even the ideological settler camp is affected by terrorist threats to personal security, and mainly because such a scenario would create a wide consensus for evacuation. On the other hand, it could have the opposite effect and even be a radicalization factor because the settlers would strongly oppose what they view as capitulation to terror. In light of these contradictory possibilities, the result is also likely to be contradictory. On one hand, evacuation for security reasons would radicalize the rhetoric of the settlement leadership. On the other, it would also weaken the resolve of the rank-and-file settlers and their supporters in the struggle against the evacuation.

If the political struggle is unsuccessful and the decision to evacuate is taken, the struggle is likely to intensify as the evacuation date nears. In that case, the authority of the government is likely to face severe challenges, and steps hitherto unknown in public

confrontations in Israel are anticipated not only on the part of the more radical anti-state group, but also on the part of youths who share a fundamental respect for the State of Israel. Even today, many of these youths (even moderate ones) say, “anything goes, except for physically injuring the evacuating forces,” and they enumerate steps they consider to be legitimate: puncturing the wheels of army vehicles and damaging their engines; hermetically sealing the roads to the settlements, etc. The more radical youths even talk about planning to blow up army vehicles and damaging the army apparatus needed for the evacuation, though they emphasize that the intent is not to hurt soldiers. In sum: outright civil disobedience against the authority of the state. A conflict such as this has great potential for wreaking havoc on two fronts: the overall fabric of life in Israel and the public status of the struggle and the settlers themselves. Israeli public opinion will not bear such flagrant injury to the symbols of government as the wanton destruction of army equipment, even if the evacuation forces themselves are not harmed.

The rabbis are also expected to step up their arsenal in the conflict during an evacuation. Even after Rabin’s assassination, and when facing only the evacuation of outposts, some rabbis publicized religious rulings instructing their followers to refuse to obey orders (although this was not the official stance of the Yesha Rabbinical Council). As the specter of wide-scale evacuation nears, these kinds of rulings are likely to multiply, and along with them the number of those who refuse to obey orders. This refusal is anticipated especially among religious reserve soldiers (if reserve soldiers are drafted for the task of evacuation), but it may extend to other groups as well. From talks with youths from Yesha, the word is that even many regular and career soldiers (as opposed to the reserves) are likely to refuse to obey an order to forcibly evacuate settlers from their homes, and this

trend will intensify with the heart-rending scenes of inhabitants in confrontations with the forces trying to evacuate them. Along with active noncompliance, “gray noncompliance” is likely to increase – the attempt of many soldiers to evade participating in evacuation through all kinds of excuses and subterfuge.

Thus, it may be exaggerated to focus our apprehensions regarding the preservation of Israeli democracy on the radical ideological settler contingent. If the more moderate youngsters of Yesha take up the cudgels of civil disobedience, the extremists may not need to use the whole arsenal of tricks they are prepared to unleash and be content with joining their more mainstream colleagues. Even so, one should not discount the possible dangers that may emanate from this group. Paradoxically, the more moderate the “centrist” stream, the more willing the radicals will be to use more extreme “weapons.” The extremists may feel that the struggle falls squarely on their shoulders if they perceive that their compatriots have abandoned them by being too willing to compromise or too obligated to the state. One of the worst-case scenarios is that the radical group would attempt to prevent the evacuation by creating a major crisis to torpedo the entire political process. One such example of this was the plan to blow up the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount by members of the Jewish underground during the 1980s. This initiative arose not only from religious anger at the very existence of the mosques on this Jewish holy site, but also from the hope that such an explosion would undermine the peace treaty with Egypt and thus prevent the withdrawal from Sinai. If the plan had succeeded, that probably would have been the result.

In a conversation I had with the late Professor Ehud Sprinzak while researching this paper, he warned that a Jewish terrorist attempt to prevent evacuation would not need to focus solely on

the mosques of the Temple Mount. He claimed that the radical faction could achieve the same ends by simultaneously attacking a number of mosques, even unimportant ones, throughout Judea and Samaria. They could also carry out a sweeping terrorist attack on Muslims such as the massacre perpetrated by Baruch Goldstein at the Cave of Machpela in Hebron in February 1994. Hezi Kalo, former head of the Jewish Division of Israel's Security Services (*Shin Bet*), notably during the period of Rabin's assassination, sketches some possible violent scenarios. The main scenarios that he fears are "attacks on Arabs to torpedo the entire process and the laying of mines on the access roads to those settlements that are in danger of evacuation." In addition, "There is always the danger that some lone lunatics might carry out acts of despair, including opening fire on the evacuation forces." Another possibility is widespread civil disobedience. He says, "I can't even imagine" how it would be possible to evacuate settlements such as Kiryat Arba and the Jewish settlement in Hebron. He gives the example of Tel Rumeida: Rabin's government considered evacuating Tel Rumeida after the Baruch Goldstein massacre in February 1994, but then recanted because the Shin Bet assessed that such an evacuation was likely to instigate nothing less than a civil war. He adds that an evacuation following on the heels of a bloodletting cycle of terror and reprisals (as was considered after Goldstein's massacre), is likely to arouse a reaction of even greater fury than an evacuation as the result of a "calmer" political agreement. The settlers would view such an evacuation as unjustified injury to the victims themselves and a capitulation to terror.

A prominent Yesha personality, familiar with what is happening within the more radical camps because of his personal biography, envisions such a scenario. In his opinion, the bitterness, hostility and alienation that the Yesha settlers (as opposed to those in

Sinai) have developed towards the Israeli establishment after many long years of confrontation practically assure that they would open fire during evacuation. If that should happen, the stunned soldiers might return fire, with tragic results. A “realistic scenario” would, in his estimation, be on the order of thirty to forty dead soldiers and civilians during the evacuation of extremist settlers.<sup>10</sup> Even more absurd is the fact that the speaker himself realizes that such a violent scenario might actually facilitate the evacuation. The shock that would sweep the entire Israeli society would probably muzzle all protest, including legitimate protest by settlers in general, and would certainly create a wide consensus regarding the evacuation of the extremists.

Yesha leadership is aware of such a scenario and is making major efforts to avoid its realization. They were wary of such a reaction even to the evacuation of outposts. Thus, for example, when the Yitzhar outpost was evacuated in June 2003, the settlers themselves set up guard shifts at the entrance to the outpost in order to prevent people from bringing firearms into the outpost.<sup>11</sup> One hopes that these efforts will be successful during an evacuation of settlements, but their very existence testifies more than anything else that the Yesha leadership fears that such a scenario is possible.

\* \* \*

10. The interviewee makes an interesting comparison between this scenario and the June 1948 confrontation over the Altalena munitions ship. He claims that the radical settlers will equate evacuation with “bombardment of the Altalena,” except that the circumstances of such a confrontation [in Yesha] are likely to be more severe than was the case with the Altalena. “We are speaking here of a confrontation that will break out not in one spot but in many places. Also, there is no authoritative figure like Menachem Begin [during the Altalena crisis] to prevent a violent response.”

11. Interview with Miriam Shapira for this position paper.

There are three additional groups of settler who were not listed in the primary classification above, and whose political reactions to evacuation must also be included. These are: the immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU), the ultra-Orthodox and the Jordan Valley settlers.

**The immigrants from the FSU** have long been known for their predominantly hawkish political stance and their distrust even towards Israeli Arabs, let alone the Palestinians. In addition, this sector has not been homogenized in the Israeli national melting pot and certainly has not internalized the value of respecting the authority of the state, even while opposing the policies of the state. On the contrary: there are various indications that from their past under Soviet dictatorship, many of these immigrants brought with them an attitude of cynicism and scorn for the authority of the state. In their eyes, the state is a hostile entity that should always be viewed with suspicion, circumvented and occasionally even rebelled against.

The Center for National Security at Haifa University conducted a survey of the attitudes of different sectors of the population towards political violence and revealed a surprising finding: there is greater support for political violence among the population of Israel proper (within the Green Line) than among the settlers. Moreover, the sector that tilts most towards political violence is the FSU immigrant group.

The participants in the survey were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: “There are circumstances when there is no choice but to use firearms in order to prevent the government from carrying out its policies.” Only 4.4% of the settlers agreed as opposed to 22.8% of the inhabitants of

development towns within the Green Line, only 6.35% of the ultra-Orthodox, and a whopping 55.3% of the FSU immigrants. Another statement dealt with support for physically harming politicians “in circumstances where a national disaster is fast approaching, and all means of protest have been exhausted.” Only 2.2% of the settlers supported this, as opposed to 9% of development town residents and 6.3% of the ultra-Orthodox, while again, a high 17% of the FSU immigrants agreed.<sup>12</sup> Of course, we must address these statistics with caution: not everyone who declares that they adhere to a specific stance actually intends to carry it out, and sometimes the declaration is only an expression of social frustration. However, the data, and especially the contrast between the different sectors, definitely indicate a trend.

This trend concerning an extreme reaction by FSU immigrants to an evacuation has the Yesha leadership worried. In this context, some leaders are reminded of initiatives taken by immigrants from the FSU to perpetrate acts of vengeance against Arabs after terrorist attacks. However, although the danger does exist, it must be put into proportion. While these immigrants are the least respectful of the state among the various sectors of the population, they are also the least plugged into the Israeli social network. In other words, it is highly unlikely that an underground movement (which requires access to weapons and intelligence) would emerge from their ranks. The major danger they pose is probably a violent and extreme reaction during evacuation, but not an armed one.

12. “The Tendency towards Political Violence among the Settlers” [Hebrew], Survey by the Center for National Security, Haifa University, February 2003.

The ultra-Orthodox are another unique sector among the settlers. There are two ultra-Orthodox cities in Yesha: Betar Elite and Modi'in Elite, each of which numbers more than 20,000 inhabitants. There is another medium-sized settlement, Immanuel, which numbers only about 2,800 inhabitants even though it was originally planned to be a city. There are also the smaller communities of Kokhav Ya'akov, Ma'aleh Amos, and Hashmonaim (most, but not all, of the inhabitants in the latter settlement are ultra-Orthodox). A total of 50,000 ultra-Orthodox residents currently live in Yesha; they make up over twenty percent of the Jewish population there. This sector is also the fastest growing in Yesha because of the difficult housing shortage in ultra-Orthodox communities in Israel proper and also because of the proximity of most of the ultra-Orthodox settlements to the Green Line. In fact, the Yesha population maintained its impressive growth during the last years despite terrorist activity mainly because of its ultra-Orthodox constituency. In 2002, the population in Yesha grew by 12,356 persons,<sup>13</sup> and over half of this increase (6,599 persons) was due to three ultra-Orthodox settlements: Betar Elite, Modi'in Elite and Kokhav Ya'akov. On the other hand, there has been a constant population decline in Immanuel, which is located in the heart of Samaria, over the last few years: from 3,634 in June 2000 to 2,815 in December 2002. These statistics may reflect something about the nature of the ultra-Orthodox population in Yesha and their likely reaction to an evacuation.

The motivation of the ultra-Orthodox settlers is similar to that of the quality-of-life settlers. The ultra-Orthodox did not settle for "Greater Israel" ideological reasons: on the contrary, most of the ultra-Orthodox Torah scholars (especially the Lithuanian

13. Data from the Ministry of Interior; **Ha'aretz**, 11.2.2003, p. 3.

segment) opposed the whole Yesha settlement enterprise and saw it as a dangerous provocation of non-Jews. This settlement trend thus came about for strictly economic reasons, as young ultra-Orthodox couples could not afford to buy apartments in the ultra-Orthodox cities and neighborhoods in central Israel, whether because of the high price of the apartments or because of the limited supply. Instead they had to fulfill their housing needs with the help of the generous bonuses offered by the government in Yesha. Therefore, we might anticipate the reaction of the ultra-Orthodox to closely resemble that of the quality-of-life settlers and be greatly influenced by the compensation package that is offered them. On the other hand, we must keep in mind that despite the official stance of the ultra-Orthodox Torah scholars, the ultra-Orthodox sector (and especially its younger generation) has turned into the most hawkish segment of the population in Israel, even more so than the Religious Zionists.<sup>14</sup> The bottom line, however, is that the dominant factor in the collective reaction of the ultra-Orthodox settlers will probably be their adherence to the directives of their Torah scholars. These Torah scholars will probably instruct the ultra-Orthodox Knesset members to ensure maximum compensation for the evacuees, and in all likelihood will also forbid demonstrations and other activities against the evacuation. (It is not clear, however, how they will actually vote in the Knesset.) The last thing that the ultra-Orthodox society needs is another painful confrontation with the Israeli Left, who will claim that those same ultra-Orthodox men who do not serve in the army also want to obstruct the peace process. Therefore it seems that many ultra-Orthodox of a hawkish political bent would join the general demonstrations and

14. In the "Peace Index Project" of the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research at Tel Aviv University that was conducted in 1997, 100% of the ultra-Orthodox identified themselves with the Right, as opposed to "only" 80% of the Religious Zionist movement.

protest against the withdrawal, but would not organize separately to do so.

An interesting and unclear question is whether individual ultra-Orthodox persons would be involved in violent activities against the evacuation. Within ultra-Orthodox society, a contingent called the “shabab” has developed; these are undisciplined, rebellious youth who do not conform to collective norms. Such a group, when combined with a hawkish political position and a lack of innate respect for the state, could possibly turn to violence. On the other hand, since these youngsters have not served in the army, they have limited access to weapons, explosives and the wherewithal to create an organized armed opposition. Therefore, in all likelihood the only young ultra-Orthodox who would become involved in violent activities would be those who are identified with the Kahanist movement, Kach. (Note: in the past few years, some ultra-Orthodox youths have served in the ultra-Orthodox Nahal Corps, thus providing accessibility to weapons.)

The third unique sector is comprised of **settlers in the Jordan Valley**, including the northern Dead Sea, and currently numbers only about 4,500 people. Settlement of this region enjoyed wide consensus, including even the Labor Party and its affiliated settlement movements, because the Jordan Valley was an area not populated by Arabs. Settling there thus posed no moral dilemmas. Almost all of the Jordan Valley settlements are secular, and the vast majority are agricultural (except for the regional center of Ma’aleh Efrain). Many of the settlers are identified with the Labor Party, and even though they benefited from larger houses than they would probably have been able to afford in the city, they are not considered “quality-of-life” settlers who came only to improve their standard of living. Most of the settlers

are farmers who heeded the call of the state and the settlement institutions to come settle in a challenging region, far from the center of the country and in a terribly hot climate. Thanks to these facts, the Jordan Valley settlers are perceived by the Israeli public as being the “salt of the earth,” people who rose to a national challenge at the center of the Israeli consensus. What this means is that these settlers did not develop that bitterness and enmity towards the Israeli mainstream that was the lot of many of the religious settlers in Yesha, who were the object of hostility from Israel’s secular elite.

Another significant aspect of the secular identification of the Jordan Valley residents is that they have no alternative authority beyond the state. They can get angry at the state that “betrayed” them, but they have no alternative source of ideological authority that could compete with or undermine that of the state. In addition, the Jordan Valley settlers and their settlements are engulfed in an ongoing agricultural crisis in addition to the terrorism crisis, and this complicates their ability to organize demonstrations and protests. For all these reasons, it seems that the reactions of the Jordan Valley residents to evacuation would most resemble those of the Sinai settlers in their time. They are likely to express great fury against the state that sent them on a pioneering mission and then “betrayed” them. (In this they would differ from the secular quality-of-life settlers in Yesha, who came for personal reasons and thus would not be able to criticize the state on ideological grounds). But their protest is not likely to go beyond demonstrations. Yet, one must bear in mind that long years of stress can have surprising effects and set off unexpectedly tough resistance.

## Mitigating Factors

### The Political System

**An unequivocal majority decision:** The first and foremost prerequisite for evacuation is an unequivocal democratic majority, and not a slim, one-vote majority. A decision by referendum would be even more effective in moderating the reactions of the settlers, especially the mainstream faction, since they could then accept it as a decision of the nation and not just of an accidental majority of the Knesset. Of course the political struggle would take place even in this case, as occurred during the evacuation of the Sinai settlements, when the decision for evacuation was taken by an overwhelming majority. But a referendum is likely to moderate at least the nature of the activities of the majority of settlers and their supporters.

In this context, it is worth pointing out that the bitter struggle of the settlers against the Oslo Accords and against the Rabin government that signed them, a struggle that ended in the assassination of Rabin, arose not only from political opposition to the agreements themselves, but from the perception that the agreements did not have widespread national support, as had the peace agreements with Egypt and the evacuation that resulted from those agreements. The settlers expressed the following arguments again and again: that Rabin was elected on a platform that was significantly more hawkish than the Oslo Accords, and he therefore should have put the agreements to a referendum; and that the Shas Party, whose presence in the coalition enabled passage of the Accords, “betrayed” its constituents, who were far more hawkish than the party leaders. In addition, they maintained that the Oslo B Accords, which determined the major concrete evacuation plans for Yesha (the original agreements

only outlined a general plan) were passed by “buying” the votes of former Tzomet Party members, a party that had been elected to the Knesset on an extremely hawkish platform; and in any case, the agreements were passed only because of the votes of Arab Knesset members and thus lacked a “Jewish majority.” The conclusion is, therefore, that a decision on the evacuation of settlements in Yesha made by a solid political and public majority would be a major mitigating factor in the struggle by the ideological settlers.

