

From Condemnation to Consequences

*Calling on States to Hold Israel Accountable
to End the Illegal Occupation*



**World Council
of Churches**

Asks – From Condemnation to Consequences: Calling on states to hold Israel accountable to end the illegal Occupation

We call on states, churches, and international institutions to impose consequences for violations of international law, including targeted sanctions, divestment, and arms embargoes. Full support must be given to the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice, and UN mechanisms both regarding investigations of crimes on all sides as well as initiatives towards a just peace for Palestinians and Israelis. Specifically we are asking states, churches, and international institutions to:

- Uphold international law.
 - Put pressure on the government of Israel to stop current annexation moves. Support the end of Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian Territories, in line with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, issued in July 2024.
 - Scale up emergency support for Palestinian villages threatened and affected by forced displacement due to settler violence and occupation policies and demand that those who have been displaced can return to their villages.
 - Scale up support of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) as well as Palestinian, Israeli, and International civil society organizations working towards a just peace.
 - Cooperate with the International Criminal Court, and exercise available bases of extraterritorial and universal jurisdiction to investigate and try crimes under international law in national courts, consistent with international standards.
- Stop trade of goods and services with illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and to suspend bilateral agreements until the occupation has come to an end.
- Implement sanctions against Israeli settlers involved in violent crimes against Palestinian communities, members of settler organisations, and Israeli government officials supporting the settler movement and advocating for the annexation of the West Bank, in contradiction to international law.
- Cease the sale of arms, munitions, and other military equipment that is at risk of being used to violate international humanitarian and human rights law against any party.

Talking points – From Condemnation to Consequences: Calling on states to hold Israel accountable to end the illegal Occupation

Talking Points – War in the Middle East

The war that broke out on 28 February 2026, between the United States and Israel with Iran, should not distract the world community from the ongoing de-facto annexation by Israel of the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. Resolving the hostilities in Palestine and Israel, based on justice, is the cornerstone for peace in the entire region. War with Iran further complicates the possibility of finding an equitable solution to the core conflict in the Middle East, and Israel's de-facto annexation measures continue while the world is looking somewhere else. The world must find ways to resolve hostilities in the Middle East based on International Law. Disregard for International Law paves the way for violence that places millions of civilians at risk, undermines regional and international security, and threatens already fragile economic and social stability across the Middle East. We are calling on world governments, churches, the United Nations, and civil society organizations to support a thriving Middle East free from wars, conflicts, violence and devastation, including a sustainable and just solution for the Palestine-Israel conflict.


Talking Points – Forced Displacement

“Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive.” Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention

- The term “forcibly” in “forcible transfer” is not restricted to physical force, but may include threat of force or coercion, such as that caused by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression or abuse of power against such person or persons or another person, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment.
(<https://www.diakonia.se/ihl/resources/international-humanitarian-law/ihl-displacement/>)
- In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, forcible transfer and displacement of Palestinians comes in many different forms:
 - Displacement due to settler violence: Between 2018 and February 2026, at least 67 Palestinian communities in the West Bank have been entirely or partially expelled due to settler violence.
(https://www.btselem.org/settler_violence_updates_list?importance=1)
 - Restriction of access to farmland, work, education, healthcare, and other services, imposed by Israel as occupying power in the West Bank, can force people to relocate to other areas. In February 2025, there were 849 such movement obstacles within the West Bank. (<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/movement-and-access-update-west-bank-may-2025>). Between 2023 and 2025, almost 4,000 children, women, and men had to



abandon their homes and transfer to other communities due to settler violence and movement restrictions.

