

# Settlement Construction Report 2019

**The yearly construction average since Trump’s administration is 25% higher than during the Obama years**

Settlement Watch, Peace Now

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## A. Highlights – Settlement Construction In The West Bank, 2019

(East Jerusalem excluded)

Peace Now's count according to aerial photos:

- **11 New settlement outposts (illegal agriculture farms) were established in 2019**, all of them in areas that Israel will need to evict under a two state solution (east of the Geneva Initiative proposed border)
- **1,917 new housing units** began construction in 2019.
- **Yearly average of construction since Trump's administration (2,267 units) is 25% higher than the yearly average under Obama's administration (1,807 units)**. In the last 3 years there were 6,800 new units (yearly average of 2,267 units) according to Peace Now's count. 2,783 units in 2017; 2,100 units in 2018; and 1,917 units in 2019; compared to an average of 1,807 units per year in the years 2009 – 2016: 1,174 units in 2009; 1,545 units in 2010; 1,792 units in 2011; 1,554 units in 2012; 1,684 in 2013; 3,100 in 2014; 1,800 in 2015; and 1,814 in 2016.
- **Nearly 63% (1,200 housing units)** of the new construction was in settlements east of the [proposed Geneva Initiative border](#), i.e. **settlements likely to be evacuated in a two-state agreement**.
- **At least 10% (195 housing units)** of the construction **was illegal, in illegal outposts**.
- The vast majority of new construction, **91% (1,764 housing units)**, **was for permanent structures**, while that the remainder was mobile homes both in outposts and in settlements.
- **61 new public buildings** (such as schools, synagogues etc.) started to be built, alongside **87 structures for industry or agriculture** (53%! of them in illegal outposts).
- **56% of the construction was in national-religious settlements** (1,065 units); **39% of the construction was in Ultra-Orthodox settlements** (741 units) and only **5% of the construction was in secular settlements**.

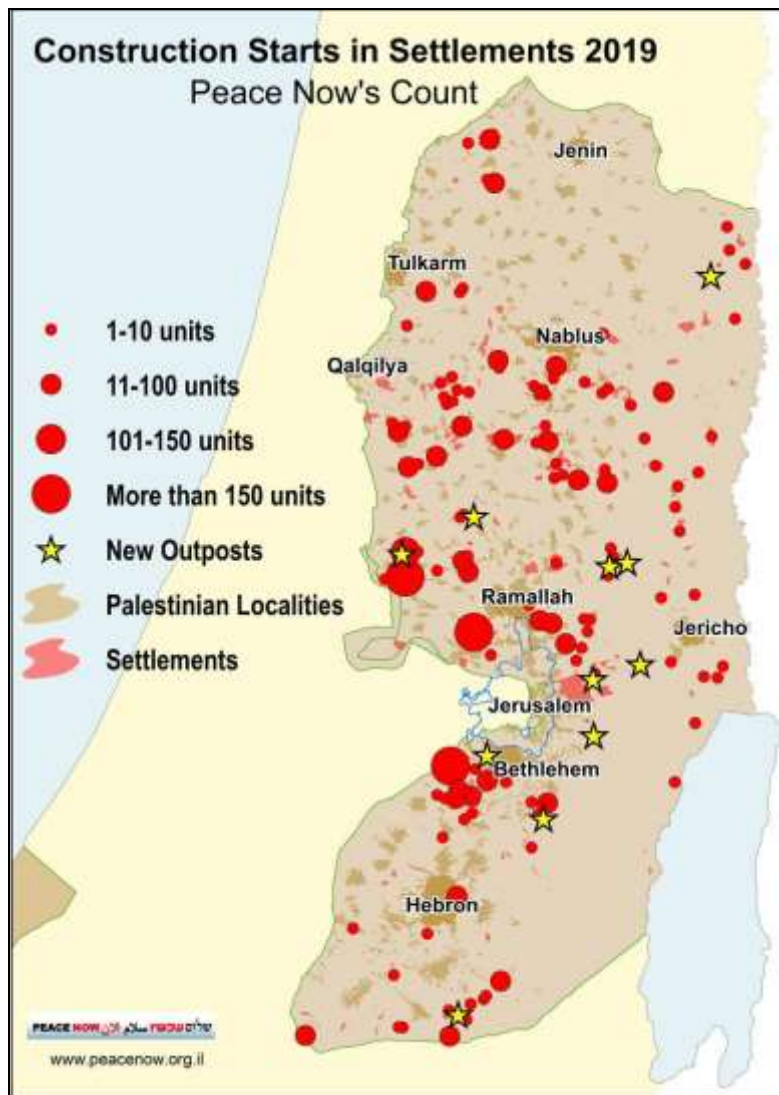
### Advancement of Plans and Tenders in 2019 (January-December)

