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# FLAME HOTLINE

Facts & Logic About the Middle East

April 11, 2017

## If Palestinians Don't Like Settlements, They Should Give Peace a Chance

Dear Friend of FLAME:

Consider this: If the Arabs had made peace with Israel when they had chances—in 1948, 1967, 1973, 2001 and 2008—when Israel made offers of land for peace to defeated Arab nations, as well as to the Palestinians, the settlements would not be an issue today.

In fact, from 1948-1967 there were no Israeli settlements in Judea and Samaria (the “West Bank”), yet the Arabs have stubbornly refused all of Israel’s offers of peace from 1948 (when Israel was founded) through the present. They have refused to recognize the Jewish state and have refused to negotiate.

Take this enduring example of the Arabs’ unqualified and unrelenting hostility: Following Israel’s repulsion in 1967 of attacks by Egypt, Jordan and Syria during the Six-Day War—as well as Israel’s subsequent offer to return captured land for peace—the Arab League responded with its infamous “Three No’s of Khartoum”: No peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with Israel.

Remember, this was before any settlements.

This 60-year refusal to make peace with Israel—this never missing an opportunity to miss an opportunity—has dearly cost the Arab world and the Palestinians specifically. Since 1948, Israel has skyrocketed—while even suffering under numerous wars and extreme political adversity levied by the Arab world—to become one of the world’s economic and technology powerhouses, while also consistently scoring among the top 15 “happiest” countries on Earth.

Meanwhile, the Arab world is mostly an economic and political

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**YOU DESERVE TO KNOW THE TRUTH...**  
**Israel's Settlements: Obstacle to Peace?**  
 Arabs opposed the State of Israel before there were settlements—and they opposed it still today. It's time to clear up 5 false myths about settlements.

*The U.S., as well as some American media and politicians, claim Israel doesn't want peace, since Jews build houses in disputed territories of Judea and Samaria (i.e. the West Bank). But the facts reveal settlements to be a misconception. What's such a great obstacle to preventing peace?*

**What are the facts?**  
 Palestinian Arabs have violently fought Israel's existence since the Jewish state's founding and only much later cited Israel's settlements as an obstacle to peace. When Israel relinquished its settlements in Gaza in 2005, it was rewarded with a mushroom war by the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas. Five major misconceptions underlie criticism of Israeli settlements.

**Myth #1: Palestinians "own" these lands.** In fact, Jews are indisputably the indigenous people of Palestine (including Israel, Judea and Samaria), who have lived in the region for millennia and ruled it as a state, providing Arab settlements by 1,000 years. Palestinians have never had a state nor possessed public land in the region. Thus, the idea of "Palestinian lands" is false. In fact, both people can live claim to Judea and Samaria (the West Bank). It is a disputed territory.

**Myth #2: Jews have no right to live in the disputed territories.** Jews and Arabs have lived together for hundreds of years in Palestine. The only exception is during 19 years of British rule, when Jews were evicted from the West Bank. Today, some two million Arabs live on full citizens of Israel, and some 400,000 Jews live in Judea and Samaria. Yet Palestinians insist that no peace with Israel is possible so long as Jews live among them. In 2015, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas stated that "in the final resolution, we would not see the presence of a single Israeli—civilian or soldier—on our lands." Why should Abbas, who accuses Israel of "apartheid," issue a racist ban on Jews? Why should Arabs be welcomed in Israeli society—as they are—when Jews would be forbidden from living with Palestinians in the West Bank?

**Myth #3: Israel is increasing new settlements in Judea and Samaria.** In December 2014, President Obama's dispute national security adviser Ben Rhodes complained to PLO's holy Woodhead of "tens of thousands of settlements being constructed" by Israel. In fact no new settlements are under construction in Israel, and Israel has created no new settlements in over 20 years. The number of settlements, plus illegal outposts, now totals just 210. While the number of settlers in living in established settlements has increased by 155,000 since 2005, the number of settlers living out of Israel's anti-Arab separation barrier has since 2009 increased by only 20,000. Less than 1% of the population in the disputed territories, Judea, Israeli communities take up only 2% of the land of the West Bank. Almost all the settlements are located on land not previously occupied, used or privately owned by individual Palestinians.