Moreover, other persons interviewed for this paper, who are not part of the settler population, opined that a wide national consensus is a prerequisite for any evacuation process. Hezi Kalo, who headed the Jewish Division in the Shin Bet at the time of Rabin’s assassination, even calls this a “minimal condition” (i.e., a condition that is necessary but not sufficient). He clearly states, “The step of evacuation should definitely not be determined by a single percentage.” Professor Kliot uses more moderate language but also talks about widespread agreement as a “central condition” for the very capability of promoting evacuation.<sup>15</sup>

**Minimizing the number of evacuees:** The smaller the number of evacuees – and Israel must stand firm on this issue – the more moderate will be the reactions of the settlers and

15. The settlers usually demand not just an ordinary majority to determine the Yesha issue, but a “Jewish majority,” i.e., a majority of Israeli citizens who are Jewish. Although this is problematic in a democratic society, a straightforward and fair look at the unique Israeli landscape reveals that a significant percentage of Israel’s citizens are part of a nation against whom a war over the Land of Israel is being waged, thus suggesting that the demand for a “Jewish majority” is not totally groundless. Just as this unique reality leads to infringement of democratic equality regarding the draft (i.e., Arab citizens are exempt from serving in the army), so may it also dictate that the democratic norm of equality in voting be infringed in

their supporters. While those who will be evacuated will be angry with their colleagues who “sold out their friends in order to save themselves,” in terms of most of the settlers and their supporters among Israeli society this will prove that maximum effort was made to minimize the evacuation decree as much as possible.

**Continued settlement in Yesha:** Several public figures among the settlers interviewed for this paper assert that a moderating damage-control factor would be the re-building of the evacuated settlements, preferably in Yesha, among the remaining blocs of settlements. This is for number of reasons: first, the evacuation crisis is not only ideological, but also social; i.e., the loss of the settlement enterprise and the laborious building of a community. If the settlement and the community can be reconstructed, the crisis will be tempered as well as the response. Second, if the settlements can be rebuilt within Yesha, then the settlers will feel that their enterprise had not been in vain and that they had contributed to the expansion of the Jewish presence there and the redefinition of the state’s borders, even if they had not been completely successful in tipping the scales. Many of the interviewees for this study emphasize, in this context, the importance of “ideological compensation” (as opposed to monetary compensation) as an important factor in moderating the reactions of the ideological settlers.

the matter of evacuation of settlements. Such specific infringement may be circumvented by requiring a special majority vote. Such a majority would gracefully sidestep the thorny issue of the “Arab vote,” yet would in effect neutralize its weight in the results. In any case, if an evacuation decision must be made, it would be best to weigh the consequences of the two possible courses of action against each other: injury to the Arab community by neutralizing its voice, vis-à-vis moderating the reactions of the Right and the settlers by making the decision according to a “Jewish majority vote.”

### **Evacuation as part of a permanent settlement with the**

**Palestinians:** Another aspect of “ideological compensation” as moderating factor would be evacuation within the context of a final arrangement, and not as an interim agreement or a unilateral withdrawal. This would enable the evacuation to be considered a “contribution” (or sacrifice) on the part of the settlers toward assurance of the future and the welfare of the State of Israel. On the other hand, a unilateral withdrawal or one as part of an interim agreement would be considered a meaningless sacrifice, thus exacerbating the response. If an agreement with the Palestinians were to include transferring Israeli Arab settlements to Palestinian sovereignty in return for evacuation of Jewish settlements in Yesha, this would facilitate the acquiescence of the settlers, who would feel that they had sacrificed their homes to solve the demographic problem in Israel. An article in this vein was written in January 2002 by Dr. Amiel Unger, one of the columnists of *Nekudah*.<sup>16</sup>

### **A positive and empathetic attitude towards the settlers:**

In order to moderate the struggle by Yesha’s inhabitants, at least the “silent majority,” it is very important that in tandem with the evacuation process, the country’s leaders express a positive attitude towards the settler population. Expressing appreciation for the ideological motivation of their settlement enterprise and their stamina, as well as their contribution to expanding the 1967 boundary lines, is likely to mitigate the settlers’ sense of loss and strengthen their perception that the enterprise was of significance for the nation. Of course, this empathy must go hand-in-hand with the way the evacuation is conducted: expressing empathy while carrying out the evacuation in an

16. In the settlers’ newspaper **Nekudah** 248 (January 2002), Unger argued that the “settlement exchange” proposal would also serve the need to deter Israeli Arabs.

aggressive, hostile manner would only exacerbate the resistance. However, it is legitimate that this empathy be conditional: that is, only on condition that the settlers accept the obligation of a democratic decision. In any case, empathy is important. It is preferable that such expressions of empathy come not only from the governmental establishment, but also from other prominent social strata: intellectuals, academicians, mayors, heads of local councils and the public at large. Although some of the settlers may see in this a hypocritical “bear-hug,” most will be appreciative.

**Rules for the evacuation procedure:** It is important that during the evacuation procedure itself, the following principles be enforced. First, there must be ongoing preparatory work in cooperation with the settlement leadership, whether at the upper echelons (Yesha Council, Council of Yesha Rabbis), or at the local level (the leaders of the individual settlements). In the final analysis, reactions to evacuation in each settlement will be the result of decisions made locally, and not by higher-ups. Second, it is important that the evacuation not come as a surprise. While it is clear that evacuation in general will not come as a surprise because it will follow an open, public vote, the authorities may be strongly tempted to initiate the specific evacuation of some of the more extremist settlements with little or no warning in order to avoid giving the settlers a chance to organize resistance. Although the temptation is understandable, such an approach is totally erroneous: people who are evacuated from their homes without advance notice are much more dangerous than those who have a chance to prepare themselves or whose leaders have had a chance to calm them down. Third, the evacuation forces must be very careful not to offend the sensibilities of the evacuees and refrain from using unnecessary force against them. As noted, many of the younger settlers who are basically respectful of the state are prepared to initiate civil disobedience against

the evacuating forces primarily because they were exposed to unnecessary and excessive force in previous confrontations. For the same reason, it is appropriate to fulfill all agreements with the settlers and their leaders. If there is no real intention or capability of carrying out an agreement, it is better left unmade. In any case, those responsible for evacuation must understand that even if there is a valid reason to breach the agreement, there is more to lose than gain by doing so. Therefore, any decision to breach an agreement must be taken only by the upper echelons of the administration.

**Evacuation forces:** Which is the preferred evacuation force, the army or the police? There are advantages and disadvantages to each. In terms of the general Israeli society, it is of course better that policemen carry out the evacuation in order to avoid the painful scenario of confrontations between soldiers and settlers. There is also a certain amount of justness to the reasoning that “the people’s army” should not be involved in such a political and controversial act. In terms of the efficiency of the evacuation itself, the very same reasoning could apply, since the use of soldiers might somewhat neutralize the reactions of the settlers, who are less willing to confront soldiers than policemen. Probably, then, it would be preferable to employ the army. First, because their presence may neutralize the reactions of the settlers and this factor overrides the problematics of the civilian/soldier confrontation; and second, because there is formal legal backing for the use of soldiers, since Yesha is under control of the IDF and not under civilian jurisdiction.

## The Settlers

**Advance preparation for an evacuation scenario:** The settler leadership is understandably reluctant to deal with an evacuation scenario in advance because such preparation would be an indication of coming to terms with it. Understandable as this avenue is, it is simply too risky to undertake evacuation without advance preparation. Such an ill-prepared evacuation could easily segue into nasty confrontations that the settler leadership would want to avoid. Therefore, from the minute that such a decision is made in the nation's democratic forums, the settler leadership must quickly get organized not only to avert the evil decree, but also to cope properly with its implementation. This preparatory work should integrate all the relevant professionals, such as psychologists, rabbis, education experts, etc., and span as wide a breadth as possible in order to reach the local leadership of the individual settlements. To the credit of the Yesha Council, it must be said that it has already started to act in this spirit regarding the evacuation of the outposts. The Council members initiated a joint statement with some of the prominent rabbis of Yesha, including figures that are accepted by the more radical groups such as Rabbi Dov Lior from Kiryat Arba and Rabbi David Dudkevitz from Yitzhar. The statement unequivocally forbade the use of physical or verbal violence towards the evacuation forces. In preparation for the evacuation of the outposts, instructions regarding "red lines" and unacceptable behavior were passed down, and enforced, to the most local levels in each outpost.

A firm stance on the part of Yesha leadership at all levels is extremely important. Local and regional leaders must insist that no physical violence be used against the evacuators, that no commands be disobeyed, and that no damage be inflicted under

any circumstance on army equipment and apparatus. (As noted, some Yesha youths are already planning such actions.) It is also essential to convey a clear, unequivocal message against inflicting damage on Arabs, mosques or politicians who support agreements [with the Arabs]. All these are realistic scenarios that, unfortunately, have either taken place or were planned in the past; thus we cannot deny the degree of reality they present. By the same token, complete cooperation between all factors within Yesha and the security forces, who attempt to thwart such actions, is essential.



## Evacuation of Settlements in Yesha The Social Perspective

4

Public discourse concerning the possibility of evacuating settlements in Yesha and on the Golan Heights focuses mainly on the political reaction to such a step: how severe it is likely to be, who constitutes the potential for danger, etc. This seems to be characteristic of a society that is far more interested in dealing with political issues than social ones. Perhaps this can be justified by Israel's history, in which political tensions threatened to rend society more than social tensions. Or it may stem from the assumption of the opinion-makers (politicians and the media) that while political issues threaten the entire society, social straits threaten only those who are directly involved. Either way, the evacuation of the Sinai settlements proved that in the long run, the emotional anguish of the evacuees was no less significant than the political trauma caused to the entire society during the period of the evacuation.

As the study by the Department of Psychology at Tel Aviv University cited previously concluded, the social ramifications of evacuation are also determined according to whether the evacuees are quality-of-life settlers or ideological settlers. In the social context, as difficult as evacuation may be, the ideological settlers will be able to cope with it more easily than the quality-of-life settlers. This is because the ideological settlers are a cohesive, unified group led by inspiring leaders, factors that will anoint the personal and communal crisis with an ideological outlook that gives significance to the crisis. On the other hand, it is clear that the more a person considers his dwelling in Yesha as the fulfillment of ideology, the more difficult the ideological crisis will make his ability to cope emotionally. In general, evacuation will likely be harder for individuals in the

ideological camp than those in the quality-of-life camp, but a cohesive ideological community will make coping easier than a non-cohesive community.

Many of those who deal with the evacuation issue also attribute importance to religious identification as a factor that facilitates coping on both the emotional and social levels. This may be because religious identity itself lends ideological significance to life and thus bestows on the individual a sense of hope even when faced with the crisis of evacuation. Additionally, the communal cohesion of the religious community is especially great, since the members generally meet in the synagogue at least once a week, and many even congregate there every day. Therefore we can rate the emotional difficulties of coping with evacuation on the following scale: inhabitants of the cities will suffer most since their communal cohesion is minimal; following them are the residents of the secular settlements; and finally, the inhabitants of religious communities. This graduated scale was true of the way the Yesha settlements have coped with the trauma of terror over the last few years. And indeed, significant emphasis has been placed on reinforcing the communal and emotional strength of the secular residents of the towns and settlements.

If we temporarily ignore the distinctions between the various types of settlement, the experts identify two opposing population groups that are most likely to suffer from the evacuation crisis. The first consists of older adults, who are more likely to encounter difficulties in starting their lives over somewhere else. (An exception to this may be “white collar” professionals, such as lawyers and accountants, who can work anywhere, though even these may have difficulty in building up a new clientele.) The second group is comprised of the young, who are most at

risk of traumatization – not in terms of their personal futures but because of the risk of permanently shaking their trust in the “Establishment” and the various authorities that have disappointed them on so existential a level as evicting them from their homes.

Dr. Mooli Lahad, an expert on crisis and stress who established the Stress Prevention Center at Tel Hai College, enumerates the following risk groups in an evacuation crisis:

- The over-fifty group, who will have difficulty in creating a new life for themselves in an alternate location.
- Intensely Zionist persons, who will face a serious ideological crisis.
- Those who enjoy high status in their evacuated communities, who will find it difficult to come to terms with their loss of status and the necessity of starting over somewhere else at the bottom of the totem pole.
- Children and teenagers, whose tendency is to focus on their immediate pain and not on hopes for the future. Dr. Lahad claims that this is especially true for adolescents who tend towards an extreme and one-sided view of the world.

Regarding teenagers, Dr. Shifra Sagy’s study (cited in chapter one) compared the trauma of youth in Yamit just prior to the Sinai evacuation with that of youngsters in the Golan Heights during talks of possible evacuation in 1993. Her conclusion was that the reaction of teenagers is greatly dependent on the worldview and attitudes presented by their parents specifically, and the older generation in general. This finding creates a Catch-22 situation for both the parents and the settlement leaders: it means that the more that the parents struggle against the withdrawal and portray it as a catastrophe – whether to achieve a better compensation package or as a true demonstration of

their feelings – the greater will be the dimensions of the family and community crisis. Thus, social and familial interests collide with ideological and economic interests.

Moreover, according to the Sinai model, there are a number of possible stages in a social crisis created by an evacuation. First, internal tensions within the settlements regarding the division of the collective property or negotiations on compensation are anticipated during the waiting period. Second, previously existing tensions within families are likely to become exacerbated by the evacuation. While each and every family will have to go through an extended post-evacuation rehabilitation period, those families that were fundamentally strong will succeed in overcoming the trauma, and those families that were already in crisis before the evacuation are likely to be sucked into the depths of the crisis as a result of evacuation trauma. This same principle applies to settlements: those settlements that enjoyed communal cohesiveness and robustness will survive the evacuation crisis better than those settlements that were already weak and prey to internal strife.

Professor Nurit Kliot of the Department of Geography at Haifa University was one of the prominent researchers of the social aspects of the Sinai evacuation. One of the main conclusions of her study was that settlers should not get direct monetary compensation – certainly not for alternative housing, as opposed to compensation for emotional distress caused by the evacuation. Instead, they should be given housing in alternative settlements prepared ahead of time. Kliot claims a number of salient advantages to this solution: as far as the state is concerned, compensation packages for purchasing apartments on the free market is far more expensive than public housing construction. As far as the settlers are concerned, they will be spared protracted

and humiliating haggling over the size of the compensation packages and will not become victims of shady dealers in the free market who will charge exorbitant prices, knowing that these people had just received generous compensation packages. But mainly the alternative settlements will enable the evacuees to continue their lives where they left off, with the same people they lived with before and in the same lifestyle. They will live with people who endured similar traumas and can provide a supportive community, thus avoiding having to go to a big city as individuals who have sustained a difficult trauma.

Kliot's recommendations were brought to the members of Rabin's government when they discussed the possibilities of a peace settlement with Syria and the evacuation of the settlements in the Golan. It seems that a process in this spirit was initiated at the time, at least for the settlements in the Golan. In September 1995, the *Yedioth Aharonoth* daily newspaper revealed that the government started developing new settlements alongside existing settlements in the Galil and new neighborhoods meant to accommodate evacuees from the Golan. The locations of the new settlements were not randomly selected. Yavniel and Kfar Tabor, for example, were selected as locations for new neighborhoods in the wake of an internal survey among the Golan settlers themselves, in which the respondents indicated a preference for these settlements as alternate sites. In other words, the settlers themselves indirectly lent a hand to the evacuation process.<sup>17</sup>

17. Ofer Petersburg, "The Golan is Already Here," **Yedioth Aharonoth**, 7 Days Supplement, 22.9.1995.

## Mitigating Factors

- **Creating surrogate settlements:** In line with Professor Kliot's recommendations, it seems that transferring settlers to surrogate settlements that would preserve the original communal framework as much as possible would also serve to alleviate the emotional crisis associated with evacuation. This scenario would enable the settlers to continue to live in the same sort of conditions they were accustomed to, thus minimizing the change in their lives. It would also spare them the necessity of undergoing exhausting and humiliating rounds of negotiation on personal compensation packages and the risk of being stigmatized as "getting rich off the state" when attempting to join other settlements. Instead, the new communities would provide a supportive human environment of people like themselves who had experienced the same crisis. Moreover, it is important for these settlements to be located, as far as possible, in the same regions in which the settlers lived previously, in order to allow them to continue working at their same workplaces (at least those settlers who work within the Green Line) and remain in their familiar social environment. Therefore, ideas of sending Yesha settlers off to a new Zionist challenge in the Negev or the Galilee may sound attractive from an ideological point of view, but are simply not practical.
- **Strengthening the communal framework:** Even if the evacuees do not move to surrogate settlements, it is important to strengthen the current communal institutions during the transition period leading up to evacuation, in order to reinforce their ability to cope with the traumas of both individuals and the settlement as a whole.
- **Expressing social empathy:** The responsibility of national and institutional leadership in the case of evacuation is not

only to provide professional crisis intervention, but also to demonstrate public support and sympathy for the evacuees and their pain, and certainly to avoid portraying them as extortionists. Government officials must stand firmly against such a portrayal. Doing so would have an influence on public opinion, and even more importantly, would give the evacuees backing and provide them with the feeling that the government stands with them. Conducting negotiations over compensation is legitimate in these circumstances, and as long as the negotiations are not unnecessarily manipulative or exploitative, the real pain of the settlers should not be aggravated by portraying them as extortionists. It is important for this message to be broadcast not only by the representatives of the government, but also by a wide spectrum of public figures. Media coverage, too, can mitigate the crisis if it focuses on the pain of the settlers and fosters empathy and understanding. But if it focuses on their monetary demands, it will have the opposite effect.

- **Reducing ambiguity:** Making clear, timely statements, regarding the schedule and conditions of the evacuation, the kind of compensation, etc., can also serve to moderate the crisis.

## General Effects on Israeli Society

A mass evacuation of tens of thousands of Israelis from their homes is likely to have harsh consequences not only on the evacuees themselves, but also on Israeli society as a whole. This does not mean that those who are in favor of evacuation must retract their position, but rather that all of the people who deal with this issue, certainly the decision-makers, be cognizant of the possible consequences.

One of the most salient ramifications may be damage done to Israeli society through the political conflict surrounding the evacuation. The more acrimonious and hostile the conflict, the more likely the harm to the fabric of society. Both the decision-makers and those resisting the evacuation and their leaders must take this into account: the latter are also obliged to avoid over-escalating the struggle and must think about the long-term future of Israeli society as a whole. They must take into account that even if their struggle is successful and evacuation is prevented, especially after a public, democratic vote has been taken in favor of it, the effect might be to undermine the stability of the rule of law and the democratic system among other sectors of society. One variation might be a sharp increase in the number of soldiers who refuse to serve in the territories.