- (<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/west-bank-monthly-snapshot-casualties-property-damage-and-displacement-december-2025>)
 - Displacement due to demolitions: In Area C of the West Bank (under full Israeli administration and military control) as well as in East Jerusalem, Palestinians have a very small to no chance of obtaining building permits from the Israeli authorities. Since 7 October 2023, zero permits have been approved for Palestinians in Area C of the West Bank to build by the Israeli authorities ([West Bank: Record number of demolitions over building permits as Israel furthers annexation agenda | NRC](#)). Originally under the 1995 Oslo Accords, this responsibility for the administration of Area C was assigned to the Israeli authorities for five years. Yet, the reality is still the same 30 years on. At the same time, there is a need to expand housing for growing families and Palestinian communities, so houses and infrastructure are being built anyway. Since the beginning of the systematic monitoring by UNOCHA in 2009, Israeli authorities have demolished more than 13,000 structures in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, thereby displacing more than 17,000 people and otherwise affecting more than 300,000. Almost 2,000 donor-sponsored structures are included in these numbers. International humanitarian law explicitly prohibits the destruction of private or public property by the occupying power (Article 53, IV. Geneva Convention), except in cases of military necessity.
 - Displacement due to evictions: In the East Jerusalem neighborhoods of Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah, families have been evicted on the basis of claims that the land, on which their houses were built, was Jewish-owned before the 1948 war. While under Israeli law, Jewish-owned property can be reclaimed, Palestinian-owned property in West Jerusalem or the wider Israel, that was lost in that same war, can't be reclaimed. (<https://peacenow.org.il/en/the-threat-of-mass-palestinian-displacement-in-east-jerusalem>). According to the Israeli nongovernmental organization Ir Amim, since the 1970s, eviction lawsuits have been filed against approximately 80 Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah (<https://ir-amim.org.il/en/publication/a-stranglehold-on-sheikh-jarrah-new-tools-for-israeli-takeover-and-palestinian-displacement/?context=category/reports>), while almost 100 families are at risk of eviction in the Batan al-Hawa neighborhood of Silwan. (<https://ir-amim.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/2023-Annual-Report.pdf>)
 - Displacement due to military operations: Another more than 30,000 Palestinians have been displaced since the beginning of 2025 due to ongoing Israeli military operations in refugee camps that are located in the northern West Bank (https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/West%20Bank_info-graphic_22_Jan_2026.pdf), without any information on whether and when they might be able to return.
- Quotes from the ICJ advisory opinion:
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- 147. The court considers that Israel's policies and practices, which it discusses in greater detail below (see paragraphs 180-229), including its forcible evictions, extensive house demolitions and restrictions on residence and movement, often leave little choice to members of the Palestinian population living in Area C but to leave their area of residence. The nature of Israel's acts, including the fact that Israel frequently confiscates land following the demolition of Palestinian property for reallocation to Israeli settlements, indicates that its measures are not temporary in character and therefore cannot be considered as permissible evacuations. In the court's view, Israel's policies and practices are contrary to the prohibition of forcible transfer of the protected population under the first paragraph of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.



Talking points – De facto annexation

Asks

1. Take political, economic, and diplomatic actions against Israel's de facto annexation of Palestinian lands and resources by the Israeli settlement enterprise in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

WCC position

· All settlements and settlement infrastructure are illegal and are a violation of international law.

2. Speak out publicly against all plans and actions to de facto or de jure annex all areas of occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

WCC position

- Faith leaders and governments must provide a moral voice of support for the obligations placed on countries by the ICJ's July 2024 Advisory Opinion on Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory, including the obligation to "take steps to prevent trade or investment relations that assist in the maintenance of the illegal situation created by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory."
- Stand in solidarity with Palestinian Christian siblings in Palestine and Israel by amplifying their calls to stop annexation of Palestinian lands including church properties.
- Actively join with fellow faith leaders in your country and around the world to speak out about the need to protect the rights and dignity of all people living in the Holy Land.

3. Take immediate economic measures (including boycott and/or divestment) against corporations including banks, institutions, and individuals profiting from or supporting Israel's illegal occupation and annexation of Palestinian land, including through settlements and settlement infrastructure.

WCC position

- "Propose a review of your faith community's financial investments to ensure they are not contributing to the violence in the Holy Land." Includes divesting from companies—including banks—that support, maintain and/or profit from Israeli settlements and settlement infrastructure, construction, maintenance, and expansion.
- "Lead discussions within your faith community to explore and challenge Christian Zionist justifications for the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestinian land." Theologies that justify and support the settlement enterprise provide theological cover for the ongoing illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, including through settlements.



Talking points

Under the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), an occupying power is prohibited from annexing occupied territory, transferring its own civilian population into it, or depriving protected persons of their rights. These acts are deemed illegal under international law, and the convention applies regardless of any attempted annexation or changes to the territory.