- **8,457 Housing units** were advanced through plans in 58 settlements. Almost 68% (5,783 housing units) of the planned units were east of the purposed Geneva Initiative border.
- Tenders were published for 1,761 housing units, 956 of them in settlements and 805 units in East Jerusalem Israeli neighborhoods.

It should be noted that since January 2020 and before the election on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Israeli government managed to advance plans for 7,582 units ([including 3,401 units in E1](#)) and to publish tenders for 3,332 units (1,785 of them in settlements and 1,547 in East Jerusalem, including [in Givat Hamatos](#)).

[Download the full list of construction starts per settlement – click here](#)

[Appendix: The construction in the settlements in the Jordan Valley](#)



## **B. 11 New Settlements (Outposts)**

In 2019, 11 new outposts were established throughout the West Bank: two in the Bethlehem area; three east of Jerusalem in the vicinity of E1 and Khan Al-Ahmar, one in the southern Mount Hebron region; one in the northern Jordan Valley, four in the vicinity of Ramallah. In recent years, [illegal outposts have again become a choice method](#), whereby settlers establish facts on the ground by building unauthorized settlements knowing fully well that the government will allow them to remain and to try to retroactively legalize them while tacitly encouraging their growth.

**The 11 new outposts set up in 2019 are all styled as farms.** The farms allow settlers to take over vast areas (pasture and agricultural cultivation) with only a small group of people—one family and several youngsters—who maintain the farm and take control of land. This control often involves them additionally [driving off Palestinian farmers from the area](#). For more information on the return of the outpost phenomenon, [see here](#).

### **Outposts established in 2019:**

[Tekoa E](#) - Bethlehem area

[Nofei Prat South \(Hill 324\)](#) - East of Jerusalem

[Susiya East](#) - South Mount Hebron  
Mitzpe HaTorah - East of Jerusalem  
Rimonim North - East of Ramallah  
Maskiot South – Northern Jordan Valley  
Nili West - West of Ramallah  
Makhrour outpost - Bethlehem area  
Halamish East - North of Ramallah  
Mitzpe Kramim East - East of Ramallah  
Kedar East - East of Jerusalem



Nili West, a new farm outpost west of Ramallah



Nofei Prat South (hill 324), east of Jerusalem

## C. Most Of The Construction Is In Settlements That Israel Will Need To Evict

Peace Now's Settlement Watch annual construction report for 2019 reveals that the construction was largely focused in isolated settlements and in areas that are highly problematic in terms of a two-state solution. 63% (1,200 housing units) of the new housing starts were in areas that are east of the proposed Geneva Initiative border. 1,200 units are the potential for another 5,000-6,000 settlers to move in those houses when completed, which means Israel will need to evict many more settlers in order to implement a two-state conflict-ending resolution.

The [Geneva Initiative](#) is a model of an Israeli-Palestinian permanent agreement that has been informally agreed upon by both Israelis and Palestinians of significant status in a variety of professions and is currently the only document for which there is agreement, albeit informal.

According to the model, Israel will be able to annex a minor amount of Palestinian land encompassing most settlers in return for exchanging to the Palestinian state land out of Israeli territory.

Consequently, **the Israeli government is digging the pit where Israel is on track to fall.** Every house built in the settlements and every family that moves to live there will cost Israel a painful and difficult evacuation. Even if one does not believe that peace can be reached in the near future, it makes no sense to build settlements and to make the conflict insoluble.

## D. Settlements With The Most Construction

### National-Religious settlements

**Most of the construction, about 1,065 housing units (56%),** in 2019, was in ideological religious-national settlements. This is a large number for such settlements, which tend to be small. Only around one-third of the settlers live in national-religious settlements (another third live in ultra-Orthodox settlements and another third in mixed urban settlements or secular settlements, sometimes called "quality of life" settlements). This means that the government has devoted much of its construction and development resources to a relatively small interest group of national-religious settlers.

