

2024 in the West Bank – The Year of Annexation and Expulsion

Settlement Watch Team, Peace Now

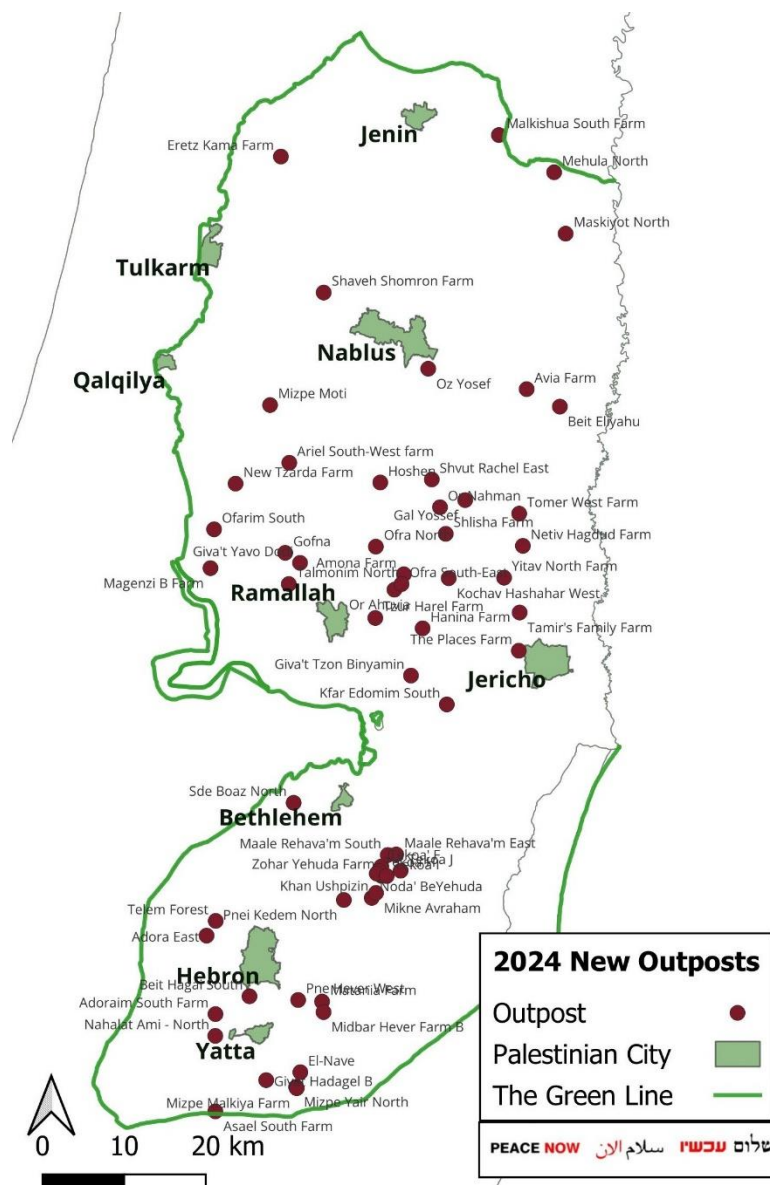
February, 2025

The second year of the Netanyahu-Smotrich-Ben Gvir government is the year in which the government's annexation plan began to be implemented in practice, as stipulated in the coalition agreement at the end of 2022. As a reminder, in 2023, the Settlement Administration was established within the Ministry of Defense, headed by Minister Smotrich. The administration was created as part of the implementation of the coalition agreements between Likud and Religious Zionism. At the same time, the appointment of Itamar Ben Gvir as Minister responsible for the police led to a significant reduction in law enforcement on settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank.

The year 2024 is characterized by a policy of reducing Palestinian space in Areas C and B and expanding Israeli presence in these areas. In fact, this year marks the most significant reduction in Palestinian presence and rights in the West Bank, with an unprecedented weakening of law enforcement against settlers regarding construction violations and violence against Palestinians. This is further compounded by budget transfers, building permits, and the legalization of outposts, all of which are unprecedented in the history of the settlement enterprise. This policy is being carried out through the establishment of a record number of illegal outposts, unprecedented road construction, a sharp rise in the quantity and intensity of settler violence—described by the head of the Shin Bet as terrorism— as well as road closures (for Palestinians), and a record in legalizing and funding illegal outposts. Since the formation of the current government, Israel has been completing the creation of the administrative infrastructure for the de facto annexation of the West Bank to Israel, transferring powers from the Civil Administration to a political and civil body under the authority of Minister Smotrich.