**Myth #4: Israel's settlements are illegal under international law.** Most who assert Israeli settlements are illegal cite the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies." However, Russia has settled its people into the Baltic region, Turkey has settled Turks into Turkish-occupied Cyprus, and China has settled Chinese into occupied Tibet. The Israel has never transferred any of its people into the West Bank. All settlements in Judea and Samaria have been voluntary, undertaken by private Israeli citizens. Why does the world focus on Israel—which has not broken this law—while allowing other nations to violate it liberally?

**Myth #5: The Palestinians would make peace if settlement building stopped.** In 2009, Israel's new settlement activity for 10 months to entice the Palestinians to negotiations sponsored by the U.S. The Palestinians refused. Indeed, Israel has made numerous land-for-peace offers to the Palestinians, most recently in 2009 and in 2010, in which the Palestinians would have received more than 90 percent of the disputed territories, plus land swaps—plus a capital for Jerusalem. Yet the Arabs refused these offers. They refuse to accept Israel as a Jewish state and insist on "rights" of five million descendants of Arab refugees from 1948 to "resettle" in Israel, which would swamp Israel demographically.

Israel has a standing offer to resume negotiations with the Palestinians with preconditions. In the Israeli option, citing Israeli settlements as an obstacle. One thing is certain: Settlements were never an obstacle to peace in 1948—when Israel was born and there were no settlements—and they're not the obstacle today.

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disaster zone, and even those countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait, which are reasonably stable, are 100% dependent on oil, and have failed to use their largess to build engines of economic independence.

The Palestinians are in worse shape than ever. They are politically divided between the isolated Hamas terror dictatorship in Gaza and the hopelessly corrupt West Bank Arabs, who are utterly dependent on the global welfare system. Neither group has held democratic elections in 12 years. Both oppose the existence of the Jewish state.

Contrast the Palestinians' obstinacy and political bankruptcy with Israel's many offers of peace and its persistent success as a state. The greatest puzzle is why so many Westerners passionately believe the Palestinians deserve statehood. But setting aside this perplexing philosophical riddle, what of Israel's settlements?

It's clear the settlements are not the problem, nor have they ever been. It's also clear that once the Palestinians make peace, the borders between Israel and "Palestine" will be drawn, and the question of settlements will instantly go away.

The final thing that should be clear to the Palestinians—though they seem steadfastly to deny it—is that absent a peace agreement, Israel's settlements will continue, slowly but surely, to expand. After all, the land in question—Judea and Samaria—doesn't "belong" to the Palestinians, and it is, by virtue of Israel's defeating Jordan in 1967, under Israeli control.

In other words—and please consider this a universal truth—the longer the Palestinians wait to trade land for peace, the less land will be available to trade for.

This week's FLAME *Hotline* featured article, below, comes from Elliott Abrams, a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, who provides a concise analysis of the Trump administration's position on the settlements, contrasting it with the bumbling, hash-making doctrine of the Obama administration.

Abrams points out that Trump, unlike Obama, is not so ideologically driven and therefore does not insist on imposition of rigid guidelines for Israel's settlements, but rather strongly requests restraint. This gives Prime Minister Netanyahu a bit of breathing room in managing disparate factions to his left and right in his governing coalition back home.

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## FLAME'S WEEKLY HOTLINE E- NEWSLETTER



FLAME's Hotline e-newsletter keeps you up to date on the most important pro-Israel advocacy issues and features our choice of the week's most informative and thought-provoking article on Israel and the Middle East. If you only subscribe to one pro-Israel news service, make it the FLAME Hotline.

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If you ever hear friends or colleagues bemoaning Israel's settlements, as I constantly do, you'll be glad you read Abram's brief piece. While President Trump still hasn't done much to fulfill his big campaign promises to Israel and to us American Zionists, Abrams makes clear that Trump's ambiguous stance on this matter is still an improvement over the past eight years . . . and likely moves us closer to peace.

Finally, I hope you'll also quickly review the P.S. immediately below, which describes FLAME's current *hasbarah* campaign to expose five despicable media myths about Israel's settlements in Judea and Samaria.