### Ultra-Orthodox settlements

Nearly 40% of construction starts in 2019 were in four ultra-Orthodox settlements (741 housing units in Modi'in Illit, Beitar Illit, Givat Ze'ev's Agan HaAyalot neighborhood, and Tel Zion in Kochav Ya'akov). The ultra-Orthodox, or Haredi, population has a high growth rate (many children in each family), leaving a lot of young couples each year in need of housing, and they prefer to live in separate, ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods, which the government designates and builds for them. Living beyond the Green Line for them is not generally the preference; they come to the settlements because the state builds suitable and cheap housing for them (for more on the ultra-Orthodox settlements, [see here](#)):

- **Modi'in Illit** - The ultra-Orthodox settlement west of Ramallah, near the Green Line, includes the most construction per settlement in 2019 with 396 housing units that began to be built there. This took place mainly in the areas within the settlement that were not yet built-up, and will be built as high-rise buildings.
- **Agan HaAyalot neighborhood, Givat Zeev** - In the ultra-Orthodox neighborhood of Givat Ze'ev "Agan Haayalot" southwest of Ramallah, 153 new housing units began to be built in 2019. The neighborhood notably lies beyond the Geneva Initiative proposed border because at the time when the Geneva Accord was signed, in 2003, the area was not yet built and therefore was designated for the Palestinians. The neighborhood started to be built only in 2007.

- **Beitar Illit** - In the ultra-Orthodox settlement west of Bethlehem, new 152 housing units have begun to be built, both in the new neighborhood, Beitar Illit C, which significantly expands the built-up area of the settlement to another ridge, as well as in the older neighborhood, Beitar Illit B which continues to be built.

**Only a small part of the construction in 2019, about 5%, was in secular or mixed urban settlements.** Apart from Ariel, where 73 housing units were built, mixed or other secular settlements had little construction—11 housing units in Adam, 5 in Hinnanit, 6 in Naomi, etc.). This may indicate that in the end, **national-religious motives for moving to the settlements still play a central role, and that the broader Israeli public, which does not see an ideological obligation to settle in the Occupied Territories, is not flocking to live in them.** The exception is, as mentioned, the ultra-Orthodox public, which the state encourages through affordable housing in predominantly Haredi settlements.



Modi'in Illit, 2018



Modi'in Illit, 2019



Agan HaAyalot neighborhood, Givat Zeev, 2018



Agan HaAyalot neighborhood, Givat Zeev, 2019

### Additional Settlements with Notable Construction

**Bruchin settlement**, established in the 1990s as an illegal outpost and retroactively authorized as a legal settlement by the government in 2012, has enjoyed tremendous construction momentum. No less than 94 new housing units have been built in 2019 (in addition to 77 housing units built in 2018), a very large amount for a small settlement. The area where Bruchin is located, in the Salfit region southeast of Qalqiliya, is very difficult for land swaps (Bruchin is 10 km from the Green Line), which would highly disrupt and in some places sever the territorial contiguity between Palestinian towns in the area. The settlements in the area have witnessed an explosion in settlement expansion in the last decade. For example, in addition to Bruchin, the settlement of **Leshem** was established in recent years, although formally it is defined as an extension of the settlement Alei Zahav. In 2019, 61 new housing units were built, after 180 were built in the previous two years.



Bruchin, 2018



Bruchin, 2019



**Nokdim and Kfar Eldad** - In the Nokdim settlement, infrastructure work began on a new large neighborhood, as well as in a nearby settlement called Kfar Eldad, which formally is defined as part of Nokdim. This construction is part of a continuing trend of building and development in the Nokdim and Tekoa settlement area in the wake of the completion of the Za'atra bypass road (aka [the "Lieberman Road"](#)). The increased pace of construction continues to this day (for more [see here](#)). In addition, a helicopter landing pad was built for then-Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman, who lives in the settlement.