Another significant consequence could be irrevocable harm to the image and future of Religious Zionism. This social sector not only coordinated the public struggle for settlement in Yesha, but also turned it into its principal public identity tag. Among some of the major groups within the Religious Zionism movement, settlement in Yesha has become an aspect of the theological principle that views Zionism as part of the religious redemption. Therefore, evacuation of a significant portion of Yesha settlements is likely to create a theological and social crisis in the Religious Zionism movement. Although the major victims of this crisis will be, of course, the Religious Zionists themselves, indirectly all of Israeli society is likely to suffer. Not only is the Religious Zionist movement a large, significant sector of Israeli society, in the last years it has also been a focal point in mobilization of members of the younger generation to national challenges that are not necessarily connected to Yesha, such as serving in elite combat units, becoming officers in the army, and settling in development towns. A crisis in the relationship between Religious Zionism and

the state is likely to threaten the motivation for enlisting for these national missions. Thus, during evacuation great importance attaches to mobilizing support by leaders among the diverse strata of Israeli society for Religious Zionism, its social value and its standing. On the other hand, it is important for the leaders and educators of Religious Zionism to prepare themselves for the possibility of evacuation and to grant theological and moral significance to the state and the place of Religious Zionism within it, even during evacuation.

A third potential ramification could be the effect on the status of the Arab sector in Israel. In at least the first few years after evacuation, the Jewish majority in Israel is likely to evince little patience for the political demands of Israeli Arabs. The anticipated reaction of many Israelis, not only the Right, will be, “we paid a steep price for acquiescing to Palestinian demands, and if Israeli Arabs are not satisfied with the state, they are welcome to join their Palestinian brethren.” Therefore, it is worthwhile for Israeli leadership to provide public support after evacuation for Israeli Arabs and for their right to make legitimate claims, just like other citizens of the state.



## Summary and Recommendations

# 5

Unlike the evacuation from Sinai, it would seem that a decision to evacuate settlements in Yesha is more likely to be acceptable today to Israeli society at large (as opposed to the evacuees) for two reasons. First, because there is already a precedent for it, but mainly because Israeli society is tired of war and therefore more willing to make painful concessions. Moreover, while pressing security issues were not a factor in the decision to evacuate Sinai, it seems that security problems would play a very large part in a decision to evacuate Yesha today and certainly in public pressure to make such a decision.

Yet, these very same facts are likely to aggravate the distress and intensify the resistance of the opponents of withdrawal and evacuation. They are likely to feel not only betrayed ideologically by their ideological adversaries, but also abandoned by an Israeli society that has caved in to terrorism. They would feel that not only had they been the ones long paying the main price for living with terrorism, but that they were also going to pay the price for surrendering to terrorism. For this reason and because massive evacuation of tens of thousands of settlers would, in any event, be a political and social trauma, it is very important that in taking such a decision, the political establishment and the public social entities take steps to temper as much as possible the evacuees' anticipated crisis.

### Political Recommendations

- **National consensus:** Determining this issue by as broad-based a national consensus as possible is recommended. The determination should be made by a "special majority"

defined in advance, whether the decision is to be made by the Knesset or by a national referendum. This “special majority” must not, however, be too dramatic. Although this recommendation might be rejected because it could afford a minority veto power, it is important to remember that the evacuees stand to lose their homes and substantial components of their world while others continue their daily lives undisturbed.

- **Communication between the evacuees and the evacuators:** There should be a running dialog between the government and those earmarked for evacuation, with heavy emphasis on the settlers’ contributions to society. It is especially important to keep the lines of communication open with the political and religious leadership of the settlers, not only at the political-governmental level, but also on the broader plane of public and media discourse.
- **A step-by-step process:** Evacuation should be a gradual process that allows people time to absorb the tidings of evacuation, to prepare for it intelligently and to make their peace with it. It is true that this process will also allow the opposition time to try to thwart the move, but the advantages of the step-by-step, graduated method are greater than the dangers inherent in lack of preparation. A “surprise evacuation” is likely to cause harsh reactions even on the part of moderates who would not ordinarily respond this way.
- **Compensation for evacuees:** There should be an “ideological compensation” in the form of emphasis on how their sacrifice has contributed to the state – by expanding Israel’s borders through additional blocs of settlement and providing the bargaining chip for a peace settlement. At least for this latter reason, there is clear preference for evacuation in the context of a final agreement over evacuation based on an interim agreement or unilateral withdrawal. The candidates

for evacuation must be welcomed back into the national consensus, after years during which they were severely denounced by many prominent groups in society.

Evacuees should be offered “surrogate settlements,” i.e., new settlements should be created to which the settlers can be relocated en masse, and preferably within Yesha. This would temper the inevitable social crisis as well as give the evacuees the feeling that their life’s work has not been in vain, as they will have succeeded in expanding the borders of the state to some degree.

- **Number of evacuees:** The number of evacuees should be limited as far as possible.
- **The disposition toward extremists:** Constant tabs should be kept on marginal groups that are capable of violence. This should be carried out in conjunction with the Yesha leadership and even with local leaders in especially sensitive areas. Prospective reactions to an evacuation scenario anticipated on the part of the FSU immigrant population in Yesha should be researched separately, as the combination of this sector’s extremely hawkish position and their blatant anti-government stance is likely to create a radical reaction to evacuation.
- **The actual evacuation procedure:** Continuous contact should be maintained with the general and local leadership in Yesha, including those figures who are considered to be radical ideologues, because they are the people who may be able to influence their followers not to resort to violence. Likewise, the evacuation forces must maintain maximum credibility by honoring their agreements with the settlers and, of course, they must avoid using unnecessary force.
- **The evacuee leadership:** Yesha leadership is strongly admonished to tighten the reins at all levels down to the lowest, in order to prevent as far as possible extreme reactions from even marginal groups. The political, rabbinical

and educational leadership must also sharply caution their followers in advance against any scenario that involves violence, not only against the evacuation forces but also against Arabs or Jewish politicians. From an educational and moral standpoint, taking a stance against any sort of seditious behavior (even if it does no bodily harm to the evacuator) is advisable. It makes great public sense not to involve soldiers from Yesha in carrying out evacuation, but at the same time any refusal to obey orders, inflict damage on military equipment or any other expression of insurrection must be unequivocally denounced *a priori*. The settler leadership must remember that Israeli society must function even after the evacuation crisis, painful as it may be, and nothing – not even evacuation – justifies shattering society.

## Social Recommendations

- **Reduction of uncertainty and ambiguity:** Clear, timely statements should be made regarding the circumstances and conditions of evacuation, the evacuation schedule, the kind of compensation, etc.
- **The character of compensation:** Evacuees should not be given money to buy housing but should be offered alternative housing that has been arranged in advance, preferably in communal settlements similar to the ones in which the evacuees lived formerly.
- **Professional assistance in coping psychologically with the crisis:** This assistance is no less important than monetary compensation. Not only should the individual suffering from evacuation trauma be supported, but so should the communities and the communal frameworks that give succor to the individual.

- **Open government support for the evacuees:** The government – and non-political public figures as well – should declare loud and clear and in every forum that evacuees are not “extortionists” and should publicly emphasize their pain and the crisis they are experiencing, as well as express empathy for their straits.
- **The nature of compensation negotiations:** Both the government and the settlers should refrain from a humiliating haggle over money in the compensation negotiations. The settlers are bound to lose in the long run (through emotional and public fallout) even if they gain in the short run (a monetary windfall).



## Appendix

### Yesha Population Data

The larger Yesha settlements, which have their own local councils, head the list, with the rest of the settlements listed by regional council. The data is taken from the Ministry of Interior and is current to June 2003. The list does not include outposts and unrecognized settlements.

#### Yesha Local Councils

Alfei Menasheh	5,550	Hebron (Jewish sector)	532
Ariel	17,464	Immanuel	2,813
Beit Aryeh	2,505	Karnei Shomron	6,403
Beit El	4,581	Kedumim	3,100
Betar Elite	21,554	Kiryat Arba	5,992
Efrata	7,088	Ma'aleh Adumim	28,120
Elkana	3,277	Ma'aleh Efraim	1,679
Givat Ze'ev	10,946	Modi'in Elite	22,927
Har Adar	1,832	Oranit	5,135
<b>Total</b>		<b>151,498</b>	

#### Yesha Regional Councils

##### Gush Etzion Regional Council

Asfar (Metzad)	286	Kfar Etzion	514
Bat Ayin	707	Ma'aleh Amos	314
Elazar	886	Migdal Oz	334
Alon Shvut	3,023	Neveh Daniel	1,081
Har Gilo	388	Nokdim	677
Karmeil Zur	576	Rosh Tzurim	314
Kedar	566	Tekoa	1,093
<b>Total</b>		<b>10,759</b>	

**Mount Hebron Regional Council**

Adora	211	Neguhot	102
Beit Hagai	329	Otniel	578
Carmel	357	P'nei (Ma'aleh) Hever	308
Eshkolot	216	Shani	407
Makhane Yatir	21	Shima'a	334
Maon	328	Sussiyah	593
Metzadot Yehuda		Telem	77
(Beit Yatir)	380	Tene (Ma'aleh Omarim)	477
		<b>Total</b>	<b>4,718</b>

**Gaza Coast Regional Council**

B'dolah	217	Morag	178
Bnei Atzmon (Atzmona)	574	Netzarim	390
Dugit	76	Netzer Hazani	410
Elei Sinai	364	Neveh D'kalim	2,533
Gadid	320	Nissanit	957
Gan Or	323	Pe'at Sadeh	96
Ganei Tal	375	Rafiah Yam	145
Katif	354	Shalev	25
Kfar Darom	363	<b>Total</b>	<b>7,700</b>

**Megilot Regional Council (Northern Dead Sea)**

Almog	141
Beit Ha'arava	51
Kalia	280
Mitzpeh Shalem	202
Vered Yeriho	202
<b>Total</b>	<b>876</b>

**Benjamin Regional Council**

Almon	710	Menorah	1,364
Ateret	329	Mevo Horon	668
Beit Horon	817	Mitzpeh Yeriho	1,251
Dolev	896	Na'aleh	555
Eli	1,966	Nahliel	286
Geva Binyamin (Adam)	1,709	Givon Ha'hadashah	1,317
Halamish (Neveh Tzuf)	1,031	Nili	786
Hashmonaim	2,290	Ofarim	830
Kfar Adumim	1,894	Ofra	2,229
Kokhav Hashahar	1,356	Psagot	1,290
Kokhav Ya'akov	3,551	Rimonim	574
Ma'aleh Levonah	484	Shiloh	1,618
Ma'aleh Mikhmarsh	1,018	Talmon	1,533
Mattityahu	412	<b>Total</b>	<b>32,774</b>

**Jordan Valley Regional Council**

Argaman	179	Na'aran	61
B'ka'ot	170	Naomi	137
Gilgal	174	Netiv Ha'gdud	178
Gitit	127	Phatza'el	276
Hamra	170	Ro'i	154
Hemdat	103	Shadmot Mehola	484
Masu'a	176	Tomer	315
Mechora	153	Yaffit	145
Mehola	353	Yitav	140
		<b>Total</b>	<b>3,494</b>

### Samaria Regional Council

Einav	514	Ma'aleh Shomron	589
Alei Zahav	449	Mevo Dotan	301
Avnei Hefetz	909	Migdalim	136
Barkan	1,254	Nofim	426
Bracha	819	Pedu'el	990
Elon Moreh	1,119	Reihan	140
Etz Efraim	629	Revava	661
Ganim	168	Sa Nur	28
Hermesh	227	Sal'it	480
Hinanit	624	Sha'arei Tikvah	3,768
Homesh	199	Shaked	577
Itamar	512	Shavei Shomron	668
Kadim	152	Tzofim	944
Kfar Tapuah	523	Yakir	1,003
Kiryat Netafim	351	Yitzhar	464
<b>Total</b>		<b>19,624</b>	

Total number of Yesha inhabitants: **231,443**

## Roundtable Discussion

# The Political and Social Significance of Evacuating Settlements

October 22, 2003, 26 Tishrei 5764

### List of Speakers

**Prof. Moshe Arens** – Former Defense Minister and Foreign Minister

**Rabbi Yoel Bin-Nun** – Head of yeshiva, rabbi, and educator

**Prof. Arye Carmon** – President, Israel Democracy Institute

**MK Ran Cohen** – Meretz

**Uri Dromi** – Israel Democracy Institute

**Maj.-Gen. Yitzhak Eitan** – Former OC IDF Central Command

**Prof. Ruth Gavison** – Faculty of Law, Hebrew University

**Rabbi Avi Gisser** – Rabbi of the settlement of Ofra

**Shaul Goldstein** – Mayor of the Gush Etzion Regional Council

**Yisrael Harel** – Former Chairman of the Council of Judea, Samaria and Gaza; editor of *Nekuda*

**Baruch Kahane** – Clinical psychologist, resident of Neve Daniel, Gush Etzion

**Prof. Shlomo Kaniel** – School of Education, Bar-Ilan University; resident of Neve Tsuf

**Adv. Dan Meridor** – Senior Fellow, Israel Democracy Institute

**Adi Mintz** – Director-General of the Council of Judea, Samaria and Gaza

**MK Haim Oron** – Meretz

**Prof. Aviezer Ravitzky** – Senior Fellow, Israel Democracy Institute; Department of Jewish Philosophy, Hebrew University

**Miriam Shapira** – Psychologist, Samaria Regional Council; one of the founders of *Besod Siach*

**Bambi Sheleg** – Editor of *Eretz Aheret*; columnist for *Ma'ariv*

**Yair Sheleg** – Research fellow Israel Democracy Institute; *Ha'aretz* editorial board member

**Adv. Gilad Sher** – Former chief of the Prime Minister's Office under Ehud Barak; one of the lead negotiators with the Palestinians during 1999-2001

**Rabbi Daniel Shilo** – Spokesman of Rabbinical Council of Judea, Samaria and Gaza; rabbi of the settlement of Kedumim

## Opening Remarks

❖ **Arye Carmon:** The issue before us is at the heart of the most problematic rifts within Israeli society, and I would like to demonstrate this to you. When my friend Prof. Ravitzky initiated, a long time ago, the process of contending with this dilemma, the intention was one of empathy. The idea of raising the issue of the political and social significance of evacuating settlements in Judea, Samaria and Gaza was free of any hint of antagonism or anything of that kind. In a scholarly arena such as the Israel Democracy Institute, the question that arises in connection with an issue of this type is that of the meaning of democracy in the context of a dilemma that deeply divides Israeli society. By the time the project had reached maturity, the political constellation had changed [formation of the Sharon government], and I thought that perhaps it would be a mistake to raise the issue at that time, for a very simple reason: had we raised the issue, we would thereby have associated ourselves with a specific political camp. We seek to avoid this since we do not belong to any political camp.

The issue came up again when the Israeli government announced its adoption of the “Road Map” and began making advances in this direction. The present government also adopted a different tune. We thought that even if the issue wasn’t on the immediate agenda, it would, nevertheless, be worth debating. I think that the ethos of the Israel Democracy Institute is that of the middle road, the golden path, the route of dialogue. This ethos is actually translated at the Institute into strategy, both at the research level and in terms of public activity. Sitting around this table are several witnesses to this approach, from the domain that we refer to as “constitution by consensus.” When this issue is raised people tend to react cynically. We live in a reality in which a

slim majority would be able to impose a constitution, and from the outset, we chose the difficult path of involving sectors in this effort which seem unlikely to cooperate. I very much hope that the present discussion will be free of styles of speech that can result in verbal sparring.

❖ **Yair Sheleg:** When Prof. Ravitzky asked me to write this report I had butterflies in my stomach, for two reasons: As a matter of principle, this issue is fundamentally one of expelling people from their homes. I mention this in the introduction as well: the word “*pinui*” (evacuation) is a euphemism. Ultimately we are talking about uprooting, about expelling tens of thousands of people from their homes. This is not a trivial matter from any point of view, whether political or ideological. On a personal level, many of my best friends, several of whom are sitting here today, live in these places. So, the feeling I had while writing such a report was very unpleasant. My willingness to do it came from a sense that it is not for nothing that this subject is so hotly disputed: the issue of Israel’s continued control of Judea, Samaria and Gaza brings us to a variety of difficult questions relating to morality, policy, security and demography, even apart from the fact that the evacuation of settlements is at stake – and so there is no choice but to dive in. And if we have already made the decision to dive in, I think that it’s best that someone with real empathy, affinity and a deep connection to the people who live in these places does so.

The report has three components. First, it points out several potential danger zones in the political response to a decision to evacuate, and this response is divided into two categories: the first, identified as “extremist settlers and their supporters,” could translate into a difficult scenario of violent terrorist action against Arabs during the process leading up to evacuation or into attacks

on IDF forces during the evacuation itself. The second category, which would involve a broader swathe of Israeli society, could see a civil rebellion which could lead to the removal of forces or to the removal of their equipment and symbols of State sovereignty. A situation such as this could plunge Israeli society into a very deep crisis.

The report's second component is the social significance of the evacuation. There would be implications for individuals, for communities and for the communal and ideological enterprise that they have created, and this also must be addressed.

The third component is the recommendations. In this context I would like to emphasize several things. Firstly, the point of departure: the reaction of the settlers and their supporters to evacuation will swing between two poles: that of personal-communal-ideological outrage against the evacuation and that of the settler population's basic connectedness to Israeli society. In order to prevent the sense of outrage from overcoming that of connectedness, Israeli society must also work to strengthen the bond between itself and the settler population.

