

Sharon authorises fresh Zionist settlement of Arab East Jerusalem

David Cohen
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The peace movement in Israel has condemned a new settlement for Jewish families in Arab East Jerusalem, defining it as a recipe for violence designed to make nonsense of the US-backed “road map” for peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

The settlement is an apartment complex that will have 140 flats when it is finished. Fifty have been completed and thirty-five have been sold.

The Ras al Amud neighbourhood has long been targeted for colonisation by extreme Zionists. Eyal Hareuveni, director of the Jerusalem branch of Peace Now—Israel’s biggest peace movement—told *Haaretz* daily that he suspected the settlers’ move was made during the war in Iraq to avoid criticism from a preoccupied United States. “This is a settler group, extremists who want to transfer the Arabs [out of their homeland]. This is only a recipe for friction and violence,” he stressed.

This is only a partial picture of the significance of the Ras al Amud settlement. In reality the decision to allow it to go ahead was taken under the direct authority of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

In the first instance it was timed to deliberately thumb his nose at the efforts of Britain’s Prime Minister Tony Blair to persuade US President Bush to prioritise the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in order to sweeten the bitter pill of the onslaught against Iraq amongst the Arab peoples.

The announcement on Ras al Amud was made on the very day that Blair and Bush met in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where Bush pledged himself to the eventual creation of a Palestinian state.

Sharon clearly sees this as largely diplomatic political rhetoric on Bush’s part, given the backing he enjoys within the highest echelons of the Republican administration. Despite State Department spokesman

Lou Fintor calling the colonisation of Ras al Amud “simply inconsistent” with President Bush’s Road Map and a personal phone call from National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, therefore, he has laid down a challenge to anyone demanding he refrain from pursuing his policy of establishing a Greater Israel.

The move also expresses Sharon’s contempt for the European powers. The French Ministry for Foreign Affairs denounced the decision, insisting that “settlement of the occupied territories is one of the main factors stalling the peace process.... In the particular case of Jerusalem, the parties have in addition pledged, in the context of the interim accords, to maintain the status quo pending the final status negotiations.”

It concluded, “Resuming the settlement of Ras al Amud sends the wrong signal ahead of the parties receiving the Quartet’s [referring to the US, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations] roadmap.”

Moni Mordecai, general director of Peace Now, told the *World Socialist Web Site*:

“The timing of this action, on the eve of the war in Iraq, raises the suspicion that the government intends to enable this underhanded opportunism that they hope will go unnoticed in the international community to exploit a situation that holds disastrous implications for the area.”

Regardless of all international condemnation and the definition of settlement activity within the Occupied territories as a war crime, Israel kept on developing East Jerusalem settlements since its triumph in the Six Days War (June 1967 war). The Israelis created large, ultra-nationalist urban communities that were based upon the economic colonisation of the Palestinians and the expropriation of their lands.

Statistics released during 2001 pointed out that the

population of these settlements, which were illegally annexed from Arab East Jerusalem, reached 200,000—almost half of the total number of Israeli settlers.

The inhabitants of Ras al Amud are extremely worried by this Hebron-type colonisation in which a minority of extremely right-wing settlers with fascistic views rule over a city with an Arab majority.

Salah, 28, lives in Ras al Amud. He told the *World Socialist Web Site*:

“The future of our people is going to be just like the future of our neighbourhood: lacking of any civil or human rights, with no real sovereignty and with cruel Zionist rule. We must resist, otherwise we will be smashed by Sharon’s bulldozers.”

He added, “The fact that the Americans condemn Sharon for robbing our lands does not help us. Actually, Sharon and Bush are nothing but close partners. They want Jerusalem to be Baghdad. The situation is terrible!”

The organisation immediately behind the Ras al Amud settlement is called Ateret Cohanim, an ultra-nationalist organisation which receives much of its funding from Irving Moskowitz, a Miami-based capitalist who has spent millions of dollars buying up Arab homes in disputed parts of Jerusalem.

The same methods were used by the Zionists throughout the 1920s and up to 1948, when they took advantage of the dire economic situation facing the Arab workers and peasants to buy up land at knockdown prices. This sparked the Great Arab Rebellion (1936-1939), which was the first *intifada*.

Moskowitz has a bloody record in Jerusalem. In 1996, during the government of Binyamin Netanyahu, he helped finance a tunnel in Eastern Jerusalem next to land considered holy by Muslims. It provoked bloody riots and uprisings that resulted in the deaths of 60 Palestinians and 15 Israelis.



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