Kfar Eldad (right) and Nokdim (left), 2018

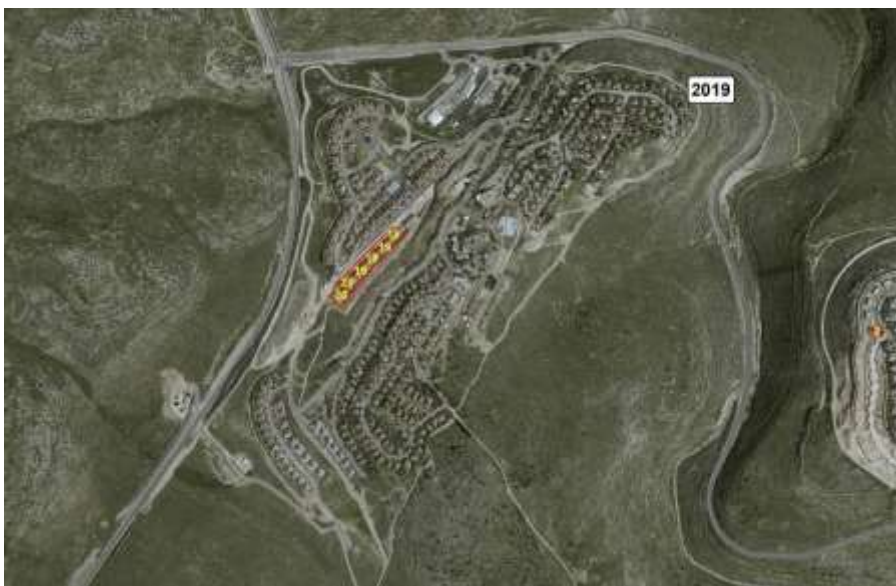


Kfar Eldad (right) and Nokdim (left), 2019

**Nili** – The settlement of Nili saw construction starts for 115 housing units, a very large amount for a small settlement. As elsewhere in the settlements, there was a burst of settlement construction, of apartments with several housing units, in contrast to the construction of villas and terraced houses typical of the small settlements.



Nili, 2018



Nili, 2019

## E. Construction In The Jordan Valley

### 1. Background: The Jordan Valley – Small settlements, huge amounts of land

Since 1967, Israeli governments have tried to encourage settlement in the Jordan Valley through various incentives. Recently, the prime minister announced plans to annex the valley. In September 2019, he presented an [annexation blueprint map for 22.3% of the West Bank](#) in the Jordan Valley, with 30 settlements and 18 illegal outposts. The so-called Trump Plan, crafted with ample input from Netanyahu, supports an annexation of the Jordan Valley although with [a slightly different map than Netanyahu's](#). For the sake of the following report, the Jordan Valley boundaries were defined according to [Netanyahu's proposed annexation map](#).

Despite the efforts of various governments, all failed to bring a massive amount of settlers to the Jordan Valley. Currently, only 12,788 settlers live in the Valley—about 3% of the settlers (interestingly, in the East Bank, Jordan, the Jordanian government managed to bring hundreds of thousands of residents to the area with the same climate and distances from Jordanian populated centers).

At the same time, [the takeover of the Jordan Valley lands is almost complete](#). Since 1967, Israel has implemented a policy of [dispossession of the Palestinians](#) - an absolute majority of the land was seized for firing zones and training purposes, and [hundreds of thousands of dunams were allocated to settlers for agricultural use](#). The Palestinians have limited areas where Israel allows them to build and live in small enclaves of about 5% of the Valley—in the Jericho area that is Area A, and in some small villages considered Area B. 95% of the Valley is considered to be Area C, under full Israeli control, and Israeli policy is not to permit any construction and development for the Palestinians.

Thus, the reality in the Jordan Valley is one whereby **a small minority of residents (12,788 settlers) control 95% of the land, while the Palestinian majority (52,950 - 81% of the Valley's population) are confined to small enclaves in the remaining 5% of the area.**