The second point to emphasize is the report discusses "ideological compensation," not just financial compensation. Ideological compensation in my view is not merely the recognition of the settlers' contribution to the state, but first and foremost the effort to evacuate as few settlers as possible and to transfer willingly, of course, all those who are interested to the settlement blocs that would remain in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. Another matter, which was not taken up in the report but which occurred to me after the report had been written is if Israeli society does make the decision to evacuate settlements based, in great part, on demographic reasons, it will be important to include within Israeli

public discourse elements of strengthening the Jewish character of the State of Israel in other contexts, beyond the expedient of settlement evacuation. All of this should be achieved by legislating Basic Laws or by other mechanisms that strengthen the Jewish character of the state. Within the context of evacuation and settler reaction to evacuation these mechanisms may serve to moderate the emotional response to evacuation by giving it a significance possessing an element of “positive” compensation from the perspective of the settlers themselves. I think that this would be the most important form of “ideological compensation.”

## Session One

### Theoretical and Ideological Aspects of the Evacuation Issue

❖ **Yisrael Harel:** No-one forced me to come here, certainly not to be one of the opening speakers, yet I am here with a strong sense of ambivalence and, to a great degree, in spite of myself. This gathering is very problematic for me since I have difficulty with the legitimacy of a position paper which sets out to provide a parachute to those who are being thrown out of a plane, rather than reflecting on the legitimacy of throwing them out in the first place. Jews are being uprooted from their land, their home and their community. And, since this approach is taken to be legitimate and even desirable, all that remains – since we at the Institute are so well-meaning – is to propose that the decision-makers prepare a softer landing for them; to propose that Israeli society display empathy toward them and, as Yair Sheleg just said, to make certain that they are compensated, not just financially but ideologically as well. In talking about

strengthening the Jewish character of the state, the hidden assumption is that anyone, anything, may be bought and that it's a question of price only.

Prof. Arye Carmon mentioned earlier other important discussions that take place here, for example, regarding the possibility of a constitution by consensus. This is a place of tremendous influence, and the current initiative is not an academic but rather a political one. This place is a political place. When I am asked, for example: "Do you really believe that there will be constitution by consensus?" my answer is an unqualified "Yes," since I know that when this Institute, under the leadership of Arye Carmon, takes it upon itself to place an issue on the public agenda, it will succeed, sooner or later. And why? Because you know how to get things done. Here, at the Institute, you know how to turn position papers into marching orders. Thus, the fact that this place initiated the project and that Yair Sheleg, coming with his own particular personal background and perception of himself within the fabric of Religious-Zionist internal discourse, was the person to prepare this post-settler paper and that it was produced under the auspices of the Israel Democracy Institute-- this was what caused me such emotional agitation.

I confess that I found it difficult to decide what the exact focus of my talk today should be. I, who am considered moderate, say to you of the Democracy Institute: Dear friends, do not take this project upon yourselves, because you will not succeed. If you thought, as Arye Carmon said, that the time was not right two years ago and that now it is, do not be deceived. After these three years of bloodshed and what they have done to ideology, to social cohesion and to sense of community – preparing for "evacuation" (or in my terms, "uprooting" or "expulsion") is the last thing that we need.

More than this, the thing that is most obvious in every line of the position paper is the well-known personal and political stand of the author. The author examines what may be done to make the expulsion easier, how to compensate and which rabbis to turn to. The end product is cold and alienating. There is not even a basic attempt to deal spiritually with the question of how such an expulsion would affect, not just the settlers themselves, but the spirituality of the entire country, the entire Zionist enterprise. At a time when it is being, to put it mildly, challenged, there is now a move to burden it further with yet another ideological crisis. The situation today is not the same as when the Sinai was evacuated. We all know what tremendous sources of national resilience have arisen, whether generally recognized or not, within this generation in Yesha. If there should be, G-d forbid, evacuation, it would not simply be a matter of transferring an enterprise from one place to another. It would be impossible to move Ofra someplace else. "We are neutral," Prof. Carmon said in his opening speech, but the recommendations of this position paper – representing the Democracy Institute's stand on the issue – are very far from neutral. What actually happened here is that the expulsion plan was approved from the outset, while the Institute merely held a kind of consultation regarding the best manner in which to carry out the operation, with a minimum of pain and a maximum of empathy.

I would like to present you with a challenge. If you take it up, my fellow settlers and I will be more likely to believe you when you talk of "neutrality." Try to imagine an opposing situation – the Israel Democracy Institute, responding to a strong current of feeling within the Israeli public, produces a similar position paper regarding the results of an evacuation of Arab localities. What would be the political and social significance of such an evacuation? Inconceivable? Illegitimate? Makes your stomach

turn? That was how I felt – and, I believe, this is how my fellow settlers felt when I was invited to take part in this discussion. To put it even more bluntly, I would like to hear from you why it is legitimate to discuss the expulsion of Jews, while it is not legitimate to talk about the transfer of Arabs. Clearly, this Institute would recoil from any discussion of the kind. And, if only for the sake of intellectual exercise, the Institute could be persuaded to hold such a discussion, who among you would be willing to participate in deliberations on the evacuation of Arabs? One or two of you would probably even try to prevent such deliberations from taking place, since it is an issue that could lead to discord and even to violence between the populations, and a court order might even be sought to prohibit it. I had prepared some remarks on several sections of the position paper, but I believe it is best if I stop here. I will be pleased if the challenge that I have presented here is taken up in the manner that I intended. I think that if you fail to respond to this challenge – to prepare a paper that discusses the possibility of evacuation of Arabs – then it will be very hard for the sector that views evacuation itself as unacceptable to regard this kind of discussion as legitimate, as a discussion devoid of political intent.

❖ **Arye Carmon:** It is very difficult to claim neutrality regarding an issue that is so problematic and so sensitive. I want to state from the outset that there is a problem here. I think that a discussion of negotiations on the borders of the state has to take place here, and within this context, I definitely believe that it is appropriate and necessary to consider a variety of scenarios, including the one that you pointed out. I am willing to take up the challenge.

❖ **Ruth Gavison:** I would like to thank Mr. Harel. I am in complete agreement that the discussion here is a political one,

as Mr. Sheleg and the Institute have made things easy for themselves. They discuss a hypothetical question: If it becomes necessary to evacuate – how should it be done? It is quite clear that people whose existential political position holds that evacuation is not necessary can have no interest in such a discussion and that any such discussion is very difficult for them. But the issue goes deeper than this. I think that Mr. Sheleg's analysis is correct provided that the decision to evacuate has been made. But in the current situation, no such decision has been made, among other reasons, because it has become so difficult for us to face the need to decide on evacuation. We don't want to discuss the theological problem, the ideological problem, the human problem, or the social problem. At some level Israeli society wants someone to compel the evacuation, for the evacuation to be imposed, since anything that is imposed on us we can deal with.

I think that this paper was written by people willing to take responsibility for the decision to evacuate. In a certain sense, Mr. Harel's remarks are very touching, but at the same time he is not entirely fair. He says, "It is so hard for me to listen to a discussion of the possibility of my life's work being destroyed, especially when some of those taking part in the discussion have no empathy."

What Yisrael Harel is doing is to ask that we as a society not discuss the question of what the long-term goal of Israeli society should be, in terms of our place in this region. When we talk about evacuation it is based on considerations of national defense and the promotion of something that we regard as being in the existential interest of Israeli Jewish society. Mr. Sheleg (and perhaps the Institute as well) has tried to provide us with a shortcut. He says: We won't talk about the issue of what really would promote the existential interest of the Israeli Jewish

population, because we are divided on this issue. Let us deal with the hypothetical problem – if it happens, if the decision is made, how should the evacuation be conducted? But in my opinion, such a discussion can be held only with those who wish to be evacuated or who at least agree that evacuation is necessary – not necessarily because they want to be evacuated, but rather because they think that it is an existential need of the State of Israel, of Zionism and of the Jewish future of the state. This disagreement, Mr. Harel, must be addressed despite the pain that it may cause you. This debate must be conducted, for we have a responsibility to hear all sides of the argument. It must be stated in the clearest possible manner: a large sector of the Israeli public has a problem with the continued defense of much of the settlement enterprise in the territories.

In general, I see that there are three main types of attitude within the Israeli public toward the issue at hand. One group, motivated by ideology, theology, Zionism and values, believes that Jewish settlement and Jewish sovereignty must remain throughout the entire territory – from the river to the sea. This is an important, interesting, high-quality group – which, in my opinion, is a minority within the Israeli public. Undoubtedly, those belonging to this group believe not only that it is not necessary to evacuate but that the entire Israeli public should be mobilized to stand behind the settlement enterprise, out of a deep belief that if we stand firm then we shall succeed.

A second group, also a minority, thinks that Israel has a moral duty to evacuate the settlements. This group believes that the territories are not ours. It was a mistake to take something that doesn't belong to us, and now we are morally obligated to evacuate, regardless of any political reality. The third group views the continued presence of settlers in the territories as an

existential danger. Most of the Israeli public regards the settlement enterprise and the territories as bargaining chips. The attitude was not one of taking the opportunity to settle on all of the land between the river and the sea, but rather that we want to live in peace, in a Jewish state in the Land of Israel, to be a free people on part of its land, since we know that there is another people here. If this is the aim, the question arises how we conduct ourselves according to this perspective. It seems to me that a large portion of the Israeli public today believes that the demographic, geopolitical, regional and international conditions are such that we have to return to a partition method. We do not know where the borders are. Some of us are pained by the loss of these territories, some accept it, some are happy about it. It seems to me that this is the judgment of a large majority of the Israeli Jewish public.

If I am reading the sociological map correctly, then we have to understand that the great ideological force of those who think that these territories must not be relinquished is matched by the equally strong ideological force of those who are either existentially worried, or who think that the other position corrupts us morally. Moral corruption is not an issue for bleeding heart liberals only. I think we all understand that a feeling of moral corruption today would undermine our ability to face this struggle in the long term.

I belong to the third group. Our aim is not to stay in all of the territory from the river to the sea, but to have a Jewish state in as much of the Land of Israel as possible. There are [demographic] facts and we have to conduct negotiations, and it is not very important right now what the details are; our goal is that of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel. Our tactics and our strategies derive from this goal, as well as the question of where Jews

should settle. Once, perhaps, we believed that Jews could settle in an area that would be under Arab sovereignty. Today, after these years of bloodshed, this doesn't really seem possible. It is possible that once we have taken action and withdrawn to different borders then we will be able to settle Jews there by agreement. I am in favor of Jews living in all parts of the Land of Israel, but not at this time. At present, our aim is to arrive at a Jewish state in that portion of the Land of Israel that guarantees the state's Jewishness. All the rest derives from this. If we have to withdraw to new borders, then the Jews currently living outside those borders would have to leave their homes. Not because they have done something wrong, not because their efforts are not appreciated, but because this would be a necessary part of our main goal – a Jewish state in the Land of Israel.

You might say: "You are getting ready to cut off our head." If we really were preparing to cut off your head, that would indeed be suicide. But it seems to me that what we really see ourselves preparing to do is to cut off a leg or two or a leg and an arm. In order to continue to exist we are giving up something precious and important and big, and we are asking and begging you to help us to perform this painful operation. It is hard for us as well. You seem to be paying the entire price, while we are asking you to understand and not oppose us. It is true that we are not always nice to you, and you say: "You are abandoning us." But most of us are only asking you to understand that you have to consider our position as well. If demographic conditions turn us into a bi-national state, due to this dispersed kind of settlement, you have to answer the questions where you think we are headed and what you think will happen when we lose a Jewish majority between the river and the sea.

If your hint, Yisrael [Harel], at the possibility of evacuating Arab

populations means that in order to maintain Jewish sovereignty between the river and the sea we would have no choice but to forcibly expel millions of Arabs from Israel, then I say that for me this option does not exist. Since I recognize no such option, I am obliged to concentrate on the area where I have a stable Jewish majority.

I would like to add another point to the ideological debate. There is an issue of democracy here, and there is an issue of solidarity. Ultimately, we are providing a solution for the Jewish collective of which we are a part and which we want to continue to exist. We know that our opinions regarding the meaning of this collective differ. We know that some attitudes toward this Jewish collective demand Jewish control of the entire Land of Israel. How do we accept this while at the same time fostering partnership? In my opinion, the answer to this question is important, since we have to agree among ourselves on our goals and on the means of achieving them. I think that one of our greatest mistakes has been that, out of panic, the sector within the Israeli public that believes that we should not insist on “between the river and the sea” has forgotten Jewish and Israeli history in the Land of Israel. I propose that we think about this from another perspective. They say: “End the Occupation.” I say: “Don’t end the Occupation!” Part of the insight, mine at least, is that there are two problems here: there is a conflict between two peoples and the conflict is a bloody one. It is possible that the people against whom we are battling is not prepared to agree to the position that I am articulating here, that of partition between the two peoples. If we have a world war and someone says: “It’s all mine,” and takes action accordingly, then why shouldn’t I say: “It’s all mine?” True, the answer is that if he wants it to be all his, then I also want it to be all mine and I won’t give up. But we don’t know if they really want it to be all

theirs, and if they do, then can they? We have the possibility here of creating a situation of two states for two peoples. In order to do this we shouldn't end the Occupation because that would be dangerous. We have to distinguish between military occupation, whose goal it is to ensure that the dangers we faced in '67 do not recur (and there are ways of ensuring this) and the influx of a civilian population sending a message of belonging and of being at home, not only in its actions but in its ideology as well. This population does not send the message: "It's ours and yours," but rather: "This is ours, and our strength dictates that it is not yours." I want to let them try a partition according to which it will be ours, and our military force will enable us to be sovereign here. This country will be ours. We will not violate human rights or equality, but the state will be the Jewish state. Here I agree with Yair regarding "ideological compensation." You will still have a piece of land where you control the territory, roads, water – but not security, as long as there is no arrangement ensuring that it won't be at our expense. "Don't end the Occupation" – the Occupation will remain, the army will defend the borders. But we must gradually begin sending the message to ourselves and to the world that our civilians will be living in a Jewish state.

Yisrael Harel initiated the debate that Israeli society refuses to conduct: Is our control of the territories a goal in and of itself, or do we maintain it only for the purpose of not rewarding terrorism? If it is a goal – then we have a disagreement, and it should be resolved. In my opinion, there is no majority within the Israeli public that thinks that this is our goal. If it is a matter of security strategy, then there should be a distinction between the settlements and the military, and the military should remain there until there is a reasonable solution to the security problem. Israeli society should be allowed to do what it has to do in terms of culture and identity; we have to remember that we are a strong

society and that when our energies have been replenished, we will create a sovereign Jewish society. I am asking of you the most difficult thing of all: not only that you not oppose our decision, but also that you understand why it is so important to me not to remain in some of these places, despite the fact that they are the cradle of our culture. I am asking you to understand that in order to strengthen us as a Jewish and democratic state, you have to consider my plight as well, and join me in this undertaking whose difficulty for you – in terms of ideology, religion, lifestyle, effort invested, and in simple human terms – I can scarcely fathom. And it must also be said that if there is strong opposition to the evacuation, at the ideological level the empathy that we need to create will not exist, since those who support evacuation will have to be mobilized for battle against those refusing to be evacuated. In order for things to go smoothly we have to collect ourselves and make the transition between the moment of “We will fight it for as long as we can” to the moment of “We will go along with whatever is decided upon as our main shared interest.”

❖ **Moshe Arens:** I think that the basic assumption of this discussion, and of the project that Yair Sheleg has taken upon himself, is that peace with the Arabs has to be accompanied by the dismantling of settlements from areas that will be transferred to Arab control, in Judea and Samaria, in Gaza or on the Golan Heights. I think that this approach has negative connotations, yet, despite this I have to recognize that it has taken root in Israeli society. This approach is contrary to the accepted norms of the world in which we live. Where have settlements been dismantled? Where have people been removed from their homes? In which country in the world has something like this been done? Who claims that without this one cannot make peace? Unfortunately, if we look for a historical precedent, we will find one in one place

only – the Sinai. Perhaps I belong to a tiny minority, but in my opinion it was a historical mistake, lacking any justification or historical precedent. It was an act that gives apparent legitimacy to those who talk with us about the possibility of making peace someday, to demand that Jews be expelled from these places. We have created a situation in which even among ourselves the attitude has gained currency that this is what has to be done, and that it is altogether fine and legitimate.

I do not think that it is fine or legitimate. I don't know where the borders will ultimately be when we reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians, the Jordanians, the Syrians. But when we start from the assumption that the Jews will have to be expelled from any areas that are turned over to their control – this in my opinion, is the opposite of peace. This is a precedent of our own making, unfortunately, and we have to free ourselves from it. We have to say loudly and clearly: "These are not conditions of peace; it isn't a real peace if this is the condition for it." And, until the Syrians come to understand this, there won't be peace on the Golan Heights either. And so I tend to agree with Mr. Harel: I am not certain that it is wise to inaugurate such a project.

❖ **Gilad Sher:** This discussion is heart-rending for all of us. I make no distinction here between the religiously observant among us, between those who came here from the territories to take part in this discussion, and the others. And so the discussion is legitimate. It is legitimate because it deals with an issue that is very non-theoretical, with a situation that has lasted for over thirty years, namely: how to preserve the Jewish and democratic nature of the State of Israel, its character and identity; how they may be preserved for generations to come and not merely until the next war or unilateral action. Our internal dispute is more multidimensional than the conflict between the Palestinians and

us. I think that the basic assumption has to be that it is impossible for us to maintain control over another people in the long run, in terms of Jewish ethics and in terms of national security in its broadest and truest sense, as well as in terms of our society and of social-economic cohesion.

The issue of the settlements is included in this statement. There are a variety of possible scenarios, from unilateral disengagement in order to withdraw to legitimate defensible borders within which the Jewish majority of a democratic-Zionist state may be maintained, to an agreement, if and when a diplomatic agreement may be arrived at via negotiations between the parties. Everything depends on context. This context is not addressed in the position paper, nor is the essential difference between our traditional connection or attachment to the territories of Judea and Samaria, and those of Gaza. Are we deciding on our own today to withdraw to borders within which we believe that a state will be able to exist that is healthier and stronger in terms of its social cohesiveness, as well as more secure for generations to come? This is an almost impossible decision within the current political context. And when it is dependent on uprooting people from their homes, it becomes much harder. Yet, paradoxically, in order to preserve most of the Jewish settlement enterprise in the territories, we have to do it, we have to leave isolated places that are humps on our back.