Situation in the West Bank in 2024

- **Settlements and Outposts:** At least 59 new outposts have been established, most of them agricultural outposts ("farms") involved in land grabs and the systematic expulsion of Palestinians from the area. This is an unprecedented number of new outposts. For comparison, from 1996 to the beginning of 2023, fewer than 7 outposts were established on average each year.
- **Outposts in Area B:** For the first time since the Oslo Accords, at least 8 outposts have been established in Area B. This means that at least 13% of the total outposts established in the West Bank in 2024 were located in Area B.



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- **Hundreds of illegal roads, over 114 kilometers in length,** have been carved out for the expansion of settlements, preventing Palestinian access, establishing new outposts, and taking control of additional land.

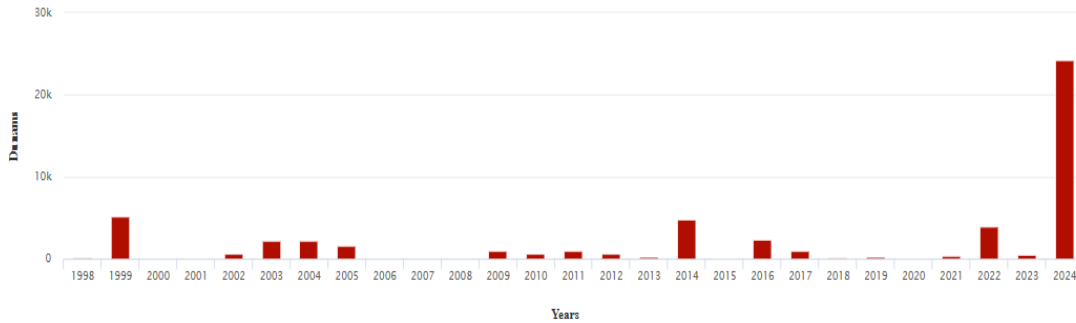


Opening of a road from the settlement of Telem.

- **Plans for 9,884 housing units in settlements were advanced by the Higher Planning Council.** In November 2024, the implementation of the government decision from June 2023 began, according to which advancing plans in settlements no longer requires approval from the political echelon. As a result, the Higher Planning Council began meeting weekly to approve settlement plans, and within six weeks, nearly 2,400 housing units were approved.
- **New tenders were published for 1,399 units** across the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem.
- **24,258 dunams were declared as "State Land"** – approximately half of all the land declared as state land since the Oslo Accords to date.

Declarations of State Lands

Source: Settlement Watch of Peace Now



- **The Cabinet decided to establish 5 new settlements:** Evyatar, Givat Asaf, Sde Efrayim, Adorayim, and Nachal Cheletz. All of these are illegal outposts intended to become official settlements.
- **The process of legalizing 5 additional outposts as "neighborhoods" of existing settlements began.** The Civil Administration announced its intention to expand the jurisdiction of settlements to include the outposts of Ahiya, Beit Eliahu, and Bnei Adam. Additionally, plans were approved for deposit to legalize the outposts of Machane Gadi and Givat Hanan.
- **70 illegal outposts were recognized as eligible for funding and infrastructure.** Minister Smotrich instructed government ministries and other authorities to begin funding these 70 illegal outposts, as well as construct public buildings in them, and connect them to water, electricity, and other utilities.
- **New settlements in Hebron**—settlers have entered a house in Hebron that they claim to have purchased from Palestinians. Their entry was made possible after they received a “transaction permit” from entities subordinate to Minister Smotrich. Additionally, a plan to establish a new settlement enclave in Hebron with 234 housing units north of Kiryat Arba has been deposited for public review.

Funds and Budgets

- **The government doubled the budget of the Minister of Settlements** and allocated additional funds for the Settlements Division – an increase of 302 million NIS.
- **7 billion NIS for roads in settlements** – According to Minister Smotrich, the Ministry of Finance reached an agreement with the Ministry of Transportation on a five-year plan worth 7 billion NIS for intercity roads in settlements. In 2024, the construction of many authorised roads was advanced, aiming to significantly expand the settlements

and increase the settler population. These include infrastructure works on Highway 60 between Jerusalem and Gush Etzion, Highway 437 between Jerusalem and the Sha'ar Binyamin industrial area, the construction of a Sheikh Anbar tunnel under the A-Tur neighborhood in East Jerusalem as part of the eastern ring road, and the paving of the bypass road to Luvon (Highway 465), including a new access road to the settlement of Beit Aryeh. In addition, land expropriation orders were published for the upgrading and expansion of Highway 55 between the Green Line and Alfei Menashe, Highway 505 between Ariel and the Tapuach Junction, and Highway 60 between Halhul and Sa'ir. For further information, see here.