“The Court is of the view that Israel’s policies and practices, including the maintenance and expansion of settlements, the construction of associated infrastructure, including the wall, the exploitation of natural resources, the proclamation of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, the comprehensive application of Israeli domestic law in East Jerusalem and its extensive application in the West Bank, entrench Israel’s control of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, notably of East Jerusalem and of Area C of the West Bank. These policies and practices are designed to remain in place indefinitely and to create irreversible effects on the ground. Consequently, the Court considers that these policies and practices amount to annexation of large parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.” (I.C.J. Report 2024, p. 51, para. 173).

- Annexation of Palestinian territory is carried out by the Israeli occupation system on multiple fronts using several tactics, including construction of the Separation Wall, settlement creation and expansion, denial of permits for Palestinians, the demolition of Palestinian homes, community infrastructure and services, and confiscation of Palestinian lands for military firing zones and settler-only infrastructure. As a result, Palestinians are forcibly displaced from their communities allowing for the expansion of settlements and de facto annexation. Many of these violations are carried out by increasingly violent settlers who are protected by Israeli soldiers, police, and the Israeli state ([Peace Now Summary of a Year of Terror, Expulsion, and Annexation — 2025 in the Settlements](#))
- The **E1 settlement expansion project** is a particularly dangerous example because it cuts the West Bank in half and isolates Jerusalem from its Palestinian geographic and demographic continuity. Israel’s Finance Minister Smotrich and prime minister Netanyahu have explicitly stated that the E1 settlement expansion is intended to "bury" any hope of a Palestinian state and prevent its recognition. Settlement construction near the Christian town of **Beit Sahour** must be halted. In November 2025, Israel began the groundworks for a settlement on land owned by Christians from Beit Sahour, on Osh Ghorab land which used to be a park for Beit Sahour children.

- *Northern part of the West Bank refugee camps*

1. Palestinians have been forcefully evicted from the three refugee camps in the northern part of the West Bank: Jenin Camp, Nour Shams, and Tulkarem. The attack began on 21 January 2025 and led to the forced displacement of 40,000 Palestinians. In February 2025 Israel's Defense Minister Israel Katz bragged that the camps are now "empty."

- *Water resources have been confiscated in the West Bank*

Ø Already 88% of West Bank water resources are under Israeli control. Israeli settlers are using an average of 247 liters of water per person per day – three times the quantity used by Palestinians in the West Bank, which amounts to 82.4 liters per person.



· *Heritage sites and land have been confiscated*

Ø On 21 August 2025, Israel declared 63 Palestinian archaeological sites in the occupied West Bank as "Israeli heritage sites," 60 of which are in the Nablus area. On 26 October 2025, the Government of Israel approved a budget of NIS 40 million (US\$11.7 million) to “develop” the archaeological sites, in other words to rewrite history and to create a narrative consistent with that of Israeli occupation. This in addition to land confiscated for 144 settlements and approximately 240 outposts, and no less than 980 kilometers of bypass roads.



Talking points – Status of Jerusalem

Asks

1. Uphold Jerusalem's Status Quo historical and legal arrangements that preserve the possession and division of holy sites in Jerusalem [and Bethlehem] and reject any alterations to their status.

WCC position

- Jerusalem is holy to three religions and two peoples and must remain united. To ensure this, the status quo should be reaffirmed and recognised as a vital safeguard not only to the Christian community, but to the multireligious, multiethnic, and multicultural character of Jerusalem itself.

2. Protect and preserve unimpeded access to worship

WCC position

- Jerusalem's present and future must be predicated on respect for the human right to freedom of worship and conscience for all, both individuals and religious communities.
- All citizens, residents, and pilgrims must have free access at all times, in peace or in war, and all inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem must be treated equally before the law and in accordance with international resolutions. This extends to ensuring the rights of property ownership, custody, and worship—which the different churches and mosques have acquired throughout history—to be retained by the same communities.