These humps have been guiding Israeli political thought for decades. I do not deny the validity of the approach that sees the settlements as important from a Zionist point of view, but I think that in order to save the settlements we have to withdraw into the large settlement blocs. 70%-80% of the settlers can be relocated there. That is where we have to draw the lines, which will remain temporary until the start of negotiations with the

Palestinian leadership. I think that the discussion here has to be based on the principle of two states for two peoples. This has been the internal logic of the Middle East peace process between the Palestinians and the Israelis for over a decade. And we have to start from the assumption that one state for two peoples is untenable in the long term. We have to start the discussion from this point, for we are on the road to governmental and social collapse, to a collapse of our security.

With regard to settlement evacuation, the manner in which this is done is very important. If we initiate the dismantling of some or all of the isolated settlements, whether because it is forced on us or as the result of a diplomatic agreement, then it will be appropriate to plan for ideological compensation by setting a new Zionist agenda. We will remove those who have to be removed from their homes and will re-settle them in the new places, and we will draw them into Israeli society with a strong, empathetic and loving embrace. I would like to remind you that during this period, we have been conducting a dialogue with the settlers, with the settlement rabbis, including some of the most extreme, in order to achieve the goal that Mr. Sheleg recommends: creating understanding of our interests, both in order to protect them and in order to preserve as much as possible of the Jewish settlement enterprise, while disengaging from the Palestinian population.

❖ **Avi Gisser:** I would like to thank Mr. Harel for his opening remarks, which emphasize the emotional-ideological side of the issue over the practical-technical side. I would also like to thank Mr. Sheleg for writing this paper. I read it without feeling that the world is coming to an end. I read it assuming that it is intended to address a very late stage, if we ever reach a situation in which it could be put into practice. The visions, hopes and dreams of

each of us cannot be expressed via a paper such as this. Since Mr. Sheleg has assumed from the outset that this is a question that has already been decided upon, this position paper is very sympathetic and empathetic and cautious on a great many points. As the paper correctly states: "Don't call it evacuation; it is expulsion and uprooting." This is all true. But here at this table we have returned to a debate on the problem of the territories. We are carrying on the debate of the last 30 years.

Your paper, Mr. Sheleg, will be an important document for psychologists, teachers and many other good people, whenever it becomes relevant. At present we have a sick patient and each party is suggesting various treatments to cure him. You meanwhile, are proposing how to hold a dignified funeral and how to break the tragic news to the family in the most professional manner possible. We are still fighting for the life of the patient and trying to cure him, each in his own way.

In order to talk about the future of the settlements and the territories and what is right and wrong in the State of Israel, I vigorously call for the formation of a constitution by consensus. I am going to say some harsh things about our recent past: the cause of the tension and hatred leading up to Rabin's assassination and beyond, was to a great degree the lack of a constitution by consensus. And, since there are no clear "rules of the game," we can arrive at the shocking situation in which someone thinks that the only tool he has is a gun. We must draw up clear "rules" for the Zionist game in the Land of Israel. How should the borders of the State of Israel be determined? How should settlements be evacuated? And how should they be established? What kind of majority is necessary for this? No other country would deal with these issues without a constitution and without a special majority. Look at how countries join the

European Union. The Union has strict entry criteria. There you have to have a two-thirds majority. Only here does each faction try to hijack the process and change history. This can't go on. The question is: How do we form a constitution, how do we occupy territories, how do we evacuate them, how do we return them, how do we build settlements.

The Oslo Accords, in my opinion, are the root of the evil. The Oslo Accords destroyed a tacit consensus: there was no written consensus, but there was an implicit agreement. The Oslo Accords destroyed this tacit consensus without initiating any fair public process. They made a mockery of democratic procedure and then a despicable murderer came along and made a mockery of the rule of law. From a security point of view I have a moral account to settle with the architects and supporters of Oslo to this very day. I hold them morally accountable for 1,200 murders. Not one of the Oslo supporters has said: "We initiated a disastrous process in one direction and brought an even worse disaster upon ourselves from the other. Now let us go back and cure the patient again. We took the wrong path." The settlement enterprise may well have made mistakes of its own, and I can point to a few of them, mainly in its aspirations. We thought that by building settlements we would turn "bargaining chips" into a Zionist objective. We were wrong. The settler movement labored under a delusion that we would succeed in turning the territories into a Zionist objective, into something dear to our hearts – and we were disappointed.

The *intifadas* have wreaked havoc upon the various ideologies, both on the Right and on the Left. Things have not been done the way we wanted them to be done, but we are now returning to treat the same sick patient. In my opinion it is more important now than ever that we develop mechanisms for

consensual decision-making, rather than mechanisms for carrying out decisions. Any decision relating to settlement evacuation has to be preceded by an open and transparent process of public debate based on full information regarding the agreement, *before* the agreement is approved, not afterwards. On this issue, and only on this issue, should special general elections be held. Of course the decision has to be authorized via a solid and decisive majority and go through all the appropriate governmental and parliamentary decision-making channels. Without all this we will find ourselves once again drawn into a dangerous vortex.

❖ **Haim Oron:** I would like to take up the challenge presented by Mr. Harel and Rabbi Gisser. Yisrael presented the debate over the evacuation of Jewish settlements and over the evacuation of Arabs as symmetrical. I would like to present a different symmetry: my transfer or your transfer. I cannot live in this country permanently if this is how things are going to look here. I am not certain that I can tell my sons, who are serving in the territories at this moment, that they should continue to live here and to raise their children here if this is the kind of country that you want to have here. Until we both understand that my plight is the same as your plight, there will be no real dialogue. I apologize, I am saying very harsh things. There is an element of condescension in this discussion, as though you have to give up more than I do. Mr. Harel, I leave my house every morning and I see the settlement of Eshkolit, one kilometer east of the Green Line, and I am a kilometer west of the Green Line, and this infuriates me.

Prof. Gavison may be right. Perhaps I represent a minority opinion in claiming symmetry between the Greater Israel bloc and the opposing ideological stand. I have a profound disagreement with you and much criticism of you. But my anger

is actually directed toward the proponents of the “bargaining chip” approach. Why? Because they have deceived us all. When Galili told me 30 years ago: “If we have to evacuate, we will,” he knew that there would be no evacuation. He never intended to evacuate, but he persuaded me that evacuation would take place.

While I was Minister of Agriculture, I visited on one occasion the Hashomer Hatzair Kibbutz Geshur on the Golan Heights, whose establishment I opposed. Most of the veteran members of the kibbutz are very close to me. I told them: “Dear friends, I am part of a government that wants to evacuate you, and I am for it.” Afterwards there was a meeting at which everyone from the Golan Heights Residents Committee was present and Yehuda Harel. The people from the Golan said: “How can you, a settlement man, say such things?” and Yehuda Harel said in front of everyone: “What do you want from Oron? He said that when I went to Quneitra. He said that if I go to Quneitra, settlements won’t be evacuated.” If it’s a bargaining chip, don’t go to settle it. Bargaining chips should be left as open land under military control.

I am not inventing these claims now, when I sign the Geneva Accords. I have been here for 36 years, and I am telling you – I think that settlement in the territories endangers the existence of the state. Think about that, not about your personal plight. I know more and more people, less ideological than I am, who are telling their children: “Stay abroad.” I will not take part in a dialogue about transfer of Jews vs. transfer of Arabs, not even as an academic exercise. We will conduct the deliberations [on the future of the Jewish settlements] and seek compromise.

Mr. Harel, I fought for compromise two weeks ago, for 70%

of the settlers, against most of whom I have demonstrated in every possible venue. So laugh at me over how I am battling for Givat Ze'ev and Gush Etzion. I understand what is going on here around this table. You come here today and tell me again: "Listen, this entire discussion is not legitimate at all, don't occupy yourself with this" or "Address this issue only when the Americans come and expel us from here, or when Israeli society collapses, when there is a non-Jewish majority here."

We have to reach a situation in which this dialogue is conducted when we are all at a level of equality. I understand how I would feel if I were told: "Leave your home!" But there is a feeling here that one question is legitimate, while the other isn't. But if this question isn't legitimate – I have no basis for joint discussion with you. This in my view is the focus of today's discussion, since we are nearing the decisive moment, whether by our own choice or due to external pressures. There may be those who say that the decision would be better off coming as a result of our taking a beating from Arafat, or maybe from Bush. Perhaps the role of a forum such as this is to try to see if we can deal some of the blows to ourselves and absorb them.

❖ **Shaul Goldstein:** Our presence here does not mean that we agree with evacuation plans. I think that a number of things could be added to this discussion that are not generally known within the context of the superficial dialogue that Israeli society engages in via the media. In my opinion, there is a great deal of repression going on. Someone here has said: "When the time for evacuation comes, we will discuss it." But we have reached the time for evacuation. What is the "evacuation of outposts"? Does anyone really understand the depth of people's attachment to the outpost that they are living in? To wake up every day in a particular place, to develop it, plant seedlings, to teach your

children that this is their home, and then to build a cemetery, and now someone comes and says, "You have to leave here, by decision of the State of Israel." In spite of this, I agree that this discussion is entirely legitimate. Mr. Harel's criticisms notwithstanding, in order to win the battle the nation has to fight shoulder to shoulder; the unity of the people is no less important than that of the Land.

In Gush Etzion and in other settlements that are not part of the consensus, there is already a third and a fourth generation. I once brought in a Fox reporter, and she talked with me about evacuation. I suggested to her that we go into the settlement, and I said to her, "Tell me, how do you do a thing like this? This represents an entire life, an entire history. How is it even possible to talk about such a thing? You bring in a truck, and you put everyone on an air-conditioned bus?"

On the other hand, as I have said before, I am prepared to give up my own personal home if that will bring about a true peace. But no one is suggesting that I do this. If there were even the faintest possibility that this might be the solution a different kind of discussion would be taking place. The fact is, after Oslo I gave way to a certain amount of optimism. But after you see the two boys from Tekoa butchered, there is no longer any trust. When I travel around the world and I get to Sydney, Jews who aren't interested in coming on aliya and taking part in the Zionist enterprise tell me, "They are burning our synagogues." No-one can persuade me that this is because of the territories. Were the 9/11 attacks also because of the territories? I believe that the issue is much broader than this. There is a kind of deception on the part of the mass media and other sectors of the Israeli public who say: "Guys, if you give up a little you will get a lot." This is not the situation as far as I'm concerned. People who think as I

do say: “Wait a minute, why are we supposed to be giving things up? What are we going to get for it?”

Uzi Dayan says, “I am not interested in solutions, I want a wall from here to the moon. All of the birds inside the security fence will sing in Hebrew, and I don’t care what language all of the birds on the other side of the fence sing in. I don’t care what their economic situation is.” But it is completely clear that two million or five million Palestinian refugees will come here from the other side of this “fence,” and conditions will be created that will ignite the entire Middle East. On the other hand, if this is the solution, then what is the problem with us remaining in our settlements? We will be Israeli citizens like the Israelis who live in New York. If this is peace, then what’s the problem?

A third question: How is it that those who are currently shouting, “Leave the territories because we want a Jewish state!” are those who, in our view, are constantly undermining the Jewish state? The same people who run to every public square and do everything possible to chip away at the Jewish foundations of the state, now suddenly they preach to us: “Leave your homes so that we can make a Jewish state.”

I salute you, Prof. Gavison, on the covenant you drew up with Rabbi Ya’akov Madan. I salute the work you have done, and I think that we should adopt your covenant and move forward with it. But, from the point of view of the settlers, when you tell us, “Leave your homes so there can be a Jewish state,” we smile with a total lack of trust in you.

One last thing: bargaining chips and quality of life. I think that the war of the last few years proves that most settlers in Judea, Samaria and Gaza came to live there based on values, and

they won't be willing to leave so quickly. All the claims that thousands of people are showing up at Meretz headquarters to get their compensation are unfounded. We consider ourselves to be Zionist pioneers, dedicated to our ideals; you can't simply take a bus and move us from one place to another.

By the way, simple arithmetic shows that most of the world's population is on our side. Last Succoth, 3,500 Christians came to demonstrate solidarity with us. Why does a minority want to force us out when most of the world thinks we should stay?

❖ **Avi Ravitzky:** I would like to ask that we not debate the question of whether territories should be returned or settlements evacuated, but rather discuss the significance of Sheleg's paper, which is the reason we are gathered here, even if Mr. Harel's opinion regarding the paper differs from mine. I am a person with a political stand, and in many instances this stand is openly declared, but I would never try to turn the Israel Democracy Institute into a tool for promoting my own political agenda. I have other tools for this. Just as I never, at least in my subjective consciousness, turn my position at the Hebrew University into a tool for advancing my political goals. So, first of all, this subjective perception has to be respected.

I would like to explain why I think that this project is justified in terms of our common interest, as I perceive it. This is not a hypothetical issue; there is a real possibility that we all agree that it will happen.

In my opinion, you do not differentiate between a certain type of Institute project, such as electoral reform or constitution by consensus, which are intended to achieve something within Israeli society, and another kind of activity that is intended to create

understanding and to promote co-existence. The responsibility is not that of promoting a particular political agenda but rather to examine how a society that is both Jewish and democratic can exist. That is my understanding of this project. By the way, the Institute also addresses the question of what will happen if there is mass resistance. In the same way, I think that if, hypothetically, the “right of return” were to become a realistic possibility tomorrow, we would have to discuss the issue of what it would do to Israeli society. I am, of course, opposed to the “right of return.” But if it should become a reality, then it would indeed have to be discussed. Ideological people are seated at this table, but I think that they are fair people trying to distinguish between their work and their personal opinions.

Mr. Goldstein, in my opinion, the recent welcome given by Israeli leaders to 3,000 fundamentalist Christians was a desecration of God’s name and one of the most disgraceful incidents in the history of the State of Israel, if not of the Jewish people. People came here who state, orally and in writing, day after day, that the Jews have to return to their Land because this was the site of their collective sin against Jesus, and only when they return to the entire Land of Israel, repent of their sin and accept Jesus, only then will redemption come. This is their stated ideology. And here, Jewish leaders, including Benny Elon, demonstrate total identification with these people, who in the deepest sense deny our identity and await the end of our history: anticipate our collective conversion to Christianity and acceptance of the Christian messiah. For me, there can be no greater desecration of God’s name than this.

And so, we have no choice but to understand that your political and spiritual perspective differs from mine. But still we want to live in harmony together. Apart from our ideological-political

differences, there are few people in Israeli society to whom I feel closer than to Yisrael Harel in terms of our religious perspective, our mentality, and our non-messianistic approach. We wish to be brothers, but we are deeply divided. Let us accept this situation, and interpret this project precisely in this context.

Yisrael Harel, you said that the paper has to deal with the question of what will happen to the Zionist enterprise if some of the settlements are dismantled. But you should remember that there are people in addition to Mr. Oron who are asking what will happen to the Zionist enterprise if the current situation is allowed to continue. Do you want Yair Sheleg to be the arbiter between them?

Nor should you belittle empathy. In your words, I heard a lack of esteem for those who express empathy. But I come into contact with people very different from you who say, "With whom do you participate in discussions? With Yesha people! You are sitting down with the defendant, with the interested party." Nevertheless, there are people within the Israeli public, on the right and on the left, who have empathy for the other.

A final comment: even if you think that a withdrawal scenario will not happen, that the Israeli public won't let it happen, the possibility still exists of it being forced upon us by external parties. I remember that after the Six Day War my father said to me, "I don't believe that we will be able to hold on to these territories, but I hope that if we have to give them up it will be due to Russian-American pressure." Such a situation would exclude the relinquishing of the territories from our internal Jewish history and make it something imposed upon us from the outside. We wouldn't be the ones guilty of abandonment.

I remember that Rabbi Bin-Nun once wrote that if withdrawal takes place, he would prefer that it be by Knesset decision but without a Jewish majority. Such a decision would obligate the Israeli government, but not Jewish history. This is a very profound stance, though it is not mine.

Those who oppose the very discussion of this issue must remember there was a stage, perhaps it will return, when it seemed that the Prime Minister wanted the Road Map to be forced on him. Whether this stage is likely to return I do not know, but what could be more appropriate for people seeking harmony, co-existence, solidarity and democratic governance than to discuss these kinds of scenarios, particularly when a scenario cuts across Israeli society in a real way and is not merely hypothetical, as in the evacuation of Sakhnin or the right of return?

❖ **Yoel Bin-Nun:** I also was very hesitant about coming here because of the title of this roundtable discussion and the way in which it would be interpreted – as though once again Oron and company, a relatively small but, in my view, a very distinguished group, were dictating the agenda of the State of Israel, while we are obliged to come and give at least some idea of our position. I decided to come, however, and wanted to say some of the things that Yisrael Harel has already said, but in a different way: there are things that have already been decided, and it is unfortunate that people are still debating them. We shall not remain in control of the Palestinians. Period. It is impossible to turn back the clock, and I do not wish to discuss situations that are irreversible. When the IDF left parts of Judea and Samaria, for example Nablus, I tore my shirt [an expression of mourning] and went on. This, for me, was an irreversible occurrence, and do not think that there is any intelligent person who could think otherwise. Right now we

are in Nablus for military purposes, and that is all. If the IDF stays in a given place to be used merely as a bargaining chip, in the end we will flee from it as we fled from Lebanon. If not for the Israeli settlements we would already have withdrawn to the 1967 borders, without peace.

