

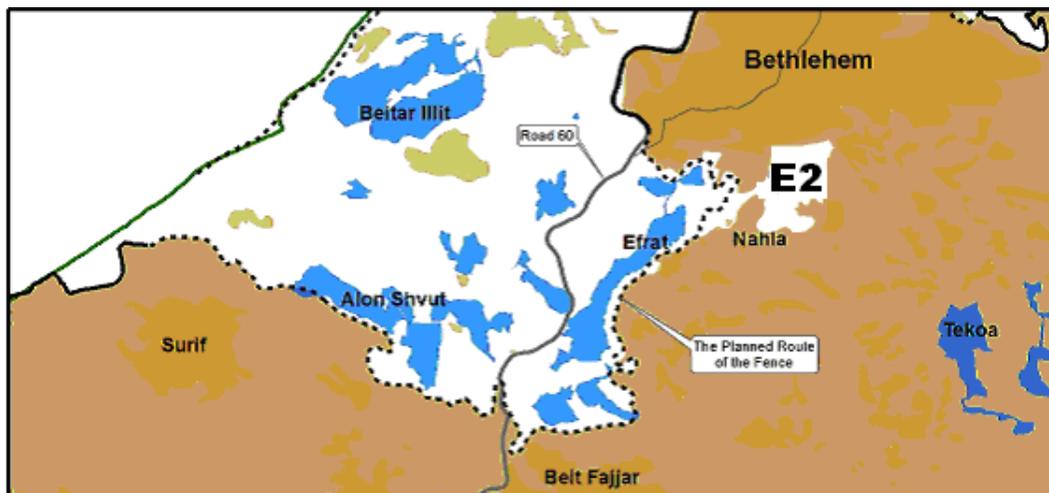
The New Settlement in E2 (Nahla) – A Significant Threat to the Two States Solution

Update on E2 – September 2014

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The establishment of a new settlement south of Bethlehem

At the present time, the establishment of a new settlement is proceeding beside the Palestinian village of Nahla, south of Bethlehem and east of the settlement Efrat. The establishment of this new settlement has ruinous implications concerning the chance for a solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of two states. Establishment of the settlement would bisect the West Bank and seriously damage the chance for peace (as would also the plan for E1, east of Jerusalem), and we therefore call this new plan E2; (the settlers call this area "Givat Eitam"). The planning in this area is to build 2,500 housing units on about 1,700 dunams (i.e. 170 hectares or 425 acres).



- **Seizing Control of the Land: Registration in the name of Himanouta** – In 1979 and 1990, in an accelerated procedure which provoked suspicions, about 309 dunams of E2 were registered in the name of the Himanouta company, which belongs to the Jewish National Fund.

Seizing Control of the Land – “Declaration” of State Lands – An additional 1,341 dunams (approximately) of E2 were declared, in 2004, as “State Lands” and were incorporated into the municipal jurisdiction of the Efrat settlement. The Palestinian landowners appealed against this declaration, and the High Court of Justice (HCJ 2676/09) is expected to reject the appeal soon. From the moment that the Court approves the status of the land, the Government of Israel will be able to promote the building plan in the planning institutions, and with the plan’s approval, to begin building on the ground.

- **“An Agricultural Farm”**: At the end of 2011, Minister of Defense Ehud Barak gave permission for the establishment of an agricultural farm on the lands registered in the name of Himanouta. In October 2013 settlers in the area set up a new settlement spot which is maintained by several young people and guarded by the army. Several weeks ago (3 July 2014) the settlers built a new road in the middle of the night (taking advantage of the media atmosphere which was created following the discovery of the corpses of the 3 kidnapped youth, and in violation of an interim injunction of the High Court of Justice which forbids all works in the area) that allows them easy access for developing the outpost. Until then the settlers made illegal use (without intervention by the authorities) of other roads that cross privately owned Palestinian lands.
- **An agricultural farm is in effect a new settlement** – “Agricultural farms” constitute a basis for founding a settlement. At first the settlers cultivate the farm’s land, later they build temporary buildings, and finally a whole neighborhood is built there. This is how small outposts developed into large neighborhoods.

In order to set up this “farm” and other “farms” which are currently being set up, in several places throughout the West Bank (e.g. “Shacharit” west of Ariel, and a new farm south of Maaleh Amos), the military commander signed, on 29 March 2012, a special military order¹ which permits establishing “agricultural farms” while by-passing the standard building procedure. It is consequently clear that establishing “agricultural

farms” in the West Bank has been turned into an additional tool by which Israel allows the settlers to widen and strengthen their rule over the lands in the West Bank.

- It should be noted that the newly planned settlement E2 is located east of the separation fence, and violates an Israeli commitment to refrain from building new settlements.
- **A Serious Blow to the Two States Solution** – The Housing Ministry has a plan in principle (but not yet approved) to build 2,500 housing units as an extension to the Efrat settlement, including 840 units in the first stage in the same place where the “Agricultural Farm” is being set up.² This may be a crushing blow to the solution of Two States for Two Peoples: E2 will block Bethlehem to the south and will prevent the growth of the city in the only direction that remains unblocked by Israeli settlements or Israeli bypass roads.
- Any attempt of Israel to annex the settlements Efrat and E2 would split the West Bank (similarly to the plan in E1), and would bisect the main highway (Highway 60) that connects the southern West Bank to Bethlehem.
- It should be noted that there exists a plan that the settlers tried to implement, without complete success (in the course of the year 2002), to connect E2 to the settlement of Tekoa to its east, with the goal of cutting off the contiguity between Bethlehem and the villages south of it (Ma’asara, Jurat a-Sham’a, Wadi Nis, and Wadi Rahhal).

¹ Regulations for planning cities, villages and buildings (registration of agricultural building) (Judah and Samaria), 5772-2012:

http://www.law.idf.il/SIP_STORAGE/files/0/1210.pdf

² In November 2013 it was published that the Ministry of Housing intended to issue tenders for the planning of 20,000 housing units in settlements.

<http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/.premium-1.2163665>