3. Reject any unilateral claims of sovereignty over all of Jerusalem by any parties or authorities.

WCC position

- Rejects Israel's illegal annexation of East Jerusalem and claims to sovereignty over Jerusalem as its "eternal capital" (1980; 1995; 2017 and 2022)
- Condemns Israel's continuing, systematic policies of confiscation of buildings and land, destruction of buildings, settlement construction, and expansion in and around East Jerusalem, discrimination and denial of building permits to Palestinian residents of Jerusalem; restrictions and denials of freedom of movement for Palestinian Christians and Muslims within and access to Jerusalem and the Holy Places, and from all attempts to alter the demographic status quo of Jerusalem prior to the conclusion of agreements with regard to its future status;
- Affirms that the provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention must be honoured regarding the rights of Palestinians to property, building and residency; the prohibition of effecting changes in population in occupied Palestinian territories; and the prohibition of changes in geographical boundaries, annexation of territory, or settlement which would change the religious, cultural or historical character of Jerusalem without the agreement of the parties concerned and the approval of the international community.



4. Identify and impose economic, political, and diplomatic sanctions on Israeli officials operating in the Jerusalem municipality, related settler organizations and Israeli government officials responsible for/engaged in forceful evictions of Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem.
5. Identify and impose political, economic, and diplomatic sanctions on settlers, government officials, and Israeli soldiers inciting and/or committing violence against Palestinians in occupied Palestinian territories.

Talking points

Under the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), an occupying power is prohibited from annexing occupied territory, transferring its own civilian population into it, or depriving protected persons of their rights. These acts are deemed illegal under international law, and the convention applies regardless of any attempted annexation or changes to the territory.

“The Court [ICJ] is of the view that Israel’s policies and practices, including the maintenance and expansion of settlements, the construction of associated infrastructure, including the wall, the exploitation of natural resources, the proclamation of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, the comprehensive application of Israeli domestic law in East Jerusalem and its extensive application in the West Bank, entrench Israel’s control of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, notably of East Jerusalem and of Area C of the West Bank. These policies and practices are designed to remain in place indefinitely and to create irreversible effects on the ground. Consequently, the Court considers that these policies and practices amount to annexation of large parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.” (I.C.J. Report 2024, p. 51, para. 173).

- Jerusalem’s Status Quo historical and legal arrangements preserve the possession and division of holy sites in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, forbidding any alterations to their status. Unimpeded access to holy sites in Jerusalem for Muslims and Christians, consistent with the city’s religious and historical Status Quo, must be protected and upheld. On Latin Palm Sunday, Israel issues 4,000 permits to Christians from the West Bank out of 50,000 Christians, which means that only 8% of the population are given permits. During the Orthodox Holy Fire Saturday, Christians from Jerusalem are denied access to the Holy Sepulcher Church, and are treated violently at checkpoints in and around Jerusalem’s Old City. Muslim worshipers are denied access to the Haram Al-Sharif/Al Aqsa Mosque during the Holy Month of Ramadan, and are subjected to violent and inhumane treatment at the checkpoints.
- *Hate crimes and violence:* Threats from extremist settlers to Christian and Muslim communities in Jerusalem increase, including infringements on the right to religious freedom and access to religious sites, land disputes, and violence against Christians. Attacks by radical Israeli groups have been steadily increasing in recent years, with physical and verbal abuse against Christian clergy reportedly becoming a daily occurrence and escalating during Christian holidays.
- *Land disputes and acquisition of property:* Contested land deals and property acquisition have threatened to displace Christian communities in Jerusalem or acquire church property. For example, in what the Armenian Patriarch describes as the “greatest existential threat of its 16-century history,” the oldest Armenian diaspora in the world risks being displaced in a contested land deal with a Jewish Australian-Israeli developer signed in 2021.



- In Jerusalem, over 90 families in Silwan neighborhood's Batn al Hawa face eviction, and the impossible-to-obtain permit regime that has led to thousands of demolitions. Sixty percent of the homes in Silwan's Al-Bustan neighborhood have demolition orders. Armenians in Jerusalem are facing threats of eviction from land at the Patriarchate's entrance in Jerusalem; and property owned by the Orthodox Church, now housing the Imperial Hotel at the Jaffa Gate area, is also threatened with eviction.
- Since 7 October 2023, no less than 3,200 Palestinians fled their homes and are seeking shelter in other communities due to settler violence. During the 2025 olive harvest there were 178 violent attacks in 88 communities, and the Christian village of Taybeh was attacked by settlers six times during 2025. Currently the threats to Palestinian communities are escalating because national security minister Ben-Gvir has significantly eased firearm regulations, issuing over 100,000 new gun licenses since October 2023.