### 2. Construction of the settlements in the Jordan Valley in 2019

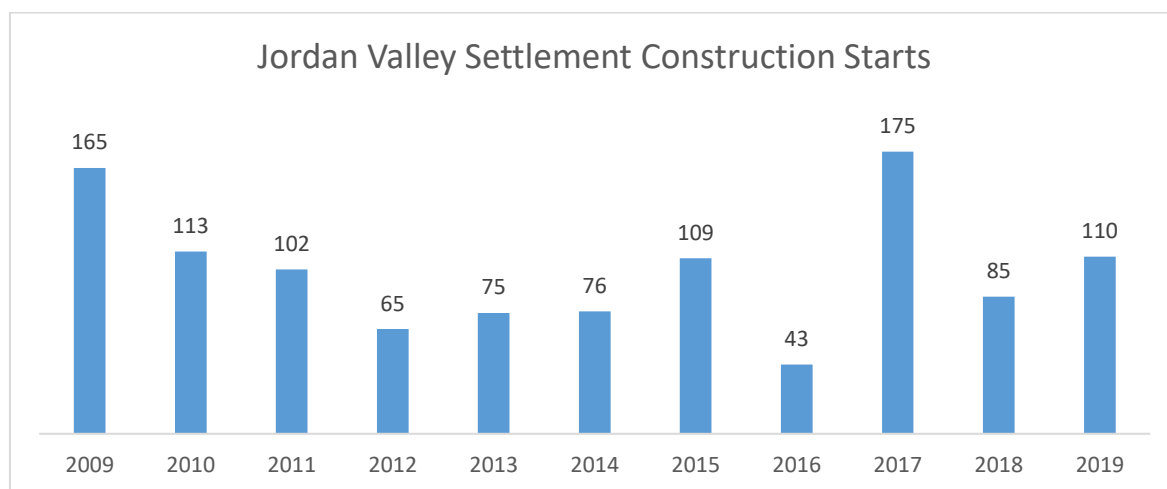
In the past decade, an average of 103 housing units have been built in the Jordan Valley settlements, with most of the construction located in relatively large settlements on its western edge: in the Kochav HaShachar, Alon, and Mitzpe Yericho.

**In 2019, there were 110 housing unit construction starts in the Valley's settlements and outposts, slightly above average.** It is possible to say that in the last three years there has been a relative increase in such construction starts, but it is still early to be determined as a trend.

Among other things, 10 new units were established in the [Kedem Arava outpost](#), making it a large outpost with dozens of families. In Mul Nevo outpost, which consists of a single farm with one resident and several employees, about eight families were added in the last two years, and in the last two years five new caravans taken root (provided by [Amana](#)).



New caravan homes in Mul Nevo outpost, 20 February 2019



Peace Now's Count

### 3. New settlements (outposts) in the Jordan Valley

In 2012, the phenomenon of building new illegal outposts renewed, mainly as agricultural farms consisting of a limited number of settlers, allowing them to take control of large areas through grazing and removing Palestinian farmers from their land. (For more information on the return of the outpost phenomenon, [see here](#). For more information on the mechanism behind illegal outpost building, [see here](#).)

Of the 40 outposts established since 2012, 30% (12 outposts) were in the Jordan Valley. The takeover of vast areas, and the [harassment and driving out of Palestinian farmers by settlers from these newly established outposts](#), is rampant throughout the area.

**In 2019, four new outposts were established** in the Jordan Valley: **Mitzpeh HaTorah** (farm for haredi yeshiva students, adjacent to Mitzpe Yericho settlement), **Rimonim North** and **Mitzpe Kramim East**—farms in the vicinity of Kochav Hashahar (note: these farms sometimes "migrate" from place to place);

and **Maskiyot South** (agricultural farm south of Maskiyot settlement in the north of the Valley, west of Alon Road).

Year Established	New Outposts in the Jordan Valley
2013	Bitronot (Brosh)
2015	Malachei Hashalom
2016	Shirat Haasabim
2016	Um Zuka
2017	Kedem Arava
2018	Beintayim Farm
2018	Kochav Hashahar East
2018	Gadi Base
2019	Mitzpe HaTorah
2019	Rimonim East
2019	Maskiyot South
2019	Mitzpe Kramim East

#### 4. Student Village in Mechora settlement

One of the ways to develop and grow settlements is by establishing student villages, where students enjoy discounted housing and scholarships in exchange for community activity in the settlement. In recent years, several student villages have been established in the settlements (e.g. in Pnei Kedem outpost southeast of Bethlehem, Rimonim settlement, and Almog settlement). In the past year, a new student village has been established in Mechora settlement in the north of the Jordan Valley.



Mechora, 2018



Mechora 2019 – New student village



Student Village in Rimonim, August 2019