- **Allocation of 409 million NIS for unique settlement projects** after cross-the-board budget cuts. This includes projects for the preservation of antiquities in the West Bank, the restoration of Sebastia Park, the strengthening of the Old City Basin (tourist settlement in East Jerusalem), and projects related to the Elad organization in Silwan.
- **Funds for illegal outposts and farms** – 75 million NIS were allocated to illegal outposts, of which about 39 million NIS are designated for illegal shepherd farms, some of which are sources of settler terrorism.

Annexation Moves

- **Powers related to settlements have been transferred from the military to a civil officer under Minister Smotrich.** The minister appointed a settler to the position known as the “Civilian Deputy” to the head of the Civil Administration, essentially making him the governor of the settlements. Despite the position’s title, The Civilian Deputy is directly accountable to Minister Smotrich and not to the head of the Civil Administration. The authority of the Civilian Deputy involves a wide range of powers concerning settlements, infrastructure, lands, and much more. For further details, see: “The Quiet Overhaul” (by Ofek, Yesh Din, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, Breaking the Silence).
- **A new legal advisory unit was established and manned in the Ministry of Defense under Minister Smotrich**, taking responsibilities previously held by the military through the Civil Administration
- **The government took over enforcement powers in parts of Area B, which are supposed to be under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority.** Following cabinet instructions, the Central Command chief signed orders that contradict the Oslo agreements by granting him the authority to demolish Palestinian homes in an area known as “the Agreed-Upon Reserve,” which is under the Palestinian Authority’s control. Subsequently, the Supervision Unit issued demolition orders in these areas.

Reduction of Palestinian Living Space:

- **Settler Violence** – Human rights organizations documented at least 1,420 incidents of settler violence against Palestinians. At least 356 Palestinians were injured, and 3 were killed by settlers (OCHA data as of December 26, 2024).
- **Community Expulsions** – Approximately 47 Palestinian communities have been forcibly displaced since October 2023 due to settler violence. This includes at least 300 Palestinian families (around 1,762 individuals) who lost their homes (data from Kerem Navot and OCHA).

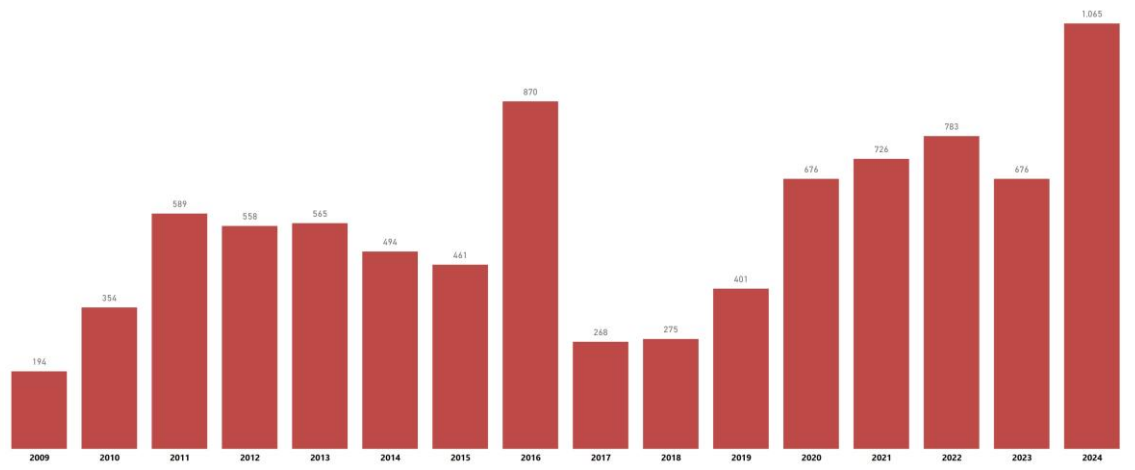


An outpost in Area B, adjacent to the ruins of a Palestinian community that was forced to leave in 2024.

- **Access Denied to Agricultural Land** – Palestinians have been barred from reaching hundreds of thousands of dunams of agricultural land. The military and settlers prevent Palestinians from cultivating land near settlements through physical barriers, such as roadblocks and dirt mounds set up by the IDF or settlers. Additionally, settlers and soldiers (often reservists living in the settlements as part of territorial defense units) regularly expel Palestinians from these areas.
- **Zero Housing Approvals for Palestinians** – The Higher Planning Council did not approve a single building permit or appeal for residential purposes for Palestinians in

Area C. Out of 138 appeals for rejected building permits, 137 were denied. Of the 12 plans and permits reviewed, 9 were rejected, with only minor approvals granted, including the renovation of an agricultural shelter, the construction of two agricultural warehouses, and the establishment of a commercial center near Jenin (initially approved in 2022).