Talking points – Settler violence

“The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.” Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention

- The establishment of settlements by an occupying power in occupied territory violates international humanitarian law. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention explicitly prohibits an “Occupying Power” (Israel) from transferring any part of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.
- In a [2024 advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice \(ICJ\)](#) relating to the Palestinian territories, the court reaffirmed the illegality of the settlements and called on Israel to end its occupation, cease its settlement activity, and evacuate all its settlers.
- Although Palestinians and Israeli settlers in the West Bank live in the same geographic area, they live under separate and unequal legal systems. As Israeli citizens, settlers are provided with all of the rights afforded by Israeli civil and criminal laws. West Bank Palestinians face discriminatory movement restrictions, unequal access to water, restrictions on building and community growth, and violence from settlers. Unlike Israeli citizens and settlers, Palestinians are subject to Israeli military law.
- [Settler violence drives forced displacement in the West Bank](#) “Across the West Bank, settler violence is clearing large swaths of Area C, the Jordan Valley, and parts of Area B, of Palestinians with the support and participation of Israeli security forces. Amid a push by Israeli authorities to prevent Palestinian statehood and consolidate annexation of the occupied West Bank, state-backed settler violence has become a key driver of forced displacement, chipping away at Palestinian presence in strategic locations.” - UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- In recent years there has been a sharp increase in the frequency and severity of settler violence. In [2025 UNOCHA](#) reported 1,828 attacks by Israeli settlers resulting in casualties and/or property damage (compared to 852 in 2022, 1291 in 2023, and 1449 in 2024).
- State-backed settler violence is a near daily occurrence. The [UNOHCHR](#) explains that “avenues of protection and accountability are increasingly inaccessible to Palestinians, as Israeli security forces fail to protect them, frequently act alongside settlers, and detain or expel international activists providing protective presence.”



Talking points – Restrictions on civil society and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

1. Israel is targeting UNRWA

UNRWA was created by the United Nations General Assembly. Resolution 302 called on governments to cooperate with UNRWA and to provide it with privileges, immunities, exemptions, and facilities. But numerous Israeli officials have been making statements that do not respect UNRWA's mandate or the right to offer services to Palestinian refugees.

While International Humanitarian Law demands that the occupying power allow the territory to be administered as before and respect the law in force in the occupied territory, Israel has been violating UNRWA's mandate and preventing the UN agency from conducting its operations.

Israel has demolished three refugee camps run by UNRWA in the northern part of the West Bank; namely Nur Shams, Tulkarem, and Jenin and has displaced no less than 30,000 people in violation of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) which prohibits forcible transfers from occupied territory.

Schools in Jerusalem are targeted. While Article 50 of the Fourth Geneva Convention demands that the occupying power facilitates the working of institutions devoted to education of children, Israel has demolished UNRWA headquarters in occupied East Jerusalem and has closed six schools and prevented 800 children from their right to education in the city.

Asks:

Israel must stop targeting UNRWA and start cooperating with the agency towards provision of humanitarian assistance, education, and protection services.

Palestinians who were forcefully displaced in the three refugee camps must be allowed to their homes immediately.

UNRWA schools and offices in occupied Jerusalem must be reopened immediately.

2. International humanitarian aid organizations are being harassed

Under international humanitarian law, the occupying power must facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and basic services to the population under occupation. In addition, the occupying power must allow impartial humanitarian organizations to operate in the territory. These obligations are derived from the Hague Regulations of 1907 (Section III) and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 (Articles 27 - 34 and 37 - 78).

Having said that, the state of Israel is taking measures that restrict the ability of international humanitarian and faith-based organisations to operate in the occupied Palestinian territories. Thirty-six organizations are targeted including church-related bodies and ecumenical organizations, and their licensing is being revoked and scrutinized. These are organizations that provide lifesaving humanitarian assistance, including medical care, food and water, shelter,



education, psychosocial support, and protection for some of the most vulnerable communities in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem.

Asks:

All measures by the state of Israel that restrict the ability of international humanitarian and faith-based organizations to operate in the occupied Palestinian territory must stop.

