

## The Settlers - A Documentary



The Israeli government's settlement project, which is de facto a land-grabbing colonial enterprise, has to be "sold" more aggressively to a much wider public. Without the financial support and the complicity of the various US administrations, the success wouldn't have been so resounding. Every critic of Israel's encroachment on Palestinian land has also to blame the US government. Just recently, Israel announced the building of 150 Jewish-only new settlements in the occupied Palestinian West Bank that led to international condemnation also by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Shimon Dotan, an Israeli Award-winning filmmaker, screenwriter, and producer, presented his new documentary, "The Settlers", at Sundance Film Festival 2016. Currently, he teaches political cinema at NYU School of Journalism and at the New School University in New York City.

The documentary reveals the history and consequences of Israeli settlement policy. According to Dotan, "in no point in time (did) any Israeli government decide [...] that it's in the best interest of the State of Israel to keep settlements in the West Bank". Apparently, it all happened in a sort of haphazard way and without a rational and calculated decision by the government.

The film presents a statement by the former Deputy State Attorney Talia Sasson, where she revealed the deceptive mechanism used to conceal the government's hand in the settlement policy. In her report, she listed 105 outposts built between 1995 and March 2005. "The findings of my report were that the entity behind the establishment of the outposts was the State of Israel, acting behind the government's back, illegally, but with the involvement of various government ministries, settlers, local councils in the Territories, they are the ones that used state funds to build those outposts and all of this was done illegally. The illegality was institutionalized. The government couldn't decide on the establishment of new settlements because the Americans were given verbal commitments and the Prime Minister didn't want to violate them, but there was still the desire to build new settlements so they found a new system whereby the government is 'unaware' that settlements are being built with government funds."

So far, the colonization of Palestinian land was very successful. What started with a call by Rabbi Zvi Jehuda Kook just before the Six Day War in 1967 to seize biblical sites such as Hebron and Nablus, it was followed by Rabbi Moshe Levinger's and his followers' call to establish the first Jewish colony inside Hebron. All this started under a Labor Party government led by Levi Eshkol.

Up until now, there are almost 600 000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. An estimated 80 000 of them are ideologically driven. Back in 1974, the late Yitzhak Rabin called the settlement movement Gush Emunim a "cancer in the democratic fabric of the State of Israel", yet all Israeli governments expedited the building of settlements and they are flourishing.

Israel can manage the occupation and control the Palestinian people, especially with the active support of president Mahmoud Abbas' regime that tries to stifle every protest against the Israeli colonial regime. What the right-wing Israeli government can't handle is disintegration from within. And it might find it impossible to manage forever Apartheid in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Sooner or later even Israel proper – i.e. within the 1967 borders – may turn into an Apartheid-like state. The signs on the wall are already visible.

As long as the occupation and the settlements are in place, resistance will continue.

Watch the interview with Shimon Dotan on *Democracy Now*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTbAKFg17Nw>

Ludwig Watzal

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<http://between-the-lines-ludwig-watzal.blogspot.de/2016/02/the-settlers-documentary.html>

<http://www.countercurrents.org/watzal010216.htm>