Another thing that has already been decided is that a massive Jewish majority is an existential condition for the State of Israel. We needn't bother mobilizing our forces – that would be beside the point. It is clear and it has been determined and it is also irreversible. Those opposed are headed in a direction that is even more dangerous. Today demography is more dangerous than the security situation. And yet, I will tell you my opinion: expelling people from their homes is immoral, whether they are Arabs or Jews. I am against transfer, against expelling Arabs from their homes and against expelling Jews from their homes, on principle. I think that if we were to accept this as a moral principle, we would be able to put our heads together and come up with other solutions. The starting-point for this discussion is that Jewish settlement in Ofra means control of the surrounding Arab villages, Ramallah, etc., with no other possibility contemplated. I deny the validity of this assumption.

It has been said before me, and I will say it more unequivocally, under conditions of peace, there is no reason why holders of Israeli citizenship should not be able to live in the Palestinian state, while holders of Palestinian citizenship live in the Jewish state, including those who define themselves as Palestinian nationals. There would not be millions of such people; every border scenario has approximately the same number of Palestinian Arabs without Israeli citizenship and belonging to the Palestinian Authority, who would constitute an island within Israel's borders. Should they be expelled? How many Palestinian Arabs should

be expelled? If there is no choice I would be prepared for a one-for-one “prisoner exchange,” Palestinian village for Jewish settlement. A thousand for a thousand, seventy thousand for seventy thousand. Within these extremely narrow borders [those of the Judea, Samaria and Gaza settlement blocs slated for annexation by Israel] there are between 70,000 and 100,000 Palestinians. So if you say that there is no choice and settlements have to be dismantled for the sake of historic compromise, then they have to be expelled as well. I am against any expulsion, but if it must take place then both sides should be subjected to it equally.

Members of your movement, my friend Prof. Avi Ravitzky, those who call themselves a “sane Religious Zionism,” have recently expressed explicitly in writing what has been on my mind for some time: the idea that we are a rather rootless people, a people who wandered for 2000 years. Zionism is also a project that seeks to uproot people from their homes and bring them to another country. The Arabs are firmly rooted in the land, Arabs can’t be moved. If you try to discuss the dismantling of an Arab village, you know that there will be no peace and no discussion, there will be nothing at all. Jews can be moved. Against this kind of equation I will fight with all my strength. This is the soul of Zionism, as far as I am concerned. We are not a rootless, wandering people. We are not merchandise that can be moved from place to place. We are rooted in the land just as the Arabs are, not one iota less. If Ofra can be moved, then Habla can be moved. From the Arab point of view the Occupation began in 1948, and if we convey the message that Jews are rootless, that Jews can be transferred, we endanger the Zionist enterprise no less than the Jewish majority issue endangers it. We are endangering the Zionist enterprise, because they are saying: “Nasrallah, just a little more pressure and they will run,

because they are rootless.” We are not rootless and we are not merchandise and we will not be expelled, and if you want to expel us, then it will have to be village for settlement, a thousand for a thousand.

The problem that has developed during the last few years is a different one: is it possible to defend the Jews living in these settlements under the conditions that we anticipate up until the time that we reach an agreement? But then the issue becomes one of security: how many settlements may be defended, and which settlements and how, under the current conditions? So let us discuss this as a security issue.

❖ **Uri Dromi:** A few brief comments: First, on a personal note, I had the opportunity of working together with Yitzhak Rabin during the Oslo period, and I particularly recall one meeting with the Yesha Council which was characterized by a lack of empathy on both sides. This was the period of harsh statements, which in retrospect turned out to have been made intentionally to stoke the flames of discord. And so we have to be more considerate of the situation of the other. A second remark: I think that Yisrael Harel has presented the Institute with a serious challenge [the drawing up of various future scenarios, including that of evacuating Arabs]. The truth is that two years ago we considered examining a few scenarios – annexation of the territories and its significance, evacuation of all of the territories, continuation of the existing situation. It’s a shame we did not do so in the end. And now, after hearing you speak, perhaps we should overcome the inhibitions we have and add a scenario of evacuation of Arabs and a scenario of peace in which all the settlements remain. If we were to place five scenarios before the Israeli public, with all their advantages and disadvantages, I think that we would be making a great contribution to the public debate. It

seems reasonable to assume that a scenario in which everything remains the same is not realistic, and, in such a case, I would expect a Bosnia-like situation to develop.

Another comment: In the French withdrawal from Algeria in the summer of 1962, 1.3 million French citizens who had been there for 132 years left with their suitcases in their hands. They were astonished to find that the French public did not care about them at all, weary as it was of the Algerian conflict. I suggest that you think about this, and you will find that Yair Sheleg is not talking about something disconnected from reality. To the contrary, Israeli society at present is empathetic toward you. It would be most unfortunate if we should reach a situation in which Israeli society washes its hands of all of the territories and says, “Just let us leave,” or “If only the Americans would come and kick us out of there.”

❖ **Daniel Shilo:** In my opinion, the initial perspectives examined should have been legal, ethical, ideological and historical ones, before the publication of a position paper of this kind. Just as Mr. Sheleg interviewed people to determine their opinions about social attitudes and what they think will take place, he should also have interviewed legal experts, philosophers, historians and others similarly qualified, in order to give Knesset members real ideological tools rather than aggressively-expressed opinions. I believe that the time is not ripe for this position paper.

A legal question: Are we really obligated to leave these places, as certain Israeli political factions claim – is the Occupation really immoral, morally corrupting and illegal? I think that it is legal. There should indeed be prior discussion of this issue. There are other very serious questions. The State of Israel is teaching the entire world that terrorism is an effective tool, that political,

ethical and spiritual attitudes may in great part be influenced by terrorism. This itself is immoral – we are corrupting not only ourselves but the entire world. It may thus be seen that it is not the Occupation that corrupts us, but rather the relinquishing of the Occupation under these conditions – this is the source of the corruption. I think that we first need to do away with the threat of terrorism, to make the other side understand that it will gain nothing through the use of terrorism; then we may hold a discussion that is “sterile” and unthreatened by terrorism. We will indeed be able to do this if we can find the necessary courage, strength and spiritual justification.

I lived on the Golan Heights for seven years, and I would have continued living there. The conditions were wonderful, and no one can tell me that such conditions are negotiable as “bargaining chips.” Only a country that has gone mad would give people who are “bargaining chips” the kind of conditions we had on the Golan Heights. And if I really was a “bargaining chip,” then it was in violation of the Helsinki Declaration on the experimental use of human subjects. Who gave them the right to use me as a bargaining chip?

Beyond this, if I have bought a plot of land and built a house on it and I am not doing anything illegal there, do I have to give it up just because someone hates me and can’t stand my presence there? Is this democracy? Is this the political stance of peace? Is this why we are not willing to go to war? We have a “Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty.” Can there be any greater violation of a person’s dignity and liberty than his being expelled from his home because someone hates him and is not willing to tolerate his presence there? Isn’t the Basic Law on Human Dignity and Liberty worth fighting for? Or will you say, “We have passed this law and it is our legislative masterpiece, but we are not willing

to have anyone give his life for it?” Then for what do you think someone should be willing to give his life?

❖ **Ruth Gavison:** We are certainly in very deep water here. I would like to make a few points that are not controversial, or which at least need not be points of contention. The Occupation is legal. From the point of view of international law, the Occupation must and can continue until an agreement is reached which ends the situation that led to it. The disagreement is not over the legality of the Occupation but rather of the settlements. According to most researchers, the act of settlement, that is, the transfer of Israeli citizens into occupied territories, is illegal. I would say that even citizens who have been illegally settled need not be forced out of their homes, as a rule. However, these situations usually come up during periods that are more or less peaceful. Thus, our problem is not whether it is legally possible to ask that settlers remain under Palestinian sovereignty. Our situation is that those who settled in the territories after 1967 did it behind the protective shield of the IDF. They did not simply go to live there as one goes to live anywhere else; they settled there because we were the occupiers. The question whether they can stay there under Palestinian sovereignty when the Occupation ends is a question as to the kind of relations that develop. At present, it appears that such a scenario would be impossible.

I have proposed that the Occupation not end. When I talk about the need to think about returning Israeli citizens to Israel proper, I am not talking about ending the Occupation. To the contrary, I am doing so in order that the Occupation might continue. I accept what Prof. Arens has said about Lebanon. I am talking about a gradual process in which we do not evacuate anyone, but rather we offer people the opportunity to leave of their own accord. Some of the settlers in the territories went there with

expectations that are not at present being fulfilled, and they would like an opportunity to say: "This enterprise apparently has no future, and we want to come back." I think that the State of Israel and Israeli society have to enable them to come back.

We are not letting them return in the faulty belief that if we let them come back now, if we create a positive framework that would enable them to return to another form of Zionism, we would be giving in to terrorism. I would like to remind you that there was a large faction within the Israeli public whose opposition to civilian settlement in the territories long preceded terrorism. I also belong to this group. If we reach a point at which we are not advancing our true objectives because we don't want to reward terrorism, then we are in trouble. The real question that needs addressing is what are our true objectives? Civilian islands are possible to maintain, but the main point is that the Jewish collective has to have a critical mass within defensible borders in order for the greatest threat to the Jewish state not to be realized. The greatest threat to the Jewish state is not that of terrorism, nor is it the demographic threat. The greatest threat to the State of Israel today is the situation in which more and more people in Israel and around the world think that this situation is irreversible, and that the way to deal with it is to create a single state between the river and the sea. And if this happens, and if we are not able to disengage, then there will be "one man, one vote" here. If we have "one man, one vote" then there will be a Palestinian state here, and we will end up doing precisely what you fear, we will flee. Not because we are not attached to the Land. We will flee because most of us who live here do so because this is the only place in the world in which we can live in a Jewish culture. And if we don't have that, if we have to live here in a Levantine, bi-national culture whose official language is Arabic, not Hebrew, then many of us will not wish to live here.

For this we have to stand shoulder to shoulder and fight. The challenge to which we have to respond is how may we develop a pattern of Jewish settlement in such a way that when we want to, we will be able to say: “We want a state with a Jewish majority here.” I have not yet received an answer to this question.

❖ **Yisrael Harel:** With regard to the discussion’s legitimacy, which I addressed in my earlier remarks, of course I cannot deny the legitimacy of a discussion of this kind, which has been going on for over 36 years. What I meant to say was that the Institute, which regards the entire field of democracy as its playing court and which shuts out no other sector of society, is now shutting out the sector that opposes expulsion.

I take up Prof. Gavison’s challenge and would also like to raise a few points in this context. You [Prof. Gavison] are undoubtedly aware that nearly one and a half million Arabs are currently living in the Gaza Strip, within an area of 376 sq. km. Right now they still have room to lie down in, but a generation from now there won’t even be standing room. Their population is the fastest growing in the world; they double their population every 15-17 years. In another seventeen years they won’t have room to stand. Where will the population go? In which direction will they be pushed? The solution must be a radical one. The thinking on this issue needs to be much broader and more daring, otherwise we will be the ones to answer for it. Do you know what the area of the entire Palestinian state would be if we were to withdraw completely tomorrow: 5,500 km, with nearly four million people. That would make it one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Meanwhile, they see how we continue to live in the places they fled or were expelled from; their nostalgia and education industry are tremendous. And so, even if there is a formal treaty, the demographic problem will still be with us.

The Central Bureau of Statistics published a report before Rosh Hashanah: the average size of the Jewish family is 3.2 people and decreasing. The average size of the Arab family in the State of Israel is 5.3 people and increasing. You don't have to be a mathematician to know where the graph lines intersect. Let us try to understand what the Jewish future is within the State of Israel if the Arabs' demographic growth is double that of the Jews. Arab public opinion during the period in which Prof. Gavison sat here with Adel Mena indicated that a significant percentage of Israeli Arabs define themselves as "Arab citizens of Israel." Today, after the October 2000 uprising, about 90% of Israeli Arabs define themselves first and foremost as Palestinians and only secondly as Israelis. Uprooting Jews will not contribute to halting this demographic trend; it isn't even an "aspirin" for the problem of the gradual loss of the state's Jewish majority. I once again present the Institute with a challenge. Take up the challenge, and include these urgent and real issues in the discussion.

❖ **Arye Carmon:** This Institute has been in existence for twelve years, and I can recall only one debate whose intensity was similar to the one here. It was a discussion that took place here a few weeks after Rabin was assassinated. We succeeded in bringing to this table people who differed deeply in their worldviews and the ways in which they perceived reality. A certain traumatic event brought about something that it is difficult for me to put in words. I do not want to draw an analogy, I just want to express hope. I think that for the sake of preserving our common frame of reference, we must continue to clarify this issue. Most of what has been said during this session is not exactly consistent with this report. But if the position paper has stimulated a frank discussion, then, in my view, we have already achieved a great deal. And what is more, the implications are beyond anything that could have been conceived.

## Session Two

### Practical Aspects of the Evacuation Question

❖ **Arye Carmon:** The title of this session is: “Practical Aspects of the Evacuation Question.” I hope that the two opening speeches that we are about to hear, those of General Eitan and Prof. Kaniel, will be enlightening and enable us to address the issues. I would like to thank General Yitzhak Eitan for agreeing to participate in this discussion and the IDF for enabling him to do so.

❖ **Yitzhak Eitan:** As in many other areas of Israeli existence, there is a kind of dependency on the IDF to pull chestnuts out of the fire in order to solve political problems that are highly complicated. The nature of things is that the army executes policy decisions, on condition that the government is able to define or to guide policy, and enables the military to interpret its policy. Of course, the ability is subjective; the military has the ability to translate this kind of interpretation into operative terms, to draw up military plans and to cope with this or that kind of problem. Naturally, in an optimal situation, the military would not have to contend with the kind of problem that is before us.

With regard to the IDF’s policy in the territories, in general, and particularly in Judea and Samaria, in particular during the last few years, general policy has been to act jointly with the residents in every way. That is, there is cooperation and inclusion of residents in the activities of the security forces by means of an institution known as “regional spatial defense,” which involves mobilizing Yesha residents for operational military activities in the field. There is an effort to create a single system – the military together with the settlements, cooperating on every course of

action. There is indeed a system of very close coordination and cooperation, a network of relations and joint activity in many areas. This has worked very well during the most intense periods of fighting and will definitely continue to be a part of the picture when the IDF has to engage in operations of one kind or another vis-à-vis the civilian population in the territories.

Of course, a nonconsensual evacuation, if we come to such a point, will involve a confrontation unlike those seen in the few evacuations that have been carried out, apart from the Sinai model mentioned in the paper, which was perhaps an extreme example. But it must be remembered that in Judea and Samaria there are over 200,000 residents, while in the Sinai there were 6,000. For this reason there can be no discussion of the military aspect of this issue at all. Clearly, if it should come to this, the ability of an army to contend with such a situation would be highly problematic, but I would expect it to find ways of coping.

The issue was raised here of civil war, or civil disobedience. Obviously there is a settler sub-group that would be capable of firing live ammunition. This small, very limited group differs from the general population of Judea and Samaria, but it exists. This group's influence may suffice to create an entirely different kind of opposition from that intended by the majority of those opposed to evacuation. It will be exceedingly important to neutralize and torpedo these groups.

And, of course, there is the phenomenon of refusal to serve, which we have been seeing recently. I assume that for all those who oppose this course of action, there will be as many who oppose the opposing policy. Up to now, the military has succeeded in striking the right balance in handling this issue, via the commanding officers. To conclude, I think that the key is

strong backing from the political echelons. That is, if the State of Israel fails to make decisions and there is no consensus, the situation will become much more complicated and difficult, not to say impossible to solve. This is the key to any action taken by a military body – there has to be a government behind it capable of giving it direction, even if this direction cannot be openly declared. When such a government exists, the military is able to get things done; when it doesn't, the military begins to lose its sense of direction.

❖ **Yair Sheleg:** Could you perhaps clarify what you have just said? After all, it is clear that military decisions are made by the government. No evacuation will be carried out via the military in the absence of a governmental decision.

❖ **Yitzhak Eitan:** In this regard, the decision has to be unequivocal, with no possibility of its being misunderstood or imperfectly understood. Sitting here are politicians. They can relate to this better than I can. An IDF commander is faced with extreme difficulties when he is told: "Do this!" while at the same time receiving the message: "Don't do this!" Not infrequently the instructions received by the military are unclear. The military doesn't know how to handle such a situation. I don't think that a political leader can give orders, and he shouldn't be expected to, but he definitely has to indicate a direction that the military leadership can understand in a way that will enable the mission to be carried out. Sometimes there is ambiguity. It is important that an order be clear in order for the army to carry out its mission. The task of the military echelon is to make its recommendation to the political echelon and to listen to what the political echelon says. The military commander tries to understand what the political echelon means. Only in this way can the action be carried out properly.

❖ **Shlomo Kaniel:** What I am about to say should be entitled, “Narrative of a Settler About to be Evacuated.” As a psychologist and researcher, after I told this story to myself I looked at it from the viewpoint of a professional. When Mr. Harel spoke I had a difficult emotional response, even though I complied without thinking twice with Mr. Sheleg’s request that I come here and grapple with these issues. It is like discussing a will while the person is still on his deathbed.

That was my initial reaction. Then I rummaged through my memories. I discovered that during the period of the late Rabin, when he was putting a lot of pressure on the settlers, we did an evacuation simulation in Neve Tsuf: we had to brief people, we were assigned to parlor groups, we banded together socially and started the process. From the earliest days of the settlements there have been evacuations and evacuation threats more or less to the same degree as today. By the way, I prefer the word “transfer,” despite its negative connotation – for me it has a positive connotation. “Transfer” means to move someone from one place to another. If there is transfer then we will be moved from one place to another, not evacuated.

I would like to emphasize another thing: the factors behind the settlement enterprise that Mr. Sheleg mentioned – those who came for quality of life, because of moderate ideology or extremist ideology – are not relevant today. From the time we went to settle – whether as bargaining chips or not, due to ideology (usually a mix of ideologies), for quality of life, schools and other factors – the reality moved us, changed us. There is great dynamism, great complexity, and the reaction to evacuation should be viewed in accordance with the time period in which it is to take place.