Humanitarian assistance to civilian populations is not discretionary but a core obligation under international humanitarian law. Safeguarding humanitarian space is therefore essential to the protection of life and human dignity of vulnerable communities under occupation.



Talking points – The newly introduced land registration law, and the annexation by archeology

Israel is currently advancing a coordinated, multi-pronged strategy to permanently alter the reality on the ground in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, effectively annexing territory and dispossessing Palestinians through seemingly bureaucratic and legal means. This campaign focuses on three key pillars of this strategy:

- The antiquities law: Using archaeology as a pretext to assert sovereignty and seize land deep within the West Bank.
- Accelerated land registration: Systematically transferring Palestinian land in East Jerusalem to the state and settlers through a coercive and discriminatory legal process.
- The Al Matar/Atarot Settlement: A massive new settlement project designed to strategically sever East Jerusalem from the West Bank, delivering a fatal blow to the possibility of a contiguous Palestinian state.
- These are not isolated actions but a deliberate and interconnected effort to foreclose any possibility of a just and lasting peace. We must act now to demand accountability and oppose these violations of international law.

I. Antiquities law: annexation by archaeology

- What it is: On 3 February 2026, a Knesset committee advanced a bill to create a new civilian Israeli authority to govern all 6,000+ antiquity sites in the West Bank. This is the first time Israel's legislature has attempted to apply its civil law directly to West Bank territory, a move that legal experts identify as de jure annexation.
- A tool for land seizure: The law grants a government minister sweeping power to declare any area an antiquity site and expropriate the land. This creates a legal pretext to establish a permanent Israeli presence and control deep inside Palestinian population centers, disrupting Palestinian life and development.
- A violation of international law: This legislation is a flagrant violation of the 1954 Hague Convention and the Fourth Geneva Convention, which forbid an occupying power from making permanent institutional changes or exercising sovereign rights in occupied territory. It also dismantles the Oslo Accords, which gave the Palestinian Authority responsibility for archaeology in Areas A and B.
- Erasing Palestinian heritage: The bill's proponents have been explicit about their goal. Committee Chairman Zvi Sukkot stated, "There is no such thing as Palestinian heritage... it is our duty to protect [Jewish heritage]." This is a politically motivated attempt to erase Palestinian history and culture while using Jewish heritage as a tool for territorial expansion.

II. Land registration: dispossession by bureaucracy

- What it is: The Israeli government has mandated the completion of land registration (Settlement of Land Title - SOLT) for 100% of East Jerusalem by 2029. While framed as



a neutral administrative process, it has become a primary state tool for seizing Palestinian land.

- **Rigged system:** Since 2018, 85% of the land that has completed this process has been registered to the Israeli state or settlers. Only 1% has been successfully registered to private Palestinian landowners. The process is being used to facilitate the construction of over 20,000 new settlement units.
- **The “Catch-22” of the custodian:** The process now formally involves the Custodian of Absentee Property, an entity with the power to seize property from Palestinians deemed “absentee.” Palestinian landowners are trapped: if they try to register their land, they risk the Custodian confiscating it. If they don’t participate, the state can seize the land anyway. This creates a no-win situation designed for mass dispossession.
- **Settler activists in charge:** The appointment of a known settler activist to oversee the Custodian’s operations confirms the political intent behind this process. It is not about fair administration; it is about using the law as a weapon to displace Palestinians and expand settlements.

III. The Al Matar/Atarot Settlement: a final blow to a two-state solution

- **What it is:** A massive new settlement plan for 9,000 housing units on the site of the former Qalandiya airport, located between Ramallah and East Jerusalem.
- **Strategic strangulation:** The Atarot settlement is not just more housing. It is a strategic move designed to achieve a key political goal: to sever East Jerusalem from its West Bank environs, particularly the urban center of Ramallah. It will break the territorial contiguity of a future Palestinian state, making a viable, independent state with its capital in East Jerusalem a geographical impossibility.
- **Completing the encirclement:** This project is a critical piece of the “greater Jerusalem” vision, which aims to create a ring of Israeli settlements around the city, isolating Palestinian neighborhoods and cementing Israeli control over the entire area.
- **Creating irreversible facts:** By building a new city in the heart of the West Bank, Israel is creating facts on the ground that will be nearly impossible to reverse, deliberately undermining any future political negotiations for a two-state solution.