- **1,065 Structures Demolished** – Israel demolished 1,065 Palestinian structures in the West Bank in 2024 due to a lack of building permits, including 17 in Area B. This displaced 857 Palestinians. This marks a record year for demolitions due to permit issues, surpassing the previous peak in 2016, during which 870 structures were demolished. **In addition, 452 Additional structures were demolished in military operations** – These demolitions affected 2,704 residents, primarily in the Jenin and Tulkarm areas. (OCHA data, as of January 14, 2025).



The number of structures demolished in the West Bank due to lack of building permits, according to OCHA data.

Demolitions in East Jerusalem

- **215 Homes Demolished** – In 2024, 215 Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem were demolished due to a lack of building permits.
- **Silwan's Al-Bustan Neighborhood** – The Jerusalem Municipality began systematically demolishing homes in Al-Bustan as part of a plan to clear the neighborhood for a tourist park known as the "King's Garden." Over 15 homes were demolished in Al-Bustan alone, out of approximately 100 homes facing demolition orders.

Analysis

It is no surprise that 2024 marks a record year for the settlement enterprise in the West Bank and a low point for Palestinian human rights, including property damage, economic suffocation, and unprecedented harm to Palestinian freedom of movement.

However, what sets 2024 apart and makes it particularly dangerous is the precedent established by the Israeli government in the West Bank. The government has been working through both legal and illegal means to annex settlements to Israel and expand annexation areas as much as possible, even into the depths of Area B.

Israel is openly working to weaken the Palestinian Authority and undermine its political status. One expression of this effort is the establishment of eight outposts in Area B and the demolition of Palestinian homes in the so-called reserved area of agreements in Area B.

As part of the annexation of the West Bank, Israel is investing billions of shekels in strengthening settlements, changing the legal system, and weakening the Civil Administration. More importantly, it is entirely altering the physical landscape.

In 2024, 59 new outposts were established, most of them shepherding outposts staffed by youth and hilltop settlers focused on land seizure and the expulsion of Palestinians from their surroundings. Settlers paved, constructed, and prepared at least 114 kilometers of unauthorized roads.

The Settlement Watch team revealed that Netanyahu's government allocated 75 million shekels in 2024 to fund illegal outposts, 39 million shekels of which were designated for unauthorized farms. It was also discovered that part of these funds was allocated to unauthorized road construction.

In addition to financial support, violent settlers in outposts also benefit from political support from the government. Minister Smotrich, entrusted by Netanyahu with responsibility for settlements as a minister in the Ministry of Defense, dictates policies that result in an almost complete halt to the evacuation of outposts and the enforcement of laws against settlers. Meanwhile, Minister Ben-Gvir has led the police to a position where settler violence is not prevented, and despite the increase in settler violence, arrests of suspects in Jewish terrorism in the West Bank have halved compared to the previous year.

The military's decision to close hundreds of entrances and exits to Palestinian communities in Areas A and B, alongside hundreds of blocked dirt roads throughout the West Bank at

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the start of the war, has severely restricted Palestinian movement in Area C, giving settlers greater freedom to operate across the West Bank. Due to the numerous blockades, Palestinian movement throughout the West Bank has become significantly longer, more expensive, and far less frequent. Main roads have effectively become settler-only roads, such as the “Lieberman Road,” which bypasses Bethlehem from the east, where all exits and entrances to Palestinian communities along the route have been blocked.

In 2024, the Civil Administration and the Jerusalem Municipality demolished a record number of structures—1,280 in the West Bank and East Jerusalem—citing the lack of building permits. The extent of home demolitions for Palestinians, the lack of building permits, and the establishment of outposts near Palestinian villages have significantly reduced the space available to Palestinians in the West Bank.

A significant part of the changes seen this year stems from the establishment of the Settlement Administration and the Israeli government’s decision to prioritize strengthening settlements and settlers. Over the past year, the Israeli government began the legalization process for ten outposts, in addition to 14 that started this process last year. Simultaneously, Minister Smotrich established a “bypass legalization process” for 70 outposts, allowing budgets to be allocated and public buildings to be constructed in illegal outposts despite not undergoing regular legalization procedures.

In summary, the legal, administrative, and physical reality is the clearest expression of the annexation of the territories into Israel. Thus, 2024 is not only the peak year for the settlement enterprise but also the year of annexation, where the government turns the occupied territories into an integral part of the State of Israel, transforming Israel into an apartheid state.