I think that I am a fairly representative example of the typical settler, not extreme in any direction. As a child of Holocaust survivors, I feel that we are in existential danger. The world around us is unsafe. In my worldview, my right to the Land of Israel is a religious right and, of course, also a historical right, and now an Arab people exists and they also deserve a state.

I am here because this is my land, and it is the source of my ideology. I see around me a nation whose strength is failing. Our army – the best army in the world – is also a weak army, and I am also troubled by feelings of great powerlessness. The basic assumption with which I and those belonging to Gush Emunim originally came to settle these places has been discredited: the assumption that it would be possible to co-exist with the Arabs. The latest *intifada* has exploded this assumption. My Arab neighbors have betrayed me in the sense that they themselves are dispatching suicide bombers. I do not have the same trust in Arabs that I had a decade or two ago.

On the other hand, the *intifada* has strengthened me greatly. This is because of the blood that has been shed, because of the fig trees, the people we have buried. I feel deeply attached to the land, not like a nomad who carries his belongings from place to place.

If, G-d forbid, I should be evacuated, in another 20-30 years I will be in an old age home, and my grandson will ask me, “What did you do during the transfer, Grandpa? Where were you? How could you have let such a thing happen?” This is the meaning that I attach to the current reality – it is pivotal and crucial, because it is part of a parameter of identity. That is, a person may have an ideological identity, a group identity, a religious identity, but the question is to what degree a particular

identity prevails over the other identities, to what degree is it at the core. The religious identity and the settler identity, which 20-30 years ago were slightly different, have today merged into one identity that encompasses everything. On the other hand, I see that for the non-religious person – whose reliance, for good or bad, is on man and the use of reason – everything in the post-modern age is relative, anything goes, and his values are crumbling.

The other thing I want to mention is related to the value of solidarity that we have talked about: since the Yom Kippur War there has been a loss of faith in leadership. This chasm is continually widening; it is a nationwide, if not a worldwide, phenomenon. Our sense of commitment as a people is diminishing, while, on the other hand, there is a tendency to move to smaller group identities; attachment to the people, the nation, is diminishing. The feeling that the settlers have is that we are going to be abandoned, that evacuation is abandonment. This feeling leads to despair. Empathy is not a source of hope for us. It's like someone coming to execute you: he gives you a choice of methods and shows empathy for you.

The main conclusion that can be reached from all this is that the transfer will be much harder than anticipated, that its nature will be different – there will be tendencies toward extremism and violence, toward revenge, toward a Jewish underground. People like me, who have never conceived of engaging in any form of active opposition and have always seen themselves as passive, are beginning to think twice and three times about the subject. Our younger generation will put pressure on us and not allow us to compromise the values that led us to bring it there. That is an additional source of pressure. Of course, there will be those willing to take the money and leave, but taking their place will

be underground types. And, ultimately, in the conflict we face between the laws of the State and morality, I believe morality will win. Whatever we think is moral and ethical according to our worldview is what we will act on from first to last. In my estimation, 20% of the settlers will engage in “active opposition”; I do not know precisely how many of them will become violent. But remember, when a hundred people come to demonstrate it takes only one violent person to cause another 30%-40% to become violent, even if, according to surveys, they had not been planning to engage in violent opposition.

I drew up a kind of scenario for myself of what will happen when they tell us to evacuate: how it will happen, what there will be apart from the demonstrations. In my imagination I see a Yom Kippur atmosphere: Torah scrolls are taken out, people are walking around with “Kol Nidre”; all the power of religion is being brought to bear, with rabbis in the lead. I cannot recall any previous event of similar emotional power; we will endow this event with the highest degree of emotional intensity.

Myths will develop which will nourish people in the long term, and who knows what might happen as a result – how many people may try to infiltrate, to build, to move to the other side of the border. Since these are processes, I fear that they will lead to a deep rift within the people. Look at the rift that developed after Rabin’s assassination and try to imagine such divisiveness invested with the strongest emotional energies of both sides.

❖ **Arye Carmon:** I find your analysis very frustrating. It seems to me to contrast very sharply with the preceding discussion. In the preceding discussion, difficult as it was and reflecting deep disagreement among the parties, there was nevertheless an effort on the part of almost everyone to maintain a sense of common

mission and destiny – between you and MK Oron and between the populations living on either side of the Green Line. Our common mission and destiny under the Zionist flag are of the highest priority. The feeling that I am left with after your analysis is that you have given up on this common mission and destiny, which I very much hope is the basic infrastructure that unites us, despite our differences.

Another thing that worries me greatly is we have spoken here about the moral and ethical aspects of the issue. Prof. Ravitzky and Mr. Goldstein have a great deal in common, and there is a point at which they part ways. You are talking in belligerent terms. You talk about the weakening of the military, the weakening of the people; you seek the forces necessary to cope. This is the impression that I am left with from your speech.

❖ **Yoel Bin-Nun:** He is not talking about ideology, but about psychology.

❖ **Arye Carmon:** That is why I started out by saying that his analysis is frustrating. You are talking about psychology and I accept this perspective. I very much hope that you are wrong. I very much hope that a common mission and a common destiny are fundamental principles for all of us. Mr. Dromi threw out the analogy here of the Algerian evacuation, something that none of us likes to hear. I fear that the concept of “they are abandoning us” is liable to gain momentum over time, based on the things that we have heard from you. I am not saying this to be antagonistic or threatening. I am only expressing my immediate reaction to what has been said, and perhaps this is the healthiest basis for joint discussion.

❖ **Baruch Kahane:** The subject of empathy was raised in the preceding discussion, and there were all kinds of references to the warm embrace that has to be extended to the settlers. It was mentioned that there are all kinds of non-empathetic types “somewhere out there.” I really felt a certain relief when MK Oron spoke and brought us back to the slightly more common and realistic kind of discourse that takes place in the society in which we live. Our society, in the degree of emotionality that characterizes its internal debates, is not as polite or as sensitive as we would like to think it is.

When we talk about the settler population, it is important to remember, first of all, that this population has over the years undergone a process of exclusion from Israeli public discourse. I remember, during the period of the struggle against the Oslo Accords, sitting at a demonstration and hearing a report on the radio about the demonstration. It was a mass demonstration, impressively quiet and civilized. A leader of the leftist camp was interviewed. He was asked what he had to say about such a mass demonstration, and he said that there were no Israelis there, only settlers. When there is such a radical degree of exclusion, when there is such selective coverage by the media, then it is not surprising that the kinds of processes that Prof. Kaniel talked about should develop.

Another thing: There has been considerable talk here of empathy, and Mr. Dromi said that today’s reality is one of empathy. We must avoid confusing empathy with pity. In the Israeli media, the settler frequently appears as someone to be pitied, rather than as a subject. Empathy doesn’t mean pitying someone, it means hearing what he has to say.

The settler, when he appears in the media, either he is pitied or else he is the object of an effort to determine how he will react to something that is done to him. But his voice is never heard. My interpretation of reality is not heard within the broader public discourse. This isn't just in the media; it's in the academic world as well. It's a very widescale phenomenon. I think that in this situation of lack of communication, lack of dialogue, all the processes that Prof. Kaniel described are inevitable. The only solution is a dialogue that really reaches below the surface, to the core of things.

If, within such a well-informed, distinguished and scholarly group of people as the one sitting here, there are those who have never heard the term "Habakuk" [an acronym denoting an experiential religious outlook which characterizes many members of the younger generation of religious Zionists: Habad, Breslav, Kook and Karlebach] and who are not aware of the tremendous spiritual ferment that this term represents, then clearly we are living in a world without dialogue, and all of these processes are indeed inevitable. I am convinced that whenever such a deep dialogue takes place, creative solutions will be found for the real, essential, security and demographic issues – creative solutions that perhaps are not being thought of today. But these solutions can develop only through dialogue, which in my opinion is not currently taking place.

❖ **Arye Carmon:** Regarding the issue of exclusion, I am afraid that the chances of such a dialogue taking place are decreasing. It seems to me that we are approaching the final moment in which it will be possible to find those who are willing to engage each other's deepest concerns in order to create dialogue. We agree that dialogue is highly important for collective and social unity. But the cracks and rifts in the fabric of our society are such that we are rapidly approaching the limit of our ability to bear them.

❖ **Dan Meridor:** This discussion has moved away, and in my opinion not accidentally, from the apparently technical subject of evacuation to the ideological sources of the entire issue. I would like to say something about the problematic element of ideology, an element that is not always visible, although it is actually the real force guiding people in history. Zionism has never contented itself with affirming that we have a right to the land. It has always insisted on the principle of a Jewish majority here and sought to combine the two – the right and the majority. We cannot maintain sovereignty based on our right to the land alone without a majority. This has been a main tenet of the entire Zionist movement, apart from marginal factions.

Everyone talks of the need for a large majority, for democracy, for constitution by consensus. Zionism is a democratic movement, a demographic movement. To bring a Jewish majority here as a basis for sovereignty – in my view, this is the ABC, the bread and butter of Zionism, the starting point for the entire enterprise. I disagree with what Prof. Gavison said earlier. She said that that the Occupation is legitimate. I accept the idea that “we were attacked, we fought, we were justified in occupying,” etc. But on the other hand she said that settlement, according to most expert opinions, is not legitimate. I think otherwise but with a condition – and this is a condition that I grew up with in the spiritual atmosphere that I was raised in, with no “Habakukim.” Jews settled the land in order to bring about the conditions for Jewish sovereignty. This is the real goal of the settler in Hanita, Kfar Etzion and Elon Moreh – that the Jewish state should include these areas as well. When a Jew goes to London or to Tel Aviv to live and buys an apartment, he is doing so because he wants to live there. His intention isn’t to create facts, he isn’t making a political statement. The settlements, in my opinion and in opposition to the opinion of Prof. Gavison, were a

legitimate effort. These were areas that did not belong to anyone, areas over which sovereignty was undetermined, and it was permissible to settle them. However, I have a condition that touches on the ideological conflict with “Habakuk”: I am not willing to control an area in which I do not have a majority. It is my right to settle in Hebron, it is my right to settle in Shilo, on condition that I am prepared for majority rule. This is because I live in a democratic world in which the majority rules, not the minority. This is the meaning of democracy. First and foremost, human equality: Arabs and Jews are equal. And if there is an Arab majority, then there is no Zionism.

I do not feel any less at home in Kfar Adumim, with my brother and sister, than in Sakhnin, despite the fact that one place is “here” and the other is “there.” If we succeed [in the settlement enterprise] then we will be annexing the territories and every Arab will be able to become a citizen of Israel. When Begin proposed autonomy in 1977 in the Knesset, he made what I think was a key statement: “If we grant autonomy, every Arab who wants Israeli citizenship will receive it. Why? Because we aren’t going to be Rhodesia.” This is something truly profound and moral. At that time we had a Jewish majority of 60%-70%. It’s difficult, it’s painful, but I live with them in Sakhnin and in Acco, we will live with them in Hebron as well. This is how I thought it would be. I admit that today we are in a different situation in terms of demographic developments, despite the welcome aliya of a million Jews.

This, in my view, is a danger to the entire Zionist enterprise. It is very painful, because I know much more about Bethlehem, Har Hebron, Shilo, Beit El and Nablus than I do about Eilat. The difference between all of the deliberations we have conducted in the past and this one is that we are at a critical moment. Time

has been on our side with regard to all the other parameters, but regarding the demographic issue we are reaching a point of crisis. As far as I am concerned this has nothing at all to do with security or with terrorism. I am prepared to face two hundred years of terrorism if I know that if I defeat it I will come out the winner. I am saying here that if I succeed, the Arabs will say: "We give up, annex us, please," and that will be the end of Zionism. This is a battle that I am not prepared to fight.

It isn't that I want evacuation or transfer or whatever term one chooses. But in the final analysis, the terrible thing is not that a Jew should have to leave his home. Prof. Kaniel's grandson could compete with my own grandson, who thirty years from now is likely to ask: "Why didn't you see that there was going to be an Arab majority? Where were you?" I won't have an answer for him. The main thing that we are facing is a danger to Zionism, and I want to rescue Zionism. I say this even if it means war rather than peace. I do not believe that MK Oron and his Geneva colleagues are right in terms of their acceptance of the Arab position, but if there is to be a war, in order for us to win we have to have a border behind which there is a massive Jewish majority.

And what about the settlements located beyond this border? In my opinion, for security reasons it is not good that they should be there, because that will be harmful. They have the right to live anywhere in the world that they please, and, certainly, in the Land of Israel. It's like a commanding officer in a war who decides that a particular squadron should be moved from a particular hill because it is in danger. The right to live anywhere exists for everyone, but each person has to be willing to live in accordance with the law of the country in which he resides, like the Arabs in Haifa. Will it be possible, within the context of a

peace treaty, to have some kind of intermediate arrangement? Removing people from their homes, even when they are willing to live according to the laws of the place, is a mistake. On the other hand, someone who wants to live in a particular place and says, "I am going to live here, and all of my neighbors are going to be denied the right to vote or to decide whose army will be here, whose police force will be here, where it will be permissible to build..." this is discrimination, and it will not work.

It is now necessary to agree upon the rules of the game for making the decision. In this regard, I want to defend Prof. Kaniel while at the same time disagreeing with him. I defend him as a professional describing a psychological state, but his conclusion worries me. Let us assume that 90% of the people decide that they want a particular border and that a certain number of Jews are outside of this border – should this tiny minority force its position on the rest of us?

❖ **Arye Carmon:** Despite the fact that the discussion has already taken a different direction, I have to say that I am still in total shock from the things that Prof. Kaniel had to say. After all, I am familiar with a certain amount of social research. I assume that this paper expresses the bitterness that people feel. I can say that there is a problem with the lack of familiarity with the ideological infrastructure of the "ideological settlers." I served in a Nahal unit, and a while ago, I met face to face, for the first time in my life, a veteran resident of one of the settlements. The first question that he asked me was: "When did you serve in the *Nahal*?" We all went to Nahal, there were *Nahla'im* with caps and *Nahla'im* without, but everyone was in Nahal. What is going on with this settler population? The youth movement to which I belonged was a very integrated movement in the Israeli pioneering spirit, and there were religious young people within

its ranks. Daniella Weiss, for example, grew up in a Revisionist household, and her motivations were those of Jabotinsky and Begin. But when she became a settler and met up with Rabbi Levinger and Menachem Felix and Benny Katsover, these national-ideological motivations went out the window and were replaced by intrinsically religious motivations.

❖ **Shlomo Kaniel:** These motivations are strengthened each year by the Torah. Anyone who has experienced the reading of the Book of Genesis each year and the *haftorah* reading each Rosh Hashanah, which talks about the going up of Elkanah to Shilo, knowing that for 2000 years all we could do was to read about it, and today looks out of the window and there it is, can't fail to be moved. The meaning of this is that the issue of the Land of Israel is more intrinsic than is generally recognized. I wouldn't necessarily agree with everything that is written here, because if religion is a motivating force, then it is also a restraining force. We do not believe that a religiously observant person is permitted to do anything and everything for the sake of the Commandments that he fulfills. For example, regarding the issue of transferring parts of the Land of Israel from non-Jewish to Jewish ownership: nowhere is it said that one may steal a non-Jew's landed property in the Land of Israel. Certainly not his olive groves, certainly not his donkeys nor anything else of the kind. Anyone who says it is permissible is simply distorting the words of the Torah. However, I am convinced that the internal, emotional rupture will be greater today than it would have been 30 years ago. I am talking about the internal rupture and about the rift within the Jewish people, a result of which is likely to be a confrontation.

I think that democracy's emphasis on individual rights has penetrated the non-Torah-observant community as well. Suppose that I am democratic-secular, I am under no circumstances prepared

to accept the idea that, because Assad hates me and because he has signed a treaty with the Prime Minister of Israel that I am forced to leave my home, which I acquired legally, on the Golan Heights or in Judea or Samaria. I imagine that the opposition of secular people in Ariel and Ma'aleh Adumim and other places will be stronger; they do not have the halakhic restraints that we have. They have no rabbis who will come and tell them, "Guys, this far and no farther!" This has to be taken into account.

❖ **Adi Mintz:** The issue that was raised by Prof. Gavison and afterwards by Dan Meridor is, in my view, a cardinal one. I think that the legal aspect of the Jewish people's sovereignty over the Land of Israel in general and the legal legitimacy under international law of the settlements in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, in particular, are of the utmost importance. That is, a great many papers and books have been published on the subject, but the assumption made by part of Israeli society and in the corridors of powers in Europe and the UN is that this is an occupation, an occupation which is illegal, and so the settlements in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, according to the Fourth Geneva Convention, are not legal. This assumption is simply incorrect, at least in the view of many legal scholars.

The fundamental question is that of the area of jurisdiction of the British Mandate and the reasons for creating the British Mandate, as set forth in the League of Nations 1922 decision. This has great importance for the State of Israel. I have sought assistance on this from the justice ministers, both the current and the preceding ones, as well as from the Foreign Minister, particularly within the context of the International Court of Justice deliberations in the Hague. But the political ability to deal with this appears at present to be limited. I think that this is important for the discussion here today.

Another point: I agree with what Prof. Gavison said regarding the main objectives of the Jewish people. That is, with the idea that the Jewish people is not succeeding at present in defining its own main objectives and those of Zionism. The disagreement over what the goals of Zionism are has been with us for many years, and has actually come to the fore on a number of occasions – and in the celebrated instance of Uganda there was at first a decision in one direction, while ultimately the opposing position prevailed. What is the significance of Zionism and what purpose does it serve? Did it appear in order to rescue the Jewish people? Perhaps it came in order to realize the right of the Jewish people, after 2000 years, to return to Zion – not necessarily in the messianic sense, but rather in the real sense.

❖ **Arye Carmon:** In 1948, a sovereign entity was created that was recognized by the nations of the world. Zionism realized its goal, at least in this sense.

