

# We've Got Your Back on a Settlement Freeze, Mr. President

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has stated that President Obama "wants to see a stop to settlements -- not some settlements, not outposts, not 'natural growth' exceptions...We think it is in the best interests [of the peace process] that settlement expansion cease. That is our position.... And we intend to press that point."

## **The settlements are disastrous for Israel, because they are a major obstacle to peace**

The conflict threatens Israel's safety and security, harms its international standing, divides it from potential regional allies, exhausts its army, divides it politically, burdens the budget, hangs heavy on its conscience, and threatens the future of its existence as a Jewish nation-state. In short, Israel is paying a heavy price for the continuation of the conflict and for the absence of a fair and agreed-upon partition into an Israeli and a Palestinian state (See <http://tiny.cc/yTNjm>).

## **A settlement freeze is in the interests of the Jewish people**

The well-being of Israel is in the interests of the Jewish people. Only the establishment of a Palestinian state as part of a final status peace agreement gives the Israelis a path to peace and security. Internationally recognized borders, good relations with other countries in the region, and international recognition are all essential to the future of Israel and the Jewish people.

## **A settlement freeze advances the peace process**

For a viable Palestinian state to be established, most settlements will have to be evacuated. A settlement freeze would be an important first step. It would send a strong signal that Israel is prepared to reverse course and prepare the way for the creation of a viable Palestinian state. It would say clearly to the Palestinians, the United States, and the world that the time is ripe for all parties to sit down at the negotiating table and start talking seriously about a final status agreement.

## **A settlement freeze is consistent with Israel's legally binding obligations**

Israel legally committed to freeze all settlement expansion when it signed the Oslo Peace Accords and again when it ratified the Road Map to Peace. The Obama Administration's policies are simply holding Israel accountable to its own legal commitments, just as they are pressing the Palestinian Authority to meet theirs.

## **"Natural growth" is not an acceptable reason to keep expanding settlements**

The Israeli government claims that it must expand settlements to accommodate "natural growth." However nearly half the settlement expansion is to accommodate Jews moving into the West Bank for the first time, not expansion of families already living there. And the Israeli government does not fund new housing to accommodate the "natural growth" of Jews living within Israel proper.

## **A settlement freeze is in the interests of the U.S.**

Every U.S. administration since Johnson's has called on Israel to halt settlement construction. In fact, some say U.S. failure to press Israel on a settlement freeze was a major factor in the collapse of the Oslo peace process. If the long-standing conflict can be resolved, it will foster better relations between the U.S. and all the nations in the Mideast region, reduce the possibilities of future conflict, and open the way to a better, more peaceful life for all.