Best regards,

Jim Sinkinson  
President, Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)

P.S. You've no doubt often read in the *N.Y. Times* and other mainstream media of "Israeli settlements on Palestinian land" or "settlements regarded as illegal by the international community." Yet these objective-sounding phrases represent malicious propaganda—disguised lies told so often that millions of Americans believe them. In order to make Americans—especially college and university students—aware of this media treachery, FLAME has just begun publishing a new position paper: "[Israeli Settlements: Obstacle to Peace?](#)" This paid editorial, exposing the five greatest myths about the settlements, is appearing in magazines and newspapers, including college newspapers, with a combined readership of some 10 million people. In addition, it is being sent to every member of the U.S. Congress and President Trump. If you agree that this kind of public relations effort on Israel's behalf is critical, I urge you to support us. Remember: FLAME's powerful ability to influence public opinion—and U.S. support of Israel—comes from individuals like you, one by one. I hope you'll consider giving a donation now, as you're able—with \$500, \$250, \$100, or even \$18. (Remember, your donation to FLAME is tax deductible.) To donate online, just go to [donate now](#). Now more than ever we need your support to ensure that the American people and the U.S. Congress end our support of blatantly anti-Semitic, global jihadist organizations.

As of today, more than 15,000 Israel supporters receive the FLAME Hotline at no charge every week. If you're not yet a subscriber, won't you join us in receiving these timely updates, so you can more effectively tell the truth about Israel? Just go to [free subscription](#).

## The Trump Administration Settles In on Settlements

By Elliott Abrams, Council on Foreign Relations, April 2, 2017

**Israeli settlement activity has been in the news this past week** because the Trump administration is steadily defining its policy.

What has emerged is a good policy: sensible, flexible, and realistic. Which is to say, it's a lot like Bush policy.

Obama policy had made construction in the settlements a sore

point for eight full years. This was one reason among many for the constant tension between the government of Israel and that of the United States during all of Mr. Obama's term in office.

What are the terms of the agreement between the Netanyahu government and the Trump administration? First, there is no written agreement and that's a good thing. There are understandings. That means there can be some arguments, but no accusations that "you're violating what you signed!" Second, the Trump administration understands that Jerusalem is Israel's capital and does not view construction there as "settlement activity." Third, there will be no new settlements built except the one being created for the people evicted from Amona, a settlement deemed illegal by the Israeli Supreme Court. Netanyahu apparently persuaded the administration that he had made that commitment last year, before the Trump presidency, and needed to keep it. Fourth, new construction in settlements in the West Bank will be in already built-up areas, or if that's impossible, as close to them as possible. Fifth, there will be some restraint in the pace of settlement expansion. Sixth, apparently Netanyahu agreed not to permit new "outposts" to be built—small groups of houses erected without government permission. And finally, there will be no annexation of land in the West Bank.

**This is very close to the Bush-Sharon understandings of 2003 and 2004.** Our "deal" was no new settlements, no seizure of additional land for settlements, construction in already built-up areas, and no financial inducements to move to a settlement (e.g. a cheap, government-provided mortgage). The goals are the same: to limit the physical expansion of settlements so that the Israeli footprint in the West Bank does not become larger and larger; to keep most population growth in the larger blocks that will remain with Israel in any final status agreement; and to prevent this issue from occupying center stage and being a constant irritant to the two governments.

This is smart. The alternative approach, that of the Obama administration under George Mitchell, Hillary Clinton, John Kerry, and Barack Obama, was not. By treating all construction—in Jerusalem, the major blocks, and the smallest outlying settlements—exactly the same, that Obama approach created a huge Israeli consensus against U.S. policy. The Trump approach is politically sensible: most Israelis do not think of construction in Jerusalem or the big settlements like Ma'ale Adumim to be anything like construction in some tiny settlement far beyond the Israeli security barrier. So this deal should be sustainable.

**There will no doubt be arguments**, as noted, over some questions: for example, is some new apartment house really as close to the already built-up area as it can be? But we dealt with such matters in the Bush years. The prime minister's office would call, we'd discuss what was planned, and we would not allow these things to sour the terrific relationship between the president and the prime minister, or between the two governments. That's the way it should be, and that appears to be what President Trump has in mind.

The logo for FLAME, featuring the word "FLAME" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letter "A" is stylized with a flame icon integrated into its top.

Facts and Logic

About the Middle East

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