❖ **Adi Mintz:** In my view, Zionism has realized only very partial goals, and in the final analysis, Zionism has no meaning without Shilo, Beit El and Hebron and, of course, without Jerusalem. The Geneva people have given up the real and fundamental reason for which we returned to the Land of Israel. What makes things difficult is that there is a fundamental demographic problem that I think needs to be solved differently. We have to find another solution to this problem, because a situation in which we rule over a population that has no civil rights, and I say this as the Director-General of the Yesha Council, is a bad one.

When I received this paper and was asked to participate in this discussion, I asked the same question that the settlers asked themselves, especially as I am serving in a representative capacity. It was important to me to come and hear the speakers

and the ideas. I think that this paper is an indication of the past, that is, the paper deals with cases of evacuation that took place in the past. I was present at three apparently similar events. When Hawara was evacuated, Begin was there. Arik Sharon was there too and chased after those who were evacuating Hanan Porat and shouted at them to disobey orders. As an evacuee, this was almost the most traumatic act, and I remember that after they managed to put us on the bus, Rabbi Yoel Bin-Nun and I hugged each other and promised each other that we would return.

I was also at Yamit and experienced the trauma of the evacuation there, and, more recently, I was present during the evacuations of the outposts. I was very worried about what was going to happen, about the rupture and the conflict developing within Israeli society. In my view, the solidarity and unity of Israeli society are a basic value, one of the most fundamental things that Israeli society strives for, and we have to find a way to prevent the rift from developing. For this reason we called a meeting the same night of the Yesha Rabbinical Council. We sat around the table, two or three moderate rabbis and two or three extremist rabbis, and I asked that no one leave until we put out a jointly drafted paper in which the limits of opposition to evacuation would be defined. We succeeded in formulating this document; it was signed by the entire Yesha Rabbinical Council and by the Yesha Council administration and was sent to all Yesha residents, and let me tell you, it had a definite impact. But, with regard to informal indications, anyone who thinks that the evacuation of Mitzpe Yitzhar is similar to the evacuation of Dolev, where I live, is wrong. Anyone who thinks that there is any similarity with the evacuation of 4,500 Yamit residents after the settlement had already been emptied, is completely wrong. The current situation involves the destruction of a community's life's work. It is true that I am an electrical engineer and that I worked

in high-tech up until two years ago, but settlement has been the essence of my existence, and there are many others like me. People have grown up this way, been educated this way, they have built their lives according to these principles, and the issue at hand is one of total destruction of a way of life, a worldview. And so I believe that this kind of expulsion is impossible; it cannot happen and it will not take place.

I do not wish to go into apocalyptic scenarios, but there is no historical precedent for a people sending its brothers into exile. There are, of course, precedents in the expulsion of Jews from Spain, France and Germany. There are precedents in the mass transfer of Germans at the end of World War II. But there is no precedent for a people to expel its own brothers. I am convinced that this cannot be done and that even talking about it leads to sharp polarization within the Jewish people.

Nevertheless, there is a consensus that the unity of the Jewish people is critically important for our ability to meet the challenges that face us. And it appears that the solution to our problems will be a different one and certainly will not involve expelling Jews from their homes.

❖ **Arye Carmon:** Let us describe a scenario, perhaps an impossible one, in which there is no evacuation. The State of Israel decides to build a fence along the entire Green Line, does or does not reach an agreement with the Palestinians according to which they are responsible for security, and you have to decide where you are going to live. This scenario is not entirely inconceivable. I am against it, but as time goes on, the voices of opposition may fade if the alternative turns out to be the cry that we heard from Haim Oron – transfer vs. transfer. Oron is saying

to you: “I, patriotic settler, am going to encourage my children to leave the country.” You have to take into account the forces that may be activated on the other side.

❖ **Yoel Bin-Nun:** I am very critical of the position paper, even more so if what the paper describes is true – that the settler population is an oppressed society, a society under siege. Only such a society would respond this way. If the settler community withdraws into itself, if it becomes a society oppressed and besieged by a general Israeli public standing behind the government’s decision, then this will be an even greater catastrophe than partition of the land, even if evacuation efforts are unsuccessful.

The responsibility for this process is a shared one. You can blame the media, and you can blame all the Tel-Avivians who couldn’t care less what happens in a school in Ofra. If we reach a situation of persecution, it will be a disaster. It is impossible to say that only the media are to blame or that only the politicians or the Left are to blame, because in this instance we too, the settlers and their leaders, are to blame. If our stance is a responsible one, then we have to do everything possible to prevent this from happening, first and foremost in our own consciousness.

Personally, I don’t feel bad; I don’t feel that I am looked upon as a settler. I do not agree that the State of Israel is a kind of launching pad for an “us” – that there is some other collective community called “the settlers.” Nor do I agree that the nation is weak, that the army is weak – this is total falsehood. In my opinion, this is a challenge first and foremost for Mr. Mintz and for the Yesha rabbinical community. If this is the situation, then it hardly matters whether evacuation is actually going to take place.

❖ **Shlomo Kaniel:** Why?

❖ **Yoel Bin-Nun:** Because evacuation under such conditions would be like it was on Yom Kippur on the Golan Heights, running at the last minute to the buses.... If that is the situation, then we have lost the battle. I don't think that it necessarily has to be like this. The situation that you describe is deeply troubling from the point of view of the settler movement, the attitude that Yesha is the means to enlarge the borders of the state. This isn't an expansion of borders but rather a kind of entrenchment of a cult. I do fear that this is what is happening in the hills, and if this is indeed the case, then we have failed, and there is no settlement enterprise. In my opinion, the question of ruling the Palestinians has already been decided, and we shouldn't be wasting our breath on it. We will never be able to control them. The only remaining question is whether under current conditions it is possible to maintain the settlements. I think that it is possible, that there has to be discussion of the question of how the settlements might continue to exist in a situation in which we do not rule over the Palestinian population.

The only justification for evacuating a Jewish settlement is the inability to defend it under the anticipated conditions, as on the Golan Heights on Yom Kippur. And if it is impossible to defend a specific settlement, I have no doubt that a rabbinical decision will be handed down. But as far as I am concerned, it is inconceivable that a certain group whose leftist ideology is rooted in 36 years of conflict is going to say to me: "We told you from the beginning, and we won't leave you alone until you admit that we were right and atone for your misdeeds. And we will spread the message around the world that Jews may be uprooted." If this is what evacuation is meant to represent, and I do fear that this is what evacuation represents, then there must be no evacuation, not of a single house.

❖ **Arye Carmon:** You are presenting a very extreme scenario.

❖ **Yoel Bin-Nun:** This is the scenario painted by the Israeli media.

❖ **Arye Carmon:** I will tell you what the realistic scenario is. The realistic scenario is that there will be an erosion of the legitimacy that the Israeli public still attributes to the settlers.

❖ **Yoel Bin-Nun:** The entire “underground” story came out of the attitude that it is impossible to evacuate us and so we have to be left on our own security-wise. In reaction to this the radical “underground” was born, and I oppose it with all my might. If it is ever said that the settlers are going to be left where they are with no security arrangements made for them, this may well come at the cost of another Jewish terrorist organization capable of dragging us all into a situation beyond our control. I beg of you, stop playing with fire! This is not solidarity, this is not an embrace, this is a threat. All of this talk of cutting the settlements off and of leaving the settlers there with the Arabs, this will end only with an “underground.” Amnon Shachak understood this, and to my astonishment, he said that if the government does not provide its citizens with security, then it won’t be able to blame them when someone takes the law into his own hands.

❖ **Avi Ravitzky:** I think that Prof. Kaniel’s remarks were sad but frank. He did not claim to be talking about a majority but clarified the position of the minority. However, you said several times: “This is part of my narrative study.” I believe that this is your narrative, but in my view, this discussion and, in fact, Mr. Sheleg’s paper present an opportunity for your narrative to be heard. I am familiar with a certain segment of Israeli

youth with whom some of you are perhaps unfamiliar. I could relate a narrative to you of tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of young people who say that if the scenario of continued Occupation comes to pass, then they will no longer call Israel home. I suggest that we examine the degree to which service in the IDF is already beginning to erode. I would like you to see just how complex things are.

Afterwards, let us cease pretending that Zionism is the occupation and settlement of the entire Land of Israel. My Zionism is the rebirth of the Jewish people. It is true that there can be no Jewish rebirth anywhere but in its land, but the land is secondary to the people, rather than the other way around. I have no commitment to the land, but I am fully committed to the Jewish people, and since the Jewish people can be reborn only in the land of its dreams and prayers, then I am deeply connected to the Land of Israel.

❖ **Ran Cohen:** I do not like to generalize; I prefer to see things in their true form, to the extent possible. I have come into conflict with many of you throughout the history of the settlements, and I have always believed that this conflict is the focus of powerful energies from the point of view of spirituality, ethics, history, commitment, the values of each camp. However, I admit that I have always believed that there is a common frame of reference, and that in the final analysis, when faced with the historical danger of destruction of the Jewish people's national home, we would unite. Tonight I am no longer certain of this, and I will tell you why: because it seems to me that during the course of this discussion we have not been looking at the true state of the Jewish people in general or the true state of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel.

Up until three years ago, I believed, wrongly, that the border we were going to have with the Palestinians would be one of industrial zones, work, livelihood and co-existence, and I worked on this together with the Palestinian Minister of Industry. The region in which I tried to create an industrial zone – Jenin – became the area from which the biggest murderers made their way into Israel – to Haifa and Afula and every other place. I now no longer believe in a border of industrial zones. At present I want a border that will physically defend the Israeli people. I do not want to face the same catastrophes here in Israel that the Jewish people faced throughout its history. I do not want to return to my earliest childhood memory of Iraq, of a pogrom in the Jewish quarter. This is the essence of my existence as a Zionist. What is the conclusion? That we may contest your position and you may contest ours, but the State of Israel has to stand firm against two opposing icebergs, like the Titanic, straddling two worlds. On the one hand, there is the world of democracy, and if Israel does not remain democratic then it will clash with the democratic world. Look at the historical processes taking place around the world – democratization, human rights, humanism. Do you want Zionism to clash with these forces to such a degree that we will become a pariah state? On the other hand, the Muslim world is beset by a frightening trend of increasing fanaticism and Khomeinism. We are a nation of six million facing this threat. The continued existence of the Jewish people elsewhere in the world would be in jeopardy without us. Perhaps this seems irrelevant today, but what will happen to the Jews in the US? I think that without a Jewish state the Jews have no possibility of a secure existence anywhere else, in spite of human rights and in spite of democracy, because you never know what is going to happen. And so, if we crash into these two “icebergs” without preserving a Jewish and democratic national home, the outcome would be that the State of Israel’s Zionist

mission of guaranteeing the Jewish people's security would be endangered. And you and I have to find a way of keeping Israel from clashing with the entire democratic and Muslim worlds.

In spite of this, I think that ultimately you are also wrong, because the survival instinct of the Jewish people won't let either you or us proceed along any path other than that of continued existence. Even if some of us fall into despair and some of you become increasingly extreme, we have no other hope of continued existence in this world apart from being a just and internationally accepted country. I think, in the end, this instinct will prevail, no matter what anyone does; whoever stands in our way will be defeated. Worse things than the dismantling of settlements have been successfully contended with throughout the history of our people. Whoever claims, in the name of a particular theory, that the State of Israel, rather than building a fence in order to defend itself from terrorism, should instead defend every street or every discotheque or school or kindergarten, all based on a vision of a "Greater Israel," stands opposed to the Jewish people's survival instinct. The State of Israel without its Zionist soul cannot exist, and its Zionist soul is Jewish – Jewish and democratic. Without both these elements it cannot exist.

❖ **Miriam Shapira:** I would like to conceptualize the things that have been said here in terms of disaster, trauma, resilience – since in any case, no matter what decision is made, it will be a disaster. There is very great potential here for trauma, both on the personal and on the national level. We can also look at this document from a perspective of resilience, since any effort to cope with trauma should start beforehand, rather than during or after the fact.

This paper deals with ways of coping with expulsion, if it should happen, while it is taking place or afterwards. We have to address the issue now, before it happens, even if there is no expulsion in the end. A large portion of Israeli youth wants to live abroad. Our young people don't know, they don't hear, and they have no chance of hearing the narrative that Prof. Kaniel expressed so strongly, while Prof. Kaniel and the public he represents have no chance of hearing the narrative of these young people, who are on their way to leaving the country. We have not talked at all about the soldier population within the context of an expulsion catastrophe. I cannot imagine the kind of colossal dilemma that soldiers are going to be faced with on a personal and a collective level. Each of these young people, and there are many of them, has parents, friends, relatives. We are talking about broad sectors of the Israeli public. Let us not forget that these past three years have been years of terrorism that have struck at all of us, and at young people in particular. No-one has measured this as yet; no one yet knows what the personal and communal effects are of this continual encounter with death. What is clear is that there has to be a true and substantive dialogue. This cannot take place via the broadcast media; it can only take place via face-to-face encounters: encounters for their own sake, encounters that enable the parties to get to know and understand each other through explanation and persuasion.

❖ **Avi Gisser:** In my function as a community rabbi, I agree with the way in which Prof. Kaniel described a large faction of those whose voices are heard in community frameworks. This is the way they express themselves and these are their sentiments, regardless whether Rabbi Bin-Nun is opposed to them. And, by the way, I also oppose them. It is not important whether we are guilty of having led them there or not. For now, how can we contain both the extent of the crisis itself and the depth of the

dispute between us, MK Cohen's opinion about the situation and that of every other person? It goes without saying that letting the various voices be heard is the basis for this. We are hearing the voices within the framework of these deliberations, but the nation watches television and the deliberations on TV are different.

The solution will appear only when a set of rules for decision-making develops according to which the Right reconciles itself to compromise in the direction of the left, while the Left compromises in the direction of the Right, under conditions to be determined jointly by the parties. Only when each side is certain that the other is obeying the same rules and when each side is reconciled to an acceptance of these rules and to an internal acceptance of a situation which appears to each side as disastrous – only then will unity, and the State of Israel, be able to exist.

❖ **Bambi Sheleg:** There are certain times when one is able to view the verdict of history with a clear eye. The verdict of history is saying today that partition is the answer. And so, the Yesha leadership has to take responsibility for the enterprise that it established. It has to turn to the settlers and say: "In this hour of history, the future of the Jewish people rests on our shoulders, and we are going to take responsibility for the evacuation. Let us do so willingly, since only in this way can the country be saved." If the Yesha leadership doesn't take responsibility for this, it will bear the responsibility for a possible civil war and other terrible scenarios.

Responsibility has to be taken not only for the future of the settlements but also for the future of the Jewish people, including Israel's position on the international plane, since one of the luxuries that the Yesha leadership has appropriated for itself is

that of dealing only with the internal plane. There is also an international reality, and this is the piece that is missing from the Gush Emunim puzzle. Whoever denies the existence of such an important part of our reality will not be able, ultimately, to persuade Israeli society.

❖ **Arye Carmon:** I am really trying to tread the middle path. Deliberations on all kinds of issues are taking place around this table, while the main theme of the evening is the attempt to find a bridge, a common language that enables us to assess the cost of these efforts. The IDF high command gathers around this table three times a year. This past January, we held a conference on “Morality, Ethics and Law in Wartime.” I would like to tell you about some of the things that came up during the conference, things that I believe indicate the high price that we are paying as a society, as a result of the reality in which we find ourselves, of which the settlements constitute a very big part.

When the Chief-of-Staff presented his position, he reiterated a very important notion. He said that there is no one narrative describing the military’s current battle against terrorism. This is a fact: there is no single narrative, because around this table – and even here the entire range of opinions is not represented – we have heard or learned about various approaches toward assessing our reality.

During the Six Day and the Yom Kippur wars, the IDF had a single narrative for its struggle, and everyone stood behind this narrative. Those struggles do not resemble present-day reality, in which there is no such unified narrative. This creates a tremendous moral problem for the decision-makers, who have additional issues to deal with, and no-one is more aware of this than you. In moderating this conference, I have an idea from

where this derives: the problem is that political subjects cannot be introduced. One of the main reasons for the problem – and we are putting the army in an impossible position – is that for 36 years the State of Israel has had no “political horizon” regarding borders. For 36 years we have been living as a society with no borders. We have talked here about identity. A border is a tool for defining identity; it isn’t just a territorial demarcation. Up until a defined point, one language is spoken and one set of values abided by; beyond it, a different language and values.

We have no such border today. Not one Israeli government has been willing to take it upon itself to define a political horizon. I would like to add this perspective to the things that Bambi Sheleg talked about. A vacuum has been created here in which an evasive governmental leadership places unbearable burdens upon our military. You could read between the lines when General Eitan spoke about the need for a leadership that expresses itself with as little ambiguity as possible.

Another thing that is unquestionably related to the international aspect of the problem is I do not know whether you are aware that a real and deep problem exists with IDF officers who arrive at a situation in which they are unable to leave the State of Israel because of the new world reality. Whether I like it or not, we are waging a war with weapons that the world no longer accepts. We are placing an impossible burden on those who defend us. This is another point that we have to consider. We began by talking about empathy, and we will end by talking about empathy. I think Yair Sheleg’s paper has achieved an important goal: today’s discussion. In my opinion, the paper has a few more goals to achieve. The empathy spoken of is liable to be limited to an ever-diminishing minority, because a significant segment of Israeli society is perceived as a deeply selfish group.

❖ **Shlomo Kaniel:** You, as well.

❖ **Arye Carmon:** Perhaps. My basic assumption is that I am not talking about facts but rather offering perspectives on reality. If among us there exists a sense of leadership, then it is our task at least to create a common language. It will be hard, perhaps impossible, we will argue, but we have to do it. Mr. Harel presented us with a challenge, and I said that I am prepared to take it up. Let us take it upon ourselves to draw up the scenarios – how each of us sees the State of Israel in 20-30 years, according to a set of agreed-upon parameters. Let's talk about it all: how a Zionist State of Israel should look 30 years from now, where its borders should be, and what price we should pay internationally, morally, culturally, economically, and in terms of identity and security.

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